



Title: Describing and Assessing Interventions to Address Anti-social Behaviour: Key Findings from a Study of ASB Practice

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SCS topic headings: Personal Safety; Safety in Public Spaces; Environment Safety; Safety of Vulnerable Groups; Partnership Working; Community Engagement; Evaluation and Monitoring

This document is a REVIEW of effective intervention approaches.

Summary of the intervention's aim

This report explores the nature of anti-social behaviour (ASB) and how ASB interventions are used in some local areas. It pulls together two strands of work:

- a quantitative strand using data from local areas to look at Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships' (CDRPs) use of ASB interventions, and
- a qualitative investigation of the context in which ASB interventions are made, focusing on persistent adult perpetrators.

Outcomes

The study provides information about those who receive interventions for ASB and what interventions were received. The detailed consideration of cases of persistent ASB by adults highlights the complex needs of many of the perpetrators and the challenges faced by practitioners. In summary, some of the research findings include:

- 55% of perpetrators in the sample were under 18 and nearly three-quarters were aged 25 or younger. Nearly two-thirds of perpetrators (63%) were male.
- The gender split varied by type of intervention; similar percentages of males and females received housing-related interventions (49% and 51% respectively) and warnings (53% and 47%) whilst 85% of those who received ASBO / CRASBOs were male.
- The most common interventions were warning letters (44% of interventions) and Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (22%).

- More punitive interventions were less common with only 9% of interventions being Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBO) or ASBOs on conviction (CRASBO).
- Young people (under 18s) were more like to receive lower-end interventions like warning letters and ABCs, while adult perpetrators were more likely to receive ASBOs or CRASBOs.
- The vast majority of ASB perpetrators (83%) received only one intervention within the time frame covered by the study with very few having four or more (1%). (Data limitations mean it cannot be ascertained whether receiving only one intervention was due to a change in an individual's behaviour.)
- Practitioners claimed that higher-end interventions (e.g. ASBOs) were particularly effective in dealing with problematic street behaviour in urban centres, although this could lead to displacement of the people and the problem to other areas.

Data collection and data sharing in local areas

- The way in which CDRPs collect and store data concerning ASB and interventions varied widely between the police, housing, and local authorities.
- There was often no consistency within CDRPs in what data were collected, sometimes resulting in missing key incident or perpetrator information on the incident.
- How ASB was categorised varied considerably across areas; the most common behaviour was a generic disorder category which included incidents such as noise, disorder, trespass and loitering.
- Some practitioners expressed concerns over the impact the data collection had on their ability to case manage ASB perpetrators.
- Poor data on outcomes as well as details of the perpetrator and the incident also limited any assessment of the effectiveness of ASB interventions. Reluctant data sharing was considered by some to narrow the scope for effective ASB practice.
- Practitioners placed a heavy emphasis on a prevention-led approach (e.g. deterring rough sleepers from city centre areas by making the environment less conducive).
- However, practitioners were aware that a balanced response, incorporating elements of both enforcement and prevention, was essential to deal with ASB, especially for perpetrators with complex needs. The effectiveness of interventions with perpetrators were influenced by a range of factors, including:
 - the successful identification of the cause(s) of the ASB through intensive front-line work and appropriate information sharing by agencies
 - the nature and type of personality of the perpetrator, their motivation to change and the quality of the relationship established between the perpetrator and the practitioner
 - the effectiveness of inter-agency working and multi-agency policy and practice

- the availability of appropriate local support services to tackle the issues underlying the behaviour and a commitment by those services to feed into the process.

Summary of evaluation conclusions

The quantitative and qualitative aspects of the research raise issues for practitioners in effectively addressing ASB:

- Developing and maintaining a strong front-line emphasis in ASB work was seen as essential.
- ASB managers and coordinators recognised that many front-line workers would benefit from more effective training covering the principles and practices of evidence gathering, building case files, steering applications through legal processes and supporting victims and witnesses to ensure successful resolution.
- Practitioners felt the needs of victims and witnesses should be addressed, particularly where vulnerable adults are concerned. More effective ways of eliciting their views and concerns need to be explored as they may be victims of ASB and may be afraid to report ASB for fears of retaliation, need to be explored as practitioners felt these groups were most likely to be under-represented in public consultation meetings.
- More work needs to be done to ensure the needs of victims and witnesses are adequately identified and addressed to ensure they continue to work with practitioners to secure a successful outcome to their complaint.
- Current data-collection practice does not tend to generate the kinds of datasets which can underpin robust assessments of the effectiveness of ASB interventions. There are practical steps which could be taken to help move ASB practice in a more focused (and perhaps cost-effective) direction.
- Good data management and data sharing is essential to strengthen service provision and feed into local thinking about effectiveness and value for money.
- Data management systems were often not designed to enable easy access to information by multi-agency groups involved in ASB work. This could lead to delays in the decision-making process and duplication of service provision.

How the evaluation gathered information for findings and conclusions

The fieldwork was conducted between January and December 2009, and was undertaken as a mixed-methods approach.

Quantitative research

Accessing statistical data in local areas provided an opportunity to look at issues with ASB data-collection practice and identified a number of weaknesses in the systems used. The data sample consisted of 4,307 ASB interventions for 3,382 individuals, from 10 CDRPs from the previous 2-5 years. The areas were not selected randomly, but were broadly representative of CDRP areas nationally.

The original aim of the quantitative strand was to build on previous work and to address some of the knowledge gaps about intervention effectiveness, looking at ASB incidents, interventions and outcomes over time in local areas. Limitations in the

range and quality of available data meant that this aim could not be met. However, these quantitative findings provided a useful supplement to previous research and to the research's own qualitative data.

Qualitative research

This focused on the context of ASB committed by adults, looking at persistent perpetrators and exploring, through interviews and a sample of individual case studies, the nature of the ASB and how practitioners use a range of interventions to address ASB.

Interviews with ASB practitioners in 24 areas gathered perceptions of the type, nature and context of ASB committed by adults. Four areas of 33 case studies with adults displaying persistent ASB were also examined. The findings highlight the complex needs of many of the perpetrators and the challenges local ASB teams face when using ASB tools and powers.

Further details about the SCS evaluation of this report are available on request. Please contact info@scsn.org.uk

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