

Safe and secure communities



Great opportunities are within our country's reach.
Only Labour can seize them, and build a new Britain which
guarantees security, prosperity and respect for all.

As we emerge from the pandemic, find a new place in the world outside the European Union and transition to a carbon neutral economy, we need a Labour government that would rise to the moment with ideas that meet the aspirations of the British public. A Labour government that is on your side. A Labour government that would give people much greater power over the issues that affect their lives. A Labour government that would tackle the cost-of-living crisis head on, get Britain growing again after 12 years of failure and improve public services so they deliver for the people paying for them.

This year's National Policy Forum, alongside Stronger Together – the policy review led by our Party Chair Anneliese Dodds – is a vital opportunity for us to develop the ideas that will form an election-winning platform on which a Labour government would build that new Britain.

The six consultation documents demonstrate the scale of the challenges we face but also the breadth of the opportunities available to us. They range from harnessing the potential of the green and digital revolutions to making sure the workplace of the 2020s offers working people the security and prosperity they deserve. They look at how the criminal justice system can keep our communities safe and secure, and how we can build first-class public services fit for the future after years of Conservative neglect. They consider how we can guarantee families up and down the country financial, social and housing security, and how we can protect our national interest while promoting Labour values abroad.

As Party members, supporters and stakeholders your voice in these debates is absolutely critical, and I encourage you to get involved. Please consider submitting your views either individually or as part of your CLP or organisation, or perhaps attending one of the online members' events to hear from one of my Shadow Cabinet colleagues. The strength of our movement is its diversity, and the breadth and depth of our collective knowledge, passion and insight. It is by working together that we will develop the ideas that underpin our vision of a new Britain – one that guarantees security, prosperity and respect for all.

Keir Starmer
Leader of the Labour Party



Thank you for getting involved in the Labour Party's 2022 National Policy Forum (NPF) consultation. It's a really important opportunity for us to hear from our members, supporters and stakeholders on how the next Labour government can build a new Britain which guarantees security, prosperity and respect for all.

This paper is one of six policy documents published by the Labour Party as part of this year's consultation. Each document will ask a set of questions on specific policy issues, followed by detail on the context, the challenges we face and Labour's proposed way forward to help inform your answers. For further information, you may wish to refer back to the relevant sections of the two reports we published at Conference 2021 looking at the same six themes:

- *Britain in 2030*, which contrasted life at the end of the decade under continued Conservative rule with how things could look under a Labour government: <https://labour.org.uk/stronger-together/britain-2030/>
- *Labour Works*, which showcased inspiring examples of the difference Labour is already making across the country where we are in power: <https://labour.org.uk/stronger-together/labour-works/>

You don't need to answer every one of the questions in the document, nor answer them in a specific way. We suggest using the questions to stimulate your thoughts on what you think the main issues are in the document's policy area.

You can write your response as an individual, or as a collective through your local party or organisation. Once you have drafted your response, please submit it to us through Labour Policy Forum: www.policyforum.labour.org.uk. For more information on how to make a submission, see www.policyforum.labour.org.uk/consultation-submission-guide.

On the Policy Forum website you can find out about other ways to get involved with the consultation, including our programme of online members' events. You can also read this year's five other NPF consultation documents which might be of interest. If you have an idea on an issue or topic that isn't covered by a specific consultation, then you can submit those too – the website lists which policy areas are covered by which NPF commission.

Thank you again for taking the time to take part in the NPF. It is through the contributions of members, supporters and stakeholders like you that Labour will develop the policy platform that will build a new Britain which guarantees security, prosperity and respect for all.

Want to know more about how Labour makes its policy?

You can learn more about the Labour Party's policy-making processes on our online Resource Hub: www.policyforum.labour.org.uk/resource-hub.

You can also follow us on Twitter [@labpolicyforum](https://twitter.com/labpolicyforum) for all of the latest policy development news and events.

Accessible Materials

The Labour Party is an inclusive, member-based organisation that prides itself on being accessible to all who share its values. If you would like an accessible version of these documents, please email us at **policydevelopment@labour.org.uk** to discuss how we can best accommodate your requirements.

