

Youth Antisocial Behaviour  
Academic Research

The definition of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) most commonly used by local authority Crime and Disorder Partnerships and Community Safety Partnerships is that which is stated in The Crime and Disorder Act (1998) to be: *'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 defendant).'*

However, (Crawford A, 2001) argues that *'Public definitions of disorder and community safety are inconsistent. Different audiences define the same behaviour differently,'* and furthermore that *'In England and Wales, the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) provides no statutory definition of disorder nor is it defined in the accompanying Guidance (Home Office 1998) .... In particular, there is no formal process for making decisions about what counts as an instance of antisocial behaviour.'*

In practice, therefore, although the *Crime and Disorder Act 1998* informs public policy and data monitoring, what is classed as antisocial behaviour can vary across the country depending on the interpretations of Local Authorities, and across different agencies concerned with the monitoring and tackling of anti-social behaviour.

In respect of this lack of clarity from the *Crime and Disorder Act* the Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate (RDS) 2001 states *'It recognises the need for local definitions to reflect local problems. However, by describing the consequences of the behaviour rather than defining the behaviour itself, the definition lacks specificity and measurability (Armitage, 2002). It does not provide practitioners with an indication of the specific behaviours that they should be monitoring and attempting to address in order to tackle the problem of anti-social behaviour within their locality.'*

Most CDRPs and CSPs define their working concept of ASB by describing the particular behaviours and consequences of particular behaviours that relate to their specific locality; guidance which is specifically mentioned and accommodated for in the *Crime and Disorder Act* to allow for the broad scope of the term 'anti-social behaviour', and which also recommends using data gained from the 2000 British Crime Survey on people's experiences of what they term anti-social behaviour.

The RDS typology (Home Office 2001) recommended as a starting point for local authorities to define these behaviours by providing comprehensive examples of what the public have come to accept as ASB and that local authorities may want to consider as part of their frameworks for policy. These behaviours come under broad categories such as; Misuse of Public Space; Disregard for the Community; Acts Directed at People; and Environmental Damage, which are then further narrowed and defined within. *(Street drinking, begging, prostitution, kerb crawling, rowdy behaviour, nuisance behaviour, intimidation, harassment, criminal damage, littering and rubbish, sexual acts, abandoned cars, vehicle related nuisance, inappropriate vehicle use, hoax calls, uncontrolled animals)* It is left to the LA to decide on which behaviours to include or exclude according to their own findings on public perception.

The RDS (Home Office 2001) is also points out the need to distinguish anti-social behaviour from criminal activity, such as in cases relating to sexual acts and drug and substance misuse or dealing, and recognises the grey areas that may arise in certain nuisance behaviour categories, however leaves the decision making in these instances to the public policy of the LA's.

When discussing youth related anti-social behaviour, a wide variety of local authority policies researched for this article address nuisance behaviour in young people aged 13-17, however as the Antisocial Behaviour and Crime and Policing Act (2014) provides statutory guidance for individuals aged 10-17, this is the accepted age range that should be considered and monitored as Youth related ASB.

### National Policy and Context

Whilst Community Safety Partnerships and Local Authorities informed their policies on anti-social behaviour with the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) and The Anti-Social Behaviour Act (2003), and continue to use that legislation in part, the passing of the Anti-Social Behaviour and Crime and Policing Act (2014) provides the newest statutory guidance for professionals and reformed the powers available to tackle Anti-Social behaviour in both youths and adults.

The focus of the recent Government reform is on victim-led outcomes, professional multi-agency approaches and flexibility in community orders and consequences with a complete overhaul of the way anti-social behaviour is managed by agencies and victims and offenders are responded to.

*'The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 includes two new measures which are designed to give victims and communities a say in the way anti-social behaviour is dealt with:*

*The Community Trigger, gives victims the ability to demand action, starting with a review of their case, where the locally defined threshold is met.*

*The Community Remedy, gives victims a say in the out-of-court punishment of perpetrators for low-level crime and anti-social behaviour'.*

*(Home Office 2014)*

There are also 8 new powers in place under the Act, which remove the use of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) that were enacted in The Anti-Social Behaviour Act (2003) these being: Early and informal interventions; Civil injunctions; criminal behaviour order; Dispersal power; Community protection order; public spaces protection order; closure power and new absolute ground for possession. (Home Office 2014)

### National Data

According to the statistical bulletin Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2016 (ONS 2016) the *'Latest estimates from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), the best measure of crime trends for the population and offences it covers, showed a 6% fall in the number of incidents against adults for the survey year ending March 2016 (6.3 million, compared with 6.8 million in the previous survey year)'.*

This figure includes Anti-Social Behaviour and with the broader scope of all reported crime across England and Wales, however there are, as yet, no individual figures relating solely to ASB for 2016.

