

The Choice

The Labour future / The Tory threat

The Choice: Crime & Justice

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1. INTRODUCTION

At next year's election, the British people face a choice on crime and justice. A choice between the Tories, who are complacent on crime, neglecting neighbourhood policing while violent crime rises, and Labour, who will restore confidence in our police and criminal justice system.

The Tories think that the continuation of a historic trend of falling overall crime figures is a vindication of their approach. But you can't take the credit for successes if you're not prepared to take the blame for big failures. And you can't say you're taking a responsible approach to tackling crime if you fail to start now with addressing the policing problems of the future. We can't afford to be complacent about crime – especially when there are worrying signs that some of the crimes people care most about are getting worse.

Under the Tories, too many people are getting away with serious crimes. Violent crime is rising, but convictions for violent crimes are falling: in fact, there is an increasing "justice gap" for a number of the most serious offences – violent crime, domestic abuse, rape and child abuse – and the Tories have no plan to turn this around. Too many offenders are literally getting away with it: thousands of perpetrators of domestic violence being dealt with by community resolution, which doesn't result in any criminal record at all, rather than being charged and proceeded against in the normal way.

This record of failure is a warning of the Tory threat. When David Cameron makes promises on crime and justice we should remember that before the last election he promised to protect the frontline, only for police numbers to fall by 16,000.

Britain can't afford another five years of the Tories. Under them, neighbourhood policing is set to become a thing of the past. The more people see violent criminals getting away with it, and the less they see of the police as a visible presence in their community, the less likely they will be to report crimes and the more criminals will continue to escape justice.

The increasing pressure on the police to do the same job with fewer officers is hollowing out neighbourhood policing, with officers coming off the beat to cover 999 emergency response, traffic calls and detective work. For the Tories, visible neighbourhood policing is a "nice to have". For Labour, it's at the heart of progressive policing.

Labour will make Britain safer, with neighbourhood policing restored to its rightful place, new professional standards in our police service, a proper focus on tackling domestic violence and sexual crimes, and attention on new forms of crime, like online crime, which are on the increase.

Next May, on crime and justice, the British people will decide between the Tory threat or the Labour future: that's the choice.

2. THE TORY FAILURE

- Since 2010 the Conservative-led Government has overseen deep reductions in police officer numbers, despite promising to protect the frontline and while wasting millions on Police and Crime Commissioner elections.
- Despite David Cameron's promises, the frontline of policing has been hit hard by this Government. What has been left is increasingly overstretched which is now beginning to have a knock on effect in terms of public safety. Experts are warning the police are overstretched as neighbourhood policing suffers and figures revealing a worrying trend in terms of serious recorded offences resulting in successful prosecutions.

Hitting the frontline

- In 2010, David Cameron promised he would protect the frontline.

"What I can tell you is any cabinet minister, if I win the election, who comes to me and says: 'Here are my plans' and they involve frontline reductions, they'll be sent straight back to their department to go away and think again."

David Cameron, The Andrew Marr Show, 2 May 2010

- But according to the last Government figures, there are now almost 16,000 fewer police officers than there were in 2010.

	Mar-10	Mar-13	Change
Total of all 43 forces	143,776	127,909	-15,867

Police Workforce Statistics, July 2014 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/policing-statistics>

- This Government's deep reduction in officer numbers has come at the same time as they wasted £100 million on Police and Crime Commissioner elections – elections which saw a turnout of just 15 per cent in November 2012.

"On the issue of the costs of reforming police governance, the proposals do not recognise the substantial costs of transition and PCC elections. We believe that the minimum cost of direct elections in 2012 would be £64m, more than the entire cost of running police authorities for a year. Our independent research shows that the cost of the proposed new governance model over the five years from 2011/12 to 2015/16 will be a minimum of £453m. That is £101m more than the cost of running police authorities during that period. This is equivalent to the removal of over 600 police officers from the front line. In the context of the current dire financial climate and the impending cuts to policing we do not believe that additional expenditure on a directly elected PCC model is justified."

Response to Policing in the 21st Century, APA, 20 September 2010, p4

- Police forces have warned that the Government's reduction in police numbers have left services overstretched.

