

Safe and secure communities

This submission is made by Unite, the major UK trade union with over one million members across all sectors of the economy including manufacturing, financial services, transport, food and agriculture, construction, energy and utilities, information technology, service industries, health, local government and the not for profit sector. Unite also organises in the community, enabling those who are not in employment to be part of our union.

- Unite represents workers throughout the justice system including staff who work in prison estates, such as in skilled trades and maintenance, translators who work for the Ministry of Justice and in courts as well as members in the Community and Not-for-Profit sector who work in legal centres, CABx and in legal advice, support and advocacy roles. As a trade union Unite is concerned to secure trade union rights, civil liberties and access to justice for all our members.
- **Unite welcome Labour’s green paper, Ending Violence Against Women and Girls and we echo the measures put forward** in the document including tougher sentencing for all forms of gender based violence, removing legal barriers such as no recourse to public funds which prevent some of the most vulnerable LGBT+, disabled and black Asian ethnic minorities women and girls from accessing justice and recovery services, tougher monitoring and enforcement of social media platforms to target abuse of all kinds including racial abuse and misogyny with sanctions for companies who fail to prevent and remove 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
- Training for teachers to help identify, respond to and support child victims of domestic abuse must also include resources for identifying responding and supporting child victims of FGM, forced marriages and exploitation.
- Unite has negotiated for our members in public sector organisations not to be disciplined when they refuse to engage with “Prevent duty” and provide representation and support for members who are suspected, suspended or in any way affected. We believe this policy should be abolished as it only causes division.
- Labour’s policies provide a starting point in rebuilding a fair, accessible and effective justice system in the UK. **Unite has supported Labour’s commitments to improving the criminal justice system including rebuilding the legal aid system, investment in our police and prisons and commitment to hold public inquiries into the historic injustices such as Orgreave and blacklisting to ensuring that these corrupt practices are consigned to the past.** We call for this to be included in Labour’s next manifesto.

1. What can Labour do to improve early intervention and prevention services in order to address the causes of crime?

Effective crime prevention and intervention requires communities to have trust in the police as community policing requires active involvement and support from the communities policed. However a catalogue of scandals such as [the strip search of child Q](#), [the murder of Sarah Everard](#), [the Charing Cross police scandal](#) and [the behaviour of two police officers following the murders of Nicole Smallman and Bibaa Henry](#) have significantly damaged community police relations, contributing to a crisis of

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confidence in policing across Britain¹. A recent YouGov poll found people in Britain are losing confidence in the police with 53% of respondents stating police are doing a bad job².

Unite call on Labour to introduce initiatives to repair community police relationships this should include;

- Wider reform of police governance and devolution;
- A genuine system of effective independent scrutiny, complaints and ultimately enforcement to prevent such abuses by increasing the resourcing, independence and powers of the IOPC;
- Improve police officer training, specifically in relation to equality and diversity. Unite commend the Mayor of London’s strategic plan for transparency, accountability and trust in the police which includes involving communities by default in police training and setting specific recruitment aims for Black police officers;
- The overuse of covert CCTV recordings is an invasion of privacy and breaches article 8 of the ECHR Act. The increase use of new technology/AI must bear consideration to the private and personal life of employees. Overuse of CCTV at work is just one aspect of the “surveillance state.” The surveillance of workers and their organisations has been going on for years, the current surveillance state has taken a new sinister development with the introduction by the Government of the Covert Human Intelligence Sources (Criminal Conduct) Bill, the *SpyCops Bill* that will give immunity from prosecution for the most serious criminal actions by the undercover secret police in Britain. Unite notes Labour’s amendments to the Bill were defeated in the Lords including the trade union exclusion amendment; there is serious concern this defeat will be taken as carte blanche for infiltration, the police and MI5 paradoxically emboldened by the fact that Parliament expressly repudiated this specific limitation of their powers. Assuming the Spycops Bill becomes law, Unite call on a future Labour Government to apply for an early repeal of the Bill.

