



# Neighbourhood WATCH

## Toolkit

### Module 14 Anti-social behaviour

**This module looks at anti-social behaviour and the effect it has on a community.**

By the end of this module you will be able to:

- recognise anti-social behaviour
- understand what Neighbourhood Watch can do to alleviate the problem
- know who to turn to for help with anti-social behaviour, and what powers they have available.

#### Introduction

This Government remains committed to tackling anti-social behaviour wherever it occurs. We will continue to be on the side of the decent law abiding majority, and will continue to stand alongside landlords, the police, local authorities and local people who are taking a stand against anti-social behaviour. Building stronger communities, giving local people opportunities to have their say, and ensuring that all agencies work together to tackle unacceptable behaviour remains absolutely vital. The British Crime Survey shows that public perception of ASB has fallen from 21% in 2002-03 to 16% in 2007-08; and an Audit Commission/CLG survey shows that perceptions of ASB as a problem fell in 94% of local authorities between 2003 and 2006.

Tackling anti-social behaviour is about central government, local agencies, local communities and ultimately every citizen working together to build a society in which we can respect one another. For most of us respect is automatic and ingrained in the habits of our everyday lives. But when respect for self, others and the community breaks down, anti-social behaviour takes hold.

Making offensive and threatening remarks, dumping litter and urinating in the street are clearly inconsiderate and disrespectful. We want a society where communities can live peacefully together, where anti-social behaviour is rare; and when it does occur, communities must be empowered to tackle it effectively.

Neighbourhood Watch can play an important part in helping agencies to effectively identify and tackle ASB.

#### What is anti-social behaviour?

The term 'anti-social behaviour' includes a variety of behaviours covering a whole range of unacceptable activity that can blight the quality of community life. Other terms such as



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'nuisance', 'neighbour disputes' and 'disorder' are also used to describe some of this behaviour.

In legal terms the Crime and Disorder Act (1988) defines anti-social behaviour as:

“Acting in a manner that caused or was likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household [as the perpetrator].”

Communities determine ASB by many factors including:

- location,
- tolerance, and
- quality of life expectations.

As a result, what may be considered anti-social behaviour by one person can be seen as acceptable behaviour by another.



### Remember

If someone harasses you or your family, or causes you alarm or distress, then that is **anti-social behaviour**. Simple!

To help you determine what behaviour could be classed as anti-social the Home Office Research Development and Statistics Directorate has produced a classification of anti-social behaviour, which is set out in the table on the next page.

This provides a guide to the main categories of behaviour that are widely accepted to be anti-social by communities and practitioners.

The categories are divided into four categories:

- Misuse of public places
- Disregard for the community
- Acts directed at people
- Environmental damage.



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**Table 14.1: Classification of anti-social behaviours**

<b>Misuse of public space</b>	<b>Disregard for community</b>	<b>Acts directed at people</b>	<b>Environmental damage</b>
<b>Drug/substance misuse</b> Taking drugs Sniffing substances Discarded needles Drug paraphernalia Crack houses Presence of drug dealers or users	<b>Noise</b> Noisy neighbours Noisy vehicles Loud music Alarms (persistent) Noise from pubs/clubs Noise from business/industry	<b>Can be on the grounds of:</b> Race Sexual orientation Gender Religion Disability Age	<b>Litter/rubbish</b> Dropping litter Dumping rubbish Fly-tipping Fly-posting
<b>Vehicle nuisance</b> Inconvenient/illegal parking Car repairs in street/gardens Vehicle arson Joy-riding Street racing Off road bikes Mini motos Cycling/skating in public areas/footpaths	<b>Nuisance behaviour</b> Urinating in public Setting fires Firework misuse Throwing missiles Climbing on buildings Impeding access to communal areas Games in inappropriate areas Misuse of air guns Letting down tyres	<b>Intimidation/harassment</b> Groups or individuals making threats Verbal abuse Bullying Following people Pestering people Voyeurism Offensive mail Obscene/nuisance calls Menacing gestures	<b>Criminal damage/vandalism</b> Graffiti Damage to bus shelters Damage to phone kiosks Damage to street furniture Damage to buildings Damage to trees/ plants/hedges
<b>Kerb crawling</b> Loitering Pestering residents	<b>Hoax calls</b> False and malicious calls to emergency services		
<b>Prostitution</b> Soliciting Discarded condoms Cards in phone boxes	<b>Animal-related problems</b> Uncontrolled animals		
<b>Sexual acts</b> Inappropriate sexual conduct Indecent exposure	<b>Rowdy behaviour</b> Shouting/swearing Fighting Drunken behaviour Hooliganism		
<b>Begging</b>			
<b>Street drinking</b>			



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This list of examples is not exhaustive. Communities and Neighbourhood Watch groups may be able to identify additional examples based on their local experience.