"We are continuing to make sure the Government understands that any more cuts can not be absorbed without risk to the services the public expect and need us to provide." In the summer, chief constable Tony Melville left after just under two-and-a-half years at the helm, after warning funding cuts could take the force to a "metaphorical cliff edge".

Western Daily Press, 5 December 2012

Hollowing out what's left and a failure to reform

- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary has warned that neighbourhood policing is "being eroded" as forces deal with the pressure they are under by broadening the remit of officers previously dedicated to this area.

"However, HMIC is concerned that some forces have chosen to make savings by broadening the remit of neighbourhood policing teams, to include tasks traditionally carried out by response officers, or investigators. This will potentially have a detrimental effect on the amount of prevention work they can carry out, and impair the level of service the public receive from the police. Neighbourhood policing thus risks being eroded in some places. "

'Policing in Austerity: Rising to the Challenge' (page 15), HMIC, 17 July 2013 -

<http://www.hmic.gov.uk/media/policing-in-austerity-rising-to-the-challenge.pdf>

- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary has highlighted the risk to neighbourhood policing as a result of the Government's reduction in officer numbers, including recognition that the public "are seeing fewer officers in their communities".

"Despite the hard work by forces to protect their front line, HMIC has continued concerns about the erosion of neighbourhood policing as the remit of police officers in these roles expands. Some officers are spending more time away from their neighbourhood beats because they have more crime investigation work to do. This means they may have less time for crime prevention work, which is crucial to the success of the police's principal purpose – protecting the public. Forces also plan to reduce their PCSOs by significantly more than last year and there are indications that the public are seeing fewer officers in their communities."

Policing in Austerity: Meeting the Challenge, 22 July 2014 [http://www.hmic.gov.uk/news/news-](http://www.hmic.gov.uk/news/news-feed/police-forces-are-meeting-the-challenge-of-austerity/)

[feed/police-forces-are-meeting-the-challenge-of-austerity/](http://www.hmic.gov.uk/news/news-feed/police-forces-are-meeting-the-challenge-of-austerity/)

- In the same report they state that "reductions of this magnitude have an adverse effect on the amount of work that can be done to prevent crime and protect the public".

"The response to the funding challenge has not been without adverse effects on some important areas of policing. HMIC has growing concerns, in particular, that neighbourhood policing risks being eroded in some places. The police workforce plans reduce by over 34,000 people by March 2015; this means that over the spending review period, three posts in every 20 would have been removed. Forces are restructuring and reconfiguring how they carry out their work in order to protect but not preserve the front line. However, reductions of this magnitude have an adverse effect on the amount of work that can be done to prevent crime and protect the public.

'Policing in Austerity: Meeting the Challenge' (page 33), 22 July 2014 - [http://www.hmic.gov.uk/wp-](http://www.hmic.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/policing-in-austerity-meeting-the-challenge.pdf)

[content/uploads/policing-in-austerity-meeting-the-challenge.pdf](http://www.hmic.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/policing-in-austerity-meeting-the-challenge.pdf)

- HMIC cautions that the police service "must guard against a vicious circle" with less preventative activity.

"Forces' ability to prevent crime and reduce demand will be seriously undermined if their neighbourhood teams are materially eroded. The service must guard against a vicious circle emerging which involves less preventive activity, more reactive policing responses and spiralling demand. It is extremely important that action is taken now to prevent this from happening."

'Policing in Austerity: Meeting the Challenge' (page 36), 22 July 2014 - [http://www.hmic.gov.uk/wp-](http://www.hmic.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/policing-in-austerity-meeting-the-challenge.pdf)

[content/uploads/policing-in-austerity-meeting-the-challenge.pdf](http://www.hmic.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/policing-in-austerity-meeting-the-challenge.pdf)

- This theme was echoed by the Independent Commission into the Future of Policing led by the former Metropolitan Police Commissioner Lord Stevens. Lord Stevens has urged the Government to abandon their "discredited model" of policing and return to a more

effective approach of neighbourhood policing, with a dedicated team of officers out on the beat in every community.

