

Research Findings

Anti-Social Behaviour Interventions with Young People



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Contents	i
Executive Summary	ii
Background	1
About the Project	1
Mind the Gap	2
Local Partnership Working	2
Research Cohort	5
Young People’s Views	8
Parents’ Views	9
Pathways	12
ASB Interventions as a Hierarchical ‘Ladder’ or Individualised ‘Toolbox’	12
Data Issues	13
Early Intervention	15
ASB Interventions and Youth Justice	16
The Role of Housing Tenure	17
Resources	18
Implications for Future Directions in Policy	18
Principles and Ethical Implications	20
Conclusion	22
References	23
Further Information	24

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Executive Summary

Concerns about youth anti-social behaviour have prompted intense political debate and reform, heralding the introduction of an array of measures to prevent its escalation. Some interventions, like the ASBO, have been the subject of much advocacy, comment and critique whilst others, such as the more widely used Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC), have largely evaded public scrutiny. The Coalition Government's recent White Paper, *Putting victims first - more effective responses to antisocial behaviour*, offers a timely attempt to streamline the diverse *ad hoc* powers that have been created in recent years. It also allows us an opportunity to take stock and draw on research findings to promote evidence-based policy and practice. A team based at the University of Leeds conducted an in-depth study of anti-social behaviour (ASB) interventions with young people in England. It focused on the use of formal ASB warning letters, ABCs and ASBOs and the inter-relations between these tools. The study found:

- ✓ Most work to tackle ASB occurs before recourse to the use of legal tools like the ASBO, but this is hampered by a lack of joined-up approaches within and between partners.
- ✓ The number of young people in receipt of ASB interventions varies widely across areas and does not correspond simply to population size or levels of deprivation.
- ✓ For many young people ASB interventions are not an early intervention sitting below the criminal justice system, but rather supplement or provide alternatives to youth justice.
- ✓ A preference for working preventatively with young people and parents, providing support alongside clear boundaries which specify possible sanctions for breach.
- ✓ Widespread and considerable variations in ASB policies and use of tools, influenced by local preferences for particular approaches, the nature of partnership relations, the willingness of key individuals to innovate and the availability of local support services.
- ✓ The availability of suitable support services is uneven and geographically contingent.
- ✓ A significant 'gap' between formal statements of local policies and the realities of what local front-line professionals did in practice.
- ✓ Inconsistencies over the implementation of, and commitment to, a tiered approach to ASB tools or 'ladder of interventions', which contribute to young people climbing the ladder at different speeds in different areas.
- ✓ Where not complemented by access to supportive services, overly punitive approaches can foster disengagement and undermine the capacity of young people and families to nurture the conditions necessary to secure long-term compliance.
- ✓ For young people, ABCs were most effective when they were issued in a fair and proportionate way in which the young person and parents felt listened to and respected.
- ✓ ASB interventions can help or hinder (whether intentionally or not) the capacity and willingness of parents and significant others to foster desistance and promote prevention.
- ✓ Experienced practitioners emphasised the importance of 'soft' skills, interpersonal relations and respectful procedures in working with young people and their parents.
- ✓ Concerns about differential experiences of 'justice by tenure', given that many ASB tools are either tenure specific or seen as more effective in relation to those in social housing

Data and Monitoring Issues

The research highlights considerable problems in data collection, management, sharing and use:

- Incompatible data management and IT systems often rendered partnership working problematic, exacerbated by inter-organisational differences in measurement and disparities in data storage.
- Inconsistent monitoring and a dearth of comparative, cross-institutional data prevent practitioners from assessing the impacts of their work on young people.
- As ASB, prevention and youth justice databases tend to operate in isolation little is known about young people's pathways through different interventions and interactions with youth justice.
- Data sharing remains one of the most intractable and contentious aspects of ASB practice: technological and cultural barriers to data exchange stymie the effectiveness of ASB interventions and partnership work.
- Misunderstandings of data protection legislation are widespread and reluctance on the part of some partner agencies to share information remains a significant obstacle to effective work. Practitioners were uncertain about the circumstances and purposes for which data can and should be exchanged. Some formed arbitrary distinctions between what they were willing to exchange in face-to-face interactions and what they were prepared to share electronically.

Lessons for Policy and Practice

The research highlights the need to:

- Ensure continuity of service provision and tracking of individuals across relevant agencies.
- Think strategically about how different tools and different (prevention, ASB and youth justice) systems of interventions interact, and about the principles that inform their implementation.
- Ensure that appropriate support services are available across areas and adequately funded.
- Improve the quality and comparability of data to inform decision-making and joined-up working. Good quality data collection, management and use matters because they:
 - Allow for joined-up provision and continuity of service over-time and between different providers;
 - Provide the capacity to track individuals and families through service provision and diverse interventions, and assess their trajectories and pathways;
 - Enable interventions to be used in a more strategic manner in which consideration is given to the relations between the various tools and how they interact;
 - Provide an evidence-base from which to assess effectiveness and to evaluate what works, for whom and in which contexts;
 - Ensure the best use of resources and facilitate best practice;
 - Afford opportunities to monitor performance and render services accountable and reviewable.

