

Describing and assessing interventions to address anti-social behaviour

Key findings from a study of ASB practice

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This report explores how interventions for anti-social behaviour (ASB) are used in some local areas and the nature of the ASB. It pulls together two strands of work: a quantitative strand using data from local areas to look at Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships' (CDRPs)¹ use of ASB interventions and a qualitative investigation of the context in which ASB interventions are made, focusing on persistent adult perpetrators.

The study has provided information about those who receive interventions for ASB and what interventions were received. The findings are in line with other research, for example about half of those receiving interventions in the study areas were young people aged under 18 and most interventions were lower level with few people getting more than one intervention in the study period. The detailed consideration of cases of persistent ASB by adults highlights the complex needs of many of the perpetrators and the challenges faced by practitioners in dealing with these types of ASB.

¹ CDRPs have been renamed Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) since the research was carried out.

Both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the research raise issues for practitioners in effectively dealing with ASB.

- Current ASB data-collection practice does not tend to generate the kinds of data-sets which can underpin robust assessments of the effectiveness of ASB interventions, although there are practical steps which could be taken to help move ASB practice in a more focused (and perhaps cost-effective) direction.
- Data management systems were often not designed to enable easy access to information by multi-agency groups involved in ASB work. This could lead to delays in the decision-making process and duplication of service provision.
- Data sharing was one of the most contentious aspects of ASB practice. Not only were practitioners uncertain about both informed consent and the requirements of the Data Protection Act but also many commented on the reluctance of some partner agencies to share information.

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Keywords

Anti-social behaviour

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- Practitioners were aware that a balanced response, incorporating elements of both enforcement and prevention, was essential, especially for perpetrators with complex needs. High-end interventions were more likely to succeed where they were combined with support services aimed at addressing the underlying causes of ASB. However, practitioners commented that lack of support services meant that many adult perpetrators experienced 'enforcement without support'.
- While local partnerships may adopt control, rehabilitative, restorative or other ideologies in their work, what they actually deliver may not always reflect the prevailing ideology, especially where access to specific services is limited.
- A strong emphasis on the front line in ASB work was seen as essential. ASB managers and co-ordinators recognised that many front-line workers (i.e. paid and voluntary workers working directly with service users in the community) would benefit from more effective training on the principles and practices of evidence gathering, building case files, steering applications through the legal process and supporting victims and witnesses.
- Practitioners were concerned that the needs of victims and witnesses should be addressed, particularly where vulnerable adults are concerned. More effective ways of eliciting the views and concerns of the most vulnerable individuals and groups in the community, who may be victims of ASB, need to be explored. This is particularly important in areas where members of the community are afraid to report ASB for fear of retaliation and/or need support throughout the court process when acting as witnesses.
- Practitioners felt that investment in permanent staff contracts would enable ASB managers to build trust in the local community and between partner agencies, develop inter-agency rapport and facilitate more effective long-term planning at both strategic and front-line levels.