

# Kevan Jones MP

Member of Parliament for North Durham



Parliamentary Update

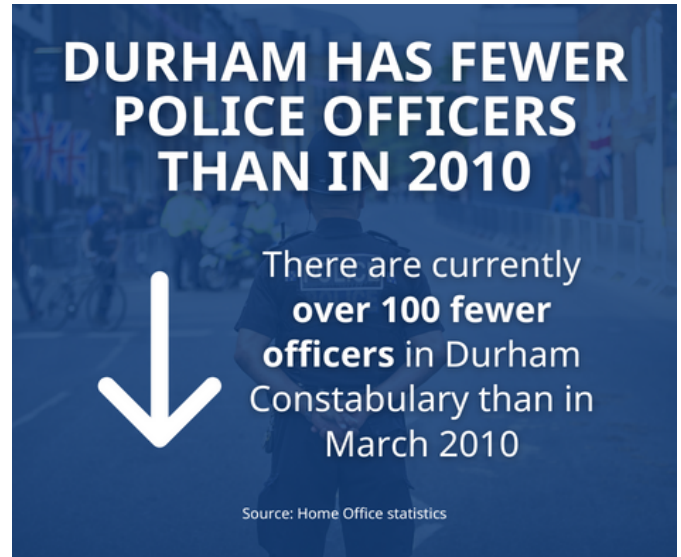
April 2023

## Police officer numbers

On 26 April, the Government announced that it had met its target of recruiting 20,000 new police officers across the country. These replace many officers lost since 2010 due to central government budget cuts.

However, despite this recent recruitment, here in County Durham we actually have **fewer officers than we had in 2010**. In March 2010 there were 1,507 officers in Durham Constabulary. Today, there are 1,379. This reduction is even greater when you consider the increased population.

It will also take new officers time to gain knowledge and experience. Across the country, a third of officers currently have fewer than five years' experience.



## Finance Bill

On 18-19 April, MPs debated the Finance Bill, which implements Budget measures. I voted against the Bill because I do not believe it will help the economy grow or ease the cost of living crisis. Taxes have risen 24 times in the last few years. Yet the one tax cut in the Finance Bill only benefits the top 1% of pension savers, costing £1 billion a year.

These changes will supposedly encourage doctors to return to work after early retirement. But the British Medical Association says a bespoke scheme for NHS doctors could cost as little as £32 million.

I voted to require the Chancellor to review the impact of his proposed changes and to recommend an alternative approach targeted at NHS doctors. Sadly, the Government used its majority to defeat this proposal.

To support the NHS, I believe the Government should abolish non-domicile tax status, which allows some people to shelter their income from abroad from UK taxes. Ending non-dom tax status could be used to fund the largest NHS workforce expansion in a generation.

## Postmasters compensation

The Horizon Compensation Advisory Board on which I sit asked the Department for Business and Trade to change the GLO scheme guidance to ensure that £10,000 is not seen as limit on compensation awards for stigma.

On 26 April, the Government announced that it accepted this recommendation and would change the guidance. The independent panel will decide cases based on fairness and it is likely that the hardest cases will now get significantly more than £10,000 for stigma.



## Court backlogs

On 19 April, the Leader of the Opposition Keir Starmer used Prime Minister's Questions to highlight how violent criminals are going free because of record court backlogs.

Crown Courts in England and Wales ended last year with a backlog of 61,737 cases, which is the highest year-end figure on record.

I believe more legal specialists should be allowed to serve as crown prosecutors to help clear the courts backlog.

## Defence Committee

On 18 April, the Defence Committee, on which I sit, took evidence from Professor Malcolm Chalmers and Professor Michael Clarke from the Royal United Services Institute on the Integrated Review refresh.

I raised the issue of defence spending, specifically day-to-day spending such as that which goes to our armed forces personnel.

The Government is cutting day-to-day defence spending in real terms over the next few years.

Over 40,000 troops have been cut since 2010 and the Government's current plan is to impose further cuts of nearly 10,000 by reducing the Army to 73,000.

Professor Chalmers noted the 'significant reduction' in personnel in his response to my question and said that squeezed armed forces wages was one of the reasons there had not been even more personnel cuts.

You can view a clip of the exchange here: [fb.com/KevanJonesMP](https://fb.com/KevanJonesMP)

## Voter ID

For the first time, those going to the polls on 4 May for local elections in England will need to provide photo ID.

[Hope Not Hate](#) recently contacted me to warn that over a quarter of people in North Durham do not know about this new rule.

On 27 April, a Minister was called to the House of Commons to answer an urgent question about the arrangements that are in place to record the number of voters who turn up to a polling station and are denied a vote because they are not in possession of valid ID.

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I hope this parliamentary update has been of interest.

Best wishes,

**Rt Hon Kevan Jones MP**



## Get in touch

*If you are a constituent and need help or would like to arrange an appointment, please contact me.*

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