



Metin Enver, Managing Editor

Editorial - July 2010

Saint Nick?

I'm not sure what was least surprising; England being knocked out of the World Cup in a spectacular defeat by Germany, or the new coalition government calling for a 25 percent reduction in all government department spending.

Within 24 hours of the Chancellor's budget statement, the police minister, Nick Herbert, took to the stage at right-wing think-tank Policy Exchange. With baited breath an audience of criminal justice professionals waited to hear what is on the cards.

Rather than speculate on where the axe may fall in the policing and criminal justice budget, the minister took the opportunity to lay out the new coalition government's stall on a number of issues.

What struck me though was a line towards the end of his speech. He made the point that we should aim to have the same level of confidence in our criminal justice system as we do in the NHS. And that perhaps the time had come to tell the public that it is not an unaccountable criminal justice system, but a criminal justice service, which exists to serve and protect them as much as it exists to serve the interests of justice.

Well, I couldn't agree more – it is a service – and I trust the minister will remember this when it comes to future methods devised to judge the effectiveness of policing. For far too long it has all been about quantity. How many, how quickly, how much – we've had a sausage machine system that not only lets down the public, the victims of crime and police officers, it also lets down offenders.

It is time we started to look at the quality of service provided. It's time to put some common sense back into policing. No more gimmicks, no more sound bite political judgments that hamper policing. Instead, let's have a system that respects and values the discretion with which you police; a system that understands that victims of crime want justice and a system that ensures justice is appropriately delivered.

Could it be that after years of banging our heads against the wall, we have finally found political leaders who will tackle the menace of persistent offenders? And then, for those persistent offenders who blight and damage so many lives – well, they think it's all over, it is now.

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