

evidence.

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

THE LATEST RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS - IN PLAIN ENGLISH

The trouble with highlighting 'bad' behaviour



Broken Britain has been a defining idea of Prime Minister David Cameron's coalition government.

It blames the 'moral' collapse of British society on selfish, irresponsible and criminal behaviour within its poorest neighbourhoods – seeing the current welfare reform agenda as the 'solution'. This argument is crystallised in reality television shows such as *Benefits Street*, *Skint* and *The Scheme*. Through their focus on 'neighbours from hell' suffering from addiction problems, engaging in vandalism, petty crime and other unsavoury behaviours, these programmes underline how antisocial behaviour has now become part of the popular image of social housing. This in turn has been used to justify the raft of punitive legislation emerging in recent years, which compel social landlords to 'manage' such behaviours.

Yet as this issue of *Evidence* explores, questions remain as to whether legal tools are the best way to deal with

households already in vulnerable situations. Simon Hoffman and Pete Mackie present evidence that it may in fact compound disadvantage.

Whilst social landlords have been given a key role in addressing antisocial behaviour, research commissioned by Peabody highlights the challenges they face in meeting tenants' expectations. Donna Brown's work on community wardens perhaps also suggests an alternative route for dealing with low-level incivility and community conflict.

This issue brings together a wealth of expertise, highlighting the damaging impact of crime and antisocial behaviour within communities, whilst also drawing attention to how it has been used as a rhetorical device to distinguish between 'deserving' and 'undeserving' families.

Kim McKee
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The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Bill

As Evidence went to press, this bill was awaiting Royal Assent to become law. It contains provisions about anti-social behaviour, crime and disorder, including provisions about recovery of possession of dwelling houses. In addition it will amend the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, as well as a number of other changes. HQN Associate Tim Horsley has been keeping members informed on the bill's progress. He detailed its report stage in the Lords recently.

On day one the Lords, unhappy on freedom of speech and assembly grounds with the term 'nuisance and annoyance', overwhelming approved a cross party amendment changing the conduct test for the new injunction power to the current ASBO test of causing or likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress. However, the conduct test for housing providers seeking an Injunction to Prevent Nuisance and Annoyance remains unchanged.

The position regarding social landlords is unaltered with those proposing the amendment and all parties agreeing the definition for housing providers and the victims they support is necessary because the option of escaping the problem is often not available. However, there seems to be limited understanding that there are victims similarly affected and constrained in the private rented sector, in particular, and in owner occupation.

The legislation is intended to deliver on the government's four key drivers:

- Focusing the response to anti-social behaviour on the needs of victims
- Empowering communities to get involved in tackling anti-social behaviour
- Ensuring professionals are able to protect the public quickly
- Focusing on long-term solutions by addressing the underlying issues behind ASB.

There remains an emphasis on a simplified system that makes sense to both victims and practitioners. However there is also an increasing recognition that early and non-statutory interventions are necessary, effective and successful in the vast majority of cases.

The bill delivers on the Home Secretary's October 2011 commitment to introduce a community remedy for a structured out of court response to low level crime and ASB.

You can follow all developments on the parliamentary web page dedicated to this legislation:

➔ <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2013-14/antisocialbehaviourcrimeandpolicingbill.html>

Read Tim's briefings on ASB and other legal issues at

➔ www.hqnetwork.co.uk/briefings

Tackling anti-social behaviour – putting the power in your hands

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Understand the new legislation and what it means for you

Beyond the thin blue line: Dundee's community warden scheme

In recent years there has been a renewed interest in community safety amongst policy makers, practitioners and academics alike. Improvements in community safety are routinely associated with a diverse range of positive outcomes for citizens such as a better quality of life, economic advancement and social cohesion, writes Donna Marie Brown of Northumbria University

Given the complex and varied nature of community safety issues it is perhaps unsurprising that a range of professionals are deemed necessary to address them. Nowhere is this more apparent than in community policing where new policing auxiliaries are becoming part of an 'extended policing family'. One key example of the pluralisation of policing within the Scottish context is the introduction of community wardens, which are the focus of this short report.

In Scotland, community wardens are employed by local authorities and defined as a 'uniformed semi-official presence in a residential area with the aim of improving quality of life'. The wardens were introduced in 2003 with funding from the Scottish Government as part of its Building Strong, Safe and Attractive Communities programme. This funding has supported more than 500 wardens who have been distributed across Scotland's 32

local authorities largely on the basis of levels of deprivation and size of population. Typically these wardens are engaged in a mix of activities which include: providing high visibility patrols to deter crime and antisocial behaviour; working with the police and other agencies to promote community safety; acting as a link between the community and local authority departments; working with vulnerable groups; and, tackling environmental issues by reporting graffiti and vandalism. In order to accomplish these tasks some local authorities have given their wardens specific powers to issue fixed penalty notices in relation to dog fouling and litter, but in other areas wardens have no enforcement powers.