There are concerns that the Government's 'localism' agenda will serve to exacerbate the quality of data collection, amplify inconsistencies and increase differential practices and experiences of justice.

There are dangers that the proposed new crime prevention injunction will lower the threshold for court-based intervention and disrupt existing preventative pre-ASBO work by partner organisations.

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Anti-Social Behaviour Interventions with Young People

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Background

The focus on tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB) has given rise to a new infrastructure of legal and informal tools which have an awkward relationship with the existing youth justice system. The piecemeal introduction of powers has left little room to consider the manner in which various orders and powers interact and connect as part of a wider complementary regime. Allied to this, there has been a growing confidence in the capacity of tailored 'risk-based' early intervention initiatives to redirect young people away from more serious offending and from being drawn into a possible life of crime. Yet, the evidence-base to support this confidence remains limited and equivocal. Moreover, evaluation tends to be the weakest element of most new early intervention programmes.

Since its introduction in 1999, the ASBO has come to dominate public debate about interventions with young people to address behavioural problems that impact adversely

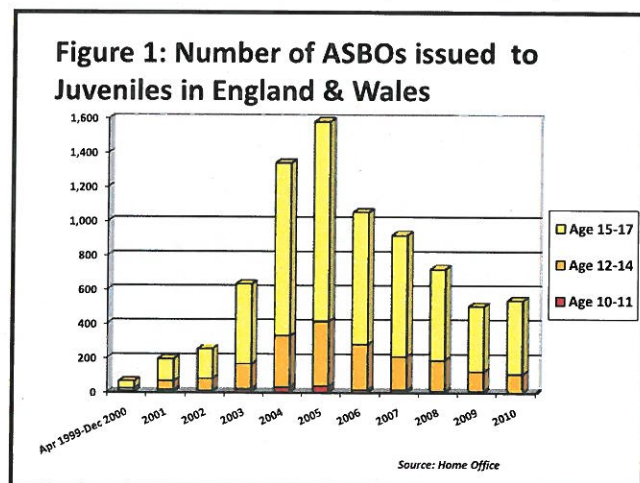
large volume of work with young people aimed at tackling ASB has been taking place below and before recourse to such acute responses. In many senses, the well-documented limitations of ASBOs have encouraged practitioners to experiment with and develop a host of informal approaches that seek to engage young people and their parents through a complex array of 'sticks', 'carrots' and persuasion designed to induce behavioural change. As such, ASBOs represent only the very tip of a much larger structure of proactive ASB work.

About the Project

Conducted over a three year period, the research team gathered data from, and interviewed a range of participants in, four Community Safety Partnerships in England. These comprised two large northern cities and two London boroughs.

The team collected data on the use of ASB interventions with all young people given a formal warning, ABC or ASBO between 1 April 2008 and 31 March 2010 and sought to track their pathways back over time and over the 12 months after their intervention. The team collected data on the use of prevention services and youth justice interventions with young people in two sites and conducted over 120 interviews and 18 focus groups across the fieldwork sites, including:

- Interviews with local ASB professionals;
- Interviews with young people subject to particular orders and parents;
- Focus groups with front-line staff from housing, police, council and youth offending services.



upon the quality of community life. Up to the end of 2010, some 7,785 ASBOs had been issued against young people aged between 10 and 18 (see Figure 1). Most ASBOs were issued on conviction rather than as preventative stand-alone civil orders.

The national decline in the use of ASBOs since their peak in 2005 hides the fact that a

The results of the initial statistical analysis of the ASB data, as presented here, will be expanded in the full final report (see 'further information' below) to include:

- A detailed account of the different trajectories through ASB interventions as demonstrated by the young people in all four sites.
- An exploration of the 'effectiveness' of ASB interventions, exploring the extent to which the recipients of key ASB interventions went on to receive further interventions.
- The results of analysis to determine the interaction between prevention, ASB and youth justice services as demonstrated by young people.

