

Safe and secure communities



This is a critical year for Labour to set out the case for change: for a fairer, greener and more dynamic Britain, where aspiration is rewarded, where working people succeed and where communities control their own destiny.

There can be no doubt that Britain faces serious challenges, nor that 13 years of Conservative government have left our country, our economy and our public services on their knees and vulnerable to those challenges. But there should also be no doubt that we can rise to them.

We believe in our country and our people. What they lack is a government that shares their ambition.

We need to show people that Labour would be that government. Show not just what the Tories have done to Britain but the Britain that Labour can build. A country run in the interests of working people, and where politics is once again a force for good.

This requires a bold and credible policy agenda – and the National Policy Forum plays a critical role in getting us there.

These will be the final NPF consultations before Labour finalises our manifesto for the next election, and they are a vital opportunity for us to hear from voices across the labour movement and country on some of the most pressing policy issues facing an incoming Labour government.

They look at the ways Britain can prosper by ensuring growth in every part of our country, by forging new, ethical trading relationships and by improving our everyday economy. They consider how better public services, focused on prevention and early intervention, can make us happier, healthier and safer. They look at how we can support families in all their wonderful diversity, and how by pushing power out of Westminster we can make our neighbourhoods and communities more cohesive and prosperous.

Please do contribute your thoughts and ideas. The strength of our movement is its diversity, and that is nowhere more apparent than in our democratic policymaking process. It is important that we are able to draw on the thoughts and experiences of our members, affiliates, stakeholders and supporters.

Together we can give Britain the fairer, greener future it deserves.

Keir Starmer
Leader of the Labour Party

Anneliese Dodds
National Policy Forum Chair

Thank you for taking part in the Labour Party's 2023 National Policy Forum (NPF) consultation. This is the final of four annual consultations before the next general election and will form a key input to the manifesto-drafting process.

As we further develop our policy platform, it is particularly important that we hear from people across the labour movement, including from local Labour Parties and affiliated trade unions. We also encourage external organisations, such as charities, think tanks, businesses and civil society bodies to submit their ideas.

Members should contribute to discussions and submissions through their constituency or branch party, as the commissions will not be accepting submissions directly from individuals in this final year.

The Labour Party is publishing six consultation documents this year. Each asks a set of seven questions on a specific policy area, followed by detail on the context and the challenges we face.

After the consultation closes on 17 March, all of the submissions from the four years' worth of consultations will be used to develop final year policy documents. Those documents will then be debated, amended and agreed by the NPF representatives in a final meeting on 21-23 July.

You may wish to look at the work of the Labour Party's policy roadmap, Stronger Together, which produced a final report, structured around the same six policy themes, in 2022: www.labour.org.uk/stronger-together.

Alongside Stronger Together, the party commissioned three independent reviews which reported over the last year, which may be helpful to refer back to as you consider your responses:

1. *A New Britain: Renewing our Democracy and Rebuilding our Economy*, the final report of the Commission on the UK's Future, chaired by former Prime Minister Gordon Brown, which made recommendations to reignite Britain's economy, rebuild trust in politics and reunite the country: www.labour.org.uk/page/a-new-britain;

2. *Start-Up, Scale-Up*, the final report of the Start-Up Review led by Lord Jim O'Neill, which explored what is needed to make Britain the best place in the world to start and grow a business: www.labour.org.uk/startupreview; and

3. *Learning and skills for economic recovery, social cohesion and a more equal Britain*, the final report of the Council of Skills Advisers, chaired by former Education Secretary Lord David Blunkett, which detailed how Labour's further education and skills agenda could improve growth, deliver quality jobs and prepare people for the future of work: www.labour.org.uk/skillsreport.

You don't need to answer every one of the questions in this document, nor answer them in a specific way. We suggest using the questions to help structure your response and act as a prompt for your thoughts on the policy area.

You can submit a response on behalf of your local party, at branch or Constituency Labour Party level. You can also respond as an organisation, such as an affiliated trade union, socialist society or external stakeholder.

Once you have drafted your response, please submit it to us through the 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.

You can find all six consultation documents on the website, and explore other ways to get involved in the consultation such as online members' events, which you can find at labour.org.uk/npf23/.

