

Resisting increases in police funding: Money that could be better spent on communities

Northern Police Monitoring Project, Jan 2025

[Up to £19.5 billion is set to be spent on policing](#) in England and Wales in the coming financial year.¹ This funding comes from a combination of central government grants and a council tax contribution known as the ‘police precept’, which households are required to pay to support local policing. [In the 2025-26 year, council tax is set to rise by £330 million to fund policing across England and Wales.](#)

On the 27th January 2025, Greater Manchester Combined Authority’s (GMCA) *Police, Fire and Crime Panel* will decide whether to approve another increase in the police precept tax for Greater Manchester. If approved, this rise will amount to an additional [£13.1 million in funding for Greater Manchester Police \(GMP\), bringing the total police precept contribution to £220 million](#). Combined with funding from the central government, this would raise GMP’s overall annual budget to £863.2 million. Meanwhile, [council tax for other vital services is set to be frozen this year](#).

Despite consistent public consultation feedback showing that the majority of respondents do not support it, GMCA has increased the police precept for households in Greater Manchester every year since at least 2021. In 2021, only [34% supported the police precept rise](#), followed by [just 23% in 2022](#), [38% in 2023](#), and [26% in 2024](#). This year’s [public consultation is open](#) between 6th January and 17th January.

Given this lack of public support—and in the context of widespread economic hardship, including rising living costs, escalating energy bills, and crumbling public services—it is time to rethink our approach to community safety. Given the ineffectiveness of and harms caused by policing, we must explore alternative ways to invest in community safety and well-being. Rejecting the proposed precept increase is a necessary first step.

Rethinking our reliance on police (and prisons)

The police have long been framed as a solution to wide ranging social problems, with policing typically serving as the entry point into the criminal legal system, funnelling people—many of

¹ The next financial year runs from April 1 2025 to March 31 2026.

whom face social, economic, and health challenges—into prisons that fail to address the root causes of harm. Yet, despite the expansion of policing and a [significant rise in the prison population over recent decades](#), as the researcher and former youth worker Dr. Adam Elliott-Cooper observes, ["we haven't seen any improvement in public safety or reduction in harm."](#) This is because police and prisons focus on the symptoms of deeper issues rather than addressing their root causes. [A report by Public Health Wales and Bangor University](#), for instance, found that over 80% of men in prison have experienced childhood adversity, such as abuse, neglect, or domestic violence. Similarly, an NHS England-commissioned report found that at least 90% of [people in prison struggle with mental health problems or addiction](#).

These findings underscore how deep-rooted social and health inequalities—shaped by interlocking factors of race, class, gender, and disability—determine who is policed and imprisoned. The police are ill-equipped to address these underlying issues. Instead of providing care and support, they respond with punishment, often worsening the very issues they are called to resolve. The [police themselves report spending between 20–40% of their time responding to mental health-related incidents](#)—tasks for which they are fundamentally ill-suited to handle. Worse still, the police do not just fail to fix the problems—they also actively cause harm.

Policing in Greater Manchester

Whilst policing is consistently shown to be ineffective and harmful overall, GMP warrant particular scrutiny for their documented failures and widespread harms. The 2024 Baird Inquiry—an independent investigation into the experiences of women and girls in GMP custody—uncovered, in the words of Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham, [‘examples of extremely poor, indefensible and inhumane treatment’ by GMP](#). The Inquiry [detailed evidence of](#) unlawful arrests and detentions; inappropriate and traumatising strip searches, including of victims of sexual abuse; systemic failures in supporting people who are vulnerable; and deeper cultural issues within the force.

The Baird report was far from the only cause for concern in 2024. A series of troubling incidents further exposed GMP's failings. For example, a former [GMP officer was convicted of sexually assaulting a six-year-old girl](#) while on duty responding to a domestic incident, as well as six counts of creating child abuse images. [A former detective from GMP's serious crime division was found guilty of misconduct in public office and supplying Class A drugs](#). He had previously pled guilty to multiple other charges, including possession of cocaine, possession of ammunition

without a firearm certificate, theft of cocaine, conspiracy to commit misconduct in public office, and unauthorised access to police computer systems. Four former GMP officers were placed under investigation for gross misconduct relating to, what the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) described as, one of the [‘worst miscarriages of justice in British history’](#). Meanwhile, [footage also circulated of a police officer kicking and stamping on a man’s head at Manchester airport](#). These are but a few of the high profile stories from 2024, but are symptomatic of a force described as [‘institutionally corrupt’](#).

