



WORKING TOGETHER TO
END MALE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

More than sixty make the White Ribbon Promise in Congleton

Congleton Town Council's White Ribbon Group was at the Maker's Market in the Town Hall on Saturday, encouraging shoppers to chat about the White Ribbon Campaign and make their White Ribbon Promise.

The White Ribbon Campaign engages men specifically to challenge the attitudes and behaviours that lead to male violence against women.

Congleton Town Council is a White Ribbon Accredited organisation which means it aims to eradicate male violence against women in Congleton and all gender-based violence. The White Ribbon Group asked people to make the promise never to commit, excuse or remain silent about male violence against women.

Councillor Robert Hemsley, Chair of the Congleton White Ribbon Group and a White Ribbon Ambassador, said "We had some really good conversations with many people, both men and women, and a total of 62 people signed the White Ribbon Promise. Many of the men were worried about the recent national and local reports of male violence and were keen to sign up and help. Some men at first said 'well I'm not violent' but then when they heard the statistics, they were quite shocked because they had no idea of the prevalence of violence against women."

In April 2021 a national survey by Victim Focus found that 99.3 per cent of women had been subjected to one or more acts of sexual harassment or violence in their lifetime, and that 94 per cent of girls under 18 have been catcalled in the street by men. Here in Cheshire East, a 2021 survey of women found that 94 per cent do not always feel safe on the streets, that almost 9 out of 10 avoid going to certain areas and nearly half (49%) do not go out alone for safety reasons.

Councillor Kay Wesley, Chair of the Community & Environment Committee and a White Ribbon Champion, said "These fears are familiar to me as a woman, and we spoke to many women on the stall who felt the same. It is unacceptable that women do not have the freedom to go about their business and social life in the same way that men do. Why should

women have to keep ourselves safe from the threat of violence? That is what the White Ribbon Campaign is about.”

The White Ribbon Group consists of Town Councillors, Council officers, and volunteers from the community who are White Ribbon Ambassadors.

Ambassador Jon Dakin recalled “Some people said what about the violent women, and the male victims? Of course, all violence is wrong, but it is important to remember that male victims of violence are usually the victims of other men. In fact, in the UK, 95% of all serious violence is committed by men. We spoke to parents with children at the local high schools who were worried about a culture, perpetuated by the media and especially by video games, that teaches young men that being aggressive, sexist and derogatory to women is what being a ‘real man’ is all about.”

Cllr Hemsley continued “Our Congleton White Ribbon campaign is about all gender-based violence, and we recognise that men can be victims too, but there is not the same cultural pressure on women to be aggressive and dominant. White Ribbon is about trying to intervene early and prevent boys and men from engaging in sexist behaviour that might lead to violence. The White Ribbon Campaign encourages men to show leadership by expressing their feelings, showing empathy and respect to others and by calling out toxic masculinity and sexist behaviours. We spoke to many people on the stall that agreed with this and were glad these issues are being discussed openly here in Congleton.”

The Congleton Domestic Abuse Clinic has received visits from six men in the past year who were worried about their own behaviour and wanted to learn to deal with problems in a non-violent way. The White Ribbon Group believes this may be due to the success of its awareness campaign, the theme of which this year is ‘Although not all men are violent, #AllMenCan take action to help eradicate violence’.

Over the next two weeks a series of videos from the Group will be posted on social media, explaining more about the White Ribbon Campaign and how everyone can get involved.

Individuals can make their promise at any time online at www.whiteribbon.org.uk. If any organisations, clubs or employers are interested gaining their own accreditation as White Ribbon organisations, please contact the team via info@congleton-tc.gov.uk and a member of the White Ribbon Group will get in touch.

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For more information please contact Debbie Coxon at Congleton Town Council on 07974 600901. Members of the group are available for radio interviews.