

# What is Anti-Social Behaviour

The term 'anti-social behaviour' includes a variety of behaviour covering a whole complex of selfish and unacceptable activity that can blight the quality of community life. A legal definition of behaving in an anti-social manner is found in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and many agencies tackling anti-social behaviour have adopted this definition for more general purposes. It defines anti-social behaviour as 'acting in an anti-social manner 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 complainant'.

## Street Scene

An anti-social street scene, with begging, street drinking, rowdy behaviour, or groups of people hanging around can make people feel intimidated and unsafe.

The Police, Local Authority and general public within the Community would recognise that most people are law abiding and sociable. It is also recognised that a minority of all different aged groups sometimes become Anti Social. This Anti Social Behaviour sometimes gets out of control to a point where others suffer Harassment Alarm and /or Distress. This then has to be dealt with by the Police and Local Authorities to allow the general public to be able to live normal peaceful lives.

## Anti-social drinking

Anti-social drinking in the streets can intimidate members of the public, cause disorder and nuisance, and generally degrade a public space. This can range from groups of street drinkers, sometimes known as 'drinking schools' to general drunken or rowdy behaviour as part of the night-time culture of many towns and cities.

Street drinking can be perceived as intimidating by others. Alcohol misuse is linked to disorder and contributes to driving people's fear of crime; 61% of the population think that alcohol-related violence on the streets is increasing, whilst 43% of women and 38% of men see drinking on the street as a problem. Many people are therefore less, rather than more, likely to want to spend more time in city centres perceived as violent and dominated by alcohol.

The National Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy calculated the overall annual cost of crime and anti-social behaviour linked to alcohol misuse to be £7.3bn. Alcohol misuse shows strong links to Anti Social Behaviour and violence.

## Begging

Begging is a criminal offence and can be related to other criminal activity. People usually beg to sustain a drug habit, and a persistent problem of begging in an area can be evidence of a thriving open street drugs market.

No one in this country should beg, it is degrading for them, intimidating for those they approach and often a detriment to the very areas where environmental and social improvements are crucial to the broader regeneration of the community. Begging makes people feel unsafe; it changes their behaviour and prevents them from using services and public spaces. 65% of the public resent being approached by those that beg and 54% will not use a cash point if someone is begging near it.

## Street Drugs

In many situations drug misuse can cause alarm and distress to the community. When this occurs it is important that enforcement action is swift and effective. One in three people feel that drugs use or dealing is a very or fairly big problem in their area. Drug dealing and drug use can cause a spiral of decline in an area as dealers take over residential premises or as street drug culture develops. The debris associated with drug use such as used needles and syringes can make areas dirty and unsafe. There were over 2,920 reports of drug misuse and drug dealing during the one day count of anti social behaviour carried out in September 2003.

## Environmental Crime

Criminal damage / vandalism; graffiti and fly-posting; fly-tipping; litter and waste; nuisance or abandoned vehicles; drugs paraphernalia; fireworks misuse. All of these offences can be classed as Anti Social Behaviour for the purposes of obtaining an Anti Social Behaviour Order.

## Anti-Social Behaviour Orders

The definition is set out in section 1 (1) of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998: Section 1(1) of the Act defines acting in an anti-social manner 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 complainant. The types of anti-social behaviour this may include are deliberately not defined in the Act, to allow for the legal remedy of anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs) to be used in a variety of circumstances and to tackle a wide range of behaviours.

The agency applying for an ASBO must provide evidence to the court showing that the person accused behaved in an anti-social manner i.e. acted in a way that caused or was likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress. The Anti Social Behaviour Order itself lasts for at least two years. However this can be extended to suit the extent of the behaviour recorded by the victim / witnesses. It is possible to receive an ASBO without being arrested by the police. Some people receive an ASBO in civil court and others in criminal court, those in criminal court are known as crASBO's. Once an ASBO has been breached the matter then becomes that of a criminal nature and the Offender can be dealt with in Crown Court. The Crown Court can give out much tougher sentences.

## Dispersal Orders

A Dispersal Order is an order which can be put into place by the chief officer of a policing area and the Local Authority to stop groups of youths congregating in a certain locations and becoming anti social. By this we mean causing or likely to cause Harassment Alarm or Distress to any person.

The Order will only be put into place when an anti-social behaviour problem occurs in a certain area and it is evidenced by reports and documentation. The order will be published in the local news paper and a sign may be erected in the location of the designated area.

The law with reference to Anti Social Behaviour has been put into place to help the general public, Young or elderly to enjoy their lifestyle free from Harassment Alarm or Distress. The law is in place for us all to follow and it is our duty as citizens to help each other live peaceful lives. ffences can be classed as Anti Social Behaviour for the purposes of obtaining an Anti Social Behaviour Order.