

Redditch Borough Council

This report is the product of the Social Overview & Scrutiny Committee's investigation into Anti-Social Behaviour.

December 2005



Overview & Scrutiny

Chair's Foreword

Welcome to this, the first major topic review report of the Social Overview & Scrutiny Committee. This report explores how the Council currently deals with anti-social behaviour and makes recommendations for how the Council's anti-social behaviour services can be improved.

On behalf of the Social Overview & Scrutiny Committee, I would like to thank everyone who has been involved in and contributed to the investigation.

I would like to thank our Expert Witnesses; both the Redditch Borough Council Officers, and those who represented our external partners from the Police, Connexions, the Worcestershire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust, the Worcester Substance Misuse Action Team, and Worcestershire County Council; your contributions have been invaluable.

Thank you to the Officers who helped us set the scene in the early stages of the review.

Thank you also to Alison Parsons and David Reddall from BASBU, the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit at Birmingham City Council, who kindly gave up an afternoon to give a detailed presentation to our Committee at the Countryside Centre.

And finally, thank you to the Members of the Social Overview & Scrutiny Committee, past and present, who have dedicated vast amounts of time and effort to this review.

Councillor Betty Passingham
Chair of the Social Overview & Scrutiny Committee



Social O&S Committee

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Executive Summary

We would firstly like to stress that we feel that the Council's current strategies for dealing with Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) are on the whole effective, *in as far as they go*; the mechanisms in place to achieve an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO) for example, are very efficient with all teams concerned working cohesively.

We have been impressed by each of the Council Officers who were interviewed as part of this review; each was genuinely dedicated to tackling ASB and its causes. We feel that it is the *approach* the Council takes to tackle ASB that needs to be changed.

We feel there is too much emphasis on the enforcement of ASB and not enough on its prevention; we feel that there is a lack of communication between some of the Council's services; we think that much work is yet to be done on the communication and definition of ASB across the Council, particularly surrounding lower level cases; we feel that there should be more support provided for the victims and witnesses of ASB; and we feel that the first point of contact and reporting method for ASB cases needs to be explored, as at present there is an inconsistency depending on how, where and when the case is referred.

In its general policy statement, Redditch Borough Council commits itself to:

“Tackling anti-social behaviour at the earliest stage possible in the most appropriate way. The Council will act to prevent the situation from escalating to a point where more serious interventions are necessary.”

We do not think that Redditch Borough Council is fulfilling this promise.



Executive Summary

We feel that there needs to be a recognition within the Council for the benefit of addressing ASB at the early stages, particularly by addressing the root causes before actual ASB occurs; and we feel that the Council's resources should be directed accordingly. We think that there are many ways by which this can be achieved; by diversionary activities and programmes; by having enough Youth Officers to provide street-based education; by mediation; by addressing low level complaints before they escalate; and by utilising non-legal actions such as Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABC's).

We urge you to accept each of our recommendations. We strongly believe that our recommendations are the key to improving the Council's ASB services and ultimately improving community safety and the everyday lives of the people who live and work in Redditch.



Recommendations

1. Definition of Anti-Social Behaviour

We recommend that the Council's definition of, and its literature for anti-social behaviour be firmed up across the Council and that robust protocols be established to clarify the roles and priorities of each service with regards to anti-social behaviour. We recommend that this be done with a view to defining the difference between low and high level anti-social behaviour cases, and by clarifying the boundaries of each service so that a unified method for dealing with each case can be established.

2. Low-level Anti-Social Behaviour

We feel that the Council should recognise the need for adopting early, low level intervention in anti-social behaviour cases, as mild cases can often escalate if not addressed. We therefore recommend that the Council fully investigates how it can improve its response to lower level anti-social behaviour and establish the most effective method by which this can be delivered.

3. Mediation

We recommend that a mediation service for anti-social behaviour be introduced in Redditch and suggest that further investigation should be undertaken to establish how it could be funded and where it should stand.



Recommendations

4. Accessibility

We recommend that the Council investigate the accessibility of its anti-social behaviour service, in particular we suggest:

- i) that the service be mapped from the customer's point of view;
- ii) that the Council investigate the practicalities of an anti-social behaviour helpline in conjunction with the Redditch Community Safety Partnership; and
- iii) the Council increase its level of support for the witnesses and victims of anti-social behaviour.

5. Cross-Departmental and Partnership Working

- 5.1 We recommend that the Council encourage joint training and joint working across services; particularly by utilising a "Working Together" seminar aimed at practitioner level to strengthen working relationships and increase the understanding and knowledge of the Council's anti-social behaviour processes. We think that this seminar should include all services that come into contact with anti-social behaviour from the initial logging of the call to the completion of the case.
- 5.2 We recommend that the Council encourage regular updates across its Services and Directorates with regards to anti-social behaviour.



Recommendations

5.3 We feel that communication needs to be addressed between the Council and its partners in relation to anti-social behaviour. We recommend that the Council promote a greater understanding and awareness of the different priorities and perceptions of each organisation by encouraging regular updates, increased information sharing, case conferences, cross-organisational training and networking events.

6. Legal Provision

We recommend that the Council allocate adequate resources for anti-social behaviour related legal actions.

7. Youth Team

7.1 We recommend that the Council recognise and promote the importance of the diversionary activities provided by the Youth Team and allocate funds and staff hours accordingly.

