

Police back arrest referral scheme

AN INITIATIVE designed to help people refrain from using substances is being supported by Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary.

Residents across the region who are arrested for any offence will now be invited to take part in the arrest referral scheme, operated by a dedicated team from Apex Scotland.

The move comes after police officers found that many suspects required assistance in relation to alcohol or drug addictions, but did not have the confidence or ability to ask for help or did not know where to go.

Anyone who volunteers to be referred to the scheme will be seen by a specialist arrest referral worker — either in the police cells or at an arranged appointment — where an initial assessment will be completed to identify issues pertaining to their substance misuse and appropriate measures will be taken to help them deal with the problem.

This could be for things like someone consuming alcohol to excess due to personal issues that have got out of control to someone dependent on substances and finding themselves homeless with no benefits and nowhere to turn for help.

Apex Scotland depute manager Sharee Rennie said: “We have three fulltime members



of staff working within the arrest referral scheme covering Dumfries and Galloway, two of whom work within the police cells and other locations. The other member of staff will support individuals until they engage with relevant services. “We pride ourselves in the empathetic approach to the clients that come into our services. We engage with around 40 people with substance misuse problems per month within the arrest referral service.

“There is nothing more satisfying to me and my staff in making small changes that make significant differences to individuals and help them achieve short and long-term goals.” And detective constable Scott Jardine, who is also a substance misuse co-ordinator for Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary, added: “The arrest referral scheme is a vital part of our armoury and we realise

that enforcement cannot work in isolation.

“Some people who come into police custody have matters that need to be addressed to stop their criminal lifestyle. Obviously if this scheme manages to stop or reduce a criminal lifestyle, it allows police officers to concentrate on other matters that concern the general public most.”