

# CRIME – IT’S TIME TO FIGHT BACK

Violent offences have risen sharply under Labour, with knife and gun crime higher than in 1997. Yet police officers spend 50 per cent more time on paperwork than they do out on patrol. Labour’s obsession with bureaucratic targets and box-ticking has hindered the fight against crime. They have launched endless initiatives and top-down schemes which have made little difference. The string of broken promises has undermined people’s trust. We can’t go on with the police filling in forms instead of fighting crime.

The criminal justice system is broken. We need to rebuild confidence in the system and convince people it is working to protect them. Nowhere is our approach of transparency, accountability and decentralisation more important. Our aim is to restore responsibility and discretion to the police – getting them out of police stations and onto the street fighting crime – while making them truly accountable to the people they serve. We will do that by giving people the power to elect an individual who will set the policing priorities for their community, and by providing detailed data about crime in their area. By giving people robust information and real power, they will be able to force the police to focus on the crime that affects their communities.

## 2.4 TARGETED MEASURES TO REDUCE CRIME AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Under Labour's lax licensing regime, drink-fuelled violence and disorder are out of control. Binge-drinking damages people's health and harms society, so we will overhaul the Licensing Act to **give local authorities and the police much stronger powers over licensing, including the ability to remove licences from, or refuse to grant licences to, any premises which are causing problems.** We will **allow councils to shut down permanently any shop or bar found selling alcohol to children,** and **double the maximum fine for under-age alcohol sales to £20,000. Tax on super-strength beers, ciders and alcopops, but not the everyday pint, will be increased.** And we will **ban off-licences and supermarkets from selling alcohol below cost price.** We will also **permit local councils to charge more for late-night licences to pay for additional policing.**

Knife crime has reached crisis levels in our inner cities, so we will **strengthen stop and search powers** to make it easier for the police to get knives off the streets. We have to send a serious, unambiguous message to young people that carrying a knife is totally unacceptable, so we will **make it clear that anyone caught carrying a knife can expect to be prosecuted and face a prison sentence.** We will **extend the length of custodial sentences that can be awarded in a Magistrates' Court from six to twelve months** and **introduce mobile knife scanners on streets and public transport,** just as Mayor Boris Johnson is doing in London.

The low-level crime and anti-social behaviour that people experience on their streets does real harm to their quality of life. Labour's use of fixed penalty notices, ASBOs and other bureaucratic measures has made no real impact on street crime, so we will **introduce a series of early intervention measures, like grounding orders, to allow the police to use instant sanctions to deal with anti-social behaviour.** This will help them intervene early to keep young people off the conveyor belt to crime.

We need to free the police from the inappropriate rules and regulations that stop them – and citizens themselves – dealing with crime. We will **change the rules so that anyone acting reasonably to stop a crime or apprehend a criminal is not arrested or prosecuted.** And we will **give householders greater protection if they have to defend themselves against intruders** in their homes.

Under Labour, the privacy of convicted criminals, including dangerous fugitives, has been prioritised over public protection. We will **end the confusion over criminals' anonymity and give police the power to identify offenders** in order to protect the public and prevent crime.

We will **implement the Prisoners' Earnings Act 1996 to allow deductions from prisoners' earnings to be paid into the Victims' Fund.** We will use this Fund to **deliver up to fifteen new rape crisis centres – growing the network by more than a third – and give all existing rape crisis centres stable, long-term funding.** This will ensure more victims of rape and sexual violence have access to a vital support service nearby. And to help stop sexual violence before it occurs we will **ensure that the school curriculum includes teaching young people about sexual consent.**

## 2.5 CUTTING PAPERWORK TO GET MORE POLICE OUT ON THE STREET

The police should be focusing on police work, not paperwork. But it currently takes eleven and a half hours – more than a full working day – to process an arrest, meaning police officers are stuck behind desks when they should be out dealing with crime. A Conservative government will **reduce the amount of paperwork that the police have to deal with, starting by cutting the stop form entirely and reducing the burden of stop and search procedures**. Any search will still be recorded but by an officer radioing in, rather than filling in time-consuming paperwork.