7.2 We recommend that anti-social behaviour enforcement should be backed up by diversionary schemes.

7.3 We recommend that the Council should encourage its partners on the Redditch Community Safety Partnership to sign up to Youth based diversionary schemes to ensure their continued stability.



Recommendations

- 7.4 We recommend that the Council and its partners should apply to the Redditch Community Safety Partnership for joint funding to support specific and targeted diversionary programmes in the area.
- 7.5 We recommend that the Council negotiate with the County Council to grant District Councils a direct responsibility for how Government Office for the West Midlands (GOWM) money should be spent in and on behalf of the District.

8. CCTV

We recommend that where lighting around the Council's CCTV cameras is negligible or non-existent, the Council investigate enhancing visibility by either introducing additional lighting or infra-red lenses on the existing CCTV cameras.

9. Anti-Social Behaviour Interviews

- 9.1 We recommend that the provision for private interview rooms in the One-Stop-Shop be increased so that anti-social behaviour interviews can be conducted in private, wherever possible.
- 9.2 We recommend that the Tenancy Team hold a surgery in the One-Stop-Shop on either a fortnightly or monthly basis.



Commendations

Through the course of our review we have made some very positive findings and we would like to take this opportunity to commend the most exceptional of these to you;

- we were pleased to hear about the County Council Youth Team's commitment to work with Redditch, and we hope that this relationship will continue to flourish;
- we were very pleased to hear about the strength of the working relationship between West Mercia Police and the Council's Community Safety and ASB Team. We were especially pleased to hear the Police say that their relationship with Redditch Borough Council was the "envy of the division";
- we were very impressed with the expert witness from Legal Services, Lisa Arben; and
- we were extremely impressed with the two Youth Officers, Karen Taylor and Phil Bryers, whom we found to be very positive with the interests of young people obviously at heart.

It is unfortunate for the Council that both Phil and Lisa have now left their posts; we would like to wish them well.



Introduction

This report is the culmination of the Social Overview & Scrutiny Committee's review into anti-social behaviour. In this report you will see that we have investigated the effectiveness of the Council's current strategies for dealing with anti-social behaviour and the level of partnership working both within and outside of the Council.

We have made a series of recommendations which we believe, if adopted, would not only improve the Council's anti-social behaviour service and its partnership working but would also, over time reduce the overall costs of addressing anti-social behaviour in Redditch.*

*Source: Audit Commission, Youth Justice 2004. A review of the reformed youth justice system.

This review stated that if effective early intervention was provided to just one in ten young offenders, the national annual savings could be in excess of £100 million.



Background

Anti-Social Behaviour : A National Priority

Anti-social behaviour has been very high on the national agenda for a number of years now; it is seen as such a high priority that each of the three major parties addressed anti-social behaviour and community safety in their 2005 election campaigns.

“My Government are committed to creating safe and secure communities and fostering a culture of respect.”

The Queen’s speech 17th May 2005

The Government White paper, “Respect and Responsibility: Taking a stand against anti-social behaviour”; outlines the need for a “cultural shift from a society where too many people are living with the consequences of anti-social behaviour, to a society where we respect each other, our property and our shared public spaces”. In a response to this statement the Government has created the New Respect Task Force, the key objectives of which are working on the anti-social behaviour agenda, highlighting respect for others and respect for the community.

In its 2005 manifesto, the government made a pledge to tackle the causes of anti-social behaviour, from lack of youth provision to irresponsible drinking. Some national bodies, such as Nacro, the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders, have asked for more resources to be allocated for the prevention of anti-social behaviour; rather than focussing the majority of the funding on enforcement.

What is Anti-Social Behaviour?

So, what is anti-social behaviour? It is not just loitering gangs hurling abuse; the term anti-social behaviour, or ASB as you will see it referred to throughout this report, encompasses a number of behaviours and actions – a detailed list of which can be found in **Appendix 2**. ASB covers everything from damage to phone kiosks, to indecent exposure; joyriding to fly-tipping; persistent



Background

alarms to menacing gestures. To paraphrase the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, ASB is:

“acting in an anti-social 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”

As you can imagine ASB really does cover a wide range of misdemeanors.

Of course, this makes it all the more challenging to tackle.

How does this relate to Redditch Borough Council?

Redditch Borough Council, like all Local Authorities has a statutory duty under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to do all it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area.

Redditch Borough Council has defined ASB as follows:

“Anti-Social Behaviour covers any behaviour by an individual or group which makes another person or group feel harassed, alarmed, threatened or distressed. It includes a variety of behaviours that can blight the quality of community life and is based on individual perception. Anti-Social Behaviour may constitute a nuisance and annoyance, harassment or criminal activity.”

The Local Government Information Unit (LGIU) has urged each Local Authority to be clearer about what constitutes ASB, citing that:

“clear definition will assist in determining priorities for local action, clarify responsibilities across agencies, and ensure the appropriate allocation of funding”



Background

Redditch Context

Redditch has a number of factors that set it aside from the rest of Worcestershire.

As a New Town of the 1960's, Redditch has some inherent design faults, for example, its Radburn housing layout. The Radburn layout sees housing estates where cars are separated from the houses; the houses are accessed at the front by footpaths, with the cars being parked at the rear. These car parks often suffer from poor surveillance which may give rise to ASB.

