

Reformist reforms vs. abolitionist steps for UK policing

This chart breaks down the difference between reformist reforms which expand the scope of policing, and abolitionist steps that reduce the scale of policing and its detrimental impact. As we fight to decrease the power of policing there are proactive investments we must make in community support and healthcare.

Reformist reforms					
Does this...	Reduce funding to the police?	Challenge the notion that police increase safety?	Reduce powers/tools/tactics/ technology police have?	Reduce the scale of policing?	
BEST USE OF STOP AND SEARCH SCHEME (BUSS)	NO. It increases funding for training and consultants.	NO. It implies that stop and search improves community safety and can be used fairly.	NO. It maintains stop and search while creating a false impression of accountability.	NO. It reduced overall numbers of stops and searches, but increased the proportion experienced by people of colour.	
COMMUNITY POLICING	NO. Police forces use it as an excuse to hire more officers and increase police presence in communities.	NO. It is based on the belief that the violence of policing is caused by a "breakdown of trust" with the community rather than policing itself.	NO. Police are trained in additional tactics and approaches, and given more tools.	NO. It targets 'low level' issues which funnels more people into the criminal punishment system, most often working class people and people of colour.	
MORE TRAINING	NO. More training requires additional funding and resources.	NO. It is based on the assumption that the violence of policing is caused by a lack of training and 'bad apples', rather than policing itself.	NO. It increases the tools and tactics available to police as well as their capacity to use them.	NO. It often co-opts voluntary organisations into co-delivery and expands the social problems to which police are seen as the solution (e.g. mental health crisis).	
NEW SURVEILLANCE TECHNOLOGIES	NO. Surveillance technology requires significant expenditure.	NO. It allows police to refine targeting, and gives the impression of objectivity while entrenching existing patterns of discrimination in policing and in society.	NO. It increases the technological footprint of policing, inviting the use of other technologies and tools.	NO. It creates the illusion of a more "efficient" police force while increasing police reach into people's lives.	
BODY CAMERAS	NO. Equipping police officers with cameras requires more money for police budgets.	NO. They are pitched as making police more accountable increasing the idea that policing "done right," makes people safe.	NO. They provide the police with another tool, increasing surveillance and increasing police impetus to acquire more gadgets.	NO. Despite multiple studies, there is no consistent evidence that they reduce police use of force - they simply increase police surveillance.	
HATE CRIME LEGISLATION	NO. It increases funding for training and consultants.	NO. It reinforces the idea that harm is caused by individual people, rather than institutions, systems and cultural norms, and can be resolved by policing and punishment.	NO. Hate crime legislation is often used by police against communities of colour who already bear the brunt of policing.	NO. It often entangles voluntary sector/community groups into working with police and diverts resources away from preventative measures.	
DIVERSION PROGRAMMES	NO. They help facilitate police demands for increased funding and training.	NO. They reinforce the idea that police are a benign gateway to services and that police are a safe and appropriate response to crisis.	NO. They increase surveillance and use of data to control and punish vulnerable people.	NO. They expand the remit of policing, while entangling service providers and voluntary orgs, when services could be provided without police involvement.	
Abolitionist steps					
Does this...	Reduce funding to the police?	Challenge the notion that police increase safety?	Reduce powers/tools/tactics/ technology police have?	Reduce the scale of policing?	
Withdraw lethal tools and tactics e.g. tasers, pepper/pava spray, spit hoods and firearms	YES. This can increase community-based budgets as money can be redirected away from tools that expand police capacity to exercise violence.	YES. This challenges the notion that we need armed police to keep us safe.	YES. Weapons, trainings and 'security expos' are used to scale up policing infrastructure.	YES. This reduces police capacity to inflict harm when coming into contact with members of the public.	
Scrap policing programmes/ infrastructure that target specific communities e.g. Prevent, Gangs Matrix	YES. It removes costly infrastructure through which communities are surveilled as well as programme-specific police staff.	YES. It affirms that police are not the appropriate institution to address concerns for people who are at risk of violence.	YES. It reduces key tools and rationales that the police use to store data about people and as a basis for criminalising communities.	YES. It reduces the reach of police and surveillance tools in communities and institutions (e.g. universities, schools, youth programmes, etc).	
Scrap, reduce and reject extensions of police power e.g. Coronavirus Bill, Section 60 Stop and Search	YES. When funds and resources to support police in exerting these powers are held back.	YES. By making clear that expansion of police powers are an inappropriate response to health and welfare concerns.	YES. It removes laws through which police power is expanded.	YES. By removing powers that increase the range of circumstances through which police can intrude on people's lives.	
Establish firewalls between all data collected/held by essential services and the police	YES. When funds and resources to support police in processing this data and receiving/making referrals to other agencies are held back.	YES. By making clear that police are not and should not be linked to essential health and welfare services.	YES. It takes away tools police use to surveil and criminalise people and communities and increases community access to essential services.	YES. It limits the ability of police to participate in multi-agency work and to entangle social welfare into policing.	
Repeal laws that criminalise survival e.g. drug, sex work, migration, vagrancy laws	YES. A large amount of police resources are spent policing people in criminalised work or employment, people who use drugs and people with insecure housing.	YES. It challenges the idea that police presence improves the safety of working or living conditions for those criminalised.	YES. It reduces the channels through which police can come into contact with people whose survival is currently criminalised.	YES. It requires that health and welfare issues be addressed outside of policing.	
Scrap the use of pre-criminalising orders i.e. Criminal Behaviour Orders, Knife Crime Prevention Orders	YES. This can increase community-based budgets as money can be redirected away from tools that expand police capacity to surveil and criminalise people.	YES. It shows that police surveilling and criminalising young people does not make them safer.	YES. It removes tools that allow police to surveil and criminalise people at an increasingly young age.	YES. It reduces the reach of policing into young people's lives.	
Prioritise spending on community health, education and affordable housing	YES. Diverting funding away from policing means more resources for health, education and housing.	YES. When we prioritise essential services, we create space to imagine more ways to ensure our wellbeing without relying on policing.	YES. Diverting funding away from policing decreases resources available for police tools and technology.	YES. Decreasing funding for policing decreases the size, scope and capacity of systems of policing.	