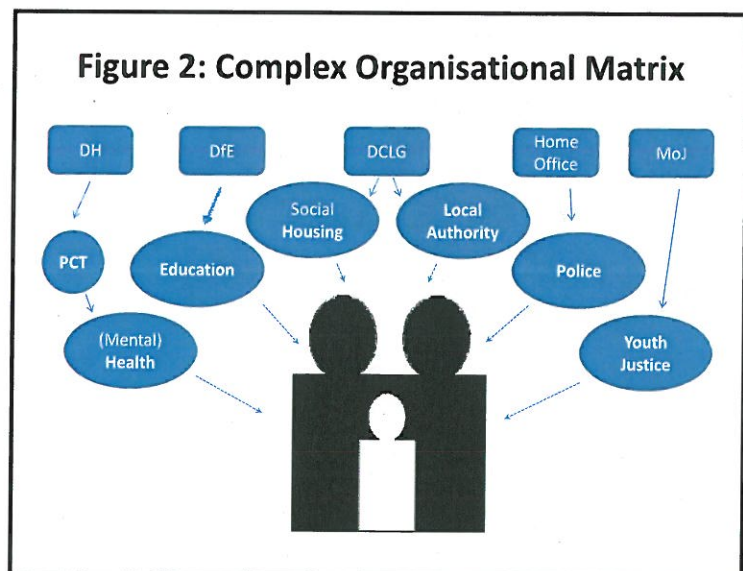
The research sites were specifically selected on the basis that: first, they represented large Community Safety Partnerships in relatively high crime areas with diverse minority ethnic populations, indicators of social deprivation and significant social housing stock; and secondly, they were acknowledged to have developed significant expertise in tackling ASB and in delivering youth interventions. In many senses, they were seen as leaders in the field of ASB practice recognised as examples of good practice. As was agreed at the outset of the project the sites are not named in this report.

Mind the Gap

In relation to the work of various local agencies involved in youth ASB interventions, a recurring theme evident from the research is that there is a considerable disjuncture between what organisations say they do (their formal *policies*) and what they actually do (their everyday *practices*). The research found evidence of individuals' and teams' operating procedures that differed markedly from, and sometimes were at considerable odds with, those set down in formal policy documents and/or articulated by senior managers.

Local Partnership Working

The research found significant variation both *within* and *between* Community Safety Partnership areas. The reasons for the variations in policies and practices are myriad and not always a consequence of efforts to provide a tailored response to the peculiarities of ASB in a particular locality. Differences *between* areas stem from divergent commitments to prevention or enforcement strategies. This may be a consequence of local government management structures. For example, an ASB team located within Community Safety may be more concerned with enforcement than one led by youth justice teams and voluntary sector organisations. Such variations can occur for financial reasons (enforcement is often cheaper than prevention) or have pragmatic origins (e.g. if prevention services are still being developed enforcement may be seen as the only option). Differences *within* areas are often a consequence of the differing philosophies and policy priorities of the many organisations involved in delivering ASB services (as illustrated in Figure 2).



Across the sites there was evidence of a lack of joined-up working and insufficient coordination of local service delivery, such that the same individuals or families were the subjects of disjointed interventions by diverse local agencies. Partner agencies worked to different definitions of ASB, used

incompatible data collection and storage systems and operated with divergent interpretations of the powers available to them.

Different working definitions of ASB used by differing organisations compounded disjointed practices:

‘Basically the definition of anti-social behaviour from a housing perspective is actually “nuisance and annoyance”. We don’t use the Crime and Disorder Act definition unless we’re going for an ASBO. It’s one of the anomalies, like some of the anomalies that you have probably found in doing your research. So we use nuisance and annoyance and now that’s a very broad term.’ (Area D: ASB Manager RSL)

Many practitioners in our research confirmed that ASB as a catch-all term can serve as a hindrance, as it conflates and confuses. It has been variously applied to a wide spectrum of activity, from serious criminal violence at one end of the spectrum to behaviour causing subjective feelings of unease at the other end.

different expertise, knowledge, resources and levers that can be deployed to tackle ASB problems. Consequently, inter-organisational tensions are a central dimension of ASB work. As the Head of ASB Services in one research site noted: ‘There are tensions, both at an operational and strategic level’. Joint working, pooling resources and information sharing can have significant benefits in identifying need and targeting support.

Effective partnership working was vital for identifying local problems and delivering preventative solutions. Where coordination is well-organised through effective partnerships, there are significant benefits to community safety. Notably, effective partnership working was seen as essential to ensure an accurate understanding of the needs of young people and their families for the purpose of responding appropriately to individual cases. Furthermore, it was viewed as pivotal in determining and delivering a coordinated approach to tackling ASB across the city, borough or area. A coherent and consistent area-wide policy that joined up

the efforts of different partner agencies was held out as desirable by many managers because it accords with principles of fairness, equity and transparency. This has positive implications for engagement with parents and compliance on the part of young people. Delivering this on the ground was demanding and often not accomplished.

Models of delivery varied in the case study sites (see Table 1). Models in which an ASB team located within the local authority took the lead afforded

Table 1: Models of Delivery in Case Study Sites

	Site A	Site B	Site C	Site D
Lead Agency	Family Intervention and YOS	ASB Team	ASB Team	Housing supported by Police
Single Referral Point	Yes: single internal co-ordinator	No: ASB team provide advice + coordination	Yes	No: dual housing/ police
Centralised/Devolved Police organisation	Central ASB officers	Neighbourhood Teams	Neighbourhood Teams	Central ASB officers
YOS Involvement	Yes: in some parts	Yes: but fractious	Limited but generally good relations	Yes
Social Housing Input	Yes: main referral point to coordinator	Yes: large RSL’s very engaged	Limited: hard to engage RSLs	Yes: Housing lead agency

Furthermore, as is increasingly recognised, the public make few consistent distinctions between ASB and crime, albeit public perceptions of ASB often provoke much concern, sometimes more so than crime (Mackenzie *et al.* 2010).

