

Цвырова К.Л., студ. гр. 202а ФК и СКД
БГУ культуры и искусств
Научный руководитель – Платонова Э.Е.
ст. преподаватель

THE PROBLEM OF ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR IN THE BRITISH SOCIETY

In a survey conducted by University College London during May 2006, the UK was thought by respondents to be Europe's worst country for anti-social behaviour, with 76% believing Britain had a "big or moderate problem". [5]

In UK anti-social behaviour is an unpleasant fact of many people's everyday life, regardless of whether they live in leafy, rural villages or deprived inner-city estates. And it is a fact, that anti-social behaviour costs Britain 3.4 billion each year.

The Crime and Disorder Act, 1998 sets out an "anti-social manner as:

- that the person has acted, since the commencement date, in an anti-social manner, that is to say, 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 himself; and

The phrase antisocial behaviour describes any behaviour from any individual that causes another person distress, harm or harassment.

Anti-social behaviour includes things such as: rowdy, noisy behaviour in otherwise quiet neighbourhoods, threatening, drunken or 'yobbish' behaviour, vandalism, graffiti and fly-posting, dealing or buying drugs on the street, litter and fly-tipping rubbish, aggressive begging, drinking in the street, setting off fireworks late at night, abandoning cars on the street.

Most types of anti-social behaviour fit into one of three categories: street problems, nuisance neighbours or environmental crime:

1) Street problems: intimidation, drunkenness, begging, public drug dealing, street prostitution and kerb-crawling are all street problems that fall under the definition of anti-social behaviour.

2) Environmental crime: it has a huge impact on our communities and on how happy we are in them. It can ruin public spaces and is expensive to clean up.

Environmental crime can include:

fly-tipping - dumping household or commercial rubbish in private or communal areas

littering - deliberately dropping litter on the streets

graffiti - spray-painting or otherwise marking private property or communal areas like the sides of bus-shelters and houses

vandalism - damaging private property or communal facilities like telephone boxes or play-ground equipment

Many factors have been identified that, while they do not cause anti-social behaviour, they do increase the risk of it happening.

4 main areas: family environment, schooling and educational attainment, community life, personal life and individual factors.

The priority accorded to ASB in Britain today can be explained in a variety of ways. One view is that current problems of ASB reflect the broad cultural shifts that Britain has undergone over the past 50 years. For example, the loss of a sense of community in many areas, a decline in deference and the greater emphasis on individualism and consumerist values have all had repercussions on standards of civil behavior. More specific social developments are also relevant, such as increasing levels of binge drinking and use of illicit drugs.

In 2003, in an attempt to curb anti-social behaviour, the British government introduced the Anti-Social Behaviour Act. This introduced the Anti-social behaviour order ("Asbo"). [4]

An Anti-Social Behaviour Order ASBO is a civil order made against a person who has been shown, on the balance of evidence, to have engaged in anti-social behaviour in the United Kingdom and in the Republic of Ireland.

ASBOs were designed to deter anti-social behaviour and prevent the escalation of such behaviour without having to resort to criminal sanctions, although a breach does give rise to criminal proceedings and penalties. They were not designed to replace any existing legislation, but instead to complement measures that both the police and the local authority have available to them to combat anti-social behaviour. They are based on the same principle as an injunction and are not penalties for offences.

An Anti-social behaviour orders were designed to combat such behaviour. Before ASBOs, the use of injunctions and evictions went some way to dealing with problem behaviour. But many individuals – and most importantly juveniles, who are commonly considered to be the cause of much anti-social behaviour – slipped through the net. ASBOs can be used on any individual, from the age on 10 upward, who has acted in an anti-social manner. The intention is to target persistent perpetrators of anti-social behaviour regardless, for example, of age or the type of housing they occupy, in order to protect their community from further acts of anti-social behaviour.[3]

An anti-social behaviour order prevents the 'perpetrator' (those people responsible) from carrying out an anti-social act or series of anti-social behaviour. ASBO's are designed to stop unacceptable and anti-social behaviour and prevent members of the public being targeted further by such acts. The ASBO, in theory, prevents a perpetrator from being present in specific areas in local communities (known as 'exclusion zones').

ASBO's can be subject to an extension if needed to give protective provision not only for the 'relevant persons' but for any other person in England and Wales. So if a person subject to an ASBO could indulge in anti-social behaviour in any part of England or Wales for example, then an ASBO may have a prohibitive inclusion which spans all of Wales or England.

Where an ASBO is an official implementation which carries the full force of legal and statutory implementation, the Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC) is

conducted and used through an informal procedure and does have some significance that is legally based. ABC's can be used both with children, young adults and older adults.

The Acceptable Behaviour Contract is a formal agreement in written form (i.e. not verbal) which is made between an individual and most often their parent or guardian (in the cases of children/young people). They can also be made between the individual and the 'registered landlords', housing departments, schools, the local police and are extremely flexible in content and the format presented. [1]

Although the ABC has not been administered via a magistrate it is still a legal and binding document and any breach of it can result in the police pursuing criminal charges against those involved and also their parents for disregarding their part of the agreement.

Legal action (such as an application for an anti-social behaviour order or a possession order, if the perpetrator is in social housing) should be stated on the contract where this is the potential consequence of breaking the agreement. The prospect of a more formal, legal intervention can provide an added incentive to adhere to the contract. Where the ASB cited on the ABC is an actual criminal offence (eg. criminal damage), then criminal proceedings also remain a possibility for breach.

In the UK, there has been criticism that an ASBO is sometimes viewed as a badge of honour by young people. Many see the ASBO connected with young delinquents.

I think, for us it is a good example of how the government together with people and police can resist Anti Social Behaviour.

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<http://www.antisocialbehaviour.org.uk/>

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