
General Election 2010

Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrats proposals on crime, safety and policing

Keywords: Police / Policing / Crime

Labour



Keyword mentions: 81

Stated purpose:

To reduce the fear of crime by protecting frontline policing while making the police more responsive and accountable, and taking faster action on anti-social behaviour. The Tories talk tough but vote soft on issues from gun crime to DNA retention; would cut police and PCSO numbers; and favour political police chiefs over real reform.

Headline proposals:

- Provide the funding to maintain police and PCSO numbers with neighbourhood police teams in every area, spending 80 per cent of their time on the beat visible in

their neighbourhood; improve police performance through online police report cards and ensure failing forces are taken over by the best.

- Intervene earlier to prevent crime, with no-nonsense action to tackle the problems caused by 50,000 dysfunctional families.
- Guarantee fast and effective action to deal with antisocial behaviour, including a right to legal injunctions for repeat victims, funded by the police or council who let them down
- Expand tough 'Community Payback' for criminals who don't go to prison, giving everyone the right to vote on the work they do.

Policy details:

Protecting frontline policing

- There are now record numbers of police officers – nearly 17,000 more than in 1997 –backed up by 16,000 Police Community Support Officers.
- We are committed to giving the police the resources to maintain these numbers, with funding assured for the next three years. To protect the front line we are making tough choices elsewhere: continuing to cut bureaucracy and inefficiency in procurement, IT and overtime.
- Every community now has a neighbourhood police team committed to spending at least 80 per cent of their time on the beat visible in their neighbourhood, and responding to non-emergency issues within 24 hours. To ensure that communities can determine local policing priorities, neighbourhood police teams will hold monthly beat meetings - at which local people will have a right to hold senior commanders to account.
- We will protect the police from politicisation, but take swift action where they are not performing. Online crime maps now give everyone monthly information on crime in their area, and we have supported the Policing Inspectorate in publishing new online 'report cards', comparing how forces perform. Where a police force or local Basic Command Unit consistently fails local people, we will ensure either that the senior management team including the borough commander or chief constable is replaced, or it is taken over by a neighbouring force or BCU.

Early intervention and preventing crime

- We need to do more and act earlier to stop children going down the wrong path. So we will expand Family Nurse Partnerships to all vulnerable young mothers, reducing future crime and behavioural problems. For the 50,000 most dysfunctional families who cause misery to their neighbours, we will provide Family Intervention Projects – proven to tackle anti-social behaviour – a no-nonsense regime of one-to-one support with tough sanctions for noncompliance.

- Youth reoffending is now falling, and the numbers in youth custody have fallen by 30 per cent. We will expand US-style street teams which use youth pastors and vetted ex-offenders to reach out to disaffected young people; Youth Conditional Cautions which focus on rehabilitation and reparation; and we will introduce a preventative element for all Anti-Social Behaviour Orders for under 16s. To ensure there are more things for teenagers to do we will double the availability of organised youth activities on Friday and Saturday nights.
- We will expand joint working between police and the probation service to supervise prolific young offenders after they get out of prison, and the use of mentors including vetted ex-prisoners to meet offenders ‘at the gate’ so they don’t slip back into crime. And alcohol treatment places will be trebled to cover all persistent criminals where alcohol is identified as a cause of their crimes. We need to try new approaches to solving the most intractable problems. So we will pioneer Social Impact Bonds, encouraging private investors to support social entrepreneurs and the third sector – and harnessing additional investment for crime prevention at minimal cost to the taxpayer.
- We have shown that Restorative Justice can increase satisfaction for victims and the police, and we will bring in a Restorative Justice Act to ensure it is available wherever victims approve it.
- On drugs, our message is clear: we will not tolerate illegal drug use. We have reclassified cannabis to Class B and banned ‘legal highs’. More addicts are being treated, with a higher proportion going on to drug-free lives. We will switch investment towards those programmes that are shown to sustain drug-free lives and reduce crime.