Different local agencies approach issues of ASB from diverse vantage points. They have

opportunities to coordinate delivery, acting as a facilitator to other agencies. The extent to which this was successful varied. The involvement of seconded staff from police and (in one site) housing enhanced relations with these organisations. The co-location of seconded staff in the same offices allowed consistency of approach to develop among

such staff. However, the extent to which this percolated down to frontline staff was a wider challenge. It also afforded possible benefits in relation to information sharing.

In the sites where housing and family intervention staff played a lead role, this enabled the development of particular approaches grounded in the expertise that these staff had developed over time. Continuity of service of key staff enabled significant expertise based on experience to inform working practices. Despite the relative novelty of many of the tools, programmes and strategies, some key personnel had been working in the field for a number of years.

Where police ASB work was managed via a central team this afforded possible benefits in the form of coordination but could mean less engagement with and involvement by frontline neighbourhood policing teams (NPTs). In one site a small police ASB team acted as a central unit for processing ASB interventions on behalf of the site's large number of NPTs. However, this was subsequently disbanded and responsibility was handed back to the NPTs. Standardising practice, coordinating data and monitoring outcomes was rendered particularly difficult in such devolved scenarios.

In those sites where the local Youth Offending Service (YOS) played a well integrated role in the delivery of ASB interventions, there tended to be a greater commitment to preventative work than at those sites where the YOS was more distanced, in terms of their involvement in decision-making and policy development. This reinforces earlier research findings by the Youth Justice Board (2006). Such distance could lead to ongoing tensions between the YOS and the police and ASB teams. These tensions were mediated by long-term (primarily inter-personal) working relationships. Tensions were often most strained during periods of personnel change, when bridges between different working cultures and practices had to be rebuilt and new interpersonal and inter-institutional trust relations forged.

Some senior YOS staff spoke of having to adopt a 'veto' approach to certain interventions, notably the use of ASBOs, when they felt this was not in the best interests of the young person. However, adopting such a stance risked causing further tensions; between the rights and interests of the young person and the rights and interests of the community at large and more specifically the victims who experienced the ASB. Such tensions often remained dormant, but barely far from the surface and were rarely resolved. As such, working together frequently demanded mutual recognition of the differing interests, values and working practices, as well as the limitations, of the key partners.

Some practitioners in all sites spoke of the estrangement of Social Services and poor working relationships with social workers. There were numerous accounts of withheld information, disrupted court proceedings and failure to attend relevant panels. Regardless of the veracity of these claims they reflected and affected the nature of working relations.

In a number of sites, some large Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) independently had developed their own processes for dealing with ASB. Subsequently, there were efforts to align these with local authority work which was successful to a greater or less extent. Given their diversity in size and working ethos, some key ASB coordinators in large public sector organizations like the police and council found some RSL's particularly difficult to engage with:

[Lack of engagement with] the RSLs is our biggest problem... They're really hard to reach partners ... And their processes, I just don't know about their processes because we're not able to engage with a lot of them'. [Area D: Police Sergeant]

One source of tension was the fact that many RSLs relied on generic housing staff to manage ASB, whereas the council and police were more likely to have designated specialist ASB staff. Where RSLs employed dedicated ASB coordinators this tended to

provide a more coordinated approach to partnership work.

The relationship between partners and various support agencies varied substantially across the sites. As a result, some partnerships were better placed to refer and signpost young people to support agencies. This varied both between and within the sites. At Site C, for instance, there were good working relationships between the ASB team and a number of important local support agencies, especially in relation to ABCs.

However, as a result of historical development and funding structures some of these agencies served tight geographic boundaries and so were unable to work with individuals who lived outside of these areas. This meant that some young people received more or better support services than others, depending on where they lived. The different approaches to interventions, diverse use of powers and variable access to support services all served to produce different experiences of 'justice by geography'.

Research Cohort

The number of young people in receipt of ASB interventions during our data collection period 2008-10 varied widely, as shown in Table 2 below. It is worth noting that the number of young people known to have received an ASB intervention in relation to population size (i.e. per 100,000 population) varied widely, being over six times greater in Site D (the second largest site) than in Site C (the largest site). Moreover, the volume of work in Site D was over eight times that in Site B. This suggests the absence of any straightforward relationship between population size and the number of young people in receipt of ASB interventions.

The research confirms the findings of previous studies (NAO 2006) that most young people who receive ASB interventions are male. This was consistent across the sites (where data were available), where more than four-fifths of all recipients of youth ASB interventions were male (see Table 2). National data on ASBOs show that the proportion of males rises in relation to these more severe interventions with over 90 per cent of all ASBOs given to juveniles being issued to male youths.

