



# King's Speech 2024: Home affairs

**Author:** Nicole Winchester

**Date published:** 12 July 2024

This research briefing sets out the Labour Party's commitments covering home affairs, drawing on its manifesto and other material in the public domain. It has been written in advance of the King's Speech to help members of the House of Lords prepare for the debate on the speech. It does not constitute official information about the government's intentions or provide a complete list of bills to be announced.

## I. Illegal migration and the asylum system

### I.1 Plans to tackle small boat crossings

Since 2018, people have been crossing the English Channel in small boats at a significant scale, with many seeking to claim asylum. The annual numbers peaked in 2022 when 45,774 crossed in this manner, before falling to 29,437 in 2023.<sup>1</sup> In 2024, 13,195 people had come to the UK via small boats as of 26 June, a higher number than seen for the same period in the previous four years.<sup>2</sup> The most recent data on arrivals covering the last seven days is available on the government's website, though these are from provisional operational data and are subject to change.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> House of Commons Library, '[Asylum statistics](#)', 24 May 2024, p 32.

<sup>2</sup> BBC News, '[Starmer confirms Rwanda deportation plan 'dead'](#)', 6 July 2024.

<sup>3</sup> Border Force and Home Office, '[Transparency data: Small boat arrivals—last 7 days](#)', accessed 5 July 2024.





Seeking to address this problem, in 2022 the previous Conservative government announced a scheme which aimed to send some asylum seekers to Rwanda, where they could claim asylum in that country.<sup>4</sup> Formally known as the ‘Migration and economic development partnership’, legislation was passed to implement the scheme, such as the Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Act 2024.<sup>5</sup> However, the policy experienced a series of legal challenges which led to delays.<sup>6</sup> No asylum seekers were sent to Rwanda on a non-voluntary basis.<sup>7</sup>

On 6 July 2024, Prime Minister Keir Starmer confirmed that the scheme would end during his first press conference as prime minister.<sup>8</sup> This honoured a commitment in the Labour Party’s manifesto to scrap what the party described as the “wasteful” scheme and use its funding to create a new border security command. It argued this would target those who organise small boat crossings.<sup>9</sup> The creation of this new command was one of Labour’s first six “steps to change”, as set out in its manifesto.<sup>10</sup>

Labour has said that this new border command would operate internationally and be supported by new counter-terrorism style powers.<sup>11</sup> These plans would require legislation, with measures expected to include new powers to enable police to search those suspected of being involved in people smuggling, live monitor their

---

<sup>4</sup> Home Office, ‘[Migration and economic development partnership with Rwanda: Equality impact assessment](#)’, updated 29 April 2024.

<sup>5</sup> Earlier legislation included the [Nationality and Borders Act 2022](#) and the [Illegal Migration Act 2023](#).

<sup>6</sup> BBC News, ‘[Supreme Court rules Rwanda asylum policy unlawful](#)’, 15 November 2023.

<sup>7</sup> BBC News, ‘[What is the UK’s plan to send asylum seekers to Rwanda?](#)’, 13 June 2024.

<sup>8</sup> BBC News, ‘[Starmer confirms Rwanda deportation plan ‘dead’](#)’, 6 July 2024.

<sup>9</sup> BBC News, ‘[Keir Starmer vows to scrap Rwanda asylum scheme ‘straight away’](#)’, 10 May 2024.

<sup>10</sup> Labour Party, ‘[Labour Party manifesto 2024](#)’, June 2024, p 10.

<sup>11</sup> As above, p 17.



finances and apply for court orders requiring the handover of financial information.<sup>12</sup> Keir Starmer said that legislation to introduce these measures would be passed “very quickly”, with a Home Office press release announcing that:

Early legislation is being prepared to introduce new counter terror style powers and stronger measures to tackle organised immigration crime.<sup>13</sup>

Labour’s manifesto also explained that the new command would be staffed by “hundreds of new investigators, intelligence officers, and cross-border police officers”.<sup>14</sup> Home Secretary Yvette Cooper has said that rapid recruitment for a leader of the command would begin on 8 July 2024, with an expectation that the individual would take up their post in the coming weeks.<sup>15</sup>

In addition, in its manifesto the Labour Party said that a new security arrangement with the EU would be sought to “ensure access to real-time intelligence and enable our policing teams

to lead joint investigations with their European counterparts”.<sup>16</sup> As part of the UK’s deal to leave the EU, some police access to EU data on criminals, terror suspects and immigration offenders was lost.<sup>17</sup> Reporting on these plans, the Times said that Labour would seek to

---

<sup>12</sup> BBC News, [‘Keir Starmer vows to scrap Rwanda asylum scheme ‘straight away’](#), 10 May 2024.

