



MANAGEMENT DECISION POCA FUNDING FOR PHONE POUCHES

DECISION NO. 2025/09

DATE: 17/11/2025

Request for POCA Funding - Phone Pouches for Children on Free School Meals

Executive Summary:

This report sets out a proposal for the use of £150,000 of the POCA reserve to support the mission of delivering even safer communities for the whole of Cheshire through the implementation of phone-free schools.

The funds are to be set aside to enable state high schools in Cheshire to fund the cost of implementing lockable phone pouches in schools. The PCC is looking to offer schools support by funding the cost of the pouches for those on free school meals and this will be made available via a grant process. Schools will need to demonstrate a whole-school adoption in order to qualify.

The request is made in line with the use of POCA funding as set out in 2025/26 Reserves Strategy approved at Joint Management Board on 29th January 2025.

Recommendation:

- 1) That the Police and Crime Commissioner approves an amount of £150,000 be set aside from POCA for the period up to 31st March 2027 to cover the cost of phone pouches for children on free school meals.

I have reached the following decision:

Approval of the recommendation.

My rationale for this decision is:

The use of POCA funding to cover the cost of lockable phone pouches for children on free school meals will ensure all children in high schools have access to a phone-free education. Schools will be able to apply for financial support to aid the implementation and ensure schools are safer places to be, for all young people.

Signature

Date 17/11/2025

Police & Crime Commissioner

PART 1 - NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

Introduction and background

1. This is an initiative backed by the Police and Crime Commissioner which aims to ensure every state high school in Cheshire will become phone-free during the school day — with pupils keeping their devices safely sealed in lockable pouches from the first bell to the last.
2. This bold initiative will aim to make Cheshire the first county in the UK to roll out lockable phone pouches across all its state high schools.
3. It is proposed that £150,000 of funding be set aside from POCA for schools to access as grant funding to cover the cost of providing lockable phone pouches to children on free school meals if they can demonstrate they have secured funding to cover the cost of pouches for the wider school.
4. Phones are powerful tools. But during the school day, they can also be powerful distractions. Even with “out of sight” mobile bans, enforcing the rules is tough. But schools that have made the move to lockable pouches are already seeing dramatic, positive change:
 - 80% fewer online safeguarding incidents
 - Better concentration and behaviour
 - A fivefold increase in library use
 - More pupils joining clubs and enrichment activities
 - It’s a simple idea with extraordinary impact:
 - Lock the phone. Unlock potential.
5. This request builds on the momentum of the national Phone Free Education movement, launched in Parliament in 2025 by Cheshire mum Esther Ghey, whose daughter Brianna Ghey was tragically murdered in 2023. Esther’s campaign called for a future where schools are safe spaces — free from the pressures and risks of online life.
6. The Cheshire PCC’s Phone-Free Schools Fund is designed to help schools take the leap — and make it last by offering up to £150,000 funding support over two years, supporting pupils on free school meals and offering matched funding opportunities from local partners and philanthropic sources.

Issues for consideration

7. This is a crime reduction and prevention project in that it is keeping children safer whilst at school and reducing safeguarding issues by keeping schools phone free during school hours. This will satisfy the crime reduction category for reporting back to the Home Office.
8. The initiative will lead to less online bullying, less harmful content, fewer distractions and fewer exclusions. In Cheshire, we’ve seen the impact this can have — and now we’re leading the way in rolling this out.

Financial Comments

9. The cost of this project is £150,000 meaning the balance of the reserve, if this project is approved, will be £301,726.

Legal Comments

10. There are no Legal requirements associated with this proposal

HR Comments

11. There are no HR requirements associated with this proposal

Equality Comments

12. There are no specific equality implications to this report.

Public access to information

Information in this form is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and other legislation. Part 1 of this form will be made available on the PCC website within 3 working days of approval. Any facts/advice/recommendations that should not be made available on request should not be included in Part 1 but instead on the separate Part 2 form.

Is there a Part 2 form - No

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE DECLARATION (Damon Taylor):

I have reviewed the proposal and I am satisfied it is correct, all relevant internal checks have been undertaken and it is an appropriate request to be submitted to the Police & Crime Commissioner.



Signature

Date: 17/11/2025

CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER DECLARATION (Clare Hodgson):

I have been consulted about the proposal and confirm that financial, legal and equalities advice has been taken into account in the presentation of this report. I am satisfied that this is an appropriate request to be submitted to the Police & Crime Commissioner.



Signature

Date: 17/11/2025