

## The Ugly Consequences of the Beautiful Game – pan-Lancashire World Cup campaign launches



FOOTBALL clubs and emergency services across Lancashire have today united to send a strong message to fans – don't pay the penalty this World Cup.

Preston North End, Blackpool, Blackburn Rovers and Burnley have pledged to stand together against domestic abuse, after it was revealed reported incidents rose by around 25 per cent during England games at the 2010 World Cup.

And now offenders are being warned to "Leave the Striking to the Players" as part of a powerful campaign designed to address traditional spikes in crime during major football tournaments.

The "Ugly Consequences of the Beautiful Game" campaign has been developed by Lancashire Police and Crime Commissioner, Lancashire Constabulary and the county's Fire and Rescue Service on behalf of the Safer Lancashire communications network to raise awareness of the consequences of domestic abuse, arson, drink-driving, alcohol-fuelled violence and cooking fires this summer.

In each case, the message to offenders will be clear – there are no excuses. Don't pay the penalty.

Lancashire Police and Crime Commissioner Clive Grunshaw said: "Residents across the county will be coming together to watch the World Cup this summer, and it should be a time for fun and celebration.

"But unfortunately, experience tells us the tournament is also likely to be a time for excessive drinking – which can have devastating consequences. I hope residents will take notice of this campaign and think twice about their actions this summer. We are not trying to stop residents going out and enjoying themselves, but want to make

sure that a criminal record or serious injury is not the unintended result of their night out.

"The message is clear – there are no excuses for breaking the law, and the penalty could be much greater than you imagined."

Chief Supt Bill McMahon, from Lancashire Constabulary, said: "The World Cup is a huge event and thousands of football fans across the County will be looking forward to it.

"Here in Lancashire we want people to enjoy this international competition and for those who want to have a drink as well, we would ask that they drink responsibly and not spoil the event for others.

"Throughout the competition, we naturally expect that there will be plenty of people out and about enjoying the games in pubs and bars as well as in their homes. With this in mind there will be additional officers on patrol to provide extra visibility and to help ensure that any celebrations pass off peacefully.

"We want people to enjoy themselves however we will take action if anyone is found to be acting irresponsibly in an anti-social or violent manner."

Increases in crime and anti-social behaviour are most prevalent when England are knocked out of the tournament and after the final. And the Fire Service are also using the campaign to spread the message about the dangers of accidental fires in the home, which tend to increase throughout the tournament as a result of residents forgetting they have cooked food after drinking or failing to properly extinguish a cigarette.

Chris Kenny, Chief Fire Officer for Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service, said: "It's a fact that drinking alcohol makes people more likely to be a fire casualty.

"Drinking alcohol can make them sleepy, careless and slow down reaction times, making it more likely for fire to strike and less likely they'll escape if it does.

"The main causes for house fires are smoking and cooking.

"A smoker who's been drinking alcohol is less likely to stub out a lit cigarette properly and if they put on a cooker, grill pan or chip pan they're more likely to forget about it.

"Their survival then depends on whether they hear and can react quickly enough to a smoke alarm, and people who've been drinking alcohol often don't – it's a statistical fact."

North West Ambulance Service recorded a 34 per cent increase in the number of assaults after England were thrown out in the 2010 games. It also saw a 21 per cent increase in the number of 999 calls compared to the previous weekend that year.

Derek Cartwright, Director of Operations at North West Ambulance Service said: "In previous tournaments we have seen the combination of expectations, emotions, warm weather and alcohol consumption result in an increase in 999 calls for assaults. We urge people to think first, drink sensibly and remain aware of their

actions so they can enjoy the matches in good spirit and avoid harm to themselves and other people.”

Over the next six weeks, billboards will be appearing in Blackpool, Blackburn and Preston warning domestic abuse offenders to "Leave the Striking to the Players", while bus shelter adverts will urge victims, friends and family to "Blow the Whistle on Domestic Abuse".

Banners will also be displayed by partners on prominent roads and buildings across the county highlighting all elements of the campaign, and posters and beer mats will be appearing in pubs, clubs, workplaces and community buildings.

The campaign is being supported by partner agencies including Blackburn with Darwen Council, Blackpool Council, Lancashire County Council, the Army, Clinical Commissioning Groups and domestic abuse services.

The campaign will run until Sunday, July 13.