Tough action on crime and anti-social behaviour

- Crime continued to fall during the recession, in marked contrast to the recessions of the 1980s and 1990s. Homicides are at the lowest level for a decade – gun murders are at their lowest for 20 years, and our gun laws are among the toughest in the world. We have strengthened the law on knife crime with jail more likely, sentences longer, and more police searches and scanners – and knife crime has fallen. We are tackling territorial youth gangs with specific police powers, and new approaches that confront gangs while supporting those who want to leave gang life.
- Domestic violence has fallen by over 50 per cent since 1997, reporting of rape has doubled, and rape convictions have increased by more than 50 per cent. But we are committed to zero tolerance of violence against women, so we will continue to drive up prosecution rates, tackle causes, and raise awareness – as well as maintaining women-only services including a Sexual Assault Referral Centre in every area.
- Labour is proud to be the party that legislated first to criminalise incitement to racial hatred, religious hatred, and homophobic hatred – and we will reverse the

Tory attempt to undermine this latest legislation, invoking the Parliament Act if necessary to force it through.

- To tackle the binge drinking which can leave people reluctant to venture into town centres at night, we have banned irresponsible promotions and strengthened police and council powers to close down rowdy pubs and clubs, cracking down on under-age and public drinking. We have brought in a right to petition local authorities to end 24-hour licensing where problems arise.
- There were no specific powers against anti-social behaviour in 1997. Now there are ASBOs, parenting orders and dispersal powers. Because we know people want faster action on ASB, we will guarantee an initial response to any complaint within 24 hours. Local authorities and other agencies will be required to give people a named case worker who will report back on progress, and escalate action if the problem persists. All relevant agencies – not just neighbourhood police teams – will hold monthly public meetings to hear people’s concerns; all PCSOs will have stronger powers to tackle ASB; a ‘Respect’ standard for the private rented sector will be introduced; and local ASB champions will make agencies work together to tackle cases.
- Enforcement will also be strengthened: we will ensure that the great majority of applications for ASBOs take under a month and that whenever an ASBO is breached there is an expectation of prosecution. And when someone suffers repeated ASB and the police, council, courts or other agencies fail to act, there must be a stronger form of redress. So we will legislate to give people financial support to pursue legal injunctions, with the costs met by the agency that let them down.

Using technology to cut crime

- We will continue to make full use of CCTV and DNA technology: new weapons deployed to strengthen our fight against crime. We are proud of our record on civil liberties and have taken the DNA profiles of children off the database and tightened the rules around the use of surveillance – but we are also determined to keep our streets safe.
- CCTV reduces the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour. We have funded cameras in nearly 700 areas, and brought in a new power for people to petition their local authority for more CCTV.
- Advances in DNA technology have been critical in solving serious crimes – last year alone there were 832 positive matches to the DNA database in cases of rape, murder and manslaughter.
- Labour will ensure that the most serious offenders are added to the database no matter where or when they were convicted – and retain for six years the DNA profiles of those arrested but not convicted.
- The new biometric ID scheme which already covers foreign nationals will be offered to an increasing number of British citizens, but will not be compulsory for

them. It will help fight the growing threat of identity theft and fraud, as well as crime, illegal immigration and terrorism. In the next Parliament ID cards and the ID scheme will be self-financing. The price of the passport and ID cards together with savings from reduced fraud across the public services will fully cover the costs of the scheme.

Punishment and reform

- We have provided over 26,000 more prison places since 1997. There are more criminals in prison – not because crime is rising but because violent and serious offenders are going to prison for longer. We will ensure a total of 96,000 prison places by 2014. More EU and other foreign prisoners will be transferred abroad, and we will work to reduce the number of women, young and mentally ill people in prison. Any spare capacity generated will reduce costs while protecting the public.
- For offenders not sentenced to prison we have brought in tough new ‘Community Payback’: hard work in public, wearing orange jackets. We will extend nationwide the right for local people to vote on what work offenders do to pay back to the communities they have harmed.
- We will always put the victim first in the criminal justice system. We are creating a National Victims Service to guarantee all victims of crime and anti-social behaviour seven-day-a-week cover and a named, dedicated worker offering one-to-one support through the trial and beyond. The compensation offenders have to pay to victims has been increased, and we will now ensure victims get this payment up front.
- To help protect frontline services, we will find greater savings in legal aid and the courts system – increasing the use of successful ‘virtual courts’ which move from arrest, to trial, to sentencing in hours rather than weeks or months. We will use the tax system to claw back from higher-earning offenders a proportion of the costs of prison. Asset confiscation will be a standard principle in sentencing, extended from cash to houses and cars. Every community will have the right to vote on how these assets are used to pay back to the community.