Redditch has by far the highest percentage of housing that is rented from a Local Authority in the County of Worcestershire; that is, 22.6% of the total housing in the district, compared to only 10.6% in Bromsgrove, its closest neighbour. At the other end of the scale, the percentage of homes owned outright in Redditch is 21.5% compared to 37% in Bromsgrove and a average of 32.1% in Worcestershire as a whole.

(source : Census of Population, 2001)

Proportionally, Redditch has the highest youth population in the County, and according to the 2001 Census, the fourth highest youth population in the nation.

We would like the County Council to take these statistics into account when it is allocating its resources for Youth work and anti-social behaviour.

How the review was undertaken

For the last year the Social Overview & Scrutiny Committee has been investigating how the Council deals with ASB; who is responsible, how is it addressed, how *effectively* it is addressed and what external partners are engaged.



Background

At the outset of the review we defined the areas in which we wished to concentrate our efforts. The specific scrutiny subjects that we decided on are detailed below; finding the answers to these two questions has formed the basis of our entire investigation:

1. **How effective are the Council's Strategies / Mechanisms / Processes for dealing with Anti-Social Behaviour?**
2. **How effective is the co-ordination of effort within the Council's organisation; and beyond the Council, in collaboration with Partner Organisations?**

We spent some time familiarising ourselves with ASB and the Council's current practices for dealing with it; we worked through a number of case studies and interviewed Council Officers from every service who came into contact with ASB cases; we have consulted neighbouring authorities and interviewed a number of our external partners.

In the pages that follow we will detail our main findings.



Discussion

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Discussion

Throughout our interviews a number of common themes emerged; we found it interesting that each of the different Council Officers knew what needed to be done to improve the Council's response to ASB; however, none of them were able to change the system on their own.

We feel that the Council should take a long-term view on any costs that may be incurred by implementing our recommendations; and should weigh up these costs against the added benefits each recommendation would have with regards to community safety and wellbeing. However, having said this, we do feel that many of our recommendations could be implemented at low cost to the Council by seeking joint funding streams with its Partners; and through efficiency savings by altering the approach the Council takes to ASB which would ultimately reduce the need for costly legal actions.

In the discussion that follows we have highlighted the key areas for improvement and the rationale behind them.



Discussion

Definition of Anti-Social Behaviour

“People need to know what ASB is, and also, what it isn’t.”

As we have already discussed, “Anti-Social Behaviour” is a term that can be heard everywhere in our present society; yet, we are sure that very few residents of Redditch know what it includes and how the Council can help address it. We think that people are either becoming more intolerant, reporting every minor issue; or are more despondent, letting ASB escalate because they are unaware that the Council can do anything to resolve the issue.

“ASB is a fairly new term and can be used in the wrong way; it is used as a label. One of the problems is that there is a lack of awareness of what ASB actually is.”

Throughout our investigation we found that there was a real lack of clarity concerning the Council’s definition of ASB across its services. There seemed to be confusion over how ASB was addressed by the Council; which services were responsible for dealing with ASB; and, how and when cases should be escalated. We feel that because of this confusion, there is an inconsistency to the level of service provided to customers depending on when, where and to whom their case is reported.

“I think there is a real gap between what is perceived as Social and what is Anti-Social Behaviour; it can be exacerbated if it is dealt with differently in different parts of the Council; there needs to be better definition of ASB across the board.”

We think that there should be a greater understanding within the Council and with the Council’s partners that ASB is not just carried out by youths; nor is ASB just about loitering and intimidation.



Discussion

We think that the Council and its partners also need to look at and address wider ASB issues such as fly-tipping and abandoned vehicles, and accept that the perpetrators of ASB could just as easily be the parents of 11-14 year-olds as the youths themselves.

Once the terms of reference and definition of ASB have been addressed, we strongly feel that they should be fully communicated across the Council's own services, to its partners and to members of the public.

We want everyone to be well informed about the Council's ASB services and how they can be accessed.

"The Council needs to communicate ASB as a bigger package; what it is, how the Council deals with it and how it can be reported. ASB needs to be marketed and badged so that people know what it really is."

"We need terms of reference for each team detailing when a case should be passed over and the length of time in which a case should be dealt with. It would give our customers a clear service standard and inform them what will happen to their case and where their phone calls will go."

We recommend that the Council's definition of, and its literature for anti-social behaviour be firmed up across the Council and that robust protocols be established to clarify the roles and priorities of each service with regards to anti-social behaviour. We recommend that this be done with a view to defining the difference between low and high level anti-social behaviour cases, and by clarifying the boundaries of each service so that a unified method for dealing with each case can be established.



Discussion

Low Level Anti-Social Behaviour

“Preventing and deterring is better than enforcing and restricting.”

As a result of this lack of definition, we have found that many problems arise around the “gap” between low level and high level ASB with no one service addressing the breach adequately. When we first started this investigation, the Council’s practice saw all ASB cases initially directed to the Tenancy Team where they were filtered. Any case that reached a sufficient level was sent to the ASB Team or Environmental Health, for example, with the remainder left with the Tenancy Team to be dealt with.

“The Tenancy Team has a very high workload; of the 20 or so ASB cases that come in a month, 18 of these would be staying with Tenancy, only 2 would be at a sufficient level to be dealt with by the ASB Team.”

