

# Team to stop a life of crime before it starts

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THE battle to pull youths back from the brink of lives of crime has been boosted by the introduction of a fresh face ready to rehabilitate.

Highly qualified youth and social worker Krystle Brady is set to become a conduit between police, community services and at-risk youths in the region, as part of a new initiative 12 months in the making.

Ms Brady, an IFYS youth worker with the Youth At Risk Network, will be embedded with the Sunshine Coast Child Protection and Investigation Unit, as part of a new program aimed at intervening with youths police identify as being on a path to becoming career criminals.

"I think it's a really important role," Ms Brady said.

The early intervention program included supported bail checks and a focus on connecting youths with services they, or their families, needed.

Ms Brady has spent most of the past decade working in youth homelessness and will be based in the CPIU office, heading out with the team three nights a week and also spending one day a week in Children's Court.

"It'll be really good to see how it evolves and what kind of outcomes we can get for young people," Ms Brady said.

Sunshine Coast Crime Group officer-in-charge, Detective Inspector Dave Drinnen said the program was a



TEAM: Detective Senior Sergeant Phil Hurst (left), detective Senior Sergeant David Somerville (right) and youth worker Krystle Brady are part of a new Coast police and IFYS partnership designed to intervene with at-risk youths.

Picture: John McCutcheon

joint initiative between Coast police and IFYS, with CPIU boss Detective Senior Sergeant Phil Hurst one of the driving forces behind it.

The program was understood to be aimed initially at the 12-16 years age bracket, but that could vary, depending on circumstances.

Insp Drinnen said the co-responder model would look for opportunities for behavioural change, and ease pres-

sure on frontline staff as well.

Insp Drinnen said the model enabled the youth worker to take a "preventive approach" with high-risk or on-bail youths, rather than an enforcement model.

He said it may change some approaches taken by police, and if the model was a success, it could expand.

He said more than 70 per cent of children they came into contact with didn't reof-

fend after cautioning and it was a "small percentage of recidivist youth offenders" responsible for the bulk of offending.

"Here's an opportunity to look at people that are starting down that path," Insp Drinnen said.

Former child protection detective and current Opposition police spokesman and Ninderry MP Dan Purdie, praised the initiative.

He said the program would relieve pressure on the criminal justice system, as it focused on the "short window of time" when youths first came to the attention of police.

"Putting more resources into the kids early ... it really is imperative," Mr Purdie said.

"It's really hard to pull them back once they're in the system."