The table does not include a specific youth nuisance category, since it is believed that ASB should be defined by the nature of activity and not by the age of the perpetrator. If such a category existed it would attract reports of young people hanging around, and whilst it is recognised that this can appear intimidating to some members of the community, their actual behaviour may not be anti-social. Only when these groups are actually engaging in nuisance behaviour should it be reported.

### How can Neighbourhood Watch help tackle ASB?

Anti-social behaviour causes lasting harm to individuals and the community and must be stopped at the earliest opportunity, when the minimum harm has been caused. In many instances anti-social behaviour can be stopped if it is challenged early enough: hence the importance of early warnings by local agencies to prevent an escalation of the problem.

This is where Neighbourhood Watch can help – members are in a position to identify the problem at the earliest possible stage and notifying your local ASB coordinator or the police, if relevant, the registered social landlord.

Each local authority area will have an **ASB coordinator** who plays a central role in reducing anti-social behaviour problems. Neighbourhood Watch members and any member of the public can contact their local anti-social behaviour co-ordinator to report ASB or find out what local action is being taken by accessing the Respect website at: <http://www.respect.gov.uk/asb-coordinator-search/default.aspx?id=11308> and entering their post code.

Neighbourhood Watch can assist by continuing to be the 'eyes and ears' of their local community and by co-ordinating local action:

- Reporting nuisance behaviour and crime
- Identifying the locality, time, day, dates when incidents occurred
- Collating information on the incidents, e.g. number of people, age, gender, clothing, and names of offenders and witnesses.

You should also comment on the effect the anti-social behaviour has on you and the other people it is having an impact on.

- Did you hear any abusive language? What did you see? For example, damage being caused, unsociable drinking, fighting.
- How did the incident make you feel? ASB can result in people feeling scared, upset or a prisoner in their own home.



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It may be useful for witnesses to keep a diary of the incidents. Your local anti-social behaviour coordinator will be able to provide a suitable form.

Neighbourhood Watch groups can assist vulnerable members or neighbours by collating information on their behalf and co-ordinating community information. You can support local agencies in tackling the behaviour and participating in local action days, clean up events, community walkabouts and environmental audits. Involve young people as are affected by ASB too. Invite them to join your scheme or encourage them to set up a youth Neighbourhood Watch scheme.

### What can local agencies do?

There are a range of powers that the police, local authorities and registered social landlords can use to take action against anti-social behaviour. A multi-agency approach that aims to address the underlying issues and problems which may be hindering a long-term change in behaviour is most likely to tackle anti-social behaviour successfully.

It is important for communities to set the standards of behaviour by which they expect people to live. If these standards are to be credible and respected, the police, local authorities and other agencies should work with local people to take swift and effective action to uphold the standards if they are breached.

The key aims of any intervention are:

- to stop the anti-social behaviour and protect victims, witnesses and the community
- to enable the individual to recognise the consequences of their behaviour
- make sure the perpetrator has access to support to help change their behaviour
- put in place measures to prevent future repetition

A tiered approach should always be adopted when tackling anti-social behaviour. Measures that can be used by local agencies include:

- warning letters
- Acceptable behaviour contracts (ABCs)
- Anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs)
- fixed penalty notices and penalty notices for disorder
- parenting contracts and orders
- noise abatement notices
- dispersal powers and 'crack house' closure orders,
- anti-social behaviour injunctions or possession proceedings against a tenant



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Action may be initiated by a number of agencies including the police, local authorities, registered social landlords and youth offending teams.

Some of the main interventions used to tackle anti-social behaviour are outlined below.

