

What time do you get up?

5.45 a.m.

What do you most look forward to when you start work?

The unexpected challenge of the day. No day as a street warden is ever the same!

What do you most dread?

The thing I most dread when I'm on patrol is finding a client that has overdosed, or hearing from someone else that a person I've been working with from the streets has passed away.

How long have you been doing your job?

Five years.

What's the biggest challenge you face each day?

Remaining diplomatic when faced with people who are ill-informed of certain issues or situations. I find that problems are a lot more difficult to tackle when people do not (or choose not to) recognise that there actually is a problem in the first place.

And what puts a smile on your face?

Two things. My granddaughter never fails to put a smile on my face. Also when I see that a person from the street has turned their life around and is heading for a brighter future, that makes me smile too.

What's your favourite thing about the area you work in?

The setting. Not many people can go to work and look at such a beautiful seascape every day.

And what would you change if you could?

The perceptions of some people. If someone is homeless, they are often perceived in a certain way. Some of the men and women I work with every day used to have thriving businesses and a good family home but through circumstance have lost everything. I think it's important to remember that we're all the same, some of us just have bigger walls to live behind than others.

Do you know anyone whose life has been changed by your service? What happened?

One person immediately comes to mind. I found a woman close to death, she was freezing cold and soaking wet. With a lot of persistence I managed to get her into accommodation and



Torbay street warden Sue Smith, winner of The Neighbourhood Alliance Wardens Supporting Vulnerable People Award, tells us a little about herself



she is now receiving the help she desperately needed.

Could you give an example of an issue or problem your service has tackled successfully?

I can think of many, but the success of the street warden service relies on the good working relationships we have with our partner agencies and other teams within the council. For example, joint work with partners such as the Devon and Cornwall Constabulary enabled street drinking in Alco-Stop areas to be tackled, which is something we couldn't have done on our own.

Has your service introduced any ideas that have been especially successful or innovative? What were the results?

Our junior street warden (JSW) scheme has been very successful in bringing communities together. The scheme also demonstrates that not all young people are antisocial and 'the

feared hoodies'. Our JSWs show that there are young people who are willing to get the best out of the communities in which they live and the results speak for themselves.

At the end of the day, what do you look forward to?

Knowing that when I get home I'll be greeted with a great big beaming smile and a cuddle from my granddaughter.

What did you dream of doing when you were a kid?

I was going to join the Army and become a physical training instructor but due to an injury I had to change my plans. I did always know that I wanted to work closely with people, especially people less fortunate than myself.

And what's your dream for the future now?

By the time I retire, I'd like there to be more awareness and education regarding those less fortunate in the community. I'd like to see the perception of the general public change, and for people to appreciate that any of us could end up on the streets. It would be my dream for more people to willingly engage with the homeless and for those on the streets to be treated with dignity, and not like lesser beings because of the circumstances they're in.

PUTTING TORBAY FIRST

◆ While Sue has not yet spent all of her winnings, the majority will be spent on fishing equipment for Shekinah Torbay and this equipment will also be made available to help set up a fishing club for the junior street warden scheme. Sue pledged £100 to help to

pay for a Christmas party for Kidz@Heart, a scheme for underprivileged children, and has also given a pair of walking boots to enable 'Big Will' to go out onto the moors and take photographs, both being therapeutic activities which can help recovering addicts.

◆ Torbay's street warden scheme was established in 2002 with an original team of two wardens. Since then, thanks to funding by the European Union, the team has grown to eight wardens, enabling them to cover five areas within Torbay.