Table 2: Volume of ASB Interventions in the Research sites by Gender (2008-10)

Research Site	Male (N)	Male as % of total*	Female (N)	Female as % of total*	Total (N)**	Mid 2007 population estimates (000s)	No. per 100,000 of total population
Site A	332	83.8	64	16.2	409	231.9	176
Site B	87	84.5	16	15.5	104	187.8	55
Site C	431	81.8	96	18.2	556	761.1	73
Site D	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2,418	530.3	456

Table 3 shows the number of young people who received one or more police ASB warning letters, ABCs and ASBOs (both stand alone and on conviction) in each site. The number of young people who received these interventions per 100,000 of the total population is given in brackets. The table shows that the use of the different interventions varies widely between the sites, and that this remains true when the size of the local population is taken into account.

they are influenced, more often, by: local preferences for particular approaches to ASB interventions; policy selections about the favoured balance between enforcement, prevention and (welfare-based) support; the nature of inter-organisational partnership relations; the willingness of key individuals to experiment with new tools; and the availability of local support services. They reflect local inter-institutional cultures of tolerance, authority and behavioural regulation, informed by political and

Table 3: Volume of Different Interventions

	Site A	Site B	Site C	Site D
Volume YP with ASBO No. (per 100,00)	11 (4.7)	4 (2.1)	48 (6.3)	17 (3.21)
Volume YP with ABC No. (per 100,00)	67 (28.9)	102 (54.3)	242 (31.8)	307 (57.9)
Volume YP with ASB Warning No. (per 100,00)	Not Available	0	351 (46.1)*	2,301 (433.9)*
Typical behaviour for ASB intervention	Criminal	Nuisance/ criminal	Nuisance/ criminal	Nuisance

* Some missing data

When interpreting the figures in Table 3, the following should be noted. Given the data collection problems (to which we return below), the lower the level of intervention and the more informal the tools used, the more unreliable the data became. The data on ASB warnings are especially subject to caveats. In one site, for example, this was due to the fact that some (but not all) neighbourhood policing teams were unable to provide ASB warning data, despite using warnings.

Previous research has highlighted the considerable variations in the use of different ASB interventions (Burney 2005; Crawford and Lister 2007; Cooper *et al.* 2009). However, what is clear from this research is that variations in practice and process are not linked directly to the distribution of risks of victimisation, to levels of socio-economic deprivation, or to disparities in the nature or type of local ASB and crime problems. Rather,

organisational choices and options. For example, the number of young people known to have received an ASB intervention in relation to population size (i.e. per 100,000 of the population) in the most deprived area, as measured by the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2010 (Site B), was lower than in all other sites. This suggests that there is no straightforward relationship between levels of deprivation and the number of young people in receipt of ASB interventions.

There are also significant variations in the types and seriousness of the behaviours and activities that are deemed worthy of intervention. As such, the general thresholds for intervention are somewhat inconsistent and the sorts of activities that are typically the focus of attention vary. In some sites responses to ASB could be triggered by 'nuisance' behaviour (examples include 'kicking footballs at properties', 'use of abusive language at a street party', 'throwing snowballs at members of the public', 'shouting / swearing', 'throwing stones', 'climbing on walls' and so on). In some sites such activities and behaviour were more likely to trigger interventions than in others. In sites where the thresholds were higher, many of the behaviours being dealt with through ASB channels were criminal in nature (examples include 'arrested for violent disorder', 'shoplifting', 'assaulting another

youth', 'criminal activities', 'possession of an offensive weapon – knife' and so forth).

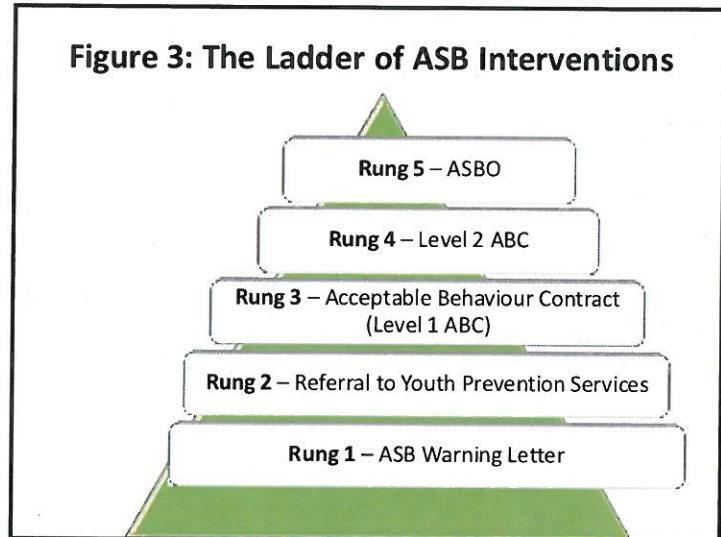
Reflecting these discrepancies, young people's pathways into, through and away from, ASB interventions differed significantly across the sites. Some areas drew young people into ASB interventions who already had significant experiences of criminal sanctions and contact with the youth justice system. In Site C, for example, many recipients of ASB interventions were already known to youth justice services. In other areas, by contrast, ASB interventions tended to be more exclusively used at an early intervention stage to 'nip in the bud' problematic behaviour before it expressed itself as criminal and prior to significant contact with the youth justice system (we return to this below).