Unite also represents police staff who perform many important roles (e.g. scene of crime officers, call takers and dispatchers, sex offender managers, fraud investigators) and have a vital part to play in keeping our communities safe. Police staff in England and Wales have borne the brunt of police funding cuts with a loss of over 16,000 staff between 2010 and 2015. This is a false economy as police staff are often involved in prevention that reduce the need for costlier crime investigation and enforcement. **Unite call for substantial investment in recruitment and training of more police staff to support efforts for crime prevention and early intervention.**

¹ Statement from Sir Michael Barber, the Chair of the Strategic Review of Policing: *“Only fundamental reform can reverse the crisis of confidence in policing”*. Tuesday 22nd February 2022. Link: <https://www.police-foundation.org.uk/news/only-fundamental-reform-can-reverse-the-crisis-of-confidence-in-policing-says-chair-of-strategic-review-of-policing/>

² YouGov: *Confidence in the police sinks in two years*. 15th March 2022. Link: <https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/articles-reports/2022/03/15/confidence-police-sinks-two-years>

Unite oppose the drive by G4S and other private companies who have increasingly sought to take over many police staff services and policies that seek to replace police staff roles with volunteers. **Public services need professional and fairly paid staff and any use of volunteers in public services should be to supplement staff rather than replace them.**

Stop and search

There are serious concerns about the dis-proportionate use of stop and search powers particularly on Black and Asian people; the increase in racial profiling (e.g. through the discriminatory Prevent policy); the use of lethal force by police and the high numbers of deaths in police custody, particularly of people from black or minority ethnic backgrounds and those with mental health problems. Many of these themes have been picked up in the Lammy Review³ and a future Labour Government should follow the Review's recommendations.

2. How can we improve support for victims and enforcement so that communities feel safe and secure in the 21st century?

Workplace safety equals community safety

Unite is committed to finding and supporting solutions to tackle the problem of sexual harassment at work and in our communities. In March 2022 Unite launched its Get Me Home Safely (GMHS) campaign, a cross sector campaign which calls on employers, local authorities, government, bus operators and law enforcement to support the campaign's demands which primarily include employer supplemented safe home transport⁴.

The GMHS campaign is particularly targeted at addressing workplace safety issues faced by women and will tackle gender based violence by developing a host of solutions which include legislative change, workplace organising, training and capacity building. In addition we highlight the plight of the lowest paid workers who are often women and black and ethnic minorities.

The GMHS campaign calls for:

1. An extension to employers' duty of care to embed safe transport home policies for all workers, all risk assessments must include an individual's journey times and hazards once they've left the workplace;
2. Free transport home for staff a prerequisite for all new liquor licenses;
3. Reverse the cuts to funding for public toilets, every bus worker must have access to clean and accessible toilets;

³ The Lammy Review: *An independent review into the treatment of, and outcomes for, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals in the Criminal Justice System*. Published 8th September 2017. Link; https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/643001/lammy-review-final-report.pdf

⁴ Unite Get Me Home Safely campaign: Make Our Communities & Workplaces Safer <https://www.unitetheunion.org/campaigns/get-me-home-safely-campaign/>

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4. Mandatory training for transport workers on gender based violence to include practical guidance on reporting sexual harassment public transport;
5. Clear and operational CCTV on all forms of public transport;
6. Tougher action and enforcement against sexual assault and harassment on public transport;
7. Municipal ownership of buses as a way to tackle the chronic shortage of night services;
8. National minimum standards and for taxi and private hire vehicles and an end cross border hiring.

