



SCHOOLS ENGAGEMENT OFFICERS (SEO) FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why are the police working with Schools?

Since 2002 central government has viewed police engagement with schools as part of core business for Neighbourhood Policing, delivered through the then Safer Schools Partnerships' (SSP's). This position was reinforced by the 'Youth Crime Action Plan 2008' and 'Action Plan for Tackling Violence 2008-11'. SSP's were also identified as central to national and local strategies to address knife-enabled crime, concerns about guns and gang culture and violent extremism.

The recent focus on Serious Youth Violence and Knife Crime has brought this area of policing activity and policy once again to the forefront nationally. Through the 2020 GM Serious Violence Action Plan the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester and Chief Constable have committed to providing:

- all educational establishments in Greater Manchester with a named link within a Neighbourhood Policing Team (NPT), and
- at least 20 officers will be dedicated full-time to the schools of greatest need across Greater Manchester.

This Action Plan was developed after consultation with 'hundreds of professionals working in education across Greater Manchester, including representatives from primary schools, secondary schools, further education, pupil referral units and other forms of alternative provision...[where] many senior leaders in schools and colleges have asked for dedicated police officers or community support officers to assist them in preventing knife crime and serious violence, as well as more quickly and effectively responding to incidents when they occur.'

Have the police consulted with Schools and Local Authorities about this new role?

Yes. Since the autumn of 2020 a multi-agency steering group has been in place to develop this programme and the role profile. Consultation has taken place at both GM and local level with Directors of Children's Services, the GMCA and many other interested groups and individuals. Local police leaders have engaged with their Local Authority and Schools to develop and agree local implementation. Schools Engagement Officers will work with schools who have agreed to be part of this programme.

Who will supervise the Schools Engagement Officers?

These officers remain part of the local Neighbourhood Policing Team and will be supervised and tasked by their team Sergeant. They will liaise closely with School staff and on occasion may support the school with specific tasks or requests, but they remain a part of the local operational policing team.

What exactly will the Schools Engagement Officers be doing?

This programme is not about 'policing schools'. There are clear guidelines in place concerning the responsibility of schools to retain primacy for behavioural and safeguarding matters, only involving the SEO when police intervention is required.

The core principles which underpin SEO activities are:

- Form part of the local Community Safety Partnership (CSP)/Early Help approach to tackling youth crime and disorder, safeguarding and prevention arrangements.
- Information sharing - to develop effective information/intelligence sharing arrangements between police, schools and wider partners in respect of crime and disorder issues, complex safeguarding, including child sexual or criminal exploitation, Prevent and other offending or harmful behaviour, such as knife/weapon enabled crime, as well as ensuring schools are routinely briefed on local community issues in their area.
- Training and Awareness - to support schools and education professionals with training and development on criminal justice and community safety related matters. For example, intelligence handling, CSE/CCE and radicalisation.
- Generic Prevention - to support schools with a range of police and criminal justice specific issues, generic crime prevention and safety inputs for school groups e.g. road/Metrolink safety, stranger danger, etc.
- Targeted Intervention - specific activities targeted at individuals most in need or repeat/prolific offenders. This work should consider diversionary activity targeted at those involved in or on the periphery of gang crime, complex safeguarding cohorts and pre-exclusionary panels.
- Community Engagement - developing activities that help build positive relationships between police and young people, with a focus on equality and issues of disproportionality.

Will the SEOs be in uniform?

The SEOs will be expected to perform their duties in full police uniform, and wearing all necessary officer safety / personal protective equipment (including body armour, baton, handcuffs, pava spray), in accordance with Force Uniform Policy and the Health & Safety Risk Assessment, in order to enable them to perform their role as an operational police officer effectively in support of the school and the community.

They may on occasion undertake certain tasks in plain clothes.

What personal safety equipment will the SEOs have?

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Will the SEOs carry Taser?

No. Tasers are carried by specially trained officers as part of operational policing duties.

What policing powers will the SEOs have (will this include arrest / stop & search)?

As operational police officers, the SEOs will have authority to use their full policing powers.

Will the SEOs deal with behavioural issues of pupils in classrooms? *

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How will SEOs deal with safeguarding matters? *

The SEO role is not about 'policing schools'. There are clear guidelines in place concerning the responsibility of schools to retain primacy for behavioural and safeguarding matters, only involving the SEO when police intervention is required.

We will work closely with safeguarding leads in education to address safeguarding issues, share information and work in partnership to keep children and young people safe.

Will SEOs patrol the school (corridors / perimeter)?

This programme is not about 'policing schools'. There are clear guidelines in place concerning the responsibility of schools to retain primacy for behavioural and safeguarding matters, only involving the SEO when police intervention is required.

It is recognised that the presence of the SEO in or around school premises will bring with it a level of operational policing responsibility, such as responding to incidents and providing high visibility reassurance at the school gates, the principles behind this role must not be viewed as merely 'policing the school premises', but part of strengthening local unified public service delivery, working in partnership to reduce crime, disorder and harm.

Will SEOs criminalise young people? *

SEOs will encourage the reporting of serious crime in schools and deal with those crimes as appropriate to the circumstances, in partnership with the school, to reach effective outcomes that are right for those involved.

They will focus on early intervention and develop problem solving approaches that are intelligence-led with schools

and partner agencies to increase crime prevention for victims / potential victims as well as offenders.

Where problems are identified, SEOs will make better use of diversion schemes to lead young people away from criminality and onto positive pathways before entry into the criminal justice system.

The SEOs will reduce demand on police call handling, custody and the Criminal Justice System (CJS) by increased partnership working with Youth Offending Services (YOS) and young people within the system, and provide further support at school to prevent re-offending.

They will use diversion schemes more effectively to deal with those on the cusp of offending as well as persistent young offenders. Early identification of vulnerability and reducing exposure to harm will have a significant impact.

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What role will SEOs have in preventing terrorism?

The SEOs will work with partners to highlight the risks to children and young people from extremism. Police and our partners will engage with and, where appropriate seek to provide multi-agency support to individuals who may be vulnerable to radicalisation.

Will the SEOs be teaching young people? **

Education is a key preventative tool and therefore schools are essential partners.

There is a defined PHSE curriculum delivered by teachers which officers may support.

There are a small number be clearly identified topics, which the Force will want officers to talk to young people about and the SEOs will be expected to deliver crime prevention advice and educational inputs in order to inform, educate and steer children and young people away from criminal activity or victimisation.

There will be those subjects that the SEOs will not be the most suitable resource to talk about, and in these cases experts from partner agencies / organisations will be invited in.

Any inputs will be delivered by the SEOs will be in accordance with policing guidelines.

* **See: NPCC Guidance for Schools and Colleges - When to Call the Police:**

<https://www.npcc.police.uk/documents/Children%20and%20Young%20people/When%20to%20call%20the%20police%20guidance%20for%20schools%20and%20colleges.pdf>

** **See: NPCC Police in the Classroom Handbook:**

<https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/sites/default/files/u26918/CYP%20police%20in%20the%20classroom%20handbook.pdf>