At the time, we were concerned that low level ASB cases were not given the time and attention that was needed. The Tenancy Team, having a responsibility for **all** matters relating to a tenancy and not solely the ASB aspect, was not and is not sufficiently resourced to dedicate enough time and effort to ASB.

“The Tenancy Team deals with more ASB cases than anyone else, on top of their other Tenancy cases.”

“The Tenancy Team cannot dedicate the time to address low level ASB but it is just not getting dealt with anywhere else... Tenancy does not have the capacity to deal with it, there needs to be someone on the ground who can deal with the lower level problems.”



Discussion

However, since conducting our interviews with the relevant Council Officers, we have seen changes to how and where initial ASB calls are referred. We are pleased to see that ASB cases are now referred directly to the ASB Team who can monitor and filter each case, directing them to the correct service as deemed appropriate. ***We would welcome regular updates on how these changes have affected the service the Council provides in relation to ASB.***

We hope that these changes will improve the Council's response to low level ASB cases as we are concerned that if low level cases are left without being addressed, they can soon escalate to higher level ASB.

Throughout our interviews, there was resounding recognition for the benefits of early intervention; by intervening early enough on a case, you can, in effect "nip the issue in the bud"; often appeasing a situation before more serious behaviours occur and before more people become aggrieved. We feel that by addressing low-level cases promptly and effectively, many court actions can be avoided, thus saving the Council legal fees and freeing the funds up to resource diversionary schemes.

"I think that in the majority of cases, court action is unnecessary. It is far more important to have early intervention."

We feel that the Council should recognise the need for adopting early, low level intervention in anti-social behaviour cases, as mild cases can often escalate if not addressed. We therefore recommend that the Council fully investigates how it can improve its response to lower level anti-social behaviour and establish the most effective method by which this can be delivered.



Discussion

Mediation *“We want to get people talking to each other.”*

Further to the previous recommendation, we would strongly like to suggest the Council adopts mediation as a desirable course of action to deal with low level ASB and neighbour nuisance. In the past, the Council offered a mediation service; however, this service was lost when the ASB Team was created. We feel that mediation is a valuable resource and should be re-introduced. We feel that mediation has the power to resolve conflict in the early stages of a dispute; it encourages people to talk to each other and promotes empathy between the different parties; quite often people do not realise they are behaving anti-socially, and by encouraging people to talk to each other we feel that much high level ASB can be avoided.

“With low level cases, 9 out of 10 could be dealt with and resolved by mediation.”

“We need intervention at a lower level, for example mediation, someone who can understand the wider picture, think laterally and suggest solutions.”

“The gap is that we have no Mediation Service; something may be a Tenancy issue but would escalate to be an ASB issue without proper intervention. If we had mediation in between it would really complement the services.”

We think that mediation would be a useful resource, not only for the Council, but also for its partners. We therefore suggest that the Council explore **joint funding a mediation service with its partners**.



Discussion

Before introducing mediation we feel that the question of where it should be located should be fully investigated; we do not necessarily feel that it would be best placed within enforcement, as we feel that it would compromise the level of service offered if the trust and respect that had been built up during mediation, was lost when the same team then started to pursue legal action. In addition, we do not necessarily feel that mediation need lie within the Council, if joint funding was achieved, it may be in the interest of everyone concerned to have an independent service.

“Our service is missing mediation; best practice is a separated mediation service away from Enforcement.”

We recommend that a mediation service for anti-social behaviour be introduced in Redditch and suggest that further investigation should be undertaken to establish how it could be funded and where it should stand.



Discussion

Accessibility *“The public needs to know what services are available.”*

We feel that the Council needs to ensure that its ASB service is meeting the customer’s needs; there seems to be a lottery for the level of service provided depending on how and when the service is accessed. We feel that the Council’s ASB services should be mapped from the customer’s point of view, so that it can effectively gauge and target its responses to ASB.

“I am concerned about the different levels of service customers are being given, depending on which team is working with them.”

We would like the Council to investigate there being one single access point for ASB across the Council and the practicalities of a dedicated ASB phone line, including finding the most efficient location for the phone line. Following an investigation, if it emerged that this was felt to be the best course of action; then we feel that it should be fully communicated across the Borough with full terms of reference.

“I think the Town Hall itself is very accessible, the problem is in communicating what services are available.”

“There are probably too many access points, people need to understand what the services do.”

“There is a training issue of where to direct enquiries – this is not just an ASB issue, this is a general problem across the Council.”



Discussion

We think that the Council could make its services more accessible if it increased the amount of support available to the witnesses and victims of ASB; we feel that more people would be empowered to report ASB if they could see that an infrastructure of support was there and that the Council would try to diffuse any repercussions. We understand that reporting and pursuing ASB cases can be highly emotional and so we feel that the victims and witnesses of ASB should be updated on the status of their case regularly. We feel that Officers should be encouraged to produce written details of how a customer's case is progressing so that the victims and witnesses of ASB can reassure themselves by re-reading these details at a later date.

We recommend that the Council investigate the accessibility of its anti-social behaviour service, in particular we suggest:

- i) that the service be mapped from the customer's point of view;
- ii) that the Council investigate the practicalities of an anti-social behaviour helpline in conjunction with the Redditch Community Safety Partnership; and
- iii) the Council increase its level of support for the witnesses and victims of anti-social behaviour.