Unite has met with several Labour MPs, council leaders and Police and Crime Commissioners to engage their support for the GMHS and where possible use their powers to implement the above demands. Unite especially notes the commitments received from the Welsh Labour Government, the Metro Mayors and Labour Police and Crime Commissioners in Northumbria, Wales, West Yorkshire and West Midlands. **Unite call on a future Labour Government to support this campaign and where applicable legislation on the above listed demands.**

Human trafficking and modern day slavery

Unite has been heavily involved in effort to tackle human trafficking, modern day slavery and exposing unscrupulous gangmasters in the agriculture sector. Unite is concerned the Government's 'hostile environment' immigration policy is being used by abusive men to threaten and control women, and the Government's focus on immigration enforcement over support for women is trapping too many women in violent situations. Women who have come to the UK as spouses of UK nationals for example, as refugees, or due to abuse and exploitation as trafficking victims in some cases, are unable to get away from terrible abuse and violence because of their lack of citizenship and individual rights.

Unite rejects the Government's policy of the use of a points based immigration system based on skill and salary thresholds to continue their racist 'hostile environment' policy and make it far more difficult for women than men to obtain a visa to work in the UK. Unite understand a higher proportion of women than men currently work in hospitality, social care, cleaning and catering sectors of the economy. Migrant workers in these sectors should have decent employment rights including the right to join a union which is fundamental for preventing labour exploitation.

Survivor support packages as set out in Labour's green paper must also include support for survivors of human trafficking and modern day slavery with minimum standards set out for support survivors that go beyond the current 45 days of support set out by the government for survivors of modern slavery. This current limitation on the length of support is not only counterproductive for the recovery needs of survivors, it is also a cruel measure which puts survivors at risk of being re-trafficked.

Labour must end the cruel hostile environment policy, remove border controls from our public services and bring human rights and fairness back into our migration system. This racist policy has led to vast levels of injustice and cruelty meted out on not only those people with irregular immigration status but also many British citizens as well. **This disgraceful policy is destroying families and violating human rights, damaging people's health and wellbeing. Unite believes that it must end.**

Unite calls on a future Labour Government to put forward proposals for a fair immigration policy in post Brexit Britain that:

- puts protection of women from violence and abuse before enforcement of immigration controls
- ensures there's a 'firewall' between public services and immigration control so women can get help safely
- expands the 'Destitute Domestic Violence Concession' (a small, temporary measure to help a limited group of migrant women) eligibility criteria to more women and making it last for a longer period
- puts an end to internal immigration checks in workplaces, support services, GP surgeries, hospitals, schools and colleges
- ensures strict enforcement on employers in sectors most exposed to exploitation of migrant labour
- develops strategies for effective regulation including frequent compliance checks, enforcement and penalties to stop abuses by agencies, to end human trafficking and modern day slavery.

3. What should Labour do to tackle violence against women and girls?

Victims of domestic violence

The way in which Universal Credit works means that it is claimed and assessed on a household basis; couples must claim jointly, and they receive their benefit as a single payment. This has huge implications for financial independence, especially for women. Separate payments should be made by default. Universal Credit core payments divided 50/50 (with individual entitlements kept) and the child element going to the main carer.

It is widely noted by organisations such as Respect and Refuge that people experiencing abuse often worry about retaining their job, having access income and gaining economic independence from their abusers. We need a law which will ensure employers provide vital practical support through paid leave, this will be pivotal for workers to secure new, safe accommodation and access support and assistance without the added fear of losing much needed income and employment.

Law in the UK is not adequately supporting people who experience domestic abuse. Whilst internationally we have seen a shift in the Philippines, Italy, Canada and New Zealand, where laws have been introduced that give workers the right to special paid leave for those who are experiencing domestic abuse (and in some cases this leave is also available to carers of survivors).

Unite supported Labour's 2018 manifesto commitment to introduce legislation similar to that in New Zealand, and we call on this commitment to continue in Labour's next manifesto.

Unite believe domestic violence is a workplace issue and workers affected by domestic abuse should be entitled to a minimum of 21 days paid leave at their usual rate of pay with the ability for discretion to take additional days should they be needed. In addition, to enable people to respond to unanticipated responses as they arise, Unite believe there should be no prerequisite for notice to be given in order to take this leave.

