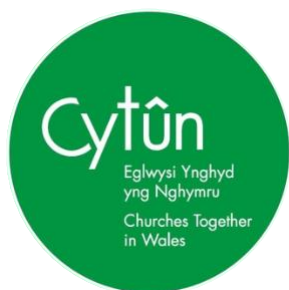


Police and Crime Commissioner Election 2021 Guide



Updated March 2021
by Rodney Coker

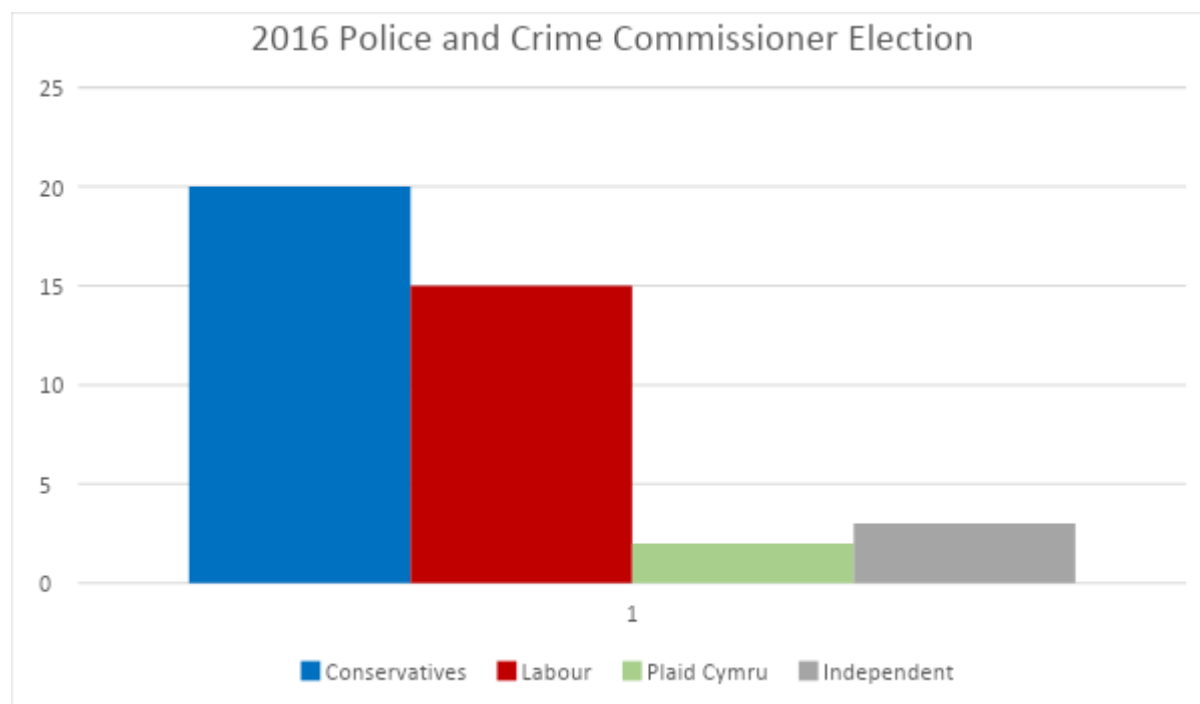
Police and Crime Commissioner Election 2021 Guide

Policing is a top priority for many families around England and Wales. The election of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) provides us with the opportunity to elect new PCCs who will work with communities to ensure our safety into the future. Yet turnout in Police and Crime Commissioner elections has been historically low. So why should we engage with these elections? Here is a brief guide into the powers and responsibilities of PCCs and the key issues of importance to voters.

What am I voting for?

History

The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 marked the transfer of control of police forces in England and Wales, resulting in 40 Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) replacing police authorities outside London. The Mayor of London assumes the role of Police and Crime Commissioner in London.



What powers and responsibilities do Police and Crime Commissioners have?

PCCs are responsible for setting the police budget. They determine how much we pay towards policing from council tax, which is added to the funding from the UK Government. They also decide how the combination of that money is spent.

PCCs are required to hold Chief Constables to account for the way in which they exercise their functions and those under their control. This helps to ensure the Chief Constable in the relevant area is delivering an effective and efficient police service. The appointment of Chief Constables is the responsibility of PCCs.

The PCC also brings together Criminal Justice Partners at a local and national level to work on formulating and implementing strategies that will reduce crime.

PCCs' commissioning and grant-making powers are pivotal in aiming to tackle crime prevention and reduction, and ensuring support for victims and the most vulnerable in society.

PCCs are required to publish their Police and Crime Plan within days of taking office. This plan covers their full term in office and is set out after consulting local people and identifying local priorities.

How does the voting work?