<sup>13</sup> Home Office, [‘Home secretary launches new border security command’](#), 7 July 2024.

<sup>14</sup> Labour Party, [‘Labour Party manifesto 2024’](#), June 2024, p 17.

<sup>15</sup> Home Office, [‘Home secretary launches new border security command’](#), 7 July 2024.

<sup>16</sup> Labour Party, [‘Labour Party manifesto 2024’](#), June 2024, p 17.

<sup>17</sup> Rajeev Syal, [‘UK police and Border Force to remain locked out of EU database of criminals’](#), Guardian, 1 March 2023.



negotiate access to an EU system called Eurodac, a fingerprinting system used to identify asylum seekers and illegal migrants.<sup>18</sup> This would enable Border Force to identify individuals who have previously been rejected for asylum in another European country and fast-track their asylum case.

Mr Starmer's announcement that the Rwanda scheme would be ended was widely welcomed by those who had campaigned against the scheme. For example, Sonya Sceats, CEO of Freedom from Torture, and Sacha Deshmukh, chief executive of Amnesty International UK, both supported the decision.<sup>19</sup>

However, some commentators have expressed doubts that Labour's plans would tackle the issue of small boats. For example, Madeleine Sumption, director of the Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford, has argued that Labour's approach is too heavily focused on people smuggling networks, stating they will adapt quickly to law enforcement tactics.<sup>20</sup> Ms Sumption said that if one network was taken out, another would likely quickly move in to fill the space. She also questioned why Labour had not included a commitment to seek a returns agreement with Europe, despite this being something that Mr Starmer had previously said he would do. Former chief immigration officer for Border Force, Kevin Saunders, has also raised concerns.<sup>21</sup> Mr Saunders, who supported the Rwanda scheme, argued that the plan had acted as a deterrent and expressed concerns about

---

<sup>18</sup> Matt Dathan, '[Labour will deploy MI5 to combat channel migrant crisis](#)', Times (£), 9 May 2024.

<sup>19</sup> Reuters, '[New UK leader Starmer declares Rwanda deportation plan 'dead and buried'](#)', 6 July 2024; and Amnesty International, '[UK: Scrapping of unlawful Rwanda refugee scheme welcome](#)', 8 July 2024.

<sup>20</sup> Matt Dathan, '[Labour's immigration policies won't stop boat crossings, experts warn](#)', Times (£), 1 July 2024.

<sup>21</sup> BBC News, '[Starmer confirms Rwanda deportation plan 'dead'](#)', 6 July 2024.



what he described as the lack of a clear plan to stop small boat crossings going forward.

## 1.2 UK asylum system

In recent years there has been a ‘backlog’ in the asylum system, with the number of initial asylum decisions awaiting an outcome reaching the highest level on record in June 2023.<sup>22</sup> The previous government announced a plan to abolish this backlog in December 2022 and claimed in January 2024 that its target had been met.<sup>23</sup> However, the fact-checking charity Full Fact has highlighted that there are different types of backlog.<sup>24</sup> As at 14 April 2024, most applicants who arrived before 28 June 2022 (the ‘legacy backlog’) had had their claims processed, with 2,377 remaining. Migrants who have arrived since that date have their claims treated differently. This is termed the ‘flow backlog’. As of April 2024 there were 80,777 flow backlog cases.

In its manifesto, the Labour Party argued that previous Conservative governments had created a “perma-backlog” of tens of thousands of asylum seekers who are often housed in hotels.<sup>25</sup> The party’s manifesto outlined plans to hire additional caseworkers to clear the backlog and end the use of hotels as a source of accommodation. It also said it would set up a new returns and enforcement unit, with an additional 1,000 staff to “fast-track removals to safe countries for people who do not have the right to stay here”.

---

<sup>22</sup> US Visas and Immigration, ‘[Immigration and protection data: Q1 2024](#)’, 23 May 2023; and Full Fact, ‘[The UK asylum backlog: Explained](#)’, 12 April 2024.

