

Speech by Sarah Newton M.P.

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Over the last twenty years, crime has fallen across the Western world. In the UK and elsewhere, we have seen dramatic falls in 'traditional' high volume crimes, like burglary and street violence. But crime and criminality are changing. The internet and new technology offer criminals, particularly organised criminals, the scope to offend on an unprecedented scale and across jurisdictions. And there is an urgent need to do more to tackle the victimisation of vulnerable people through crimes that have often been under-reported in the past, such as domestic abuse, child abuse and modern slavery.

There is no doubt that better crime prevention contributed significantly to the sharp falls in 'traditional' crimes in recent years. Improving security, particularly car and home security, and targeted crime prevention advice have certainly had an impact on overall crime levels. We must understand what worked previously and apply that rationale to tackle new, emerging or previously hidden crime types and at the same time, we should update our approach as fraud and cybercrime mean different kinds of offenders - often operating from outside the country - targeting different kinds of victims.

Just over a year ago in March 2016, we launched a ***Modern Crime Prevention Strategy***, which sets out this Government's thinking in more detail. The strategy is based on six key drivers of crime – opportunity, character, the effectiveness of the Criminal Justice System, profit, drugs and alcohol – and contains proposals to make crime harder to commit in certain situations or in relation to certain products, and less profitable for criminals. It brings to bear the latest techniques – from behavioural economics to data analytics – and seeks collaboration from a wide variety of partners including government, law enforcement, businesses and the public. Changing crime means a fundamental shift in crime prevention - a wide range of partners, and the public themselves, have a key role to play and we need to support citizens and communities to get more involved in crime prevention.

CYBER / FRAUD

According to the Crime Survey for England and Wales, there were an estimated 3.5 million fraud incidents and 1.9 million computer misuse incidents (5.4 million in total) in the year ending December 2016. We need to promote our Cyber Aware campaign - encouraging individuals and businesses to take responsibility. We all have a responsibility to be more cyber aware and this can be done through a series of simple, protection actions. Neighbourhood Watch have been supportive of this so far in extending our reach and credibility at a local level and we want to continue this. I also want to highlight the support you have provided to

Thames Valley and Lancashire Police in piloting approaches that enable law enforcement, local partners and business to work together to protect vulnerable groups from cyber and fraud, and ensuring potential victims are equipped with the knowledge to be more secure online. This collaboration is helping Cyber Aware to better target hard to reach groups and ensure local measures are aligned with local victims' needs and aftercare.

SAFEGUARDING THE VULNERABLE

In the Home Office we're looking at how we can strengthen our approach to protecting vulnerable older people from abuse and exploitation. Whilst it is hard to know the true scale of this abuse, much of which will be hidden, estimates suggest that 300,000 older people or more experience abuse in private households each year, and research by Age UK suggests that 53% of those 65+ believe they have been targeted by scammers.

We know that social isolation and loneliness can be a main factor in making older people more vulnerable to a range of problems, from health issues to becoming a victim of crime, abuse or exploitation. In ensuring that we protect the most vulnerable including the young and the old, we know that older people can be particularly vulnerable to certain types of abuse and exploitation and that, if they become victims, they can face additional barriers in seeking support. Up to 500,000 older people are abused each year, either in their own homes or in care homes and over half of people over 65 believe they have been targeted for fraud. Charities and networks like Neighbourhood Watch have a key role to play in highlighting the different kinds of abuse and neglect that can affect older people, including domestic abuse, financial abuse and care home abuse. We need to continue to tackle the culture of denial and harmful attitudes in society which lead to people turning a blind eye to abuse or not recognising when it is occurring.

I am delighted that Neighbourhood Watch is also working with the Home Office to increase understanding and reporting of domestic abuse. This Government is determined to build a society that does not tolerate domestic abuse, in which victims and their families feel safe and supported in seeking help, and where perpetrators are dealt with effectively. This Government has plans to introduce a new Domestic Abuse Bill, but legislation can only ever be one part of the solution.

The provisions in the Bill will be accompanied by a programme of non-legislative measures including the appointment of a new Domestic Violence and Abuse Commissioner, to stand up for victims and survivors, including raising public awareness through community groups and advocacy. We think Neighbourhood Watch has a key role to play in alerting households to what constitutes domestic abuse including violence, financial control, verbal abuse and emotional harm. Without domestic abuse being properly understood and recognised we will not be able to provide victims with the support they are entitled to receive.

RECENT EVENTS AND NEED FOR COMMUNITIES TO COME TOGETHER

This country has faced a number of awful incidents in recent weeks which have affected the whole nation - including the Grenfell Tower fire and the terrorist attacks in Manchester and London. In the face of such horrors, time and again we have seen our communities come together, demonstrating unwavering acts of kindness and generosity in support of their neighbours. The terrorist acts have in particular highlighted that we have a responsibility to protect the public from all of the harms which extremists pose to our society. This is why the Government is establishing a powerful new Commission for Countering Extremism which will play a key role in supporting communities to identify and confront extremism. Within its grassroots and being at the heart of communities - Neighbourhood Watch is all about working with communities, standing up for our fundamental values, supporting integration and striving to defeat extremism and can play a crucial part in supporting future efforts to stamp out extremism in this country.

WHAT CAN NHWN CONTRIBUTE INCLUDING THROUGH ITS NETWORKS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Neighbourhood Watch has an incredibly impressive reach into millions of households. But how can you extend and diversify your networks to ensure that it is as attractive to the young as the old and to communities with high crime rates as well as those with low crime rates? Some of the planning for the future will require it to work through established community networks such as The Big Lunch and the government supported Company of Community Organisers as well as developing new partnerships with charities such as the youth volunteering charity V-Inspired to ensure its appeal to young people. We know a lot about who does and doesn't volunteer and where the opportunities are and the challenge to Neighbourhood Watch is to adapt its offer to ensure continued support from all parts of the community.

The ***Modern Crime Prevention Strategy*** recognises Character as one of the key drivers of crime and explicitly recognises the benefits that volunteering can bring to shaping 'good citizens'. It also recognises the benefits achieved through developing positive interactions between young people and the police (for example through the Volunteer Police Cadets). The very act of volunteering can help to prevent an individual from committing crime in the future by encouraging them to make positive choices and building a commitment to the community. Neighbourhood Watch has a very powerful role to play in this respect by helping and encouraging volunteering, and in turn, helping to tackle and prevent crime.

I thank you for all your hard work and enthusiasm in Neighbourhood Watch and I look forward to continuing the strong relationship with the Home Office that has grown over the years we have worked together.

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