Terrorism and organised crime

- Our counter-terrorism approach is one of the most sophisticated in the world, and investment has trebled since 2001, with thousands more counterterrorist police and a doubling of security service numbers.
- We will continue to give the police the tools they need to fight terrorism while giving Parliament and the courts oversight to ensure these powers are not overused. We condemn torture, and our police and security services will not co-operate with those who use torture. We will develop our Prevent strategy to combat extremism.

- We will continue to make Britain a hostile place for organised criminals, harassing them with asset seizures, tax investigations and other powers; strengthening the Serious Organised Crime Agency and encouraging police forces to cooperate across force boundaries and international borders; and responding quickly to new threats including cybercrime.

Condensed version:

Ensure that if a police force fails consistently, either its chief constable will be replaced or it will be taken over by a neighbouring force; mandatory assessment of every parent of every child aged 10-15 who is under consideration for an Asbo; automatic parenting orders on those whose teenage children breach an Asbo; tougher sentences for knife crime; portable weapon scanners for the police; pledge to protect frontline police from budget cuts in 2011-2013; highlight schemes to reduce police bureaucracy; oppose elected police authorities or commissioners; add 15,000 prison places by 2014; ensure that serious offenders are added to the DNA database no matter where or when they were convicted; retain for six years the DNA profiles of those arrested but not convicted.

Conservatives



Keyword mentions: 77

Stated purpose:

Mend our broken society by cracking down on drink and drug fuelled violence, tackling re-offending, and intervening early to stop young people getting onto the conveyor belt to crime in order to reduce the causes of crime and anti-social behaviour.

To rebuild confidence in the criminal justice system so that people know it is on the side of victims and working for law-abiding people, not criminals. To reform the police, giving them back their professional discretion – getting them out of police stations and onto the street, fighting and preventing crime

Headline proposals:

- Put the criminal justice system on the side of responsible citizens, and take tougher measures against knife criminals
- Crack down on the binge-drinking that leads to violence. Overhaul the Licensing Act to give local authorities and the police much stronger powers to remove licences from, or refuse to grant licences to, any premises that are causing problems
- Cut paperwork to get police out on the street.
- Give people democratic control over local policing.
- We will introduce honesty in sentencing and pay voluntary and private providers to reduce re-offending

Policy details:

Targeted measures to reduce the causes of crime

- Allow councils and the police to shut down permanently any shop or bar found persistently selling alcohol to children
- Double the maximum fine for under-age alcohol sales to £20,000
- Raise taxes on those drinks linked to antisocial drinking, while abolishing Labour's new 'cider tax' on ordinary drinkers
- Ban off-licences and supermarkets from selling alcohol below cost price
- Permit local councils to charge more for late-night licences to pay for additional policing
- Introduce a series of early intervention measures, including grounding orders to allow the police to use instant sanctions to deal with anti-social behaviour without criminalising young people unnecessarily.

Put the criminal justice system on the side of the public

- Anyone convicted of a knife crime can expect to face a prison sentence. Introduce mobile knife scanners on streets and public transport, and extend the length of custodial sentences that can be awarded in a Magistrates' Court from six to twelve months
- Ensure that victims and their families are better informed about the progress of criminal proceedings and release of offenders
- Examine the case for greater Parliamentary scrutiny of sentencing guidelines
- Carry out a fundamental review of legal aid to make it work more efficiently, and examine ways of bringing in alternative sources of funding
- We will change the law so that anyone acting reasonably to stop a crime or apprehend a criminal is not arrested or prosecuted, and we will give householders greater legal protection if they have to defend themselves against intruders in their homes
- Implement the Prisoners' Earnings Act 1996 to allow deductions from the earnings of prisoners in properly paid work to be paid into the Victims' Fund. Use this Fund to deliver up to fifteen new rape crisis centres and give existing rape crisis centres stable, long-term funding. Ensure that the school curriculum includes teaching young people about sexual consent

Reform the police

- Reduce the amount of paperwork that the police have to deal with, starting by scrapping 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 paperwork
- Amend the health and safety laws that stand in the way of common sense policing
- Give police the power to identify offenders in order to protect the public and prevent crime
- Return charging discretion to the police for minor offences
- Process criminals more quickly by video-linking custody cells and courts
- Replace the existing, invisible and unaccountable police authorities and make the police accountable to a directly-elected individual who will set policing priorities for local communities. They will be responsible for setting the budget and the strategy for local police forces, with the police retaining their operational independence
- Give people the information they need to challenge their neighbourhood police teams to cut crime
- Oblige the police to publish detailed local crime data statistics every month, in an open and standardised format
- Create a dedicated Border Police Force, as part of a refocused Serious Organised Crime Agency, to enhance national security, improve immigration controls, and crack down on the trafficking of people, weapons and drugs
- Work with police forces to strengthen arrangements to deal with serious crime and other cross-boundary policing challenges, and extend collaboration between forces to deliver better value for money