Looking at the most recent available statistics for the year 2015, Crime in England and Wales: year ending June 2015 (ONS 2015), it is stated that the total recorded

number to the police during the year to the end of that period was 4.3million, of which 1.9 million related to Anti-social behaviour. This is a 9% decrease from the previous years' reporting period.

However, it is clear from the report that *'These figures are not currently accredited National Statistics. A review by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (A step in the right Direction) in 2012 found significant variation in the recording of ASB incidents across police forces'*. (ONS 2015)

The report goes on to describe why it is extremely difficult to make an authentic and accurate comparison of ASB data over different years to determine trends, as recording methods and policies change so often. (See Appendix 1)

#### ASB and the link to offending (escalation)

*'There is evidence that ASB is often a precursor to more serious offending behaviour among young people. Once this pattern of behaviour is established it can be difficult to break the cycle and reoffending rates for young offenders are relatively high.'*  
(Big Lottery Fund 2012)

#### Prevention and Support

*'In a 2011 report on the Youth Justice system, it was reported that: "Little is known about the relative effectiveness of interventions with young offenders. The Youth Justice Board had not been able to isolate which programmes had had the most impact on youth offending, and why' (Big Lottery Fund 2012)*

#### Appendix 1

Figures recorded by the police relating to anti-social behaviour (ASB) can be considered alongside police recorded (notifiable) crime to provide a more comprehensive view of the crime and disorder that comes to the attention of the police. It is important to note that any incident of ASB which results in a notifiable offence will be included in police recorded crime figures (and excluded from the ASB counts). This is to ensure there are no overlaps between the 2 series.

The police record ASB incidents in accordance with the National Standard for Incident Recording (NSIR); Section 5.7 of the [User Guide \(1.36 Mb Pdf\)](#) has further details. These figures are not currently accredited National Statistics. A review by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary [\(A step in the right Direction\) in 2012](#) found significant variation in the recording of ASB incidents across police forces. It is also known that occasionally police forces may be duplicating some occurrences of a singular ASB incident where multiple reports by different callers have been made.

Following the HMIC review in 2012, it was also found that there was a wide variation in the quality of decision making associated with the recording of ASB. HMIC found instances of:

- forces failing to identify crimes, instead wrongly recording them as ASB

- reported ASB not being recorded on force systems, for instance if the victim had reported it directly to the neighbourhood team or via email (as opposed to by telephone)
- reported ASB being recorded as something else, such as suspicious behaviour
- incidents that were not ASB being recorded as ASB

Furthermore, data on ASB incidents before and after the year ending March 2012 are not directly comparable, owing to a change in the classification used for ASB incidents. From April 2012, ASB incidents also include data from the British Transport Police, so direct comparisons can only be made from 2012/13 onwards. The police recorded 1.9 million incidents of ASB in the year ending June 2015. This compares with the 4.3 million notifiable crimes recorded by the police over the same period (Figure 16). The number of ASB incidents recorded by the police in the year ending June 2015 decreased by 9% compared with the previous year, continuing a downward trend.

(Statistical bulletin: Crime in England and Wales: Year ending June 2015: ONS 2015)

Statistical bulletin: Crime in England and Wales: Year ending June 2015: ONS 2015

Good practice in... reducing anti-social behaviour and working with young people who have offended or are at risk of offending (Big Lottery Fund 2012)  
[www.biglotteryfund.org.uk%2F%2Fmedia%2FFiles%2FResearch%2520Documents%2Fer gp reducing asb.pdf](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk%2F%2Fmedia%2FFiles%2FResearch%2520Documents%2Fer%20gp%20reducing%20asb.pdf)

Home Office 2001, Defining and Measuring Anti-Social Behaviour  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/116655/dpr26.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/116655/dpr26.pdf)

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingmar2016#what-is-happening-to-trends-in-crime> ONS 2016 Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2016 (office national statistics)

Statistical bulletin Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2016 (ONS 2016)

Crawford, A: Joined-up but fragmented: contradiction, ambiguity and ambivalence at the heart of New Labour's 'Third Way' in *Crime, Disorder and Community Safety* (ed. Matthews, R and Pitt, J, 2001) p69-70