



SCSN Briefing Paper No 05 – Public Space Safety

1 Topics

- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Terrorism
- CCTV
- Public Disorder
- Major Events

2 Executive Summary

Public space safety can relate to a number of key issues but it comes down to the safety of the public when in the public domain.

The Anti-Social Behaviour Etc. (Scotland) Act 2004, states that a person engages in Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) if they either act in a manner or pursue a course of conduct that causes or is likely to cause alarm or distress. The five most common types of ASB are: rubbish & litter; graffiti, vandalism or other deliberate damage to property; noisy neighbours or loud parties; drunk and rowdy behaviour in public; and swearing or shouting of abuse in public. In Scotland ASB is one of the most significant volume crime and disorder issues in Scotland, however, it is widely recognised as being under-reported and when it is reported, a large proportion of incidents are subsequently judged to not be a criminal offence. Therefore, attempting to gauge the extent of ASB incidents from recorded crime figures does not reflect the scale and nature of ASB incidents experienced by local populations. The public feel that the issue of ASB is up to the police, however, there is willingness to being involved in a group to combat the issue. The majority of ASB occurs within the same, repeat places and in the most deprived areas of Scotland. Young people are often cited as the perpetrators of ASB and studies have shown that the most prolific offenders start offending at a very young age. Alcohol misuse and underage drinking is repeatedly cited as factors in youths' committing acts of ASB.

The UK threat level for terrorism is at 'Substantial' and the public are advised that people should always remain alert to the danger of terrorism. CONTEST is the UK Counter Terrorism Strategy which includes action at international, national and local levels. With the London 2012 Olympic Games and the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games there will be a need for heightened security. There is currently concern that the use of approximately 1000 Scottish police officers at the London Olympics could result in Scotland having a lowered response.

Over recent months there has been an increase in the number of demonstrations and protests largely in response to public spending cuts although there has also been some evidence of growing support for a small number of domestic extremists groups. For the most part they pose a threat to public order but not to national security.

Public space CCTV plays a significant role in the prevention, detection and prosecution of crime on a daily basis, whilst reassuring communities that crime is being detected and criminals are being prosecuted. There are at present approximately 2,500 public space cameras across Scotland with a concentration in major cities and towns across the central belt. In March 2011 the Government launched Scotland's first National Strategy for Public Space CCTV in Scotland. The purpose of this strategy is to help partners deliver more effectively around the existing legal framework for CCTV. The aim of this strategy is to facilitate a more

strategic approach to CCTV development and management, so as to deliver safer communities more efficiently.

3 Key Statistics

- The most commonly perceived problems associated with ASB are: litter (26%), rowdy behaviour (16%) and vandalism/graffiti/damage to property (14%).
- 27% of the population state that ASB is a very big or quite a big problem in their local area. For public perceptions on a national scale, 87% believed ASB was a 'very' or 'quite' a big problem for Scotland as a whole, despite the fact that they had not experienced it for themselves.
- People's views on ASB are influenced by the media as 97% of those who had seen a great deal about ASB in the media thought it was a problem for Scotland compared with 43% of those who had not seen very much/nothing regarding ASB in the media.
- People living in the most deprived areas of Scotland were almost five times as likely as those in the least deprived areas to say there was a problem within their area (49% compared with 12%).
- 65,490 Fixed Penalty Notices were issued in Scotland between April 2007 and March 2009, 94% of tickets issued for 3 offences; 'breach of the peace', 'drinking in public' and 'urinating/defecating in public'.
- 58% feel it is up to the police and authorities to sort out problems with ASB, with 39% (of this number) saying that they would be interested in getting involved in a group.
- 59% of people said they were 'very' or 'fairly' likely to report ASB to the authorities, 48% were 'very' or 'fairly' likely to challenge the offenders, 51% said they would talk to them later and 55% said they would talk to the teenagers' parents.
- The most prolific ASB offenders start offending between 10 and 13 with three quarters of incidents attributable to those aged between 11 and 24 with offending peaking at around 15–16 years of age.

4 Discussion Questions

- What are the challenges for public space safety in the next 5-10 years?
- Are there any examples of effective projects or initiatives that we should be promoting the roll out off?
- As regards preventative spending – what should our three priorities be, and who do we need to work in partnership/collaboratively with to achieve these?

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