Discussion

Cross-Departmental and Partnership working

Whilst highlighting some areas of excellent cross-departmental and partnership working, our investigation also highlighted areas where there was a distinct lack of communication across the Council's services; and between the Council and its partners. We found that this lack of communication and sharing of knowledge often resulted in a duplication of effort and undid some of the good work that was being done. We feel that much work needs to be done to build up working relationships across the Council and to help each service understand others' priorities. We suggest that a robust service level agreement and/or protocol for ASB should be implemented across the Council so that the role each team plays in combating ASB is clearly defined and understood.

We feel that the overriding issue within the Council when it came to communication was the relationship between the Tenancy Team and the ASB Team; we suggest that joined up working should be investigated to strengthen the partnership and increase the level of communication between the two teams to help build up a mutual understanding of each team's work.

"I would say that the ASB Team's working relationship with the Tenancy Team does not work well because they each have different priorities."

"Occasionally there is a communication gap between services... the ASB Team and Tenancy Team should be working together if their cases involve the same people... Officers should work together rather than create more of a problem by going on multiple visits."

We have taken heed of one Expert Witness's suggestion that a "Working Together" seminar aimed at practitioner level be re-introduced in the Council; where policy and protocol are made more approachable by working through case scenarios, and Officers are given the opportunity to meet the other Officers they should and would be working with.



Discussion

There is a strong feeling across each of the services that regular updates and communications should be encouraged.

“The Council falls down with the communication across its services. Lots of good work is being done, but the work can detract from work already taking place. The different services all need to sit round a table and share the information.”

We suggest that it is not just case related updates that should be given; we also think that protocols should be set up between services where early communication can help with the Council’s day-to-day work. For example, protocols should be set up for the Landscape and Countryside Services to liaise with the CCTV Control Centre so an early warning can be given to remove any overgrown foliage that would impinge on the sightlines and therefore the operation of the Control Centre.

Of course, it is not just the internal communication that needs to be addressed; throughout our interviews we heard evidence that communication between the partner agencies also needed to be improved. We found that one of the main problems was that, of the organisations we interviewed, the only one who had a specific “Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy” was the Police; each of the other organisations admitted that their work was affected by ASB, but specifically addressing ASB was not one of their corporate priorities. We think that this makes partnership working very difficult as each partner is working to its own set agenda and priorities. We are pleased that the Council has a commitment to develop an Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy with its partners on the Redditch Community Safety Partnership* and believe that this will lead to vast improvements in partnership working once implemented. However, we have concerns for partner communication in the interim.

*Redditch Borough Council Corporate Plan 2005-08, Community Safety, Action 1.2(d)



Discussion

We think that if each organisation was given the opportunity to present their work, their priorities and the problems they face to the other partners, then each partner would have an increased empathy and understanding for the others' work and it would become clear what each organisation could do and what they could not do; it would also help agencies gauge which partners to call in on a specific project and also gauge when it would be better to work alone.

Similar to our suggestion for increased inter-Council communication, we recommend that the Council encourage a series of networking events with its partners. We believe that it is not just the "obvious" partners who should be involved, such as the Police and the Probation Service, but also agencies like Connexions, who may not have a direct responsibility in a specific ASB case but nonetheless if made aware of the problem, could direct their resources at the identified target area.

We feel that a whole range of methods could be utilised to increase communication with our partners; such as issuing regular updates, inviting extended partners to case conferences, cross-organisational training and other networking events. We feel that through these conversations the Council should try to encourage its partners to adopt addressing "Anti-Social Behaviour" as a priority wherever it impinges on their work.

"We need to have an ASB strategy across all the partners as Redditch Borough Council is not the sole responsible authority."

We acknowledge that certain organisations, particularly those with a very targeted service, will always prove hard to engage; however, we feel that this can be alleviated in part by regular communication and the knowledge that each organisation is ultimately working towards the same end.



Discussion

We recommend that the Council encourage joint training and joint working across services; particularly by utilising a “Working Together” seminar aimed at practitioner level to strengthen working relationships and increase the understanding and knowledge of the Council’s anti-social behaviour processes. We think that this seminar should include all services that come into contact with anti-social behaviour from the initial lodging of the call to the completion of the case.

We recommend that the Council encourage regular updates across Services and Directorates with regards to anti-social behaviour.

We feel that communication needs to be addressed between the Council and its partners in relation to anti-social behaviour. We recommend that the Council promote a greater understanding and awareness of the different priorities and perceptions of each organisation, by encouraging regular updates, increased information sharing, case conferences, cross-organisational training and networking events.



Discussion

Legal Provision *“The Legal aspect is integral to the ASB Team’s work”.*

We have some concerns that there are only two part-time Solicitors working in the Council; particularly when, by the nature of ASB cases, the short timescales mean that Officers regularly have to shelve their other case work to deal with ASB. We are also concerned that Legal Services Officers often feel compelled to work over-time on regular occasions with no extra pay.

“I would say there is a blockage in terms of legal provision; not in terms of blocking the work that is provided for the ASB Team, but the knock-on effect it has on the rest of Legal Services’ work.”