To save even more time, we will **return charging discretion to the police for minor offences and process criminals more quickly by video-linking custody cells and courts**. And we will **reform the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act, which regulates police surveillance, so that authorisation is not needed in routine cases**. At the same time, we will **take steps to prevent the misuse of surveillance powers by local authorities**.

Britain's health and safety culture is making our police risk averse and putting the public in danger, so we will **amend the health and safety laws that stand in the way of common sense policing**.

## 2.6 MAKING THE POLICE ACCOUNTABLE TO THE COMMUNITIES THEY SERVE

The only way we are really going to change how Britain is policed is through a revolution in accountability – making the police answerable to the communities they serve. People want to know that the police are listening to them. That is why we will **replace the existing, invisible and unaccountable police authorities and make the police accountable to a directly-elected individual who will set priorities for the policing of local communities**.

Giving people democratic control over policing priorities is a huge step forward, but it is not enough. We need to give people the information and power they require to challenge their neighbourhood police teams to cut crime. So we will **oblige the police to publish detailed local crime data statistics every month, in an open and standardised format, and ensure police teams have regular neighbourhood beat meetings** so that people can use this crime data to hold the police to account.

# REDUCING REOFFENDING

Fighting crime is about much more than catching criminals. To bring crime down for good we have got to break the cycle of reoffending and give those who have served their time a chance to play a positive role in society. Under Labour, the prison system is in crisis, and incapable of properly rehabilitating prisoners. Reoffending rates remain very high – 100,000 persistent offenders are responsible for more than half of all crime – and tens of thousands of prisoners are being let out early from prison because of Labour’s mismanagement of the prison system. The consequences of this failure are enormous. We can’t go on like this.

## 2.7 PRISONS WITH A PURPOSE

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In the last year around 30,000 criminals have been released early from prison because the Government failed to build enough places. We will **redevelop the prison estate and increase prison capacity as necessary, enabling us to scrap the early release scheme.**

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Many people feel that sentencing in Britain is dishonest and misleading. So we will **introduce a system where the courts can specify minimum and maximum sentences for certain offenders.** These prisoners will only be able to leave jail before their maximum sentence is served by earning their release, not simply by right.

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Under Labour the number of foreign nationals in prison in England and Wales has doubled, yet over 1,000 foreign prisoners – including sex offenders and murderers – have been released from prison without being considered for early deportation. A Conservative government will **extend early deportation of foreign national prisoners** to reduce further the pressure on our prison population.

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Bail laws also need urgent reform. We will put public safety first by **creating a new offence of breach of bail and ending the presumption of bail for persistent offenders or those accused of serious crimes.**

## 2.8 OUR REHABILITATION REVOLUTION

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At the moment, most criminals leave jail and immediately lapse back into a life of drugs and crime. We will never bring our crime rate down or start to reduce the costs of crime until we properly rehabilitate ex-prisoners. So **when offenders leave prison, they will be trained and rehabilitated by private and voluntary sector providers**. We will **use the same approach that lies behind our welfare reform plans – payment by results – to cut reoffending**, with organisations paid using savings made in the criminal justice system from the resulting lower levels of crime.

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We believe these changes will help cut crime, but we want to go further. So we will **pilot a scheme to turn a group of public sector prisons into a Prison and Rehabilitation Trust**, so that just one organisation is responsible for helping to stop a criminal reoffending from the moment he enters prison until he is successfully rehabilitated.

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Drug and alcohol addiction are behind many of the crimes that are committed on our streets, but the treatment that too many addicts receive just maintains their habits. We will **give courts the power to use abstinence-based Drug Rehabilitation Orders to help offenders kick drugs** once and for all. We successfully led the campaign to have cannabis reclassified as a Class B drug, and we will **examine the case for banning other currently legal narcotics** that are doing huge damage to people's lives.