

DAVID CAMERON: IT'S TIME TO FIGHT BACK

"Gordon Brown was right. We have to be tough on crime, and tough on the causes of crime.

That was his soundbite. But tragically for our country, that's all it was.

Over the last 10 years, any way you look at it, the causes of crime have got worse.

Family breakdown – worse.

Educational failure – worse.

Welfare dependency – worse.

And over the last 10 years, any way you look at it, our response to crime has got worse.

The police are catching fewer criminals – under Labour detection rates have fallen, and less than a quarter of all crimes are now solved.

Meanwhile prisons have got worse because Gordon Brown wouldn't fund extra places.

Re-offending rates have gone up from 57 per cent to 65 per cent in the last 10 years – that's a terrible record.

And because of Britain's crime crisis and Gordon Brown's refusal to build more prisons, he's having to let criminals out early.

25,000 prisoners are going to get early release because the Government didn't plan properly.

I have said before, and I repeat again today, that in my view, Labour's record on crime is their biggest broken promise.

They have shown that they have no substantial or effective response to the growing problem of crime and disorder on our streets.

They have no substantial or effective response to the growing social breakdown that is steadily diminishing the quality of life for so many of our citizens.

Indeed their principal response has been to deny that the problem exists.

Denying the scale of social breakdown in our country.

Denying the scale and extent of crime and anti-social behaviour.

Denying even that gun crime has gone up.

In the last few days, we have seen ministers distorting statistics, hiding the truth and even congratulating themselves on their response, claiming it is better than in America.

Their attitude is arrogant, complacent and out of touch.

When what this country needs is new ideas and effective action, what we get is the same old Labour and the same old spin.

I think the country deserves better than this.

It's time to draw a line in the sand.

It's time we said enough is enough.

Whether an election comes in two months or two years, today we are showing that only the Conservative Party has the ideas and the determination to make our streets safe.

We are setting out in our document today what a Conservative Government will do to fight back against crime.

What is new about this approach is that it sets out the changes that need to be made across the board – in homes, in schools, in police forces, on the streets and in wider society.

It represents what I have called the Social Covenant – a collective agreement, on the part of all of us, to help make our communities places of safety.

The actions we set out today will have effects immediately, in the medium term and in the long term.

In a moment David Davis will speak about the actions we propose with immediate effects – especially the role of the police in tackling head-on the

crime and anti-social behaviour that blight our towns.

We need greater police presence, greater police freedom, and real penalties against anti-social behaviour.

Nick Herbert will set out the actions we will take with medium term effects – reform to our schools, our drinking laws, the courts and the prisons.

We need real school discipline, licensing that stops underage drinking, swift, effective justice and prisons that work.

But our document also sets out the actions we will take that will have a long term effect, and that's what I'd like to talk about now.

For my part I want to focus on the long term.

Ultimately it is social change that will deliver a real and sustainable fall in crime – families and communities policing themselves, and bringing young people up in a culture that is loving, fair and firm.

A lot of that is down to the parents.

But as I said last week, it's not all down to the parents.

The state and wider society are surrogate parents too, fixing incentives, sending messages, holding up standards of behaviour for the young to follow.

We all have a responsibility – politicians, parents, neighbours, businesses – to make a society that is safe for our country's children.

So today's document explains how we will strengthen families, using the tax and benefit system and new rights to flexible working.

It explains our approach to welfare reform – using independent providers, especially local ones, to help find long-term jobs for the unemployed.

And it sets out our view on popular culture – that the companies which make music videos, films and computer games have a social responsibility not to promote casual violence, the gang culture and the degradation of women.

Today I am calling on the country to fight back.

We must fight back against the gangs, the guns and the graffiti.

We must fight back against the drugs, the danger and the disorder.

Above all, we must fight back against the attitude that treats rising crime as inevitable...

...that treats social breakdown as an irreversible fact of modern life...

...that despairs of ever making our streets safe and civilised places to be.

It is time to fight back against crime, and the fightback starts here."