



# Western Health and Social Care Trust

**Press Release**

**14 March 2008**

## **Promoting safety and independence to the Learning Disabled**

Over 150 learning disabled adults and young people from the Western Health and Social Trust area had a unique opportunity to enhance their life skills in such areas as safety at home and on the roads, fire safety, emergency calls and dealing with strangers. The initiative is a unique venture jointly supported by the PSNI's 'Policing with the Community Fund' and the European Union INTERREG IIIA funding through the cross border Health Services partnership Co-operation and Working Together (CAWT).

The highly interactive events was held in the Bawnacre Centre in Irvinestown over three days and has been co-ordinated by the Western Health and Social Care Trust and the Police Service of Northern Ireland's Community Safety Officers. Other vital local organisations supporting the events include the Fire Service, Omagh and Fermanagh District Councils Home Safety Departments, Omagh and Fermanagh Community Safety Partnerships, Elm Brooke School, Erne School and Arvalee School. Those invited to come along to one of the events include older pupils in special schools and learning disabled adults attending day care or living in supported and independent living accommodation.

Organiser Margaret Dolan, Day Care Services Manager for Learning Disability at the Western Health and Social Services Trust explained the benefits of the initiative. She said "This initiative is important as it helps to raise awareness about personal safety. It is an excellent opportunity for people with learning disabilities to reinforce the skills that they already have and also to learn new skills. All the participants involved had great fun and have valued the opportunity to interact with new people and were very eager to participate. I look forward to working with the all partners again in order to continue this important work in the future."

Sergeant Ewan Ballantine explained why the PSNI has supported these events. He said: "By raising awareness of personal safety we can prevent crime from happening, particularly for people with disabilities. Thus, we were keen to be involved in this initiative because we recognise that people with disabilities are part of the community. It has helped to reinforce the personal safety message through a series of highly interactive sessions." He added: "This is very much a partnership with the Western Trust, Fire Safety, Community Safety Partnership from Fermanagh District Council and Omagh District Council and the Home Safety Officer from Fermanagh District Council and Omagh District Council."

It is hoped that a similar event will be held in the Derry / Strabane region of the Western Health and Social Care Trust region. The contact person is

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### **Notes to Editor**

1. The CAWT cross border 'Protecting Vulnerable Adults' project is a two-year programme, which aims to review policies, procedures, service practice and available training in relation to learning disability services in the border region. It is also identifying and developing good practice in the protection of learning disabled adults.
2. Co-operation and Working Together (CAWT) is a cross border health and social care partnership comprising the border counties of the Health Service Executive in the Republic of Ireland and the Southern and Western Health and Social Services Boards and Trusts in Northern Ireland. CAWT manages a range of cross border health and social care programmes funded by the European Union INTERREG IIIA for Ireland/Northern Ireland 2000 – 2006 (Measure 3.2 Health and Well being) on behalf of the Special EU Programmes Body and the Departments of Health.
3. The European Union's INTERREG IIIA programme is designed to support cross border co-operation, social cohesion and economic development between regions of the EU. The Northern Ireland/Ireland programme is managed by the Special EU Programmes Body and covers all of Northern Ireland and the six border counties of the Republic of Ireland. It aims to address the economic and social disadvantage that can result from the existence of a border.