

# Government funding for police led initiative



Police Scotland. Photo: Martin P. McAdam [www.martinmcadam.com](http://www.martinmcadam.com)  
A police-led partnership initiative aimed at diverting young people from criminal activity in Edinburgh is to receive Scottish Government funding.

As part of the CashBack for Communities Scheme, £19 million, which was seized from criminals, is to be shared with a range of organisations to further their work in diverting at risk youths away from potentially criminal or anti-social behaviour.

One such project receiving a share of this funding is VOW, a unique collaborative project, where police in the Capital work along a number of partners to engage and empower vulnerable young-people to make positive life choices.

This partnership helps break the cycle of offending and prevent individuals from continually entering the criminal justice system.

So far 167 young people have been helped through the work of the team. The funding will ensure this vital work continues and even expands.

In addition, some of the cash boost will go towards the award winning partnership project with City of Edinburgh Council Turn Your Life Around (TYLA), with City of Edinburgh Council.

Turn Your Life Around is a mental health and wellbeing project where local volunteers with a range of difficult childhood experiences are supported to share their stories of adversity and resilience with school pupils, families and staff.

Pupils at the schools are then given a platform to discuss the stories, reflect on risk and resilience factors and encouraged to seek help if they are experiencing similar difficulties.

The nature of these projects means that officers, peer mentors and volunteers are regularly asked to revisit, share or support childhood trauma and this funding will be used to provide trauma counselling and additional support for all those involved in delivering these services and will augment the existing skills they already have.

This in turn will increase the capacity for them to help young people turn their lives around.

Chief Superintendent Sean Scott, Divisional Commander for Edinburgh said: "This partnership and public health approach, using these inspirational peer mentors and courageous young volunteers, was a first of its kind here in Scotland.

"The proof that it works is testament to the number of young people that have managed to turn their lives around and the fact that on average the young people who engage with the peer mentors and officers manage to reduce their offending by around 80%.

"Traditionally, it has been difficult for police to

identify and engage with at risk youths while working in isolation. This collaboration opens a number of doors, not only in preventing further criminal activity, but signposting those we engage with to a range of support services that can help them make positive lifestyle choices.

“With this essential funding, the excellent foundations and work that has already been commenced, will be continued and expanded to include trauma counselling, with the model being rolled out in Glasgow and other Policing Divisions looking to follow suit.

“This peer mentoring project transforms not only the lives of the young people who engage and take part, but transforms their families and communities, through working in partnership to deliver prevention and interventions that have been evaluated and proved to work at reducing harm”

Councillor Ian Perry, Education, Community and Families Convener at City of Edinburgh Council said: “This funding is fantastic news and will help the programmes continue to go from strength to strength. Set up in 2016 with Police Scotland, the Turn Your Life Around project delivered by the Health & Wellbeing Team was recently recognised as Education Initiative of the Year by Herald Society Awards. This is testimony to the feedback received from over 1000 children, young people and staff in schools last year who heard the inspiring stories from the TYLA volunteers and were involved in follow up

sessions.

“It is of paramount importance that the volunteers are also appropriately supported and this funding will ensure we can continue to provide this as the project continues.”