

ISSUED ON BEHALF OF THE SUSSEX POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

Bid for cash to stop kids turning to crime

SUSSEX could be in for a share of a £22 million Government fund aimed at steering young people away from serious crime.

The Office of the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner has submitted a bid for funding from the Early Intervention Youth Fund for work to prevent young people getting involved in serious violence.

The bid was outlined as the Sussex Police and Crime Panel, which scrutinises the work of Commissioner Katy Bourne, heard a report on the work the police are doing with schools and other educational establishments.

The panel heard the force had appointed 22 Prevention Youth Officers, aimed at strengthening links between the police and schools and colleges, in which they spend at least a quarter of their time.

Mark Streater, chief executive of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, said: "The emphasis is very much on trying to avoid the criminalisation of children rather than schools just asking for police interventions that tip them into the criminal justice system.

"If our bid for Government funding is successful, hopefully we will be able to do far more at an early stage to prevent young people being drawn into really problematic areas."

The report outlined a seven per cent increase in recorded crimes relating to educational establishments last year, including a 45 per cent increase in sexual offences.

However, Mr Streater said the total represented an increase of just 0.12 crimes per school, and the increase in sexual offences was down to schools being more pro-active in reporting cases of 'sexting', in which youngsters send explicit images of themselves via mobile phone.

During the meeting, held at County Hall, in Lewes, the Commissioner also updated the panel on progress towards a new way of handling police complaints, which is due to be introduced in April.

Mrs Bourne said the change would mean she, rather than the Chief Constable as at present, will have the final say in considering appeals from people dissatisfied with how their complaint against the police has been resolved.

Panel chairman Cllr Bill Bentley said: "The panel was encouraged to receive an update on the excellent work being done to build stronger links with schools, colleges and universities and to prevent criminal behaviour.

“Early prevention is absolutely key and if the bid for funding is successful, it will have a huge impact on the work the police and their partners can do to stop young people from getting drawn into a life of crime.

“While the increase in crime rates in schools is concerning, the panel understands there are complex reasons behind this, however we will continue to closely monitor this issue and to scrutinise the work of the Commissioner.”

The meeting heard answers to questions raised in person or in writing from nine members of the public, and anyone with any issues or queries they'd like to raise with the Commissioner are urged to do so ahead of the next meeting, on Friday, February 1 2019.

Questions to the Panel must be submitted in writing two weeks before the meeting and can be emailed to pcp@westsussex.gov.uk or submitted by writing to Sussex Police and Crime Panel, Room 102 (Cabinet Office), County Hall, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 1RQ or by calling 0330 222 2542.

Ends.