<sup>23</sup> [HC Hansard, 13 December 2022, cols 885–912](#); Home Office, ‘[Legacy backlog cleared as plan to stop the boats delivered](#)’, 2 January 2024; and Ben Bloch, ‘[Rishi Sunak’s claim to have cleared asylum backlog branded ‘misleading’](#)’, Sky News, 2 January 2024.

<sup>24</sup> Full Fact, ‘[The UK asylum backlog: Explained](#)’, 12 April 2024.

<sup>25</sup> Labour Party, ‘[Labour Party manifesto 2024](#)’, June 2024, p 17.



In addition, Labour highlighted plans to speed up returns of failed asylum seekers by negotiating additional returns arrangements and increasing the number of safe countries that such individuals could be sent back to.<sup>26</sup> The previous government negotiated a returns agreement with Albania under which the two countries worked together to make it more difficult for illegal migrants to arrive and stay in the UK.<sup>27</sup>

Looking at the problem “upstream”, the manifesto said that the party would work with international partners to “address the humanitarian crises which lead people to flee their homes, and to strengthen support for refugees in their home region”.<sup>28</sup>

Focusing on Labour’s plans to increase the number of bilateral returns agreements, David Suber, a doctoral researcher at the Jill Dando Institute of Security and Crime Science at UCL, highlighted that the previous government’s returns agreement with Albania led to two and half times more returns of Albanian nationals in 2023–24 than previous years.<sup>29</sup> However, Mr Suber also noted that the top five countries people crossing the channel on a small boats come from were Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey, Eritrea and Iraq and that according to Home Office data, the vast majority of people coming from these countries would be recognised as refugees if their applications were processed. In addition, Mr Suber argued that governments of some of the countries with the most asylum seekers “are not particularly inclined to facilitate returns” because it is unpopular domestically with reliance on remittances sent by family members working abroad.

---

<sup>26</sup> Labour Party, ‘[Labour Party manifesto 2024](#)’, June 2024, p 17.

<sup>27</sup> Home Office, ‘[Milestone reached in UK-Albania agreement on illegal migration](#)’, 25 April 2023.

<sup>28</sup> Labour Party, ‘[Labour Party manifesto 2024](#)’, June 2024, p 17.

<sup>29</sup> David Suber, ‘[Labour’s immigration plans: A border security expert explains why ‘smashing the gangs’ is so difficult](#)’, The Conversation, 13 June 2024.



### 1.3 Windrush compensation scheme

Labour’s manifesto also said it would ensure the Windrush compensation scheme was “run effectively”.<sup>30</sup> More information about the Windrush scandal and compensation scheme can be found in the House of Lords Library briefing, [‘Windrush scandal and compensation scheme’](#) (15 February 2024).

## 2. Policing and counter-terrorism

### 2.1 Counter-terrorism

#### 2.1.1 Martyn’s law

The Labour Party’s manifesto committed to bringing in ‘Martyn’s law’ “to strengthen the security of public events and venues”.<sup>31</sup> This follows a campaign by Figen Murray, who lost her son Martyn Hett in the Manchester Arena attack in May 2017.<sup>32</sup> The campaign has called for the introduction of new legislation to require certain public spaces and venues to take actions aimed at ensuring preparedness for and protection against terrorist attacks.

In May 2023, the previous government published the draft Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill which acted on concerns raised by the

---

<sup>30</sup> Labour Party, [‘Labour Party manifesto 2024’](#), June 2024, p 73.

<sup>31</sup> As above, p 15.

<sup>32</sup> Kerslake Review, [‘The Kerslake report: An independent review into the preparedness for, and emergency response to, the Manchester Arena attack on 22nd May 2017’](#), 27 March 2018.



campaign.<sup>33</sup> The then government explained that the draft bill would undergo pre-legislative scrutiny by the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee before being introduced and that a consultation would also take place.

The committee published its report on the draft bill in July 2023.<sup>34</sup> It found that while the overall intention behind the draft bill was welcome, it had “serious concerns” about its proportionality, especially in relation to the impact on smaller businesses and voluntary- and community-run organisations.<sup>35</sup> The committee also noted concerns about unfinished provisions and argued that “there are a number of other areas in which we feel that the draft bill could be improved upon”. Following this, in February 2024, the then government launched a consultation related to the draft bill which was targeted at those it would potentially affect.<sup>36</sup> The consultation closed in March 2024 and the outcome was not published before the general election was called.

