

News in brief

Probationer training and the trials of work-based assessments are among the topics up for discussion at a seminar called 'Training Matters', being held this month by the Police Federation.

Federation representatives from around the country have been invited to take part in the event on July 20 in Kegworth, Leicestershire.

Speakers will include Alan Gordon, vice-chairman of the Police Federation, Tony McNulty, police minister and Richard Winterton, chief executive of Skills for Justice.

The Association of Police Authorities and chief officers issued a joint statement to voice concerns of potential political interference in policing.

The comments relate to provisions made in the Police and Criminal Justice Bill which include powers to allow the Home Secretary to direct chief constables and to alter 'at whim' the membership and role of police authorities.

They have called on the House of Lords to subject the proposals to rigorous scrutiny as they believe it puts policing by public consent at risk.

Drug treatment will receive a boost in funding to invest in personnel, day-to-day running of services and building and refurbishment of premises.

The Department of Health will provide Drug Action Teams with £394.6 million, which will be an increase of thirty per cent, compared to last year's settlement.

Caroline Flint, public health minister, announced the funding in Parliament last month, adding that for every £1 spent on drug treatment, at least £9.50 is saved in crime and health costs.

Martin Barnes, chief executive of DrugScope, said: "Investment in drug treatment is proven to be very cost-effective and brings substantial benefits to communities, families and individuals. This increase in funding should be welcomed and supported."

Crystal meth has been re-classified as a Class A drug because of its potential to create 'serious social problems', according to the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs.

Vernon Coaker, a Home Office minister, announced the change in Parliament last month following advice from the advisory council.

When the drug, known by its street name as crystal meth, is smoked it produces an intense rush for users, similar to crack cocaine. It can become very addictive, lead to long-term abuse and psychotic behaviour.

Commander Simon Bray, a Met officer and ACPO lead on the drug, said: "ACPO is pleased that the Home Secretary has decided that methylamphetamine is to be reclassified as a Class A drug."

He added: "The serious and well documented dangers associated with production and use of this drug in all its forms will now be substantially easier to combat as a result of this reclassification. It will also become possible to close down, for long periods, premises used as illicit 'meth laboratories'."