### Acceptable Behaviour Contracts

An acceptable behaviour contract (ABC) or acceptable behaviour agreement (ABA) is an intervention designed to engage an individual in acknowledging their anti-social behaviour and its effect on others, with the aim of stopping that behaviour.

ABCs are not set out in law, which is why they are usually referred to as 'agreements'. Although ABCs have often been made with young people, they are a tool that can be used for a person of any age. The informal, flexible nature of the contract means they can be used for various types of anti-social behaviour.

### Anti-Social Behaviour Orders

Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) can be made against any person aged 10 or over who has:

- acted in an anti-social manner, defined as 'a manner that caused or was likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household [as the perpetrator]';

And

- where an order is needed to protect person(s) from further anti-social acts

Orders can be used against offenders living in any type of housing and to tackle anti-social behaviour in a wide range of situations and settings.

ASBOs are issued by a court and if they are breached the offender will be arrested and may receive a fine, community sentence or prison sentence.

### Dispersal Orders

A dispersal order enables a senior police officer to designate an area where there is persistent anti-social behaviour and a problem with groups causing intimidation.

Within the designated area the police have the power to:

- Disperse groups where the relevant officer has reasonable grounds for believing that their presence or behaviour has resulted, or is likely to result, in a member of the public being harassed intimidated, alarmed or distressed. Individuals can be directed to leave the locality and may be excluded from the area for up to 24 hours;



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- Return young people **under 16**, who are out on the streets and not under the control of an adult, to their home if it is **after 9 pm** and if they are either:
  - at risk or vulnerable from anti-social behaviour, crime etc.; or
  - causing, or at risk of causing, anti-social behaviour

The designated area could be as small as a cashpoint or a shopping arcade where groups often gather, or it could be as wide as a whole local authority area, as long as there is evidence of anti-social behaviour. The local authority must also agree to the designation.

The decision to designate an area must be published in a local newspaper or by notices in the local area. The designation can last for up to six months and can be renewed if necessary.

### Injunctions

Injunctions are civil orders which prohibit the person concerned from engaging in certain behaviour. They are aimed at stopping the anti-social behaviour rather than punishing the perpetrator. Injunctions are quick to obtain, partly because the standard of proof is civil (balance of probabilities) and not criminal (beyond reasonable doubt). Different types of injunctions exist – common law or civil injunctions; injunctions that relate specifically to housing management functions, also called anti-social behaviour injunctions; and section 222 injunctions. Breach of the provisions (conditions) of an injunction can result in up to two years' imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine for contempt of court.

### Further Information

Information on tackling anti-social behaviour is available from the Home Office [Respect website](http://www.respect.gov.uk) (www.respect.gov.uk)

Respect Actionline: 0870 220 2000

### Other useful websites

There is now a Neighbourhood Policing Team in your area. To find out about your local neighbourhood policing team and details on how to contact them go to [www.direct.gov.uk/neighbourhoodpolicing](http://www.direct.gov.uk/neighbourhoodpolicing)

You may also find useful information on:

- the [Home Office web page on anti-social behaviour](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/anti-social-behaviour) (www.homeoffice.gov.uk/anti-social-behaviour)
- the [Home Office website on crime reduction](http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk) (www.crimereduction.gov.uk)



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### Practical Activity 14: Identifying anti-social behaviour

The aim of this activity is agree a standard of behaviour that is acceptable in your area. By the end of the activity you will be able to identify:

- unacceptable behaviours
- behaviours that are acceptable but which some residents find intimidating

Over the next month, observe what goes on in your neighbourhood. Do people behave in a manner which you find anti-social?

If so, write down the six most offensive behaviours below.

1 \_\_\_\_\_  
—

2 \_\_\_\_\_  
—

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
—

4 \_\_\_\_\_  
—

5 \_\_\_\_\_  
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6 \_\_\_\_\_  
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Ask other members of you Neighbourhood Watch or your community to create their own lists. If possible, include a cross-section of the population – young and old, men and women, people of different faiths, etc.

Get together as a group to discuss your lists. If possible, ask a member of your local police force to attend the discussion.

Are there behaviours that you all agree are anti-social?

Are there behaviours that some find anti-social and others are find acceptable? Can such behaviours be understood or made less intrusive?



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Discuss how, as a group, you might improve the behaviours in your neighbourhood. What agencies would help to effect this change?