## 2.1.2 Other measures

On protection against terrorism more widely, the Labour manifesto said that the party would update the rules around counter-extremism, including online, to “stop people being radicalised and drawn towards hateful ideologies”.<sup>37</sup> In addition, Labour said it would

---

<sup>33</sup> Home Office, [‘Martyn’s law progresses as government publishes draft legislation’](#), 2 May 2023; and [‘Terrorism \(Protection of Premises\) draft bill: Overarching documents’](#), 2 May 2023.

<sup>34</sup> House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, [‘Terrorism \(Protection of Premises\) draft bill’](#), 27 July 2023, HC 1359 of session 2022–23.

<sup>35</sup> As above, p 3.

<sup>36</sup> Home Office, [‘Closed consultation: Martyn’s law—standard tier consultation’](#), 5 February 2024.

<sup>37</sup> Labour Party, [‘Labour Party manifesto 2024’](#), 13 June 2024, p 15.





ensure the police and intelligence services have the powers and resources needed to protect the public from terrorism and hostile espionage.

Commenting on Labour's manifesto, Rebecca Riedel, a lecturer at Cardiff Law School, argued that that it is unclear how the party's plans to prevent individuals from being drawn towards terrorist ideologies will be achieved.<sup>38</sup>

## 2.2 Crime and policing bill

In an interview with the Times, then Shadow Home Secretary Yvette Cooper said that a Labour government would introduce a crime and policing bill as one of its first laws.<sup>39</sup>

The Times reported that the legislation would be introduced in Labour's first King's Speech and would contain measures to overhaul police standards as well as creating new criminal offences. Ms Cooper also stated that a Labour run Home Office would take a "more active" approach to crime and policing. In its 2024 manifesto, the Labour Party set out a range of plans focused on policing and criminal justice which could be included in a crime and policing bill. Information on these plans, which may or may not form part of such a bill, is set out below.

---

<sup>38</sup> Rebecca Riedel, '[The 2024 general election manifestos on the prevent duty and extremism](#)', Law and Religion UK, 20 June 2024.

<sup>39</sup> Matt Dathan, '[Yvette Cooper: People feel police aren't there, that no one is coming](#)', Times (£), 1 July 2024.



## 2.3 Knife crime and youth violence

In its manifesto, the Labour Party set out several measures aimed at reducing knife crime and stressed its target of halving knife crime in a decade.<sup>40</sup> Latest figures from the Ministry of Justice showed there were 3,243 offences for possession of a knife or offensive weapon committed by those aged 10 to 17 resulting in a caution or conviction in the year ending December 2023.<sup>41</sup> This was an increase in offences when compared to 2013 (2,582) but a decrease when compared to 2019 (4,463).

To tackle the carrying of knives, Labour's manifesto said that every young person caught with a knife would be referred to a youth offending team (YOT) and would receive a mandatory plan to prevent reoffending.<sup>42</sup> This plan would have penalties including curfews, tagging and custody in the most severe cases.

To reduce the prevalence of knives, the party said that it would ban ninja swords, lethal zombie-style blades and machetes. The previous government had taken action to tackle these weapons; however, there has been criticism that loopholes in the law remained.<sup>43</sup> Labour has also said that it would strengthen the rules on online sales, with executives of online companies that break these rules personally held to account through “tough sanctions”. These measures have been campaigned for under the name of ‘Ronan’s law’ after Ronan Kanda, a 16-year-old who was murdered with a ninja sword in

---

<sup>40</sup> Labour Party, [‘Labour Party manifesto 2024’](#), June 2024, p 66.

<sup>41</sup> Ministry of Justice, [‘Knife and offensive weapon sentencing statistics: October to December 2023 main tables’](#), 16 May 2024, table 2a.

<sup>42</sup> Labour Party, [‘Labour Party manifesto 2024’](#), June 2024, p 66.

<sup>43</sup> Sky News, [‘Third crackdown on zombie knives introduced—but Labour says it’s ‘too little too late’](#)’, 25 January 2024.