Thank you again for taking the time to contribute to the NPF. It is through the contributions of members, supporters and stakeholders that Labour will develop the policy platform that will build a fairer, greener, more dynamic future for Britain.

Want to know more about how Labour makes its policy?

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

You can also follow us on Twitter [@labpolicyforum](https://twitter.com/labpolicyforum) for policy development news and information on members' 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.

Empowered communities

Introduction

The National Policy Forum (NPF) is entering the final year of the current policy cycle, which will culminate in a full, in-person meeting of the NPF to determine Labour's policy platform. That platform will in turn contribute towards an election-winning manifesto for the next general election.

The Safe and Secure Communities policy commission and its predecessor commissions have consulted on a range of policy topics over the previous three years:

- In 2020, on Devolution and the constitution after coronavirus;
- In 2021, on Ending violence against women and girls; and
- In 2022, on Guaranteeing safe and secure communities through an effective criminal justice system.

For this fourth and final year, the Safe and Secure Communities policy commission has chosen to focus on empowered communities. We welcome submissions on this issue – and specifically the seven consultation questions set out below – from Constituency and Branch Labour Parties, affiliated trade unions and socialist societies, as well as contributions from expert third party organisations such as charities, think tanks, businesses and civil society. Full details on how to make a submission can be found on www.policyforum.labour.org.uk.

The outcomes of all four consultations will then be taken into account when the commission produces its draft policy document for consideration at the full NPF meeting in July 2023.

Questions

1. How should Labour tackle anti-social behaviour and ensure people feel safe in their homes, workplaces and local communities?
2. What resources and tools do the police and enforcement agencies need to keep our streets safe and to deal with neighbourhood crime?
3. How can prevention and diversion schemes be improved to reduce crime and reoffending?
4. What approach should the Labour Party take to improving justice?
5. In what ways can devolution and constitutional reform empower people and bring our communities closer together?
6. What are the specific implications of policy proposals in this area for (a) women, (b) Black, Asian and minority ethnic people; (c) LGBT+ people, (d) disabled people and (e) all those with other protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010?
7. What consideration would need to be given to policy proposals in this area when collaborating with devolved administrations and local governments in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland?

The context

The last 13 years of Conservative government have left our communities more divided, unequal and vulnerable. The pandemic has had a lasting impact on our communities and the cost of living crisis presents both immediate and future challenges. Yet, the Conservatives have prioritised their own political future ahead of building stronger community cohesion and security.

The poorest areas have been hit the hardest, with the deepest cuts often being inflicted upon local and neighbourhood services most in need, while financial support is handed out to those areas which are already better off. Labour will seek to rebalance power, give local people more control over their communities and build a fairer future for everyone.

Ensuring our communities are safe and that people feel secure in their homes and local neighbourhoods should be one of the top priorities for any government. Yet the Conservatives have spent a decade cutting our police and fire service workforces, leaving communities across the country exposed.

There are thousands fewer Police Community Support Officers than in 2010, and neighbourhood policing has been slashed in the past eight years alone. The percentage of people saying they never see the police out on foot patrol has almost doubled since the Conservatives came to power in 2010.

Confidence and trust in our police have plummeted and it is the sad reality that in 21st century Britain many people have given up reporting neighbourhood crime, as they believe nothing will come of it. Our police lack the ability to respond quickly to crimes, investigate them thoroughly and hold those responsible to account. The overall charge rate is at the devastatingly low level of 5.5 per cent and the total number of arrests has fallen sharply since 2010.

Furthermore, serious violent crime is increasing, with specific types of knife crime surging to their highest point on record. Online crime and fraud have also risen to unprecedented levels, and the number of sexual offences being recorded by the police has now reached a record high.

Despite this, diversion schemes and preventative services have been decimated, particularly those available to young people. Between 2010 and 2020 more than 4,500 youth work jobs were cut, and 760 youth centres closed. Cuts to youth services funding have left our young people without the safe spaces they need, and access to mental health services for many is virtually impossible.

The Conservatives have also eroded public faith in our constitution and political institutions. From the granting of peerages to ex-Conservative staff members to the decision to award contracts during the pandemic to businesses with connections to the Conservative Party, it is clear greater scrutiny and accountability must shape the future of the UK's constitution, so it reflects our modern democratic values.

