

What is Anti Social Behaviour?

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Anti-social behaviour includes a variety of behaviour covering a whole complex of selfish and unacceptable activity that can blight the quality of community life.

Examples include:

- ? nuisance neighbours
- ? rowdy and nuisance behaviour
- ? yobbish behaviour and intimidating groups taking over public spaces
- ? vandalism, graffiti and fly-posting
- ? people dealing and buying drugs on the street
- ? people dumping rubbish and abandoning cars
- ? begging and anti-social drinking
- ? the misuse of fireworks

Anti-social behaviour doesn't just make life unpleasant. It holds back the regeneration of disadvantaged areas and creates an environment where more serious crime can take hold.

On any measure of polling or survey, anti-social behaviour matters - it has a negative effect on far too many people's quality of life.

The Anti-social Behaviour Act applies only to England and Wales. There are similar but separate measures in force in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

What is an ASBO?

An anti-social behaviour order (ASBO) prevents those people responsible from carrying out an anti-social act or series of anti-social behaviour. ASBOs 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 the person responsible from being present in specific areas in local communities (known as exclusion zones).

How are they imposed?

ASBOs are imposed by magistrates' courts after an application by a case officer who is usually an employee of the local council.

The case officer has to tell the court details such as the people and incidents involved and the restrictions of the proposed ASBO.

The court will also hear about welfare issues, family circumstances, attempts at mediation and warnings and evidence that the defendant has not been victimized or discriminated against.

The court then decides what prohibitions to apply.

An ASBO has to last for at least two years but can be indefinite. It must be reasonable and proportionate and realistically practical.

ASBOs do not need to only refer to criminal acts, but can prohibit actions which, although not criminal themselves, would be necessary steps before a criminal act - such as a ban on entering a shop rather than on shoplifting.

Appeals against ASBOs can be made to a Crown Court.

What happens when they are breached?

Breaching an ASBO is a criminal offence, for which a defendant can be arrested.

The police investigate breaches and can obtain information from any source including housing and other local authority officers, neighbours and members of the public.

Usually breach of an ASBO will result in prosecution and a court appearance.

Using Parents to Tackle ASB

A proposal to tackle anti-social behaviour by forcing more parents to attend parenting classes are set to be published. The moves may even be extended to parents whose children have been responsible for anti-social behaviour, rather than crimes. An alternative to such orders would be to do nothing about such families, with a future cost to society including thousands of pounds in court and social care fees

Critics of Anti Social Behaviour

One theory is that Anti-social behaviour in some children could be the result of their genetic make-up and hence giving them an ASBO is not fair or just as they just cant help it!

Other critics of the ASBO system argue that it criminalizes behaviour that is otherwise lawful. Other parties have voiced concerns about the open-ended nature of ASBO penalties - that is, there is little restriction on what a court may impose as the terms of the ASBO, and little restriction on what can be designated as antisocial behaviour. Many youths have been parading the ASBOs as a Badge of Honour within their own gangs and communities.

In England if you are a member of the public and are experiencing a problem with anti-social behaviour, the anti-social behaviour co-ordinator in your area will be able to assist. Contact details for all Local Authorities can be found below. <http://www.together.gov.uk/authority.asp>

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About the Author

Davinos Greeno works for the [organic food](#) and [ethical clothes](#) directory that lists 100s of Organic and Ethical Companies and we also have [Health Articles](#) for you to read or publish.