Wolverhampton in 2022 by two 17-year-olds who had bought it online.<sup>44</sup>

In addition, the party set out measures aimed at stopping young people being drawn into crime. It said it would introduce a new offence of criminal exploitation of children aimed at targeting the gangs “who are luring young people into violence and crime”.<sup>45</sup>

In addition, Labour has said it would:<sup>46</sup>

- create a new young futures programme with a network of hubs for every community with youth workers, mental health support workers and careers advisers offering support
- use local prevention partnerships to identify young people at risk of being drawn into violence and intervene
- place youth workers and mentors in accident and emergency units and pupil referral units, with funding coming from the full recovery of the cost of firearm licensing

Reacting to Labour’s plans, the then policing minister, Chris Philp, argued that “this is just another reheated pledge from the Labour Party using money they have already spent seven times”.<sup>47</sup> However,

---

<sup>44</sup> Labour List, [‘Labour announces ‘Ronan’s law’ to crack down on online weapons sales’](#), 25 June 2024; and BBC News, [‘Ronan Kanda: Teenagers guilty of mistaken identity murder’](#), 23 May 2023.

<sup>45</sup> Labour Party, [‘Labour Party manifesto 2024’](#), June 2024, p 66.

<sup>46</sup> As above.

<sup>47</sup> ITV News, [‘Keir Starmer pledges £100 million plan to tackle knife crime under Labour government’](#), 25 January 2024.



actor and campaigner on knife crime Idris Elba welcomed Labour's emphasis on youth services and said he supported plans to tighten "loopholes" on the sale of zombie-style knives. Anne Longfield, the former children's commissioner for England and chair of the Centre for Young Lives, has also said she supports the proposed Ronan's law and argued that this should come alongside greater investment in youth work and widening access to child and adolescent mental health services, as well as other measures.<sup>48</sup>

## 2.4 Violence against women and girls

Setting out a "landmark mission" to halve violence against women and girls in a decade, the Labour Party's manifesto said that it would use "every government tool available" to target perpetrators and address the root causes of abuse and violence.<sup>49</sup> It set out the following plans:

- On enforcement, the manifesto announced that it would introduce specialist rape and sexual offences teams in every police force. It also said "the most prolific and harmful perpetrators" would be targeted using tactics usually reserved for terrorists and organised crime.
- On support, Labour said that domestic abuse experts would be introduced in 999 control rooms to enable victims to speak directly to a specialist and to ensure that there is a legal advocate in every police force to advise victims from reporting up to trial.
- On stalking, the party's manifesto said that Labour would strengthen the use of stalking protection orders (SPOs)

---

<sup>48</sup> Fiona Simpson, '[Labour announces plans to tackle sale of knives to minors after death of 16-year-old](#)', Children and Young People Now, 27 June 2024.

<sup>49</sup> Labour Party, '[Labour Party manifesto 2024](#)', June 2024, p 67.



and give women the right to know the identity of online stalkers.<sup>50</sup> SPOs are civil orders that can contain both prohibitions and positive requirements to protect victims from the risk of stalking.<sup>51</sup>

- Labour announced that it would introduce a new criminal offence to tackle drink spiking.<sup>52</sup> In December 2023, the previous Conservative government published a report on understanding and tackling spiking which found no “gaps in the law that a new, bespoke, offence would fill”.<sup>53</sup> Instead, it said an amendment to the Criminal Justice Bill, which fell at dissolution, would modernise the language of the current offences which it hoped “may help increase public awareness of the illegality of spiking and encourage the reporting”.
- On charge and prosecution rates, Labour said it would make it easier for “high-performing” police forces to charge domestic abuse suspects to speed up the process.<sup>54</sup>

The manifesto also outlined plans to tackle the issue of violence against women and girls that would go beyond policing. In the wider criminal justice system, the party said it would fast-track rape cases, with specialist courts at every crown court location in England and Wales, to tackle low prosecution rates and high victim drop-outs due to delays.<sup>55</sup> More information on Labour’s commitment to introduce specialist courts for rape cases can be found in the House of Lords Library briefing [‘King’s Speech 2024:](#)

---

<sup>50</sup> Labour Party, [‘Labour Party manifesto 2024’](#), June 2024, p 68.

<sup>51</sup> Crown Prosecution Service, [‘Stalking protection orders’](#), last updated 13 May 2024.

<sup>52</sup> Labour Party, [‘Labour Party manifesto 2024’](#), June 2024, p 68.

<sup>53</sup> Home Office, [‘Understanding and tackling spiking’](#), 19 December 2023.

<sup>54</sup> Labour Party, [‘Labour Party manifesto 2024’](#), June 2024, p 70.

<sup>55</sup> As above, p 67.



