

Targets and victims



More and more firefighters
face violent and premeditated
assaults – and it's not just
an inner-city problem

FROM the streets of Northern Ireland, from South Wales, Scotland, the north west of England to the county of Royal Berkshire, a problem is rapidly getting worse.

There appears to be an increasing number of attacks on firefighters, some of them pre-planned ambushes, mainly by gangs of youths throwing bricks and bottles.

Roads have been blocked and firefighters attacked when forced to stop. Some attacks have involved guns and fireworks.

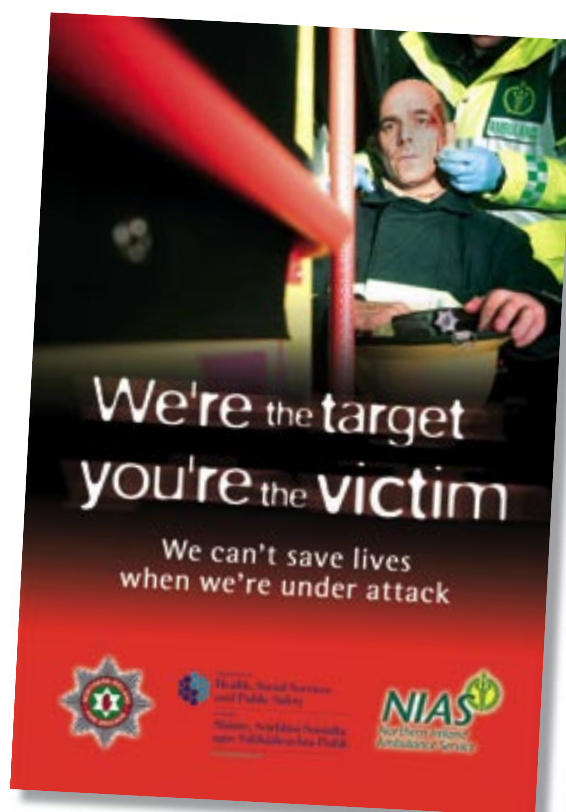
If asked, most of the public might associate such attacks with deprived areas in the inner areas of major cities. But it is not quite as simple as that.

Those areas have their problems, but violence against firefighters is not confined to the inner city areas, as Eddie Cardoso, FBU Brigade Secretary in Berkshire, explains. Berkshire was the scene of a recent incident where youths set fire to mattresses and other material in a public park and attacked the firefighters who arrived to put the fires out.

"People who don't live here think of Berkshire as Windsor Castle, Eton School and Royal Ascot" says Eddie. "But like most other brigades we have areas which are either trouble spots or potential trouble spots, This isn't just about inner cities."

Brigades like Greater Manchester do have their problems as Kevin Brown told us. "Youngsters are no

*The
Northern
Ireland
Fire
Service's
poster*



longer satisfied with making hoax calls so they can hear the sirens and see the blue flashing lights. They are setting light to cars, rubbish, derelict buildings. We have had some incidents where this has been done to lure us in so they can attack us.

"Some have been planned ambushes. In one incident they used fireworks with scaffolding poles used as makeshift rocket launchers as well as brick and bottles".

And a hard-pressed police service is not always there to offer support as Les Skarretts in Merseyside explains. "We have real problems in some areas of Merseyside" he says.

"The police have been called for support but most of the time they are so busy themselves that they have no one to spare unless we tell them that our lives are in danger."

Finding accurate figures about the number of