

Lifesaving campaign has today been launched

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A lifesaving campaign to cut the number of motorists driving while under the influence of drink or drugs this Christmas has been launched.

Nearly one in six deaths on the road involve drink drivers.

Staffordshire County Council has joined forces with more than 30 pubs, social clubs, restaurants and hotels to promote its designated driver scheme.

The venues will be giving special offers to drivers who stick to soft drinks in a bid to encourage them to stay safe and sober.

County Councillor Mike Maryon, Cabinet member for Highways and Road Safety, said: "This high profile campaign aims to highlight the dangers of driving while under the influence of drink or drugs. It is not about increasing arrest rates – it is about decreasing the number of people who are getting behind the wheel when they are not fit to drive.

"Taking a risk where this issue is concerned can have catastrophic implications for other road users and pedestrians who often suffer as a result of one person's irresponsible behaviour.

"People need to think before they have a drink or take drugs and then get behind the wheel – all actions have consequences, sometimes devastating ones."

At this time of year, the abundance of parties and family celebrations can lead to people being over the legal limit.

The penalties for drink driving are steep. If you drive whilst over the limit you could face six months imprisonment, a fine of up to £5,000 and a minimum 12 month driving ban. An endorsement for a drink-driving offence also remains on a driving licence for 11 years.

The legal limit in the UK is 80 milligrammes of alcohol in 100 millilitres of blood, but it is very difficult to equate that to a number of drinks or food containing alcohol.

The fact is any amount of alcohol affects how well you drive. It's also difficult to calculate how long alcohol takes to leave your system, and many people drive while still over the limit, often the morning after a night out.

If you injure or kill someone while drink or drug driving the penalties are much harder and you, and the victim's family, live with the consequences for the rest of your life.

Driving when you've taken drugs - whether its prescribed medication or illegal substances - is just as dangerous as drink driving and the penalties are the same.

Luke Stanley, operational manager at the Swan Hotel in Stafford, said: "We have always promoted ourselves as a responsible drinks retailer and feel it is important to join the county council in ensuring we have a safer Staffordshire.

"We have a responsibility to our customers and the wider community."

For more information on the venues that are taking part in the scheme log on to www.staffsaferroads.co.uk/i'll-be-des