

Anti-Social Behaviour Debate - LGA Briefing

2nd November 2009



Local Government Association

LGA Key Messages

- **Councils and the police have been at the forefront of tackling anti-social behaviour for many years with great success.** In 2007/08 local authorities had key roles in the 11,829 acceptable behaviour contracts issued, the 941 stand alone ASBOs issued and the 1,358 ASBOs issued on conviction, the 1,969 anti-social behaviour related injunctions issued, the 998 eviction orders and 4,583 notices seeking to evict tenants issued, the 980 parenting orders and the 3,400 parenting contracts issued, and the 413 dispersal orders made.
- 80% of councils have tackling anti-social behaviour as their top priority for improving community safety. All councils are using their local knowledge to focus on the issues that really matter to their residents and they have been making full use of the powers that are available to them. **While new powers are welcome, imposing minimum standards on councils from the centre is not the way to drive up performance.**
- **More can be done to allow councils to tackle problem premises in their local areas.** Councillors need to have more say over licensing and Licensing Authorities should have the freedom to set license requirements, free of centralised control.
- A local approach to tackling anti-social behaviour is imperative. Tough enforcement has its place, particularly for persistent offenders, and where immediate respite is needed. But this needs to be balanced with support too so that people can change their behaviour. Each area is different and each case requires specific understanding and action. It is also important that, as well as tackling anti-social behaviour on the ground, we look to dealing with the root causes which will invariably vary from place to place. **Councils and councillors know their communities and the impact that anti-social behaviour can have in holding back regeneration and creating an environment in which crime can take hold. Each individual case requires careful consideration and that is why a one size fits all approach from Whitehall is not right.**

briefing

New Powers to Deal with Anti-Social Behaviour

The Home Secretary recently announced new powers will be available for councils to deal with anti-social behaviour. Though councils are making full use of the powers available to them, the government's additional emphasis on tackling breaches of ASBOs is helpful, while the greater support being made available to victims of anti-social behaviour is welcome.

However, the Home Secretary also announced new "minimum standards" for councils tackling anti-social behaviour. **The LGA Group believes that imposing minimum standards from the centre is not the way to drive up performance.**

Centralised targets force the police and councils to concentrate more on delivering on the targets than actually tackling anti-social behaviour in the most useful way. Councils should be free to determine what methods are best

suited to their local area.

Instead of imposing targets the Government should be looking to spread best practice amongst councils and their partners. The IDeA (part of the LGA Group) and the National Police Improvement Agency are already assisting the Home Office's Operation Vigilance programme to assist the police and councils in 35 areas to reduce the level of acquisitive crime.

Anti-social behaviour and licensing

The Policing and Crime Bill, which will soon reach its House of Lords Report Stage, deals in part with the licensing regime and anti-social behaviour. While the LGA Group supports the aims of the Bill, we have been arguing for some key amendments which will allow councillors to effectively deal with problem premises, and the associated anti-social behaviour, in their areas.

- **The LGA opposes the introduction of a mandatory code** of conduct for alcohol retailers. **Proposed new local licensing powers unnecessarily tie the hands of local licensing authorities** which are best placed to recognise problem premises, both in the on and off-trade. Only at the local level can conditions be applied in a proportionate and targeted way to minimise the burden for industry and the council tax payer.
- **The Government's objectives could be best met through empowering local elected councillors and licensing authorities** to lead local action in partnership with other agencies.
- **Councillors should be given "interested party" status on licensing issues.** This will allow councillors to make representations on the back of a license application and initiate or comment on a license review. At the moment they can only do these things at the behest of a local resident who they must publicly name.
- **Licensing authorities and Environmental Health officers should be able to object to the granting of a Temporary Event Notice (TEN) when they believe an event would compromise public safety or create a public nuisance,** such as that which accompanies widespread binge drinking. At the moment councils have to lobby the police if they want to object to a TEN, a method which is unnecessarily circuitous.

Recent Developments:

The tragic case of Fiona Pilkington and her daughter is one which we must all learn lessons from. While Hinkley and Bosworth Borough Council did take action to tackle the problems the family were experiencing, including sending warning letters to the parents of five youths who were accused of causing problems, and following this with ASB contracts and injunctions when it was clear further action was needed, they are keen to learn what more they could have done to offer immediate respite and what systems councils can put in place to avoid any similar situation. They are working with the police and other local partners to ensure that processes are improved across the Borough.

For more information on this briefing or on the case studies detailed overleaf please contact Greg Taylor in LGA Public Affairs on 0207 664 3034 or at greg.taylor@lga.gov.uk

Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour – Council Case Studies

- Brighton City Council have identified the key trouble spots in the city and set up, with the Crime and Disorder Partnership, innovative, area-specific schemes to deal with anti-social behaviour. The **Brighton “Nightsafe” programme** is open to all businesses involved in the local night time economy and:
 - links them with other local businesses and the police through a radio system;
 - helps them to meet with, and work in partnership with, other local businesses as well as the police, the council, drug and alcohol teams and other organisations;
 - join the “Nightsafe yellow card system” which helps businesses identify trouble-makers, allows them to give a yellow card to trouble makers, and ban persistent offenders from all member premises.

As a result of intelligence sharing across the SafetyNet radio network and the Yellow Card Exclusion scheme Sussex Police report a **significant reduction in night time crime and disorder in Brighton**. Furthermore, police statistics also show an increase in the number of people out at night as a result of these improvements which has obvious benefits for local business.

- Bradford Metropolitan District Council, with local police, set up **Operation Wilt** to reduce anti-social behaviour by 30% during Ramadan of 2007 in comparison to 2006. The scheme identified trouble spots and engaged with local community groups to tackle the root causes of the problems. The council offered education to community groups on addressing anti-social behaviour and diverting young people from offending. Joint police/community patrols took place every night during Ramadan, young people were invited to a meal held by the police to discuss their needs, and briefings at Mosques to discuss the local concerns were attended by over 11,000 people.

As a result **Operation Wilt achieved a 30 per cent reduction in criminal damage and a 37 per cent decrease in anti-social behaviour**. Partnership funding was secured for sustainable youth work and facilities and the scheme led to active local participation, improved relations between police and community, and better provisions for the local youth.

- The **“Best Bar None”** scheme was set up by the Manchester City Centre Safe project to tackle drink-related crime in the city by encouraging licensed premises to work in partnership with the local authority and police, awarding the premises that work hardest to tackle anti-social behaviour. Following the scheme’s success in Manchester “Best Bar None” has been developed nationally, and has been rolled out in more than 50 areas across the UK.
- Nottingham City Council introduced **“Legal But Lethal”**, a partnership that identified key problem premises monthly. After announcing tough measures to curb anti-social behaviour the partnership used a variety of measures to “test” premises, resulting in a 2,300 capacity city-centre club having its license revoked after mystery customer visits, CCTV footage, crime records and other data showed no improvement. A city centre “saturation zone” was established in 2005. This led to a **reduction of almost 1,000 crimes of all types in the city centre and a 44% reduction in serious woundings**.



briefing

Local Government House, Smith Square, London SW1P 3HZ
DX 119450 Clerkenwell 3 Email info@lga.gov.uk
Tel 020 7664 3000 Fax 020 7664 3030
Information centre 020 7664 3131 www.lga.gov.uk