Guaranteeing safe and secure communities through an effective criminal justice system

Questions

1. What can Labour do to improve early intervention and prevention services in order to address the causes of crime?
2. How can we improve support for victims and enforcement so that communities feel safe and secure in the 21st century?
3. What should Labour do to tackle violence against women and girls?
4. How can prisons and the probation service be reformed to reduce reoffending?
5. How can Labour increase confidence and access to justice across all communities?

The context

Labour believes it is the first priority of any government to ensure that its citizens and communities are safe and secure. This means working in partnership to prevent crime in all its forms, having a strong and effective criminal justice system that can swiftly deal with crime and its consequences, delivering justice, putting victims first, protecting the public and increasing rehabilitation of offenders.

However, the UK's criminal justice system is currently not delivering for communities, with prevention and enforcement failing in equal measure.

The latest figures show an 18 per cent rise in crime over the last two years. At the same time, the charge rate is falling, down from 7.5 per cent last year to just 5.8 per cent this year – a record low. As well as charges dropping, cautions and other community penalties have fallen by nearly two-thirds from 2015, despite the increase in crime. Shockingly, police recorded rape has reached its highest ever level, and only 1.3 per cent of rapes are resulting in a charge. Recorded knife-enabled rape has increased by 34 per cent since 2019 and is now at its highest point on record.

At the same time, the prevention and early intervention services in place to prevent criminality, rehabilitate offenders and drive down repeat offending have been neglected and under-resourced, leading to poor outcomes for both victims and offenders. Youth service budgets have been cut despite their vital role in offering young people a way out of crime, and drug, alcohol and mental health services have failed to meet demand despite the role they can play in tackling some of the causes of offending.

Over the last decade, victims of crime have been increasingly let down while criminals have been let off. The criminal justice system is failing to keep communities safe, to prevent crime happening in the first instance, and to catch, sentence and rehabilitate offenders. The focus of this commission's consultation is therefore how Labour can guarantee safe and secure communities through an effective police and criminal justice system.

The challenges

Over the last 12 years crime and disorder have plagued communities, and the preventative and early intervention services in place to guarantee safety and security for communities have been undermined.

Being tough on the causes of crime is a key Labour value. Yet since 2010, youth service budgets have been cut by approximately £1 billion, with the youth justice grant seeing a sharp decline – all despite the vital work that youth offending teams do by intervening early to divert young people away from crime. Preventative services have also been slashed across the board, with Dame Carole Black's drug review drawing attention to the impact of cuts to drug treatment services on users. Progress on crime will not be made without progress on prevention.

The latest figures show there are over 7,000 fewer neighbourhood officers than there were in 2015. This reduction in visible policing has left many feeling their communities are less safe. Public confidence in the police is a cornerstone of the British model of policing by consent. Yet the proportion of people who almost never see an officer on patrol has almost doubled over recent years. At the same time, a series of recent incidents have undermined public faith in the police and it is clear that culture is an issue that needs addressing as well as police numbers.

Threats to safety and security are constantly evolving, with crime changing and becoming more complex. Fraud and computer misuse have increased by 54 per cent over the last two years, whilst an increasing proportion of crime takes place online. Ensuring the criminal justice system can keep pace with these new threats, as well as responding to the crime and antisocial behaviour that communities experience every day, will be a key challenge for the next Labour government.

Access to justice should be the right of every person in the country but between 2010 and 2019 half of all courts in England and Wales closed. The Crown Courts' backlog has hit a record high of almost 60,000 cases, with cases typically taking 697 days to be completed. Victims of violent and sexual crimes in particular are waiting years to get their day in court. Labour research revealed earlier this year that the typical delay between a rape offence and the completion of the resulting criminal case rose to 1,000 days in 2021 for the first time. As a result, many victims are giving up on seeking the justice that they deserve while cuts to legal aid are affecting access to justice.

Furthermore, prisons and the probation service have been so mismanaged that they are not working for victims nor for rehabilitating offenders. The number of inmates developing drug problems more than doubled between 2015 and 2020, nearly two thirds of young offenders now reoffend and the probation service has been so undermined that officers are leaving at a rapidly increasing rate.