PCC elections take place every four years (the 2021 elections were postponed from 2020). Those registered to vote at local elections are eligible to vote for PCCs in their areas. The Supplementary Vote system is used.

There are two columns on a ballot paper. Voters can mark an X in the first column for their first-choice candidate and another X in the second column for their second choice. A candidate who receives more than 50% of the first preference votes on the first count is elected.

If no candidate reaches 50% in the first round, the two candidates with the highest number of votes are retained. The ballot papers showing a first preference for eliminated candidates are checked for their second preference. Any second preference votes for the two remaining candidates are then added to the candidates' first preference votes. The candidate with the most votes then wins.

What are the big issues in these elections?

- 1. Domestic abuse** can happen to any individual regardless of age or gender. It can be financial, emotional, physical and coercive control. Many areas have reported their highest increases in levels of reported domestic abuse crime during Covid lockdowns. Prosecution levels are low and there is need for the support of prosecuting perpetrators and raising awareness and the pathway of support available to victims. PCCs can join with partner organisations to work with families and perpetrators to devise preventative approaches, and challenge the myths and stereotypes about the victims and survivors of domestic abuse.
- 2. Drugs and Alcohol misuse:** Substance abuse can be linked to crime and anti-social behaviour and therefore causes harm not only to the individual but also to the wider community. Cannabis continues to remain the most commonly used drug in the UK. Admissions to hospitals relating to drug misuse continue to

increase rapidly in deprived areas, and PCCs can develop systems to routinely engage with those suffering from drug or alcohol abuse to understand their experiences and improve the substance abuse strategies in operation.

- 3. Hate crime** is any incident which is, or is perceived to be, motivated by prejudice based on a person's disability, race, religion, gender identity or sexual orientation, as well as other elements of an individual's identity. Whilst no one should be living in fear and anxiety about the consequences of the hate crime they receive, many do. Many communities are keen for social media, political and institutional decision makers to act in order to strengthen hate crime protections. PCCs can ensure that all Hate Incident Reporting Centres are publicised through coordinated communications to raise awareness and build confidence to report incidents of hate crime.
- 4. Road safety** is a significant issue for our communities and is frequently raised as a concern by members of the public. Road safety covers a spectrum of issues from inconsiderate parking to dangerous driving, but the number of people killed or seriously injured on the road is a major concern. There were 1,580 reported road deaths and 131,220 casualties in 2020, which have decreased from the previous year. However, such trends in reported casualties in the UK have been impacted by the national restrictions implemented from March 2020 onwards following the Coronavirus pandemic. PCCs can provide resources that will encourage the police to promote improved driver and road user behaviour.

5. Serious violence can have a devastating impact on the lives of individuals, their families, and the communities where they live. Organised crime, serious violence, and the use of weapons are often interlinked, and in combination they can destroy lives. It is particularly disturbing to see the rapid increase in knife crime and the number of young people that have fallen victim to such acts. Understanding the scale and nature of serious violence will be key in determining the preventative measures needed. PCCs can work with services to encourage service integration to enable consistent and effective services across your areas to victims and those at risk of harm.

6. Modern Slavery: There are estimated to be around 136,000 adult and child victims of slavery in the UK, and the number is rising each year.

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is intended to ensure that suspected victims are cared for whilst their cases are investigated. Many people wait several years for a decision to be made, and rates of prosecution for the crime of slavery are extraordinarily low. Currently NRM data is not disaggregated for each county, so the facts about crimes committed, risks to the community and numbers of referrals are difficult to find.

Much of the support given to slavery victims in the NRM is administered by voluntary organisations contracted within the Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract. Whilst it is important to maintain the security of vulnerable victims, it is very difficult for churches and community groups who are not contract-holders to offer additional support, due to difficulty obtaining information about numbers and locations of victims in their area.

PCCs have a role in prioritising and co-ordinating work to detect modern slavery, in raising public awareness, and in encouraging communication between local organisations keen to offer support to victims.

Questions for candidates

Whilst priority issues may vary depending on your area, here are some questions you may choose to ask Police and Crime Commissioner candidates standing for election.

1. How do you intend to take into account within your approach the insights of people with lived experience of domestic abuse?
2. What locally developed programmes would you opt for to ensure young people are provided with the tools to better manage conflict and peer pressure to avoid serious violence?
3. What do you plan to be your main contribution to improving the performances of the services that you will lead, fund or influence?
4. How are you going to ensure that your accountability to the public is examined more than once every four years?
5. What priority will you give to detecting and prosecuting cases of Modern Slavery in your area? How will you help to reduce the backlog of cases in the system, currently awaiting decisions?

Contact

We would like to know how this guidance was useful and what should be added or changed for future publications.

If you have questions, suggestions or comments please write to:

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