

Restore our civil liberties

*We will scale back Labour's database state and protect the privacy of the public's information.
We will introduce a balanced approach to the retention of people's DNA and reform the criminal records system so it protects children without destroying trust.*

Labour have subjected Britain's historic freedoms to unprecedented attack. They have trampled on liberties and, in their place, compiled huge databases to track the activities of millions of perfectly innocent people, giving public bodies extraordinary powers to intervene in the way we live our lives.

The impact of this has been profound and far-reaching. Trust has been replaced by suspicion. The database state is a poor substitute for the human judgement essential to the delivery of public services. Worse than that, it gives people false comfort that an infallible central state is looking after their best interests. But the many scandals of lost data, leaked documents and database failures have put millions at risk. It is time for a new approach to protecting our liberty.

Protect our freedoms

Labour's approach to our personal privacy is the worst of all worlds – intrusive, ineffective and enormously expensive. We will scrap ID cards, the National Identity Register and the Contactpoint database. **To protect our freedoms from state encroachment and encourage greater social responsibility, we will replace the**

Human Rights Act with a UK Bill of Rights.

We will review and reform libel laws to protect freedom of speech, reduce costs and discourage libel tourism.

Wherever possible, we believe that personal data should be controlled by individual citizens themselves. We will strengthen the powers of the Information Commissioner to penalise any public body found guilty of mismanaging data. We will take further steps to protect people from unwarranted intrusion by the state, including:

- cutting back intrusive powers of entry into homes, which have been massively extended under Labour;
- curtailing the surveillance powers that allow some councils to use anti-terrorism laws to spy on people making trivial mistakes or minor breaches of the rules;
- requiring Privacy Impact Assessments of any proposal that involves data collection or sharing; and,
- ensuring proper Parliamentary scrutiny of any new powers of data-sharing.

The indefinite retention of innocent people's DNA is unacceptable, yet DNA data provides a useful tool for solving crimes. We will legislate to make sure that our DNA database is used primarily to store information about those who are guilty of committing crimes rather than those who are innocent. We will collect the DNA of all existing prisoners, those under state supervision who have been convicted of an offence, and anyone convicted of a serious recordable offence. We pushed the Government to end the permanent retention of innocent people's DNA, and we will change the guidance to give people on the database who have been wrongly accused of a minor crime an automatic right to have their DNA withdrawn.

We believe that people working in positions of trust with children should go through a proper criminal record check. But Labour's new system goes too far. So we will review the criminal records and 'vetting and barring' regime and scale it back to common sense levels.

The Hunting Act has proved unworkable. A Conservative government will give Parliament the opportunity to repeal the Hunting Act on a free vote, with a government bill in government time.