**Criminal justice reform: A revolution on the American right**

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**US conservative and justice reformer Pat Nolan lays out the shift towards rehabilitation and restorative justice – and away from heavy-handed imprisonment – that is sweeping through US states. UK shadow justice minister Sadiq Khan responds from the British perspective, arguing for both the better outcomes and fiscal sense that justice reform could provide.**

*'After giving prisons a blank check for three decades, many conservative leaders are applying their natural scepticism of large government institutions to the criminal justice system ... If our prison policies fail half of the time, and we know that there are more humane, effective alternatives, then it is time to fundamentally rethink how we treat and rehabilitate our prisoners. We can no longer afford a business-as-usual approach to prisons.'*  
Pat Nolan, director, Justice Fellowship

Writing on behalf of the American right, Pat Nolan lays out the 'conservative principles' for justice reform, focused on producing better outcomes both for the offender (especially vulnerable and/or minor offenders) and for the community:

* Reserve costly prison space for dangerous offenders
* Focus on reducing future harm
* Fill each inmate’s day with productive activities
* Facilitate victim–offender dialogue
* Match offenders with mentors
* Provide opportunities for community service and reparation
* Punish parole violations immediately
* Coordinate re-entry supervision and services.

In response, Labour MP Sadiq Khan sets out his priorities for justice reform, which reflect and reinforce many of the arguments made in Pat Nolan's essay.

* First, we need **a more tailored approach to dealing with offenders**. For example, instead of abolishing the Youth Justice Board, we should be seeking to emulate its success.
* Second, we need **a system of swift and proportionate punishment that nips antisocial behaviour in the bud** and prevents problems from escalating.
* Third, we need to **prioritise rehabilitation as the next step in bringing down crime rates** even further and delivering a more efficient criminal justice system.