[Justice](#)' (July 2024).

Focusing on the root causes of violence and abuse against women and girls, the party set out plans to tackle misogyny in schools and to teach young people about healthy relationships and consent.<sup>56</sup> In addition, the manifesto noted plans to strengthen the rights and protections available to co-habiting couples as well as improve them for whistleblowers in the workplace, including those who report sexual harassment.

The End Violence Against Women Coalition has welcomed Labour's goal of halving violence against women and girls within a decade and the commitment to tackle misogyny in schools, though it described the latter as "vague".<sup>57</sup> Stating that the measures in the manifesto relating to violence against women and girls focused mainly on the criminal justice system, the organisation called for a whole society approach which looks beyond the criminal justice system.

## 2.5 Anti-social behaviour

To tackle anti-social behaviour, the Labour Party's manifesto said that it would introduce new "respect orders".<sup>58</sup> It explained that under these new orders there would be powers to ban persistent adult offenders from town centres to "stamp out issues such as public drinking and drug use". Fly-tippers and vandals would also be forced to "clean up the mess" they created when offending.

---

<sup>56</sup> Labour Party, '[Labour Party manifesto 2024](#)', June 2024, p 68.

<sup>57</sup> End Violence Against Women, '[New government elected: EVAW's priorities for the Labour leadership](#)', 9 July 2024.

<sup>58</sup> Labour Party, '[Labour Party manifesto 2024](#)', June 2024, p 65.



The manifesto said that Labour would create a new specific offence for assaults on shopworkers<sup>59</sup>. Labour had previously tabled an amendment to create such an offence during the House of Commons committee stage of the Criminal Justice Bill.<sup>60</sup> The then government did not support the amendment at the time, however in April 2024 it announced that it would make assaulting a retail worker a standalone offence.<sup>61</sup> The British Safety Council has campaigned for five years for the introduction of a standalone offence in England and Wales, with the offence already existing in Scotland.<sup>62</sup>

## 2.6 Police recruitment and neighbourhood policing guarantee

In recent years there has been a focus on police numbers both by politicians and in the press. From 2010 to 2019 police forces reduced their workforce numbers as part of the then government's programme of austerity, causing a reduction of 21,363 officers.<sup>63</sup> In 2019, the Conservative government under the then Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced it would recruit 20,000 officers, following a commitment made in the party's 2019 manifesto.<sup>64</sup> The then government met this target in April 2023.<sup>65</sup> However, in July 2023, press reports highlighted Home Office figures showing that record

---

<sup>59</sup> Labour Party, '[Labour Party manifesto 2024](#)', June 2024, p 65.

<sup>60</sup> House of Commons Public Bill Committee, '[Criminal Justice Bill](#)', 30 January 2024, session 2023–24, 16th sitting, col 535.

<sup>61</sup> Home Office, '[Prime minister launches retail crime crackdown](#)', 10 April 2024.

<sup>62</sup> British Safety Council, '[Assault of retail workers to become a standalone crime in UK shoplifting crackdown](#)', 10 April 2024.

<sup>63</sup> Jon Fox, '[The UK population has lost trust in its police forces—Labour's plan to improve crime investigation is critical](#)', The Conversation, 24 June 2024.

<sup>64</sup> Home Office, '[National campaign to recruit 20,000 police officers launches today](#)', 5 September 2019; and Conservative Party, '[Conservative Party manifesto 2019](#)', November 2019, p 17.

<sup>65</sup> Sky News, '[Government hits manifesto target of recruiting 20,000 police officers in England and Wales](#)', 26 April 2023.



numbers of police officers were resigning across England and Wales.<sup>66</sup> The data showed that between April 2022 and March 2023, 4,668 officers had resigned. The Police Federation reported that this was the highest number since comparable records began 16 years ago and was a 32% increase on the number who left in 2021/22.<sup>67</sup>

Noting the recruitment challenges in policing, particularly for detectives, Labour's manifesto said that the party would roll out a direct entry scheme for detectives to "boost investigation skills".<sup>68</sup> Direct entry schemes for detectives already exist in some forces.<sup>69</sup>

The Labour Party's manifesto also said it would introduce a new neighbourhood policing guarantee.<sup>70</sup> Arguing that visible neighbourhood policing has been eroded, the party said that the guarantee would restore patrols by recruiting thousands of new police officers, police community support officers and special constables. Under the plan, each community would have a named officer "to turn to when things go wrong". Labour said these new officers would be funded by tackling waste through a new police efficiency and collaboration programme for England and Wales.<sup>71</sup> The party explained that this programme would set nation-wide standards for procurement and establish shared services and specialist functions to drive down costs.

