

## **Taking action to tackle knife crime threat**

HUNDREDS of young people at risk of committing serious violence in Sussex have been helped by a ground-breaking scheme aimed at tackling the scourge of knife crime.

The REBOOT project, which sees troubled teens offered personalised, one-to-one support to keep them on the straight and narrow, launched in April following a successful pilot in Hastings.

Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner Katy Bourne said 376 young people had received support through the scheme, part of a strategy to tackle the 'emerging threat' of knife crime.

Speaking at a meeting of the Sussex Police and Crime Panel, Ms Bourne was outlining action taken as a result of £3.1 million additional Government funding she had secured to tackle the issue.

While welcoming its success, the panel expressed its concern that the £891,616 Government funding for the REBOOT scheme was for one year only and risked leaving those young people it had helped feeling 'abandoned' if continued funding was not forthcoming.

Cllr Bill Bentley, Sussex Police and Crime Panel chairman, said: "We were very heartened to hear the success the REBOOT programme is already having in the six months it's been running.

"It is making a real difference in targeting young people who are at risk of being dragged into the spiral of serious violence, with positive effects for them, their families and the community.

"Having shown such promise, it would be very disappointing if those young people who are benefitting were left high and dry if this valuable work has to stop after just one year.

"We will continue to work with the commissioner to lobby the Government to extend funding for a further three years so that this support can continue to be provided to change young people's lives for the better and to keep our communities safe."

The REBOOT programme includes five levels of intervention ranging from an initial visit from a PCSO to a civil injunction through the courts – an outcome which had not yet had to be used.

A report to the panel described how Government funding secured by Ms Bourne had also enabled the setting up of a new Violence Reduction Unit which focuses on early intervention, prevention and enforcement.

Meanwhile, cash from the national Serious Violence Fund had enabled 105 extra patrols to take place, resulting in 87 arrests and the seizure of weapons including kitchen, folding and hunting knives.

Sussex is one of 18 police force areas identified as increased risk of serious violence, with 55 emergency hospital admissions for assaults using sharp objects in the six years to 2019.

The next meeting of the Sussex Police and Crime Panel will be held at County Hall, Lewes, on Friday, January 31.

Ends.