Mirroring the analogous structure of a pyramid, the vast bulk of ASB work with young people occurs at the lower levels of intervention (the base of the pyramid), where there is greater emphasis on persuasion, support, informality and voluntary involvement rather than overt coercion. At these levels of intervention, the predominant logic tends to be one of prevention rather than enforcement.

Figure 3 presents a 'ladder' of ASB interventions as aggregated across the different research sites. At its base sit various warning notices. These usually outline the behaviour that is the subject of complaint and notify the young person and parents of the possible consequences of future conduct problems. They are rarely accompanied by any additional interventions. Rather, the focus is on notification and persuasion. Above these sits referral to a variety of youth inclusion and prevention services, with a focus on diversion and pre-emption. At the third rung are contract-like ABC agreements signed between partner agencies and the young person (and where appropriate the parents). These combine commitments by the young person with specified support. In theory, these are voluntary agreements that

emphasise reciprocity and are negotiated by the parties. Practice, however, varies regarding the extent to which they engage with the needs of the young person and are preventative in orientation. Breach of an ABCs can be used as evidence in preparing an ASBO application, a fact that is normally drawn to the attention of the young person concerned.

The generic term 'Level 1 ABC' denotes the



lowest-level voluntary 'acceptable behaviour agreements' that were used in all sites. In some sites a second, higher level ABC was used, whereas in another site pre-ASBO warnings were utilised. The generic term 'Level 2 ABC', therefore, denotes interventions that sit above the Level 1 ABC but beneath the ASBO in the ladder of interventions and are qualitatively different in form and consequences from a Level 1 ABC.

As is to be expected, younger juveniles were more likely to be in receipt of lower level interventions - such as an ASB warning letter, referral to youth prevention services and inclusion projects or an ABC - which we describe as the first three rungs of the 'ASB ladder' (see Figure 3). Conversely, older youths were more likely to be in receipt of higher level disposals - such as a second tier ABC or an ASBO (rungs 4 and 5 on the ladder). Typically, those in receipt of an ABC were between 14 and 15 years of age whilst

those subject to an ASBO were between 15 and 17 years of age.

However, these aggregate figures hide wide variations in the age at which young people first received an ASB intervention, with some young people being several years below the age of criminal responsibility upon receipt. It was not unusual to find children as young as 8 the subject of ASB interventions (and in some instances, the research encountered work with 7 year olds). In some sites, youths under 10 did not formally sign an ABC; rather their parents signed a 'parental control agreement' in relation to their child's behaviour. Nevertheless, staff sought to engage children as responsible for their behaviour.

Whilst this work is occurring outside of the formal criminal justice system, it does raise significant implications for: (i) the manner in which children below the age of criminal responsibility are being held responsible for their behaviour in the shadow of the criminal law and (ii) the extent to which it is appropriate to treat children as competent 'rational actors' – especially in the context of responsibility for their behaviour – who are assumed capable of articulating their interests (in a room full of adults), making decisions, agreeing to conditions and understanding their full implications, as well as being held to account for any subsequent non-compliance or breaches of conditions. Whilst there may be distinct psychological benefits for enhanced motivation that derive from treating young people as autonomous and competent individuals (particularly older and more mature young people), there are evident dangers associated with treating children as fully knowledgeable and responsible beyond their capabilities. One of the traditional protections of childhood has been not to burden children with excessive or inappropriate responsibilities or compelling them to take decisions that they are not competent to take.

There are notable disparities in the use of ASB interventions between areas. The number and nature of the different rungs in

the intervention ladder (e.g. warning, referral to youth prevention and inclusion schemes, ABC, ASBO) vary considerably. Furthermore, there is significant variation in the number of times a young person might expect to receive the same intervention before progressing to the next rung. These factors contribute to discrepancies in the time it takes for a young person to progress from a low level to a high level intervention.

Young People's Views

From the perspective of young people, where ABCs were most effective their implementation conformed to a number of criteria:

- They were issued in a fair, respectful and proportionate manner in which the young person and their parents felt that they had their say and were listened to;
- The terms and implications were carefully explained to the young person as offering an opportunity for them to address and change their behaviour, setting out clear boundaries with identifiable consequences;
- They engaged with and supported the capacity of parents and other carers to assist the young person in changing their behaviour;
- They provided the young person with 'escape routes' and 'turning points' (Sampson and Laub 1993), as well as opportunities to avoid situations and people that might provoke behavioural difficulties, and/or access to resources that might help them address their behaviour and associated problems.

