

Introduction

This guidance on ASBOs draws on the experience of the police service, local authorities, youth offending teams, the courts and other organisations. It is intended for use by practitioners - people with a professional responsibility for tackling anti-social behaviour, whether they represent local authorities, the police, youth offending teams, registered social landlords, prosecutors, the courts, or any other agency which seeks to tackle the problem of anti-social behaviour.

The crime and disorder reduction partnership lies at the heart of the Government's approach to the reduction of both crime and anti-social behaviour (much of which is of course criminal in nature). All crime and disorder reduction partnerships have an anti-social behaviour co-ordinator and access to them is published on the Together website (www.together.gov.uk). All partnerships, too, are required to draw up strategies for the reduction of anti-social behaviour in their areas, and the anti-social behaviour co-ordinators are in the best position to ensure that those strategies genuinely reflect the needs of the community served by the partnerships.

Anti-social behaviour is given a wide meaning by the legislation - to paraphrase the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, it is behaviour that causes or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more people who are not in the same household as the perpetrator. Among the forms it can take are:

- graffiti - which can on its own make even the tidiest urban spaces look squalid, and can act as a magnet for further anti-social behaviour and crime;
- abusive and intimidating language, too often directed at minority groups;
- excessive noise, particularly late at night;
- fouling the street with litter;
- drunken behaviour in the streets, and the mess it can result in; and

- dealing drugs, with all the problems to which it gives rise.

There has been considerable criticism of the current wording being too wide. However, the House of Commons Select Committee looked at this in its report on anti-social behaviour and concluded¹ that it would be a mistake to make it more specific because:

- the definitions work well from an enforcement point of view and no significant practical problems appear to have been encountered;
- exhaustive lists of the kind of behaviour considered anti-social by central government would be unworkable and anomalous; and
- anti-social behaviour is inherently a local problem and may be of a different nature in different localities.

This flexibility is therefore a major strength of the current statutory description of anti-social behaviour.

Anti-social behaviour is an issue that concerns everyone in the community. Incidents that cause harassment, alarm and distress cannot be written off as generational issues - they impact on the quality of life of young and old alike. And they require a response that puts partnership into action.

Just as the problems of anti-social behaviour are wide-ranging, the solutions too must operate equally effectively on many levels. While an energetic and constructive police response is essential, it must be supplemented by engagement from a wide variety of partners. To take only the most obvious, schools need to have effective policies in place against truancy and bullying, and the police need to work closely with licensing authorities in order to tackle alcohol-related problems. Local authorities and registered social landlords need to take responsibility for acting against anti-social behaviour by their

¹ House of Commons Select Committee, *Anti-Social Behaviour: 5th Report of Session 2004-05*, recommendation 7.