The Police Federation, which represents rank and file police officers, has argued that the incoming government's focus should not only be

---

<sup>66</sup> Evening Standard, '[Record numbers of police officers quitting forces—figures](#)', 26 July 2023.

<sup>67</sup> Police Federation, '[Officers leaving police service in record numbers](#)', 27 July 2023.

<sup>68</sup> Labour Party, '[Labour Party manifesto 2024](#)', June 2024, p 70.

<sup>69</sup> Joining the Police, '[Forces recruiting via detective entry routes](#)', accessed 5 July 2024.

<sup>70</sup> Labour Party, '[Labour Party manifesto 2024](#)', June 2024, p 64.

<sup>71</sup> As above, pp 65 and 129.





on police numbers but also on pay.<sup>72</sup> The federation has said that poor pay and morale are leading to resignations, with a loss of experience for police forces. Following the result of the general election, the federation sent a message to the new Labour government repeating its calls for a new pay system, but also arguing that election pledges need to be properly funded with long-term sustained investment in policing.<sup>73</sup>

## 2.7 Police standards and training

In its manifesto, Labour said it would give His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) new powers to intervene in failing forces.<sup>74</sup> The current head of HMICFRS has previously called for new powers to compel forces to follow his recommendations rather than relying on the current system of voluntary compliance.<sup>75</sup>

Alongside this, the manifesto set out plans to introduce mandatory professional standards on vetting, checks and misconduct for individual officers. In an interview with the Times, Ms Cooper, explained that currently vetting standards are in guidance form rather than being a statutory requirement.<sup>76</sup> In addition, the article said that legislation introduced by Labour would set up a new police performance and standards unit in the Home Office. Ms Cooper

---

<sup>72</sup> Police Federation, '[In this general election, we need to talk about police pay not just numbers](#)', 17 June 2024.

<sup>73</sup> Police Federation, '[Message to the new government: 'Police officers need a fair pay review process](#)', 5 July 2024.

<sup>74</sup> Labour Party, '[Labour Party manifesto 2024](#)', June 2024, p 69.

<sup>75</sup> Matthew Weaver, '[Police watchdog for England and Wales demands new powers amid trust crisis](#)', Guardian, 9 June 2023.

<sup>76</sup> Matt Dathan, '[Yvette Cooper: People feel police aren't there, that no one is coming](#)', Times (£), 1 July 2024.



explained that this new unit would require the 43 chief constables in England and Wales to be more accountable to the home secretary on their force's performance but would also help them to “troubleshoot the problems they face”.

As part of these standards changes, Labour said in its manifesto that “anyone with a history of violence against women and girls would be barred from the service” and that automatic suspensions would be introduced for officers being investigated for domestic abuse or sexual offences.<sup>77</sup> In addition, Labour stated there would be “stronger” training on racism and violence against women and girls and the introduction of new legal safeguards around strip-searching children and young people.

The party's manifesto has also called on police forces to change the way they operate.<sup>78</sup> Labour explained that it would work with national policing bodies and police staff to standardise approaches to procurement, IT, professional standards and training. The manifesto also explained that the party would ensure that the service is organised to enable investment in specialist capabilities, such as digital forensics, and to more effectively tackle cross-border issues such as serious organised crime.

Reacting to some of Labour's plans, the former assistant chief constable for Greater Manchester Police, Ian Wiggett, has noted the current recruitment and retention issue faced by forces and argued that stricter vetting would “bring further practical barriers”.<sup>79</sup>

---

<sup>77</sup> Labour Party, '[Labour Party manifesto 2024](#)', June 2024, p 69.

<sup>78</sup> As above.

<sup>79</sup> Ian Wiggett, '[Back to the future part II: The challenges facing the UK's new home secretary](#)', Policing Insight, 8 July 2024.



Mr Wiggett has also said that officers are feeling vulnerable and lack support when simply “doing the job” and that automatic suspensions “will do little to build confidence and morale”. In addition, focusing on plans for procurement, Mr Wiggett argued that collaboration had been encouraged for 20 years but had not yet provided a “convincing value for money argument”. However, focusing on IT projects, he noted current issues with several large projects and said that a fresh approach could free up significant sums of money.