The following young person illustrates the manner in which he was prompted to take stock and enabled to use the ABC as a reason to avoid problematic situations:

'Yes, it [the ABC] helped me because it made me think like it just made me not want to do stuff like I used to. Because when I went on it [the ABC], if someone did something, I just used to join in. Say if someone were fighting, they wanted me to join in, [on the ABC] I

wouldn't join in... I just calmed down, it helped me a lot and I just didn't do what I used to do as much.' [BYP1]

Similar sentiments were expressed by other young people interviewed in the research.

By contrast, an ABC worked less well where it was not clear how the agreement related to whatever the young person had done or where there was uncertainty as to what the intervention entailed; its terms and length. Wide-ranging and 'catch-all' terms – such as prohibitions against committing future 'anti-social behaviour' - were seen as unjust and unreasonable because it was felt difficult to predict what their breach might entail. Furthermore, such terms did not provide the young person with fair warning as to how to act cautiously enough to prevent or avoid such uncertain acts:

'... like alarming someone, you could easily alarm someone couldn't you? You could smoke or stand with a cigarette outside someone's house and they might think it's a spliff and that's alarming isn't it? I don't find that fair to be honest.' [CYP10]

Young people were concerned by the ramifications of interventions for housing sanctions (notably the threat of eviction) which, due to their impact on other members of their family, were seen as more prominent and meaningful than criminal justice sanctions.

'It's just – rather than me getting arrested and arrested and arrested for loads of things, getting me mum evicted and stuff, I'd rather do a sentence in prison then come straight out and have nothing... whatever, it's down to us, whatever we do, they should take it out on us. Because I wouldn't be bothered whatever happened to me, it's just getting me mum thrown out of her house and more hassle for my mum and stuff.' [AYP6]

This threat served as both a trigger for change and as a source of resentment and perceptions of injustice:

'They came to me house and made me sign this thing and that was when I thought I need to start being good because they're going to bring me to jail again. They said: "If I broke the

ABC then I'd get an ASBO" or something, and "get brought to court, maybe even get kicked out of my house" and I didn't want that. So that made me think I need to start behaving.' [CYP8]

Overly punitive approaches to fostering behavioural change and encouraging civility were not always complemented by access to appropriate supportive measures and services. The interview data suggest that this can (inadvertently) foster disengagement and undermine the capacity of individuals and families to nurture the conditions necessary to secure long-term compliance.

To build rapport, some ASB practitioners sought to emphasise their own personal distance from enforcement decisions or enforcement agencies (notably the police) and sought to reinforce their own experiences that were similar to those they were working with whether this be as parents or with tales of 'when I was young'. Young people were believed to be more likely to respond well to being presented with options of different future pathways which they had a chance to determine. This was often presented in the form that they were being given a chance not to go down a road of crime, troubled behaviour and conflict with authorities:

'If they don't want to sign it, one of the things that I always say, because I don't think you should bully someone into signing an ABC, is that sometimes you get kids that are just on the border... "we don't want you to start getting into that path of criminality with some of the ones that are already entrenched in it". And we explain about followers and leaders, I always use that tactic.' [Site B: ASB team]

Parents' Views

Parents appreciated recognition of the challenges of parenting and acknowledgement that as parents they are not able to supervise their children 24 hours a day. Parents' views about the manner in which they were treated by ASB professionals and their experiences of procedural and

substantive justice, shaped their willingness to cooperate:

'When they came to my house, I thought they were respectful, they knocked on the door and they spoke appropriate. And I got them to sit down and they explained why they had come to my house.' [CF6]

Engaging with the young person and parents was crucial to fostering their cooperation and compliance:

'And she [the PCSO] was like the voice of reason, she was like really nice and she spoke to [the daughter], on her level, she wasn't rude to her... Yes, she was really nice. She explained to [the daughter] about how it felt like, say for an old lady or an old man to come into the block and how intimidating it is to come across a gang of youngsters. And they've got to try and walk past or the noise on the landing, or on the stairwells.' [BF1]

Some parents were genuinely grateful for the information and support provided by ASB professionals in assisting them in managing their child's challenging behaviour. Some parents were unaware of what their child had been up to and appreciated the shared concern shown by some ASB staff. Some parents were grateful for being offered opportunities to access support services, where these were available. In other areas, the intervention triggered by an ABC presented an opportunity for parents and carers to set (or reaffirm) boundaries and engage in closer supervision.

The following extract illustrates the importance of experiences of respectful treatment by professionals for parents' willingness to cooperate.

