

Austerity is now gutting the very core of the state

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My perception of what the state is and should be is, I admit, somewhat different to that of some right wing thinkers. I am unashamed of that. But where we do have rare common ground is in believing that it is the duty of the state to protect its citizens and, come to that, their property. In that context a [report from the Guardian this morning](#) is worrying. They say:

Under-pressure police forces are taking days to respond to 999 calls that should be dealt with in an hour, the policing watchdog has said, as they come under “significant stress” from slashed budgets and increased demand.

Almost a quarter of forces in England and Wales are struggling to deal with emergency calls in a timely way, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) has said in a report on police effectiveness.

And they add:

In some cases, crimes that require a “prompt” response — that is, police attending within an hour of the call — are not dealt with for days. In Cambridgeshire, for example, the average “prompt” response time was 15 hours. This could include cases of serious assault, including sexual violence, inspectors said.

In case of doubt as to fault they note:

The inspectorate put the delays down to a lack of police officers available to attend the emergencies, ruling out a problem with the call handlers.

In other words, a twenty per cent cut in real terms funding for the police since 2010 has not produced efficiencies or increased productivity. It has instead simply gutted their capacity to do the job society expects of them.

No one should be surprised by this. The vast majority of the work in question requires the presence of a person who has been trained to undertake both the task in hand and to deal with the stresses that it has created for the victim of the reported crime. There

is remarkably little you can do to cut the time required to achieve this result barring getting to the victim on a timely basis to a) collect evidence when it is most readily recalled and b) to minimise the victim's stress. Since neither of these can now happen productivity is bound to fall as a result.

But worse, one of the core functions of the state is simply ceasing to operate.

And that happened entirely on Theresa May's watch.

When a prime minister cannot serve the interests given highest priority by her own ideology her time really is up.