In line with the decision at Unite Policy Conference in 2018 and again in 2021, Unite calls on a future Labour to legislate for paid special leave for those affected by domestic abuse.

Increase funding and support for services that deal gender based violence

Services for people escaping violence, and support services for survivors, have faced severe funding cuts that have led to large numbers of closures and moves towards ‘one size fits all’ model of service provision which is inappropriate.

Between 2018 to 2021, rape prosecutions in England and Wales fell by 70%, this despite police forces in England and Wales recently recording the highest ever number of rapes within a 12-month period, though only 1.3% of the recorded rape offences that have been assigned an outcome resulted in a charge or summons⁵. Survivors are being further victimised by a criminal justice system that is denying them access to justice, currently there are more than 12,000 people on Rape Crisis waiting lists, the vast majority waiting for specialist counselling and therapy, this despite Rape Crisis service delivery increasing by 41% over the past year, demand for services far exceeds the funding available and most women in the UK do not have access to a Rape Crisis Centre⁶. Survivors deserve better and we need a criminal justice system and a Government that puts victims first and provides punishment that deters this heinous crime.

Overall a preventative policing strategy involves many vital non-police services such as legal and advice, education, youth work, homeless support, mental health and drug and alcohol services, **as well as victim and survivor support organisations e.g. women’s refuges**. Many of these services are disappearing due to the huge cuts to local government funding. **A future Labour Government must reverse these cuts and implement sustainable funding models to support organisations that deal with rehabilitation, support and prevention of gender based violence.**

4. How can prisons and the probation service be reformed to reduce reoffending?

The failure of UK sentencing and prison policy has led to a rapid rise in the prison population; overcrowding; high levels of suicides and reoffending rates. Not only is this system failing to prevent crime, rehabilitate prisoners or protect the public but is also putting our members who work in prisons at risk as prison conditions have led to increased violence against staff, increasing by 247% in the past decade⁷.

Unite policy on women and justice highlights that for those women who receive short custodial sentences, prison isn’t a deterrent, but it can have devastating effects on families. Therefore we believe working with organisations such as Women in Prison and the Prison Reform Trust will help to

⁵ Home Affairs Select Committee: *Investigation and prosecution of rape – Report*. April 2022. Link: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5802/cmselect/cmhaff/193/summary.html>

⁶ Rape Crisis responds to Home Affairs Committee report on rape investigation and prosecution, and backs calls for better victim support and funding. 12th April 2022. Link; <https://rapecrisis.org.uk/news/rape-crisis-responds-to-home-affairs-committee-report-on-rape-investigation-and-prosecution-and-backs-calls-for-better-victim-support-and-funding/>

⁷ Sky News: *MoJ's own records show assaults on prison staff increased by 247% in past decade, report finds*. 10th August 2021. Link; <https://news.sky.com/story/mojs-own-records-show-assaults-on-prison-staff-increased-by-247-in-past-decade-report-finds-12378222>

find alternatives to custodial sentences for non-violent crimes and reduce women’s imprisonment rates including remand.

Unite believe the profit motive must be removed from our penal system and the State must take back responsibility for running prisons, probation and services within the wider criminal justice system. Despite the prison sector facing huge cuts to funding private companies are able to extract value and pass it on to global parent companies. In some cases, for example, Amey, Unite found this value extraction meant double-digit increases in revenue and profits, and generous increases for directors and senior executives, while hard working prison staff faced pay cuts.

Unite believes that a future Labour Government should pursue all options for this from ending contracts early that are not delivering to the terms and taking back in-house contracts that are due to end. There are numerous examples within other sectors of how this would be possible, particularly within local authorities.

Putting rehabilitation centrally within the service is vital and bringing the service back in house will make it easier to integrate it with wider public services such as mental health services, and the promised National Education Service. There is also an important role for not for profit and charities supporting people who are leaving prison to reduce reoffending.