We have noticed that there is currently no provision within the ASB Team budget for legal provision. When you consider that according to the Home Office, the average cost of obtaining an ASBO in 2004 was £2,500, we feel that legal provision is essential. We therefore recommend that the Council allocate adequate resources for dealing with ASB related legal actions.

We feel that this matter would be particularly pertinent if and when the Council’s ASB service is provided cross-tenure; however, we also acknowledge that the level of funding needed for legal provision could well be reduced if the Council adopts more low-level interventions, such as, mediation and a range of diversionary measures.

We recommend that the Council allocate adequate resources for anti-social behaviour related legal actions.



Discussion

Youth Service *“An ASBO is becoming a badge of honour.”*

We feel that Youth work is a very important part of the Council’s service, yet we do not feel that this is reflected in the Council’s current funding and staffing levels. Traditional ASB legal actions are not always having the desired effect; nationally there are reports of breached Orders and consistent repeat offenders. It is becoming “cool” to have an ASBO. We think that the Council needs to look at the root of the problem, and address the fact that there is a lack of things for the youths of Redditch to do.

We are very disappointed that some members of the Youth Team have to divert their time and effort towards fundraising in order to secure funding streams for diversionary programmes. We feel these resources would be put to better use providing services to the youths in the area.

“It is frustrating with schemes like Hot Stuff where there are proven successes year on year, yet the money must be found each year so that the programme can continue.”

We feel that the diversionary programmes and activities provided by the Youth Team are incredibly worthwhile as they provide things for youths to do in a social environment. The Youth Team also conducts street-based education, encouraging hard to reach gangs and groups of Youths to channel their energy into worthwhile causes such as vocational programmes, qualifications and courses. It takes time to build up the trust and relationships that are essential to this work and so we are dissatisfied to hear that the Youth Team Officers are only contracted to work a combined ten-hours a week; and that some of their contracts are only three or six months long.

“Setting such short-term contracts puts a strain on Officers’ work and the relationships they build.”



Discussion

“It is hard to attract quality workers without being able to offer them the hours or length of contract.”

We have heard some evidence of ASB actions being supported by diversionary activities; over the summer, for example, the Police kept leaflets of the Hot Stuff Programme in their patrol cars so that if they dispersed a group of youths from a particular area, they were able to get a positive outcome from the situation by offering the youths something else to do. We feel that the Council should be offering more support; in fact, we think that **all ASB enforcement should be backed up by diversionary activities**; most ASB seems to occur when there is nothing else for people to do.

“With young people it is not always best to use enforcement; we need diversionary tactics in a social environment.”

We are aware that funding has been allocated to the County Council from the Government Office for the West Midlands (GOWM) specifically to fund youth work as part of the GOWM’s Transforming Youth Work Performance Improvement Fund (TYWPIF). We would like to suggest that the Council negotiate a direct responsibility for District Councils to ensure that this money can be spent effectively in the areas where it needed the most.

We understand that the Redditch Community Safety Partnership (RCSP) is committed to “Investing in all Our Young People” and so we feel that all our partners in the RCSP should be encouraged to commit and contribute to youth diversionary programmes in Redditch.

We have also heard evidence of a targeted diversionary programme in a neighbouring authority which has been funded through its community housing association, Connexions and the community



Discussion

safety partnership. We think that the Council should investigate this matter and explore applying for similar funding or grants; working with key partners with the aim of providing a programme for a specifically targeted group of known anti-social behaviour offenders. This programme should aim to provide a series of activities that each has a social context; the example highlighted in the neighbouring authority was run by the Ranger's service with each of the activities being related to caring for the environment. We feel that the possibility of being successful in obtaining a grant from the RCSP lies in working with key partners and in offering a specific and targeted scheme, the benefits of which can be measured.

We recommend that the Council recognise and promote the importance of the diversionary activities provided by the Youth Team and allocate funds and staff hours accordingly.

We recommend that anti-social behaviour enforcement should be backed up by diversionary schemes.

We recommend that the Council should encourage its partners on the Redditch Community Safety Partnership to sign up to Youth based diversionary schemes to ensure their continued stability.

We recommend that the Council and its partners should apply to the Redditch Community Safety Partnership for joint funding to support specific and targeted diversionary programmes in the area.

We recommend that the Council negotiate with the County Council to grant District Councils a direct responsibility for how Government Office for the West Midlands' (GOWM) Transforming Youth Work Performance Improvement Fund should be spent in and on behalf of the District.



Discussion

CCTV We are concerned that some of the Council's CCTV cameras are not as effective as they might be because of poor lighting.

As the responsibility for street lighting lies with the County Council, we urge the Council to engage in discussions with the County so that the CCTV cameras in Redditch can work to their full advantage.

Having said that, we appreciate that increased lighting is not always the most suitable course of action in a communal area as it may encourage people to congregate after nightfall. We therefore recommend that infra-red lenses be added to the cameras so that they can capture images in the dark.

We recommend that where lighting around the Council's CCTV cameras is negligible or non-existent, the Council investigate enhancing visibility by either introducing additional lighting or infra-red lenses on the existing CCTV cameras.



Discussion

Anti-Social Behaviour Interviews

We feel that as ASB calls are by their nature, private and sensitive subjects, they should be conducted in a private room. We are concerned that there is not enough provision for private interview rooms in the One-Stop-Shops to enable the majority of interviews to take place in private; there is currently one interview room in each of the One-Stop-Shops with the Town Hall One-Stop-Shop having one private interview room and two other interview rooms.