This research aimed to investigate the role, responsibilities and effects of the community wardens that operated within Dundee. Dundee's Community Warden Scheme employs more than 50 wardens and is composed of a scheme manager, a day warden co-ordinator, senior community wardens, community wardens and administration support staff. The primary research for the project involved engagement with a range of stakeholders within Dundee's community policing programme, including: community wardens, police officers, social workers, youth leaders, young people, community members and local authority employees. More than 50 participants were interviewed for the research, and over 100 hours of ethnographic 'walk-outs' with the community wardens were completed.



The key findings of the research are:

- Dundee's Community Warden Scheme provided a highly valuable and alternative form of policing that complemented, as opposed to contradicted, the aims and ambitions of police officers involved in community policing initiatives
- Wardens worked very closely with the police (and a range of other agents and institutions involved in community policing) and the joined-up partnership approach, based upon intelligence sharing and open communication, provided a highly effective model for targeting low-level crimes and incivilities
- Wardens were generally viewed very positively by the communities in which they patrolled, not least because of their dedication in responding to pressing local problems and their ability to establish longer-term relationships with community members
- The visibility and regular presence of the community wardens was considered as highly significant in reducing crime and the fear of crime, by the wardens and the community members alike.
- Whilst the wardens were provided with a range of general and site specific training, the importance of their personality - in terms of how approachable and friendly they are - was considered as more significant by the young people involved in the project. This was carefully considered in the recruitment process
- When the wardens came in to contact with 'problematic young people', they were well positioned to target the causes rather than the symptoms of their behaviour - be that through personal intervention or the referral of the young person to a relevant professional. This goes some way in reducing social problems as opposed to simply displacing them
- Relationships between young people and community wardens took time to develop as the young people were initially suspicious about the role of the wardens

- It was generally believed that it would be detrimental to increase the powers of the community wardens as this would negatively influence their relationship with the local communities they work with
- While statistical evidence of their direct impact on levels of crime and disorder at a national level remains open to debate (not least because of the real difficulties of drawing a simple cause and effect relationship between a policing intervention and crime rates), wardens do appear to be having a positive impact.

While wardens are not a panacea, their presence embodies a response to the low-level incivilities and conflicts within communities which recognises the importance of local knowledge, partnership working, and the search for long-term solutions rather than quick fixes.

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For further information about this project, please see Brown, Donna and Fyfe, Nick (2010) *Renaissance, reassurance and restoration? Community Wardens and the urban realm in Scotland*. In: Policing in Europe (Journal of Police Studies). Cahiers Politiestudies, 16 (3). Maklu, Antwerpen, Belgium, pp. 207-322. ISBN 978-9046602713.

Brown, Donna (2013) *Young people, antisocial behaviour and public space: The role of Community Wardens in policing the 'ASBO-generation'*. Urban Studies, 50 (3): 538-555. ISSN 0042-0980.

Brown, Donna (2012) *Out on patrol: Maintaining the strengths and addressing the weaknesses of Scotland's Community Warden Scheme*. Crime Prevention and Community Safety, 14 (4). pp. 258-277. ISSN 1460-3780.

CLG coordinating action

The CLG now coordinates central government work on family intervention, with the Troubled Families team based within the department. This team has published a guide to academic research on troubled families, together with good practice on achieving success.

➔ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-with-troubled-families-a-guide-to-evidence-and-good-practice>

This work was supported by a report on the costs and benefits of intervention.

➔ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-fiscal-case-for-working-with-troubled-families-analysis-and-evidence-on-the-costs-of-troubled-families-to-government>

Realistic goals in good practice

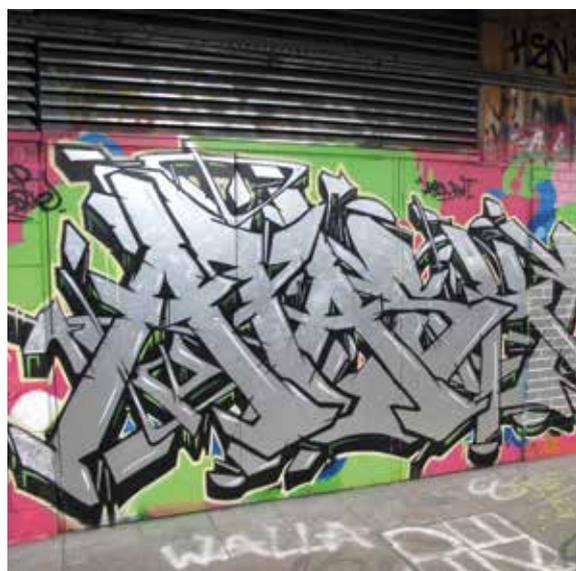
Good housing providers are active in tackling and preventing antisocial behaviour. Yet it remains one of the most challenging issues landlords face. Peabody decided to put its responses to the test with research to evaluate its work.

