

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 concluded 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 antisocial 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 them

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

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Introduction

tenants and against their tenants. Social services need to ensure that they are taking the welfare of the whole community fully into account when making decisions, as well as taking care of the perpetrators. And, just as important, all of these bodies need to be sharing information with each other to the fullest possible extent in order to act fairly and decisively against the problems of antisocial behaviour.

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Anti-social behaviour orders: the basics

What are anti-social behaviour orders?

Anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs) were introduced by section 1 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 in England and Wales and have been available since April 1999. The