We are impressed with the One-Stop-Shop Customer Service Advisors' desire to progress an inquiry to the next stage by providing each person with more than they came in with; be it some additional information, a contact name or an appointment to see the Officer dealing with their case.

We have been told that it has often proved difficult to book appointments with Tenancy Officers as they are frequently working offsite. We suggest that the Tenancy Team be encouraged to hold surgeries in the Town Hall One-Stop-Shop; this would mean that appointments can be made at the first point of contact, at times when the One-Stop-Shop knows a Tenancy Officer will be available; any specific Tenancy enquiries could be posed directly to the relevant Officer.

We recommend that the provision for private interview rooms in the One-Stop-Shop be increased so that anti-social behaviour interviews can be conducted in private, wherever possible.

We also recommend that the Tenancy Team hold a surgery in the One-Stop-Shop on either a fortnightly or monthly basis.



Discussion

Cross-Tenure

We have not made any recommendations on cross-tenure working for the ASB Team as we believe that plans are already afoot to expand this service. However, we would like to point out that we would have grave concerns if the ASB Team's work was opened out to the whole community without any consideration for additional resourcing in the other services that will be affected by the additional workload, for example (but not exclusively) in Legal Services.

"We do not know what the demand for the ASB Team's services is in the private sector."

"I would have concern for Legal Services to provide a cross-tenure service with the number of Officers they have available at the moment."



Conclusion

At the start of this review we set out to assess the effectiveness of the Council's current strategies for dealing with anti-social behaviour and the level of partnership working both within and outside of the Council. As a result of this investigation we have found areas that we feel work well and have highlighted areas for improvement across the Council and its partners.

We strongly urge you to accept our recommendations as we firmly believe that if they are adopted, the net incidence of high level anti-social behaviour in Redditch will be reduced; and the perception of community safety will be increased.



Witnesses RBC Officers

Community Safety

Angie Heighway, Acting Head of Community Safety
Liz Bellaby, Anti-Social Behaviour Manager
Warren Stone, Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator
Phil Bryers, Youth & Community Safety Officer (on secondment from West Mercia Police)
Karen Taylor, Youth Strategy Officer

Community Support Services

CCTV Control Centre Staff

Customer & Office Services

Lynn Jones, One-Stop-Shop Team Leader
Ruth Griffin, Senior Customer Service Advisor, One-Stop-Shop

Environmental Health

Steve Webster, Head of Environmental Health

Environmental Services

Guy Revans, Head of Environmental Services

Housing Services

Liz Tompkin, Head of Housing Services
Verney Jeynes, Tenancy Manager
Glenda Biddle, Tenancy Officer
Woodrow Tenancy Team Staff

Legal Services

Lisa Arben, Senior Solicitor

Planning Services

John Staniland, Head of Planning Services



Witnesses Partner Agencies

Birmingham City Council Officers

Alison Parsons, Head of BASBU
David Reddall, BASBU Team Leader

Connexions Herefordshire & Worcestershire

Nicola North, Manager (North)
Darren Beattie, PAYP Co-ordinator

West Mercia Police

Inspector Gareth Prosser, Redditch District Inspector
Police Constable Andrew Holliday, Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator
Police Constable Dave Wilkins, Beat Manager, North East Sector

Worcestershire County Council Officers

Catherine Driscoll, Head of Partnership Development, Adult and Community Services
Siobhan Williams, Acting Service Manager Children & Families (North Worcestershire),
Children's Social Care, Children's Services
Dave Evans, Area Operations Officer (North Worcestershire), Youth Service, Children's Services

Worcestershire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust

Jacky Mourby, Clinical Manager for High Risk / Forensic Liaison Service

Worcestershire Substance Misuse Action Team

Phil Deakin, Co-ordinator



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Glossary

| | |
|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| ABC | Acceptable Behaviour Contract |
| ASB | Anti-Social Behaviour |
| ASBO | Anti-Social Behaviour Order |
| BASBU | Birmingham Anti-Social Behaviour Unit |
| CCTV | Closed-Circuit Television |
| GOWM | Government Office for the West Midlands |
| NACRO | National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders |
| ODPM | Office of the Deputy Prime Minister |
| O&S | Overview & Scrutiny |
| LGIU | Local Government Information Unit |
| PAYP | Positive Activities for Young People |
| RBC | Redditch Borough Council |
| RCSP | Redditch Community Safety Partnership |
| RDS | Research, Development and Statistics Directorate, Home Office |
| SMAT | Substance Misuse Action Team |
| TYWPIF | Transforming Youth Work Performance Improvement Fund |
| WCC | Worcestershire County Council |



Appendices

| | | |
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| | Appendix 2 : ASB Typology | page 53 |



Appendix 1 Terminology

ABC (Acceptable Behaviour Contract)

ABC's are voluntary agreements between an individual, the Council and the Police; both the Council and the Police can suggest this action where they feel it is appropriate. These actions are usually adopted where there is evidence of low level ASB; the individual signs an agreement not to enter into certain behaviours of an anti-social nature; these contracts are usually countersigned by the individual's parent (if under 18).

