

Emilia's Place a success over Christmas



Julie Coulson and Steve Sully with a 'onesie' in a recovery room in Emilia's Place. Photo: James Maggs.

THE initiative set up to offer a safe haven for 'small hours casualties' has a new tool – the onesie.

It is one of the measures that volunteers at Emilia's Place have introduced to care for people recovering from the effects of excess alcohol by helping to maintain their dignity.

And Emilia's Place – which opened in Hereford's old youth court on December 20 – prevented seven ambulance call-outs and four A&E attendances over the Christmas period.

The centre, run by Hereford's volunteer Street Pastors and funded with a grant from PCC Bill Longmore, offers revellers a safe place to recover on a night out, helping to reduce the pressure on the ambulance service, A&E and police.

And Rob Thomas, who set up the Street Pastor organisation in Hereford, said the initiative got off to a successful start over the Christmas period.

"From our point of view we were extremely delighted that all the input we had through the likes of the police via the PCC, ambulance service and equally the Wye Valley Trust really paid off because – though there is always room for improvement – all of our procedures and processes worked really well and delivered really positive outcomes," he said.

"It's about looking after people and keeping them safe. We also gave out our first onesie. Part of what we are trying to do is care for people more and it's about maintaining their dignity. "

Emilia's Place even cared for people who had medical conditions such as diabetes as well as getting emergency care for someone suffering with a life-threatening condition.

Taking a pause after the launch, the centre is expected to open on the last Saturday of each month.

"I think the thing that has really thrilled me is that a lot of people voluntarily gave up New Year's Eve. The ambulance people that work with us were volunteers as well. It's very heart-warming when you see how willing and kind people are in wanting to help other people," Mr Thomas added.

"If you give people the proper equipment and training to help other people we can keep a good number of people out of A&E so if there is a serious car accident or someone has a heart attack then A&E is available for them."