“Faced with continuing budgetary constraints and repeated calls from government minister insisting that they are ‘crime fighters’, the police service in England and Wales is in danger of retreating to a discredited model of reactive policing. Neighbourhood policing that is responsive to the concerns of local communities is being threatened”

Lord Stevens, Daily Telegraph, 24 November, 2013 - <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/law-and-order/10469304/Lord-Stevens-We-must-bring-back-neighbourhood-policing.html>

- Lord Stevens also highlighted wider failings with the Government’s reform programme, finding that at the same time as making the “wrong calls in areas where it has acted” it had also failed “to address key issues where reform is urgently required, such as police standards, misconduct, and structures”.

“In short, we believe that the Government has made the wrong calls in areas where it has acted police purpose and governance while failing to address key issues where reform is urgently required, such as police standards, misconduct, and structures.”

‘Policing for a better Britain: Report of the Independent Police Commission’, 25 November 2013, (page 13) - <http://independentpolicecommission.org.uk/uploads/37d80308-be23-9684-054d-e4958bb9d518.pdf>

- Despite these warnings the Government has shown a worryingly complacent attitude, failing to come forward with plans to reform the Police service for the future. Their attitude was summed up by the Crime Prevention Minister who suggested that historical crime trends mean the need for reform is lessened – exactly the attitude the HMIC has cautioned against.

"Crime goes down year on year so in that sense there is less for the police to do. Clearly that has an impact on the number of police officers you need on the street."

Norman Baker MP, Minister for Crime Prevention, Guardian, 17 July 2014

More people are getting away with serious crimes

- The Tories often hide behind the historic trend of falling overall crime figures claiming this as a vindication of their approach. But beneath the headline figures, some worrying patterns are emerging.
- Despite the fact that the number of recorded crimes is going up, the number of cautions, proceedings and convictions is falling.

Offence Group	Year	Recorded crime	Cautions	Proceedings	Convictions
Violence against the person	2012	607,616	70,250	207,920	141,527
	2013	614,464	63,554	197,136	134,420

Source: *Criminal Justice Statistics 2013*, Ministry of Justice Statistics bulletin, published 15 May 2014
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/311304/criminal-justice-statistics-2013.pdf

- The number of rape, domestic violence, and child abuse cases reported to the police is going up. But the number of cases that the police put forward for prosecution is plummeting as the service is hollowed out.
- For rape cases in England and Wales there has been a steady increase in the number of offences in recent years. However since 2010 there has been a gradual decline in the rate of prosecutions and convictions.

Rape cases in England and Wales, year ending March

	Recorded Crime	Pre-charge decisions	Total prosecutions	Convictions
2007/08	12,673	5,722	3,503	2021
2008/09	13,096	6,597	3,495	2018
2009/10	15,074	7,683	3,819	2270
2010/11	15,892	8,130	4,208	2465
2011/12	16,038	6,822	3,864	2414
2012/13	16,327	5,404	3,692	2333
2013/14		5850	3621	2348
Change 10/11 to 13/14		-28%	-14%	-5%

Source: *House of Commons Library*

- The number of domestic violence pre-charge decisions in 2013/14 is up on 2010/11, yet the number of prosecutions has fallen by five per cent over the same period while the number of convictions is also down.

Domestic violence in England and Wales, year ending March

	Recorded Crime	Pre-charge decisions	Total prosecutions	Convictions
2007/08	580,238	74,065	63,819	43977
2008/09	741,643	80,423	67,094	48465
2009/10	721,344	91,184	74,113	53347
2010/11	739,099	101,242	82,187	59101
2011/12	796,935	95,117	79,268	58138
2012/13	n/a	88,110	70,702	52549

Source: House of Commons Library

- This picture – a fall in the number of prosecutions despite an increase in recorded offences - is similar with regard to sexual offences against children.

Sexual offences against children in England and Wales, year ending March

	Estimated Recorded Crime	Pre-charge decisions	Total prosecutions	Convictions
2007/08	15,022	n/a	3,941	2,841
2008/09	14,885	11,094	4,029	3,011
2009/10	17,217	12,691	4,137	3,133
2010/11	17,730	13,018	4,794	3,551
2011/12	17,189	11,613	4,655	3,530
2012/13	18,915	9,381	4,051	3,070
2013/14		11,187	4,371	3,344
Change 10/11 to 13/14		-14%	-9%	-6%

Source: House of Commons Library

3. THE TORY THREAT

- Five more years of the Tories would be disastrous for Britain.
- Under them, Neighbourhood Policing is set to become a thing of the past.
- The danger is that the more people see serious criminals getting away with it, and the less they see of the police as a visible presence in their community, the less likely they will be to report crimes and the more criminals will continue to escape justice.