Yet the Government's recent legislative interventions in this area appear to be more focused on stoking division for political gain than actually tackling the fundamental issues, while the Victims Bill has been delayed for the seventh year running. Where the Government has acted, it has often been ineffective – meaning that not only are communities left less secure, but public money is poorly targeted or wasted altogether. Overcoming the challenges set out above will be key to Labour guaranteeing safe and secure communities through an effective criminal justice system.

The way forward

Labour will restore security in our communities, ending the Conservatives' approach which is failing to deliver justice, letting victims down, and doing little either to prevent offending in the first place or to provide effective rehabilitation. Labour believes that key to achieving this goal is a criminal justice system that catches and sentences those who have broken the law and has prevention and early intervention at its heart, that recognises that low-income communities are hardest hit by crime and also seeks to address the underlying causes of offending such as mental health. We need a criminal justice system that puts victims first, one that ends inequalities in access to justice for different groups, and one that ensures the best chance of effective rehabilitation in order to reduce crime.

Labour has already set out a number of ways we would reform the criminal justice system. Labour will roll out Police Hubs nationally, located in visible and accessible places in communities, providing somewhere the public can go to talk to the police and other agencies in person about their concerns in an area. Each police hub will have its own Neighbourhood Prevention Team to ensure anti-social behaviour and other crimes in the community are tackled quickly by bringing together police, community support officers, youth workers and council staff to address the causes of crime. As part of this drive to bring back neighbourhood policing Labour would undertake a major recruitment drive to increase the number of Special Constables, whose numbers have fallen sharply since 2010.

As part of a package of measures to tackle antisocial behaviour, Labour will reform community sentencing. Community sentences work; they keep offenders out of prison and can have a greater impact on reducing reoffending than short custodial sentences, but judges' faith in their delivery is being undermined after a decade of neglect of the probation service. To increase the use of community sentences, give communities greater input into the type of unpaid work offenders do and to improve chances of rehabilitation, Labour would establish Community and Victim Payback Boards which would set out local priorities for the type of unpaid work offenders undertake.

Victims must be at the heart of the criminal justice system. That is why Labour has set out provisions to put victims' rights on a statutory footing, as well as new protections for victims of crime and of persistent, unresolved anti-social behaviour.

Labour believes that policing should be of the highest standard so that all communities can have confidence in policing, especially Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities. Labour has set out a plan to improve police standards, including inclusion of violence against women and girls in the Home Office's strategic policing requirement – a policy the Home Office has now implemented following pressure from Labour – an overhaul of misconduct proceedings including urgent action to reduce long delays in holding hearings, and improving anti-racism training and recruiting more Black, Asian and minority ethnic officers. Labour will also overhaul police training, social media usage policies and whistleblowing structures so that police undergo a specific package of Violence Against Women and Girls training and police officers and staff can confidently report misconduct from colleagues without fear or favour.

Labour's green paper, Ending Violence Against Women and Girls, sets out a comprehensive, cross-departmental approach to tackling this endemic issue. Measures in the green paper include:

- Toughening sentences for rape, stalking and domestic murder, reviewing sentencing for all domestic abuse and introducing whole life tariffs for those who rape, abduct and murder a stranger
- Removing legal barriers that prevent victims of domestic abuse getting the help they need, such as restrictions on legal aid and the 'no recourse to public funds' rule

- Bringing in new custodial sentences for those who name victims of rape and sexual assault
- Introducing a survivor support package to improve victims' experience in the courts, including fast tracking rape and sexual violence cases, legal help for victims and better training for professionals to give people the help they need
- Introducing new measures for those who face additional barriers to protection and support, such as migrant, Black, Asian and ethnic minority, LGBT+, and disabled women and girls
- Training for teachers to help identify, respond to and support child victims of domestic abuse
- Introducing criminal sanctions for tech executives who do not act fast enough to remove misogynistic abuse on their platforms
- Repealing the rape clause for social security claims, reviewing single payments for Universal Credit and ending the five week wait, to ensure domestic abuse survivors can access the support they need quickly