It asked the University of Birmingham to interview residents and staff about ASB and community safety on its estates. The research team analysed Peabody's strategies and practice, and drew out points of good practice. The aim is to inform the group's Safer Homes strategy on the issue, which is currently in preparation.

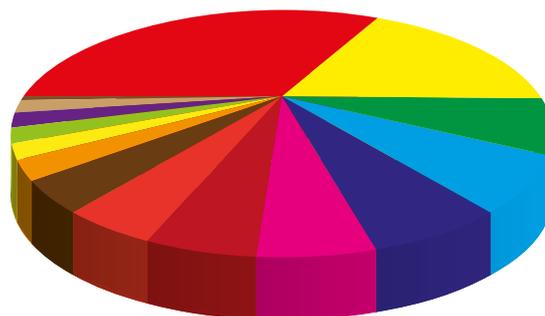
The findings

The term ASB covers a wide range of incidents, from loud music to criminal damage. Noise is the most common issue, but all ASB is seen as potentially damaging to home life, health and wellbeing.

Not surprisingly there were some strongly held views and there was not always agreement about the nature of the problem or solutions. Residents suggested that housing providers needed to do more, whereas frontline staff felt that some residents had unrealistic expectations and needed to do more to help themselves and their communities.



The research team reports that reported ASB in 2011/12 fell into these categories (figures taken from HouseMark benchmarking):



■ Noise	33.8%
■ Harassment/threats	18.0%
■ Rubbish	7.5%
■ Garden nuisance	7.2%
■ Pets/animals	6.7%
■ Drugs	5.3%
■ Communal areas/loitering	5.3%
■ Vandalism	4.6%
■ Other criminal behaviour	3.9%
■ Domestic violence/abuse	2.5%
■ Alcohol related	2.0%
■ Other violence	2.0%
■ Hate-related incidents	2.0%
■ Vehicles	1.9%
■ Prostitution/sex	0.3%

Practitioners taking part in a research workshop overwhelmingly agreed that residents' perceptions of ASB were significantly greater than the evidence suggested. Because of this, participants stressed the need to better understand residents' perceptions. At present, a variety of methods were used to collect data about residents' perceptions. Still, many participants agreed that they did not have a full enough understanding of the views of residents nor did they have a full enough picture of the actual scale and prevalence of ASB. A fundamental part of this problem is the potential mismatch between types of ASB that are important to residents and those that landlords have the power to take action on.

Most workshop participants agreed that residents placed responsibility for the 'problem' of ASB squarely with housing providers. A number of those participating said how residents see eviction and other judicial measures as being the preferred – at times only – option for responding to and tackling ASB. Some felt that when housing providers failed to respond with judicial means, it reinforced perceptions held by residents and complainants of a lack of commitment to enforcing their respective policies. Participants clearly believe that a gap exists between the expectations of complainants – and residents more widely – and the 'available remedies'.

Recommendations

The recommendations, many of which are already in place at Peabody, are focussed on measures that help resolve ASB incidents more effectively, and those that might prevent it from happening in the first place. They include:

- The victim/s should be at the heart of any response to a complaint about ASB. It's important that housing providers demonstrate what action is being taken, but that residents have realistic expectations about what can and can't be done
- After a case has been closed, housing providers should follow up with the complainant to check how satisfied they were with the service, and think about any improvements that can be made
- Housing providers need to use mediation techniques to work effectively with both perpetrators and complainants of ASB.
- Communities should be encouraged to help themselves. If residents work together they'll feel a greater sense of belonging to their neighbourhood.
- Housing providers must work effectively with other agencies such as the police, social services and health services to deal with ASB cases arising from mental health problems, drug use and street drinking.
- Housing providers must communicate effectively with residents, including face-to-face meetings, printed communications and social media.

Report summary

➔ <http://www.peabody.org.uk/media/2052/supporting-peabody-communities-executive-summary.pdf>

Full report

➔ <http://www.peabody.org.uk/media/2051/supporting-peabody-communities-report.pdf>

Don't forget education role

The Department for Education published statistics to March 2011 on the numbers of families receiving intervention services and the recorded outcomes.

➔ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/monitoring-and-evaluation-of-family-intervention-services-for-families-supported-up-to-31-march-2011>

It published an independent evaluation (by the National Centre for Social Research) of family intervention projects from 2007 to 2011. The research covered 3,675 families completing a family intervention, and found successful outcomes in a range of areas including parenting, crime and ASB, and diet. However, mental health and worklessness proved difficult to tackle.