Neighbourhood Policing risks being further eroded

- We have already heard warnings from the Police that Neighbourhood Policing has been hollowed out over the past four years. However, new analysis of what is going on in Police forces across the country reveals the future threat. Under the Tories we are well on the way to losing Neighbourhood Policing as we know it.
- Just this month, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) found the situation has deteriorated further.

“Neighbourhood teams may look larger in terms of resource, but have a much wider set of responsibilities. However, when we carried out focus groups with officers and staff during our research, we came across a number of examples where neighbourhood teams were given larger remits and this had led to tensions. Neighbourhood officers were responding to 999 calls, guarding crime scenes or doing the paperwork associated with crime investigations rather than engaging with their communities and working with partners to tackle local priorities.”

HMIC, Policing in Austerity: Meeting the Challenge, 22 July 2014

<http://www.hmic.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/policing-in-austerity-meeting-the-challenge.pdf>

- Figures reveal that the situation is worsening as Police forces and Neighbourhood teams are increasingly being funnelled to other areas, to pick up additional responsibilities in a police service hit hard by the Government's deep reductions to officer numbers.
- Analysis from the House of Commons Library reveals that while Neighbourhood teams may ostensibly appear strong the reality is that they are now covering a range of additional responsibilities.
- Many of these officers will now be 'neighbourhood' in name only as their teams increasingly have to cover 999 emergency response, traffic calls and detective work rather than being on the beat.
- The figures reveal the extent of the officers lost – roles which Neighbourhood Police are increasingly covering, with almost 10,000 fewer response officers, 1,300 fewer traffic Police and hundreds of detectives.
- Figures from Police Strength Figures issued by the Home Office and analysed by the House of Commons Library, reveal this trend:

	England and Wales 2014	England and Wales 2010	Change
CID	14,518	15,200	-682
Community Safety/Relations	3,510	5,289	-1,779
Dogs	1,179	1,270	-91
Neighbourhoods	21,588	15,638	5,950
Probationers Year 1	1,976	3,747	-1,771
Response	36,160	45,866	-9,706
Traffic	4,356	5,634	-1,278
Overall in officer categories	83,287	92,644	-9357
Without 'neighbourhoods'	61699	77006	-15307

Source: House of Commons Library analysis of Home Office Police Service Strength figures

- The cuts to other teams amount to 15,000 fewer posts, dwarfing the much smaller reallocation of resources to neighbourhood units from these former units. Genuine Neighbourhood Policing has gone out of the window, and has been replaced with a workforce reacting to events, part response, part traffic, part neighbourhood.

More people getting away with it

- With fewer Police officers, increasingly overstretched, the criminal justice system is under increasing pressure, with the Police's ability to deal with serious crimes compromised.
- Rather than prosecuting serious offences, the Police are increasingly using alternative, less resource intensive mechanisms.
- New figures reveal the extent of the problem in terms of domestic violence offences, with the Police revealed to be increasingly using Community Resolutions.
- Freedom of Information requests to police forces in England and Wales revealed an increase in the use of Community Resolutions for incidents of domestic violence:

Community Resolutions for Domestic Abuse	
2009	1337
2010	1853
2011	2765
2012	3556
2013	3305

Source: Based on FOI responses received from 15 Police Forces

- Community Resolutions are intended for use in relation to lower level crime.

"Community Resolutions: They put the needs of victims first, by asking people what outcome they would like to see. This can include a simple apology, offer of compensation or undertaking to clear up any graffiti or criminal damage and enables the public to become part of the solution.

"Community resolutions mean that children and adults who have no previous convictions and make one stupid mistake do not need to be unnecessarily criminalised. It also frees up officers' time, which can be devoted to higher level crime."