5. How can Labour increase confidence and access to justice across all communities?

Universal access to public services and social security – the socio-economic impact of the coronavirus crisis demand universal access to public services and social security. Increasing confidence and access to justice for all must include meeting the funding needs of domestic violence and gender based violence providers and removing barriers that prevent migrants from accessing justice, social security and recovery services. Unite call for a scrap of the No Recourse to Public Funds (NPRF) policy

Unite is committed to supporting the right of all EU nationals and other migrant workers living and working in the UK to remain here. Unite stands in solidarity with all peoples and communities threatened by racism, abuse and violence. The Government, politicians and media commentators must exercise responsibility over the use of language– not further poison our political discourse.

Sexual harassment and LGBT+ experiences

As well as key issues highlighted through Unite’s Get me home safely campaign (see above), Unite also believe the voices of LGBT+ people have not been heard clearly enough in discussions around the issue of sexual harassment in the workplace. It is essential that we change this and ensure that the voice and experiences of the LGBT+ community are in the ongoing debate and search for solutions. The TUC carried out a survey “Sexual harassment of LGBT people in the workplace” (2019) the first of its kind on this issue which showed shockingly high levels of sexual harassment and sexual assault. For example:

- Around seven out of ten LGBT+ workers experienced at least one type of sexual harassment at work (68 per cent)
- Almost one in eight LGBT+ women (12 per cent) reported being seriously sexually assaulted or raped at work.
- Approximately two thirds of those who were harassed did not report it

- One in four of those who did not report the harassment as they felt they would have to ‘out’ themselves at work.

The report found that many of the incidents of sexual harassment were linked to the sexualisation of LGBT+ identities and the misconception that these identities solely focus on sexual activity.

People influenced by these stereotypes see being Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Trans as an invitation to make sexualised comments or ask inappropriate questions about an LGBT person’s sex life, particularly if an individual is ‘out’.

Unite the Union’s LGBT+ members call for political action to urgently to put the responsibility for tackling this problem where it belongs – with employers.

Unite call for a future Labour Government to:

- develop stronger legislation that places a new legal duty on employers to prevent sexual harassment, with real consequences for those who don’t comply.
- introduce a new legal duty on employers to take preventative steps to stop sexual harassment happening
- strengthen the role of key regulators such as the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE)
- reintroduce and improve legislation to protect workers from third-party harassment.

Black and Asian ethnic minorities

The BAEM community face unfair prejudices and racial prejudices within society, most significantly since the empowerment of the far right since the Brexit vote in 2016 which in 2018/19 has risen to 103,379 recorded instances of hate crime in England and Wales (Hate Crime, England and Wales 2018/19). The Black Lives Matter movement has helped to highlight the many ways in which Black and Asian people are systematically discriminated against not only in the US but in the UK and across Europe. Giving rise to a greater public understanding of the role and legacy of the slave trade and the prevalence of police brutality, and has also highlighted the huge contribution made by Black and Asian communities across the world.

People everywhere face huge challenges as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and disabled and BAEM people have been affected disproportionately. Labour must ensure that action is taken to address historic wrongs and to invest in new jobs which offer real opportunities to people.

Unite calls on Labour to:

- ensure that we fight for equality impact assessments in all relevant workplace consultations as well as when introducing new policies across all government departments, in particular within the criminal justice system where BAEM are overrepresented and further disadvantaged;
- tackle racism within workplaces and communities via proactive education and campaigning;
- Unite believes the whole labour movement has a role in supporting community organising initiatives to unite against the rise of racism and the far right on our shores and beyond.

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Discussions on preventing gender based violence, racist violence and hate crime need to focus on safeguards for all communities, safeguards for workers and safeguards for industries needing labour. At the core of this Unite believes in the reassertion of collective bargaining and trade union strength, workers make up communities and worker strength is fundamental for safe and secure communities.

For clarifications contact: irina.docarmo@unitetheunion.org