Despite research showing that [stop-and-search has little effect on deterring or disrupting crime](#), GMP increased their use of stop-and-search powers at a rate of [25 times higher than the national average between 2021 and 2023](#). [Black residents have expressed anger](#) at continuing to be disproportionately targeted. Racial disproportionality extends across other aspects of GMPs practices. For example, a 2021 [report by Resistance Lab](#) found that in 2018/19, Black people in Greater Manchester were subject to Taser usage at nearly 4 times the rate of white people. Additionally, a recent report published by the IOPC confirmed that [a record high number of road traffic fatalities involving GMP](#) took place in 2021/22, with a disproportionate number of the drivers killed being Black, Brown, or from Gypsy, Roma or Traveller communities.

GMP has also faced accusations of financial mismanagement, notably over [its failed £27 million iOPS computer system, which was deemed unfit for purpose](#) by the force’s Chief Constable. While much more could be written about the troubling practices of GMP, it is clear that there is substantial evidence raising serious concerns about providing the force with additional funding.

Noting the reliance of those in power on police and prisons as solutions to social problems—and the harm caused by GMP and forces across the country—a different approach is needed. This new approach should be bold enough to prioritise long-term solutions over short-term fixes. It can begin by rejecting the proposed precept tax increase. While this tax increase represents only 1.57% of the overall annual budget for GMP, its rejection would carry symbolic importance far beyond its financial impact. To be clear, rejecting the precept increase would not mean that £13.1 million is immediately redistributed; it would simply leave the money in the hands of the people of Greater Manchester. Our aim is to inspire a conversation about how such money could be invested in the future to build a city rooted in care rather than punishment. £13.1 million, if used wisely, could go a long way to shifting power from the punitive to the caring. This is an opportunity for GMCA to take seriously the much-repeated claim, once featured in Burnham’s manifesto, that ‘we do things differently here.’

Alternative investment in safer communities

If we are serious about using public funds effectively and ensuring community safety, we must move beyond policing and explore alternative approaches that address harm and its root causes. [Investing in education, mental health services, affordable housing and community-led initiatives not only reduces the harms that exist in our communities](#), but also builds and strengthens communities. By addressing the social conditions and structural inequalities that contribute to harm, we can create safer neighbourhoods and reduce our reliance on punitive policing models, which—as noted above—often exacerbate harm.

Whilst the development of alternative models should be guided by meaningful dialogue within our communities in Greater Manchester (unlike the GMCA's track record on 'consultation' around the precept), we share some initial ideas for alternative investment below that we hope might serve as inspiration. For this purpose, we have focused on the 1.57% increase to GMP's total budget which stems from the proposed precept rise. [This figure—£13.1 million](#)— is what the *Greater Manchester Police, Fire and Crime Panel* will vote on the 27th January 2025.

To reiterate, rejecting the police precept increase would not result in the immediate redistribution of these funds. Instead, it would mean that the people of Greater Manchester are not subject to the tax increase. Our aim here is to use this modest figure to imagine and inspire conversations about how such resources could be better allocated in the future. £13.1 million represents a very small portion of the overall GMP budget and, therefore, a very small reduction—and eventual redistribution—of the power and resources of the police. In this sense, we are asking very little of GMCA, yet the symbolic and transformative potential of such a decision should not be underestimated.

Based on this figure of £13.1 million, and using indicative and relatively conservative estimates, the following three examples provide just some illustration of how such money could be better invested:

1. Invest in housing for people who are homeless

£13.1 million could fund housing programmes in Greater Manchester by supporting approximately 1,350 homeless individuals. This would cover stable and affordable

accommodation, wraparound support services, and administrative expenses—² benefitting about 8% of the estimated homeless population in Greater Manchester.³

[Homelessness links with poverty, mental health challenges, and addiction—factors that often result in police intervention.](#) By providing stable and affordable housing alongside tailored support, housing programmes could address the root causes of homelessness, reducing the need for reactive measures. Permanent housing with integrated support services [has been shown to significantly reduce homelessness while improving mental and physical health outcomes.](#) Additionally, such interventions decrease reliance on emergency services, including the police. Investing in housing not only enhances individual well-being but also contributes to safer, healthier communities by tackling social issues at their core.