Condensed version:

Replace police authorities with a directly-elected police commissioner; strengthen stop and search powers to tackle knife crime; give police the power to publicly identify offenders; change the law so that anyone acting reasonably to stop a crime or apprehend a criminal is not arrested or prosecuted; allow the police to use instant sanctions to deal with anti-social behaviour; reduce the burden of stop and search procedures; increase prison capacity above Labours plans, in order to scrap the early release scheme; allow courts to specify minimum and maximum sentences for certain offenders; scrap ID cards and identity database.

Liberal Democrats



Keyword mentions: 54

Stated purpose:

Liberal Democrats believe in strong communities, where local people can come together to meet local needs, enjoy a pleasant local environment, and feel free from the threat of crime. We want every community to be safe and fair, and offer opportunities to people of every background. Under Labour and Conservative rule, communities have been let down. Governments have talked tough on crime but failed to take effective action. Liberal Democrats will put thousands more police on the beat and make them work more effectively to cut crime.

Headline proposals:

We will focus on what works to cut crime. We will support more positive activities for young people to stop them getting involved in a life of crime. Labour and the Conservatives posture on penalties, which do not deter criminals. What does deter them is increasing the chances of being caught. That is why more police are needed on the streets – to provide a longer arm for the law. And we need to help the police to be more effective at catching criminals, spend less time on bureaucracy and more time preventing crime, reassuring the public and helping keep everyone safe.

Policy details:

- Pay for 3,000 more police on the beat, affordable because we are cutting other spending, such as scrapping pointless ID cards.
- Reduce time-wasting bureaucracy at police stations with better technology that can be deployed on the streets.

- Give local people a real say over their police force through the direct election of police authorities. Authorities would still be able to co-opt extra members to ensure diversity, experience and expertise.
- Give far more power to elected police authorities, including the right to sack and appoint the Chief Constable, set local policing priorities, and agree and determine budgets.
- Strengthen the Youth Service by making it a statutory service, and encourage local authorities to provide youth services in partnership with young people and the voluntary sector.
- Reform the police, with a full review of the very restrictive terms and conditions for police officer employment.
- Scrap intrusive Identity Cards and have more police instead, and also scrap plans for expensive, unnecessary new passports with additional biometric data.
- Halt the increase in unnecessary new offences with the creation of a ‘stop unit’ in the Cabinet Office. Every department in Whitehall would have to convince this unit of the need for a new offence.
- Turn the National Policing Improvement Agency into a National Crime Reduction Agency with a wider remit to test what policing techniques and sentences work and spread best practice across police services and the criminal justice system.
- Remove innocent people from the police DNA database and stop storing DNA from innocent people and children in the future, too.
- Make hospitals share non-confidential information with the police so they know where gun and knife crime is happening and can target stop-and-search in gun and knife crime hot spots.
- Bring in stop-on-request for night buses. You should be able to ask the driver to let you off between stops, so you’re as close to home as possible.
- Require better recording of hate crimes against disabled, homosexual and transgender people, which are frequently not centrally recorded.
- Ensure that financial resources, and police and court time, are not wasted on the unnecessary prosecution and imprisonment of drug users and addicts; the focus instead should be on getting addicts the treatment they need. Police should concentrate their efforts on organised drug pushers and gangs.
- Always base drugs policy on independent scientific advice, including making the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs completely independent of government.

- Give people a direct say in how petty criminals and those who engage in anti-social behaviour are punished by setting up Neighbourhood Justice Panels (NJPs), like the one run by Liberal Democrats in Somerset where 95 per cent of offenders have been turned away from further crimes.
- Champion restorative justice programmes, like NJPs, which make offenders confront their behaviour and are more successful at reducing crime than traditional forms of punishment.

Condensed version:

Increase police numbers by 3,000 over five years; scrap identity card scheme; make police authorities directly elected, with increased powers; annual fitness tests for police officers; replace form-filling with new technology; create a National Crime Reduction Agency to spread best practice through the force; review police officers terms and conditions; seek advice from Law Commission and Plain English Campaign to make paperwork more simple.