➔ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/184031/DFE-RR174.pdf

Also in 2011, the department published an independent evaluation (by York Consulting) of the Family Pathfinder programme which delivered intensive family support from in 15 local authority areas from 2007 to 2010. The research found 'a compelling case for authorities and their partners to develop and implement intensive support for families with multiple and complex needs'. In addition, the interventions brought a net benefit of £1.90 in the avoidance of negative outcomes for every £1 spent.

➔ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/182428/DFE-RR154.pdf

When punishment makes things worse

Researchers Simon Hoffman from Swansea University and Pete Mackie from Cardiff University studied enforcement action in social housing in Wales. Their findings offer worrying evidence that it compounds disadvantage

The problem of antisocial behaviour remains a key concern for government and government policy. The legislative framework favours enforcement to deal with behaviour seen as antisocial, including non-criminal behaviour. A number of remedies utilise the management role of social landlords, and the framework of housing tenure, to introduce the concept of 'conditionality' to social housing.

Our paper investigates the impact of tenure conditionality, and in particular enforcement of antisocial behaviour interventions, on individuals and families living in social housing.

We begin by focusing on social housing as an institutional setting for antisocial behaviour policy, and the consequences for residents - a discrete population defined by legal and organisational frameworks. The paper then discusses the relationship between social housing and social exclusion, including tenure conditionality, and contrasts this with supportive intervention to manage tenant behaviour.

The second part of the paper describes a study in which we used primary data from housing advice agency records to explore the links between the enforcement of antisocial behaviour interventions and social exclusion. The unique nature of the empirical data provides an important insight into the social impact of antisocial behaviour law and policy on some of the most vulnerable members of society.

We then provide a comparative analysis of data from enforcement cases with secondary data from 'intervention projects' where intensive support has been provided to individual perpetrator households as an alternative to enforcement action. This analysis provides a contrast with the position of households in similar circumstances who have nevertheless been subject to different treatment in the management of their behaviour.

Next we seek to locate the research in the context of devolved government, and in particular the opportunity this provides for the Welsh Assembly Government (now the Welsh Government), to pursue an agenda that recognises the housing rights of marginalised social groups. The article concludes by questioning the suitability of legal enforcement tools to manage antisocial behaviour amongst already vulnerable social populations.

Based on the research evidence, we argue that enforcement, as a response to antisocial behaviour, often compounds the disadvantage of households who are already facing challenges of poverty and social exclusion. It undermines long-term security of tenure and thereby increases the risk of homelessness and social exclusion. These outcomes are contrasted with those from studies of similar households who received support within housing intervention projects, which have been shown to deliver reductions in antisocial behaviour and sustainable outcomes for families, communities and landlords.

The findings provide important lessons for the direction of antisocial behaviour policy throughout the United Kingdom and beyond. In the context of devolved government in the United Kingdom we argue that the Welsh Government should take a lead in Wales to develop policies and legal responses which recognise the housing rights of marginalised groups. We advocate the introduction of support into social housing to counter the trend toward punitive treatment of social tenants as a response to antisocial behaviour.

Full text (subscription only)

Hoffman, S., Mackie, P. K. and Pritchard, J. 2010.

Anti-social behaviour law and policy in the United Kingdom: assessing the impact of enforcement action in the management of social housing. International Journal of Law in the Built Environment 2(1), pp. 26-44.

In numbers: evaluating family intervention

Intervention in 'troubled families' has been a top political priority for UK governments of the last decade, writes Janis Bright.

The work has focused on intervention projects where families are subjected to a regime of 'tough love' to try and improve their life chances and experiences.

Academics have completed a range of work on these interventions, both to evaluate their success and to take a more philosophical look at the intentions that lie behind them. Here we round up some examples of each.



Questions about numbers

The case for intervention supported a government decision to continue with family intervention. In December 2011, the Coalition announced a further £448 million towards 'turning around the lives of the 120,000 of the most troubled families in England'. But, say some commentators, that 120,000 figure is problematic.

The Cabinet Office's Families at Risk Review estimated that around 2% of families in England face multiple difficulties such as bad housing, debt, worklessness, poor parenting, substance misuse and poor educational outcomes. That figure in turn came from the Social Exclusion Unit under the last Labour government, which calculated that in 2004 there were 140,000 families with multiple disadvantage in Britain, and therefore 120,000 in England.

Professor Ruth Levitas of Poverty and Social Exclusion, a collaboration of eight UK universities and agencies, describes this number as a factoid – 'something that takes

the form of a fact, but is not'. She is also concerned at the shift in rhetoric between 'troubled families' and 'families who cause trouble'. She says:

"'Troubled families' discursively collapses 'families with troubles' and 'troublesome families', while simultaneously implying that they are dysfunctional as families. This discursive strategy is successful in feeding vindictive attitudes to the poor."

➔ <http://www.poverty.ac.uk/report-housing-living-standards-income-distribution-low-income-households-employment-families/flaws>

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