



The Checkpoint Programme QSD on 27 February 2020

On 27 February 2020, Lord Bates (Conservative) is due to ask Her Majesty's Government "what assessment they have made of the findings of the Checkpoint programme, run by Durham Constabulary, to reduce reoffending rates and custodial sentences".

Summary

- Durham Constabulary introduced the Checkpoint programme in 2015 as an alternative to prosecution for low-level crime.
- Checkpoint is a four-month management programme which aims to tackle underlying issues, such as alcohol or drug misuse or the offender's mental health.
- Offences deemed eligible for the scheme include theft, criminal damage, fraud, or common assault. Hate crimes are not accepted for Checkpoint.
- As part of the programme, offenders agree to an individually tailored contract. If the contract is completed without the offender reoffending then no further action will be taken against them. If they fail to complete the contract, then the offender may face prosecution.
- Initial analysis by Cambridge University, published in *Policing* journal, has found that individuals who took part in Checkpoint had a lower re-arrest and reoffending rate compared to offenders who had been given other types of out of court disposals (eg community service). The full study into Checkpoint is expected to be published in 2022.
- A similar trial scheme, Operation Turning Point, was run in the West Midlands between 2011 and 2014. West Midlands police also reported reductions in reoffending as a result of the scheme.
- The use of out of court disposals has been advocated by the National Police Chiefs' Council. In its 2017–21 national strategy, the Council provides guidance on how to use out of court disposals and highlights the Checkpoint programme and Operation Turning Point as effective methods to reduce re-offending rates.
- The Government stated in response to a written question in July 2019 that the use of out of court dispersals are an operational matter for the police.
- Research from the Centre for Justice Innovation suggests that there is moderate evidence in the UK that out of court punishments for low level crime reduces reoffending. Civitas has claimed that using out of court punishments over sentences would mean more victims of burglary and shoplifting, drink-driving and knife crime.

Sally Dray | 20 February 2020

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Any comments on Library briefings should be sent to the Head of Research Services, House of Lords Library, London SW1A 0PW or emailed to purvism@parliament.uk.

Further Information

- Durham Constabulary, '[Checkpoint](#)', accessed 18 February 2020

Information on the Checkpoint programme from Durham Constabulary's website.

- Centre for Justice Innovation, '[Pre-court Diversion for Adults: An Evidence Briefing](#)', June 2019

Briefing from the Centre for Justice Innovation detailing the background to pre-court diversions and analysing their impact on re-offending rates, cost, victim satisfaction and processing times.

- National Police Chiefs' Council, '[Charging and Out of Court Disposals—A National Strategy, 2017–21](#)', January 2018, pp 3–17

Strategy from the National Police Chief's Council to provide guidance and direction for the police service across England and Wales about out of court disposals.

- Ministry of Justice, '[Proven Reoffending Statistics Quarterly Bulletin, England and Wales, January 2018 to March 2018](#)', 30 January 2020

Latest statistics for reoffending rates released by the Ministry of Justice covering the period January to March 2018. Information on reoffending rates of adults given out of court disposals is on page 10.

Parliamentary Questions

- House of Lords, '[Written Question: Alternatives to Prosecution](#)', 22 July 2019, HL16981
- House of Commons, '[Written Question: Alternatives to Prosecution](#)', 8 April 2019, 238626
- House of Commons, '[Written Question: Treatment of, and Outcomes for, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Individuals in the Criminal Justice System Independent Review](#)', 24 June 2019, 264759

Press Articles and Comment

- Josh Halliday, '[Durham's Pioneering Police Scheme Slashes Reoffending Rates](#)', *Guardian*, 14 February 2020
- Charles Hymas, '[Violent Offenders and Thieves Avoid Prosecution as Police Bid to Rehabilitate Rather than Criminalise](#)', *Telegraph* (£), 17 January 2020
- What Works Blog, '[How are Experiments in the Midlands Leading to Safer Streets?](#)', 4 May 2018
- Kevin Weir et al, '[Checkpoint: An Innovative Programme to Navigate People Away from the Cycle of Reoffending: Implementation Phase Evaluation](#)', *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*, 18 March 2019
- Peter Cuthbertson, '[Ending Short Prison Sentences](#)', *Civitas*, February 2019