ASB (Anti-Social Behaviour)

This term applies to a whole range of behaviours that cause or are likely to cause harassment, distress or alarm to another person, not from the same household (please refer to the RDS ASB Typology chart in **Appendix 2** for some examples of ASB).

ASB – Low Level

Low level ASB refers to behaviours which by themselves would not constitute grounds for legal action, but if left may escalate to high level ASB.

ASB – High Level

More "serious" ASB upon which a legal case may be founded.

ASBI (Anti-Social Behaviour Injunction)

ASBI's are discretionary remedies which are granted at Court to control a person's behaviour; if breached, an ASBI could result in a 2-year prison sentence. An ASBI can only be granted if the Court is satisfied that the individual is engaged in, or is threatening to engage in conduct which may cause a nuisance or annoyance to any person (be it directly or indirectly) or where it prevents a landlord from effectively fulfilling their housing management function.

ASBO (Anti-Social Behaviour Order)

ASBO's are granted at Court and can stop a person from carrying out particular acts of ASB; an ASBO can stop a person meeting with certain people; it can stop them going to a particular area; and it can impose a curfew. The maximum penalty for breaking the conditions of an ASBO is a 5-year prison sentence for adults or a custodial sentence at a young offenders institute for young people.

CRASBO (Criminal Anti-Social Behaviour Order)

A CRASBO is similar to an ASBO but applies when the person is being convicted of a criminal offence.



Appendix 1 Terminology

- Cross-Tenure** Cross-Tenure applies to a service that is available to people from all types of tenancies ranging from owner-occupiers to those renting from the Council. The Council's ASB Team is currently only able to deal with cases involving one or more Council tenants; if the service was provided cross-tenure it would be available to all residents of the Borough.
- Dispersal Order** Sometimes referred to as a "Section 30 Dispersal Order"; a Dispersal Order can be granted on a specific area so that the Police can disperse groups if there are 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.
- Owner-Occupier** An owner-occupier is someone who owns the property that they live in.
- Parenting Contract** Parenting Contracts are voluntary agreements between Local Authorities and parents whose children have truanted or been excluded from school. A Parenting Contract will set out the standards of behaviour expected from the parent's children.
- Parenting Order** Parenting Orders are granted in Court when there has been a problem with a young person's behaviour. Parenting Orders can require a parent to attend a programme to build their parenting skills; the order can also specify ways in which the parents are required to exercise control over their child.
- Target Hardening** This is a fund for the provision of practical and immediate support to victims and witnesses of ASB; for example, the fund could be used for a robust lock on a victim's door, or increased lighting in a threatened area. The current annual budget for this fund is £6,000.



Appendix 2 ASB Typology

The following pages detail the typology of Anti-Social Behaviour as defined by the Research, Development and Statistics Directorate (RDS) in its “Defining and Measuring Anti-Social Behaviour” report (2004).

As you will see, RDS has split the typology for ASB into four categories which help to classify the different ASB actions according to where they occur, who the action is aimed at, and, whether this action directly or indirectly affects a victim, or the environment.

We must highlight that this list was not intended to be exhaustive.

Environmental Damage

Criminal damage / vandalism

Graffiti

Damage to bus shelters

Damage to phone kiosks

Damage to street furniture

Damage to buildings

Damage to trees / plants / hedges

Litter / rubbish

Dropping litter

Dumping Rubbish

Fly-tipping

Fly-posting



Appendix 2 ASB Typology

Misuse of public space

Drug / Substance misuse & dealing

Taking drugs
Sniffing volatile substances
Discarding needles / drug paraphernalia
Crack Houses
Presence of dealers or users

Street drinking

Begging

Prostitution

Soliciting
Cards in phone boxes
Discarded condoms

Kerb crawling

Loitering
Pestering residents

Sexual Acts

Inappropriate sexual conduct
Indecent Exposure

Abandoned Cars

Vehicle-related nuisance & inappropriate vehicle use

Inconvenient / illegal parking
Car repairs on the street / in gardens
Setting vehicles alight
Joyriding
Racing cars
Off-road motorcycling
Cycling / Skateboarding in pedestrian areas / footpaths



Appendix 2 ASB Typology

Disregard for community & personal well-being

Noise

Noisy neighbours
Noisy cars / motorbikes
Alarms (persistent ringing / malfunction)
Loud music
Noise from pubs / clubs
Noise from business / industry

Rowdy behaviour

Shouting & Swearing
Fighting
Drunken behaviour
Hooliganism / loutish behaviour

Nuisance behaviour

Urinating in public
Setting fires (not directed at specific persons or property)
Inappropriate use of fireworks
Throwing missiles
Climbing on buildings
Impeding access to communal areas
Games in restricted / inappropriate areas
Misuse of air guns
Letting down car tyres

Hoax calls

False calls to emergency services

Animal related problems

Uncontrolled animals



Appendix 2 ASB Typology

Acts related at people

Intimidation / harassment

Groups or individuals making threats

Verbal abuse

Sending nasty / offensive letters

Following people

Pestering people

Voyeurism

Bullying

Obscene / nuisance phone calls

Menacing gestures

Can be on the grounds of:

Race

Sexual Orientation

Gender

Religion

Disability

Age

(Source: Home Office RDS, "Defining and Measuring Anti-Social Behaviour", 2004)



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