

Continue to fund school police officers who educate children and support schools

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 2 Rhagfyr 2024
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Petition title: Continue to fund school police officers who educate children and support schools

Text of petition: This will negatively impact schools and police resources, which are already under significant pressure. In addition to educating pupils, school police officers respond to incidents which take place in schools. They have developed specific skills and knowledge to address issues within schools and built working relationships with staff and pupils. Without a specific police officer, schools will have to call 101, which could also overwhelm the communication centre and place additional demands on general response officers. This will further decrease resources to respond to other calls. Incidents in schools, particularly secondary schools are a regular occurrence, and having a dedicated officer, is a more effective and efficient way to address such situations.



1. Background

The Wales Police Schools Programme (WPSP) was a collaborative initiative between the Welsh Government and the four Welsh Police Forces. The programme aimed to educate children and young people about various issues affecting their safety and well-being through crime prevention education and supportive policing services. These included:

- Crime Prevention Education: delivering lessons on issues such as substance misuse, personal safety, safeguarding, and community behaviour.
- Supportive School Policing: Schools Police Officers (SPOs) were assigned to every school in Wales.
- Community Engagement: The programme aimed to promote positive citizenship and community cohesion by addressing issues like bullying, internet safety, domestic abuse, and radicalisation.

2. Welsh Government action

Funding for the Wales Police Schools Programme came from the Welsh Government, with additional support and resources provided by local police forces and other stakeholders involved in promoting youth safety and well-being. The programme ran from 2004 with annual funding from the Welsh Government's health budget, most recently with an allocation of £1.98m in 2023-24. Funding was matched by the police forces. The funding from the Welsh Government was withdrawn from 31 March 2024. [The Welsh Government's Draft Budget 2024-25 narrative](#) (paragraph 53) stated:

In prioritising funding to the NHS, we have reviewed all centrally held budgets in Health and Social Services and have redirected funding from several areas. These include substance misuse budgets. While we are protecting core provision, we have reprioritised funding from the Wales police schools programme, which provides support in all primary and secondary schools in Wales on a range of topics, including substance misuse, online safety and personal wellbeing.

In a [letter to the Health and Social Services Committee](#) (7 February 2024), Lynne Neagle, the Deputy Minister for Health and Well-Being at the time said that:

The landscape around wellbeing for learners on a range of important issues has changed significantly since the introduction of the programme.

The Deputy Minister also said that many areas would be considered in mandatory health and well-being learning in Welsh schools, noting that Relationships and Sexuality Education covers a number of areas, including substance misuse, online safety and domestic violence.

In answer to [an Oral Question on 9 January 2024](#), Mark Drakeford, First Minister at the time said:

we have to focus on the responsibilities that have been devolved to the Senedd. And when there is less money available, one of the things that we can do is focus on those things where we receive funding to do things.

It was [reported in September 2024](#) that the programmes would continue in the Dyfed Powys and North Wales police areas. Gwent Police said it has now moved to a model of "building closer connections between schools and their local policing teams".

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