2. School-based counselling and support

£13.1 million could fund 290 school counsellors annually, at an estimated cost of £45,104 per school counsellor. This includes gross salary (£28,000), national insurance (£3,864), pension contributions (£2,240), costs for supervision/training (£2,000), and administrative overheads (£9,000).⁴

In the context of a crisis in young people's mental health—[and with poor mental health linked to criminalisation](#)—investing in school-based counselling can have transformative impacts. School counsellors can intervene in cases of trauma, conflict, and behavioural challenges, giving children the support they need before issues escalate. [This approach has been shown to reduce exclusion rates, improve mental health](#) and academic outcomes, and better equip young people to navigate future challenges. By fostering a

² The average annual cost per person for Housing First in the UK - a model which prioritises providing stable housing along with support services without any preconditions - is estimated at £9,683, covering accommodation, support services, and administrative expenses. Therefore, an investment of £13.1 million could support approximately 1,353 individuals through the Housing First model. This does not necessarily represent an endorsement of Housing First but is indicative of costs.

³National housing charity Shelter estimated that there were 16,500 homeless people in Greater Manchester in December 2024.

⁴ The average salary for school counsellors in the UK is £26,733 (Indeed, 2024). Employer contributions to National Insurance are calculated at 13.8% of earnings above the threshold, and pension contributions are typically at a rate of 8% of gross salary. Additional costs for professional supervision (BACP recommends 1.5 hours per month at £40–£70/hour) and mandatory training, such as safeguarding and CPD, are estimated at £1,000–£2,000 per year. Administrative overheads, including private workspace, scheduling, safeguarding compliance, and record-keeping, contribute approximately £5,000–£8,000 annually to the total cost of employment.

safe and supportive school environment, counsellors enhance individual well-being and contribute to healthier, more connected communities over time.

3. Invest in Youth Centres and Youth Workers

£13.1 million could fund 40 fully staffed youth centres for one year, at an annual cost of £200,000 per centre, and provide 146 additional youth workers across Greater Manchester. Each youth centre's costs include staff salaries, operational expenses, and resources for delivering structured programmes and safe spaces for young people. Youth workers, at an estimated annual cost of £35,000 each, include gross salary, pension contributions, National Insurance, and training and administrative support.⁵

Research consistently shows that investing in youth services benefits young people and their communities in the long term and reduces harmful behaviours. Youth centres offer safe spaces for young people to engage in social activities, receive mentoring and develop critical life skills. [Community-led youth programmes are associated with lower rates of crime](#), improved mental health, and better educational outcomes. By tailoring support and creating opportunities for personal growth, youth centres and workers equip young people to build brighter futures for themselves, benefiting individuals and society as a whole.

These are but three suggestions that should be seen as starting points rather than definitive solutions. School counsellors and youth workers, like other professionals, are not immune from perpetuating harms and inequalities, or engaging in punitive police-like practices. The suggestions here are also all state-centred and there is scope for more imaginative and radical interventions—ones that shift funding away from state institutions and place resources more fully under the control of local communities. The limitations of these alternatives must be part of a broader community dialogue about meaningful social change.

What next? A call to action

⁵ The annual cost of £200,000 per youth centre includes staff salaries, rent, utilities, program resources, and administrative overheads. Staff salaries account for a significant portion of the cost, with typical youth worker salaries ranging from £25,000 to £30,000 (according to Talent.com). Operational costs include rent and utilities (approximately £30,000–£50,000 annually) and program resources (approximately £10,000–£20,000 per year). Youth worker costs are estimated at £35,000 per worker annually, which includes gross salary (approximately £27,500), National Insurance contributions (13.8% of earnings above the threshold), pension contributions (8% of salary), and additional costs for training, supervision, and administrative support (approximately £2,000 per year). This estimate aligns with UK youth service budget data and common employer cost structures.

- **Complete the consultation** - We encourage you to complete GMCA's consultation, voting to reject the police precept tax increase by 17th January using [this link](#).
- **Attend the *Greater Manchester Police, Fire and Crime Panel* meeting** - This is the meeting where the precept will be discussed and voted upon. It is scheduled to take place on Monday 27th January at 1pm. It is currently listed to take place at: The Tootal Buildings, Broadhurst House, 1st Floor, 56 Oxford Street, Manchester, M1 6EU. [Keep an eye on this webpage for updates or changes](#).
- **Write to the *Greater Manchester Police, Fire and Crime Panel* members** - You can contact members of the panel to share your views and encourage them to vote against the precept tax increase. Details of the panel are available [here](#).

