Tackling antisocial behaviour

“Antisocial behaviour is a broad term used to describe day-to-day incidents of crime, nuisance and disorder that make people’s lives a misery – from litter to vandalism, to public drunkenness or aggressive dogs, to noisy or abusive neighbours. Such a wide range of behaviours means that responsibility for dealing with antisocial behaviour is shared between a number of agencies, particularly the police, councils and social landlords.”

Antisocial behaviour is described as “behaviour by a person which causes, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household as the person.”

There is little doubt that antisocial behaviour is a concern in London, and it has been a longstanding issue for the police and London’s local authorities. In the year to February 2017, there were almost 272,000 calls related to antisocial behaviour made to the Met’s Command and Control Centre – a 10 per cent rise on the same period in the previous year – and the Mayor’s new Police and Crime Plan identifies it as a mandatory priority for every borough.

Background

What is antisocial behaviour?

The term antisocial behaviour includes a wide range of incidents – from those seen to be inconsiderate and thoughtless to behaviour which is intimidating and criminal. It can have a lasting impact on individuals, neighbourhoods and communities and it is often associated with fear of crime. It can also lead to an increase in crime, in particular criminal damage and violence.

The Met classifies antisocial behaviour into three main categories, depending on how many people are affected:

- Personal antisocial behaviour – when a person targets a specific individual or group
- Nuisance antisocial behaviour – when a person causes trouble, annoyance or suffering to a community
- Environmental antisocial behaviour – when a person’s actions affect the wider environment, such as public spaces or buildings

Under these headings antisocial behaviour falls into one of 13 different types:

1. Vehicle abandonment
2. Vehicle nuisance or inappropriate use
3. Rowdy or inconsiderate behaviour
4. Rowdy or nuisance neighbours
5. Littering or drugs paraphernalia
6. Animal problems
7. Trespassing

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2 Metropolitan Police, What is antisocial behaviour?
3 London Datastore
5 Metropolitan Police, What is antisocial behaviour?
Tackling antisocial behaviour

8. Nuisance calls
9. Street drinking
10. Prostitution related activity
11. Nuisance noise
12. Begging or vagrancy
13. Misuse of fireworks

What is the scale of antisocial behaviour in London?

Data on antisocial behaviour is generally collected by the police, local authorities and registered social landlords. Reports of antisocial behaviour to the Met (calls to its command and control centre) have declined over recent years (see table one), with fairly consistent peaks in the summer months. However, it increased by 10 per cent in 2016 when compared with the previous year.

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<td>359,582</td>
<td>279,121</td>
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Source: London Datastore

Tackling ASB in London

The wide range of behaviours and crimes covered by the term antisocial behaviour necessitates a multi-agency response and a number of agencies have a duty to respond. Depending on the type of action taken, these could include the police, local authorities, registered social landlords, housing trusts, fire and rescue services or youth offending teams.

The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 is the law that guides agencies in how they can respond to antisocial behaviour. It received Royal Assent on 13 March 2014 and changed the way agencies deal with antisocial behaviour – the “reforms are designed to put victims at the heart of the response to antisocial behaviour, and give professionals the flexibility to deal with any given situation.” The Act introduced simpler and more flexible powers and made communities central to the response – it replaced 19 pre-existing powers, many of which had proven to be ineffective, with six new powers:

- Civil Injunction
- Criminal Behaviour Order

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6 Data from local authorities and registered social landlords will be sought through the written call for evidence
7 London Datastore
8 London Councils, [The new ASB powers in London](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/12/contents/enacted)
Tackling antisocial behaviour

- Community Protection Notice
- Public Spaces Protection Order
- Closure Powers
- Dispersal Power

It also introduced two further measures that give communities and victims a say in how local agencies deal with antisocial behaviour: the community trigger and the community remedy. Further information on these powers can be found in appendix one.

The new powers to tackle antisocial behaviour came into effect between October 2014 and March 2015. London Councils report that they are being implemented widely across London and that “practitioners like the new powers and are willing to use them, especially on new or emerging issues … feedback is confirming that they are having an immediate effect in reducing antisocial behaviour that has had an adverse impact on many of London’s communities for so long.”

London Councils also reports that there have been more Community Trigger activations in London than anywhere else in England and Wales and “local partnerships are seeing them as a positive approach to scrutinising local partnership working.”

Terms of reference

The terms of reference for this investigation are:

1. To identify the extent and scope of antisocial behaviour in London.

2. To assess the effectiveness of policy responses to antisocial behaviour in London (including current legislation, Mayoral and local initiatives).

3. To examine the effectiveness of multi-agency partnership working.

4. To make recommendations on what more the Mayor, the Met and partner agencies can do to help reduce antisocial behaviour in London, in particular in light of the Mayor prioritising tackling antisocial behaviour in every London borough.

Key questions

- Why has antisocial behaviour fallen so much in London?
- Why, despite the large falls in ASB related calls to the Met, does antisocial behaviour remain a high priority for the Mayor and the Met?
- What is the Met’s approach to antisocial behaviour and what are the main challenges for the police?
- Does ASB affect some communities more than others? If so why?

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10 London Councils, The new ASB powers in London
Police and Crime Committee  Scoping – July and September thematic meetings

Tackling antisocial behaviour

- What steps have been taken to address antisocial behaviour in London and how successful have they been?
- How can the Mayor support London’s local response to antisocial behaviour?
- Has the Mayor allocated sufficient resource to support this work and address antisocial behaviour across London?

Project plan

The committee’s thematic meetings in July and September will focus on tackling antisocial behaviour in London. It is suggested that the first meeting (5 July) will be used to consider the scale and range of antisocial behaviour in London. This could include:

- To what extent antisocial behaviour is a problem in London?
- What demand does it place on the Met and other partners – and how do these partners work together to tackle antisocial behaviour?
- How have the changes in the 2014 Act altered the approach to antisocial behaviour?
- What are the successful models for talking antisocial behaviour?

Guests are likely to be representatives from policing, local authorities, registered social landlords, academics and other antisocial behaviour experts.

The second meeting (6 September) will seek to test potential recommendations with key decision-makers, including MOPAC, the police and local authorities, and priorities for further action. Other experts or stakeholders may be invited dependent on the ideas being discussed.

Formal committee meetings will be supported by a call for written evidence. The committee may also wish to hold informal meetings with some stakeholders, such as Safer Neighbourhood Boards, local authority antisocial behaviour managers and housing providers. It is suggested that these meetings take place during the summer break.