West Midlands Police, Community Resolution Guidelines,

<http://www.west-midlands.police.uk/docs/advice-centre/advice-leaflets/Comms%20Resolutions.pdf>

- The use of Community Resolutions in serious cases is against the guidance of the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) which states that they should only be used in "less serious offences". It lists those crimes that are appropriate for Community Resolutions as likely to be low level criminal damage, low value theft, minor assaults (without injury) and anti-social behaviour.

A community Resolution is the nationally recognised term for the resolution of a less serious offence or anti-social behaviour incident, where an offender has been identified, through informal agreement between the parties involved as opposed to progression through the traditional criminal justice process.

Guidelines on the use of Community Resolutions incorporating RJ, August 2012,

<http://www.acpo.police.uk/documents/criminaljustice/2012/201208CJBAComResandRJ.pdf>

- Specifically on domestic violence, ACPO states that it "does not support the use of restorative justice" in this area.

"At present, ACPO guidelines for domestic abuse/domestic violence does not support the use of RJ in determining outcomes in this area."

- Yet the Tories have ignored warnings that Community Resolutions are being abused and that guidelines should be enforced by government. A Joint Inspection from HMIC, HMI Probation, HMI Prisons and the HMCPSI on Community Resolution found inconsistencies in the way it is being applied that could put public confidence in policing at risk as a result of “an absence of clear national policies”.

“There were inconsistencies in the use of RJ – not only between criminal justice agencies but also within agencies from one area to the next. Although the use of informal resolutions by the police has increased dramatically over the last four years, there was wide variation in how forces had implemented informal resolution schemes, including around the offences covered and which offenders were eligible.”

Facing Up To Offending: Use of restorative justice in the criminal justice system, a joint thematic inspection by HMIC, HMI Probation, HMI Prisons and the HMCPSI, September 2012

http://www.hmcpsi.gov.uk/documents/reports/CJI_THM/VWEX/RJ_CJI_rpt_Sept12.pdf

“Race hate crimes and domestic abuse involve serious offences where more formal interventions may be required, often through the criminal trial process. Greater clarity within national policies on the use of informal resolutions for this kind of criminality would bring more consistency in the treatment of these offences. This is particularly important given that equality of treatment and the visible response of police officers are vital components in maintaining victim and public confidence in policing.”

Facing Up To Offending: Use of restorative justice in the criminal justice system, a joint thematic inspection by HMIC, HMI Probation, HMI Prisons and the HMCPSI, September 2012

http://www.hmcpsi.gov.uk/documents/reports/CJI_THM/VWEX/RJ_CJI_rpt_Sept12.pdf

“The inconsistencies outlined above both reflect and have evolved from an absence of clear national policies and wider public debate.”

Facing Up To Offending: Use of restorative justice in the criminal justice system, a joint thematic inspection by HMIC, HMI Probation, HMI Prisons and the HMCPSI, September 2012

http://www.hmcpsi.gov.uk/documents/reports/CJI_THM/VWEX/RJ_CJI_rpt_Sept12.pdf

- Unless the Tories accept Labour’s policy on Community Resolutions, the danger is that an increasing number of serious crimes, including domestic abuse, will be dealt with in this manner, rather than facing prosecution.

4. THE LABOUR FUTURE

Only with Labour will Britain be better off. We will deliver a positive vision for the future, where we build a Britain which works for working people once again.

We will make Britain safer, with neighbourhood policing restored to its rightful place, new professional standards in our police service, a proper focus on tackling domestic violence and sexual crimes, and attention on new forms of crime, like online crime, which are on the increase.

With Labour:

- A Local Policing Commitment that gives communities a guaranteed minimum level of neighbourhood policing.
- Legislating for the wider social purpose of policing, so that rather than retreating to patrol cars, the police are engaged with local communities and promoting measures to prevent crime, harm and disorder.
- Stronger action from government to mandate partnerships between the police and other public services, so that for instance hospitals share violent wounding data with the police so they know where there are spikes in knife crime.
- Increased local accountability, with a local say over the appointment of local police commanders and neighbourhood priorities.
- A commitment to introducing a Violence Against Women and Girls Bill to ban the police using community resolutions for domestic and sexual violence

Only with Labour will Britain be better off.

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