The UK remains one of the most centralised democratic countries in the whole world and has one of the highest income inequalities in Europe. While there have been some welcome developments in recent years, such as the expansion of regional Mayors and Police and Crime Commissioners, the Government's approach to devolution and constitutional reform has been far too slow and too narrow.

The overall focus of this year's commission is therefore how Labour can empower our communities more broadly and strengthen neighbourhood cohesion, in particular, with the aim of reducing crime.

The future under Labour

Strengthening neighbourhood cohesion will be a key priority for the next Labour government, as every person and every family has a basic right to feel safe. It is Labour's mission to drive down crime and anti-social behaviour, put more police in local areas, stand up for community services and empower victims. Our communities deserve a stronger and brighter future.

Ensuring our police have the necessary resources, equipment and skills will be essential for Labour in achieving this mission. Labour has already pledged to bring back neighbourhood policing by putting 13,000 more neighbourhood police on Britain's streets, including recruiting at least 10,000 more officers, PCSOs and specials. This is the equivalent of giving every constituency in England and Wales 15-20 extra neighbourhood police.

Furthermore, Labour has brought forward plans to tackle the increase in several types of serious violence, such as knife crime. By cracking down on knife supply, such as increasing enforcement against online black market sales, introducing heightened surveillance, hotspot policing and analysing the geographical pattern of where knife attacks have taken place, Labour will be able to act on one of the most serious threats our communities face.

Previously, Labour has outlined a package of measures that would help tackle the epidemic of violence against women and girls, in a green paper published in 2021. Proposals include introducing a new statutory minimum sentence for rape of seven years, whole life tariffs for those who rape, abduct, and murder, as well as criminalising street harassment.

More recently, Labour has committed to rolling out specialist rape courts that would also fast-track rape cases and better support victims, in addition to introducing a new Domestic Violence Register that would allow for better police and law enforcement monitoring of perpetrators and help to identify offending patterns more quickly.

This was accompanied by a pledge to deliver specialist support for victims, by putting domestic abuse experts into 999 control rooms and rape investigation units in every force to get justice for women. Everyone has the right to live free from fear and these are practical measures which will help tackle the crisis.

A Labour government would advocate for and embed at every level the principle that victims should be at the heart of our criminal justice system. It was under a Labour government that the Victims' Code was drawn up and the post of Victims' Commissioner created. Labour will look to build on this positive record and measures already put forward.

Labour would strengthen community sentences and create Community and Victim Payback Boards to act on antisocial behaviour and stop more serious reoffending at source. Victims and other local representatives will be given a role in deciding what unpaid work offenders must undertake, such as removing graffiti, clearing wasteland or redecorating community centres.

Labour understands that public trust in our police is critical to keeping people safe, particularly among marginalised communities and people that have been victims of discrimination. Labour has consistently called for an overhaul of our police standards system and would introduce mandatory professional standards for every police force, as well as reforming vetting processes. Policing by consent is an essential part of Britain's criminal justice system and Labour would end the postcode lottery on police standards which undermines the important work we need the police to do.

Labour will also seek to tackle the root causes of the problems that our communities face. By introducing stronger preventative action involving local government, schools and community organisations, charities

and frontline providers, we can urgently identify and protect those at risk of being drawn into violence. It means restoring youth projects and treatment services, building upon the positive work Labour councils are already doing around community cohesion and intervention.

To ensure that the increased police workforce can be as effective as possible, we must also understand the challenges anti-social behaviour presents to our communities and how agencies can work best together to ensure safe and secure communities. The commission would welcome respondents' thoughts on how supporting community-led strategies in tackling youth violence can encourage people to reintegrate and take pride in their local community.

Giving local people more control over their local area can help us tackle crime, build community safety, and increase political engagement. A Labour government will introduce a Take Back Control Act within the first King's Speech to establish clear frameworks for local leaders to request, negotiate and take on powers over economic policymaking, establishing a presumption towards moving power out of Westminster and ensuring local areas can bid for any powers that have already been devolved elsewhere.

Following the publication of the report by the Commission on the UK's Future, chaired by former Prime Minister Gordon Brown, we must consider how devolution and constitutional reform can act as another tool in driving community participation in politics. Advocating for the transfer of power from Westminster to the people and their local areas will be a key pledge for Labour and the commission would welcome respondents' thoughts on the recommendations contained within the report.