The plans to suspend all officers accused of domestic abuse or sexual offences have been welcomed by some organisations. For example, the charity Refuge has previously called for a consistent national policy requiring such suspensions under its ‘remove the rot’ campaign.<sup>80</sup> In March 2024, as part of this campaign, the charity presented a petition with 50,000 signatures to the then government.<sup>81</sup>

## 2.8 Cooperation with the Crown Prosecution Service

The Times has reported that Labour plans to amend the [Data Protection Act 2018](#) to get rid of rules that prevent police forces from sharing unredacted case files with the Crown Prosecution Service.<sup>82</sup> It said this has been estimated to waste 210,000 hours of police time each year and “has been blamed for causing major delays and obstacles to prosecutions”.

---

<sup>80</sup> Refuge, [‘Remove the rot: Refuge investigation uncovers magnitude of police force’s failure to tackle violent misogyny by police officers and staff’](#), accessed 10 July 2024.

<sup>81</sup> Margaret Davis, [‘Call for suspension of all police and staff accused of violence against women’](#), Yahoo News, 21 March 2024.

<sup>82</sup> Matt Dathan, [‘Yvette Cooper: People feel police aren’t there, that no one is coming’](#), Times (£), 1 July 2024.



The Times also reported plans to introduce a statutory duty on chief constables and chief crown prosecutors to devise joint charging action plans to “ensure that a larger volume of crimes are prosecuted and there is a higher success rate”.<sup>83</sup> This would include powers for police to charge domestic abuse suspects so they can be kept in custody and prevented from returning home.

## 2.9 Fraud

In its manifesto, Labour set out plans to introduce “a new expanded fraud strategy to tackle the full range of threats, including online, public sector and serious fraud”.<sup>84</sup> The party said it would work with technology companies to stop their platforms being exploited by fraudsters.

The Financial Times has also reported that Labour may require technology companies to reimburse victims of online fraud.<sup>85</sup> This would represent a departure from current “controversial” rules which placed the burden on banks and “sparked a backlash from the financial sector”.

## 2.10 Crossbows

Home Secretary Yvette Cooper has said that she is urgently considering whether new laws are needed regarding crossbows.<sup>86</sup>

---

<sup>83</sup> Matt Dathan, [‘Yvette Cooper: People feel police aren’t there, that no one is coming’](#), Times (£), 1 July 2024.

<sup>84</sup> Labour Party, [‘Labour Party manifesto 2024’](#), June 2024, p 69.

<sup>85</sup> Akila Quinio and George Parker, [‘Labour plans to force tech giants to compensate online fraud victims’](#), Financial Times (£), 28 June 2024.

<sup>86</sup> Flora Thompson, [‘Tougher crossbow laws considered in bid to prevent violent attacks’](#), Independent, 10 July 2024.



This follows the murders of three women where it has been reported a crossbow was involved on 9 July 2024. In February 2024, the previous government launched a call for evidence to “seek information and evidence about whether further controls on crossbows should be introduced”.<sup>87</sup>

---

<sup>87</sup> Home Office, '[Controls on the use of crossbows on public safety grounds](#)', 14 February 2024.

---

## About the Library

A full list of Lords Library briefings is available on the Library's website.

The Library publishes briefings for all major items of business debated in the House of Lords. The Library also publishes briefings on the House of Lords itself and other subjects that may be of interest to members.

Library briefings are produced for the benefit of Members of the House of Lords. They provide impartial, authoritative, politically balanced information in support of members' parliamentary duties. They are intended as a general briefing only and should not be relied on as a substitute for specific advice.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in Lords Library briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

## Disclaimer

The House of Lords or the authors(s) shall not be liable for any errors or omissions, or for any loss or damage of any kind arising from its use, and may remove, vary or amend any information at any time without prior notice. The House of Lords accepts no responsibility for any references or links to, or the content of, information maintained by third parties.

This information is provided subject to the conditions of the Open Parliament Licence.

Authors are available to discuss the contents of the briefings with Members of the House of Lords and their staff but cannot advise members of the general public.

**Any comments on Library briefings should be sent to the Head of Research Services, House of Lords Library, London SW1A 0PW or emailed to [hlresearchservices@parliament.uk](mailto:hlresearchservices@parliament.uk).**