'The first initial time of going to the housing, we didn't sign the ABC order thing because I just thought no it's not fair because it was only sent to my son and not to the other children on the road... So we didn't sign that one... But she [police officer] came to visit us at home and it was a couple of police officers and somebody from our housing association. And they talked me through it and everything and I thought do you know what, it's best just to sign this one. And to show that we are willing to – because [the son] wasn't really naughty -

you know what you do get from some kids. He was just standing on his own street and it was causing more trouble than what it was worth really. So we did, we signed that one and, after that, things just really quietened down. We didn't hear any more and everything was fine... We just wasn't signing it because we didn't think it was fair... but the second time they were very nice to us when they came to the house, really, really nice.' [BF2]

By contrast, for some parents perceptions of injustice prompted a defensive response and/or antagonistic relations with authorities. Uncooperative relations were also fostered amongst parents who perceived the response to be disproportionate to the events that triggered it. In one incident, ABCs were signed with a number of youths after snowballs were thrown at a particular house belonging to a notable resident on the estate. This incident was differently interpreted by the victim, police and housing staff, as well as the boys and their parents.

'Well as far as he [the son] was concerned, it was just snowballs, he says "everybody's done it, not as if I'm going round smashing windows or breaking into buildings"... I thought it were stupid, it's what every kid's done, thrown a snowball, even see grown-ups doing it. I thought it were actually stupid at the time. I thought it were actually [the] council going too far with it.' [CF3]

This case illustrated some of the difficulties of early intervention with young people in that the behaviour might have escalated into more serious problems and was perceived by the victim as threatening, alarming and distressful, but the response also seemed disproportionate to perpetrators and their parents, leaving them questioning the legitimacy and authority of the relevant officials involved. It also reflects behaviour that might be viewed as simply youthful exuberance rather than malicious.

In particular, threats of eviction in relation to their child's apparent behaviour were experienced by many parents as unfair and disproportionate.

'I didn't like it because they threatened me with my home... it was not very fair because I knew that he's not naughty... And they threatened me with my house.' [BF4]

Not only was this perceived as unfair because some parents felt genuinely unable to control the behaviour of their child, but also as eviction would have profound ramifications for other family members who were innocent victims and in no sense liable for the behaviour. One mother explained how she felt on hearing that her son's ABC might lead to her family's eviction if breached:

'A bit upset and uptight because I thought the next step would be to be evicted, because I've got other children to think of and he's just not my only priority... Because when they say it's my tenancy and I have to have full responsibility, I'm trying my best and I've got five different children and he's the one that's the trouble causer.' [CF2]

Threats of eviction not only fall unequally on those most socially disadvantaged by their status in social housing but also tend to impact disproportionately on mothers. Consequently, threats of eviction were liable to engender considerable stress and anxiety among some parents:

'I mean at first when it happened we thought we were getting an ASBO because you just sort of panic straight away... And because you sort of just panic that it's affecting your housing, it just puts you in a real bad sort of state of nerves when you get these letters and everything, you have to be called up to your housing and head office and things like that. Basically I've always lived in this road since I was a little girl, I came here when I was about seven, and I'm 43 nearly now.' [BF2]

ASB interventions can support or undermine (whether intentionally or not) the capacity and willingness of parents, carers and significant others to foster desistance and promote prevention.

Interventions can and need to support parents in providing pathways away from crime. In this, those who administer and manage ASB interventions need to work with parents in ways that foster their capacity to provide such positive pathways and do not

alienate them or diminish their desire to cooperate.

Fostering parental cooperation is therefore vital for effective desistance. Cooperation is likely to be fostered where parents are supported and seen as key enablers in behavioural compliance. Many parents were keen for assistance, welcomed appropriate opportunities to access resources and frequently expressed frustrations at the erstwhile lack of support available to them. Cooperation is likely to be forthcoming where it is accompanied by experiences of procedural justice – being treated with respect, provided with evidence and being given a voice and listened to – and perceptions of fairness in dealings with authorities (about which many were suspicious of their motivations).

Conversely, perceptions of injustice and unfairness in terms of the proportionality of the intervention, the attention to due process and respect accorded to them can cloud parents' willingness to cooperate and foster antagonistic relations. Thus, for example, threatening parents with eviction, whilst it served as a fast-track to compel parents to pay attention and take the matter seriously, can serve to undermine parent's and carers willingness to cooperate, provoke hostile attitudes and exacerbate relations between parents and young people by placing them in opposition – in large part due to the injustice felt by blaming them (and holding them to account and directly responsible) for their child's behaviour.

Experienced practitioners emphasised the importance of 'soft' skills, interpersonal relations and respectful procedures in dealing with young people and their parents. Given the possibility of antagonistic relations, misunderstandings about motivations and discrepancies as to the facts of incidents triggering action, as well as the potentially punitive consequences, getting young people and parents 'on side' was seen as key to successful outcomes. Treating people fairly and with respect, explaining to them the nature of concerns, allowing them to be

heard, providing them with options and emphasising the benefits of specific interventions and support services were seen as reliable means of engaging parents and young people.

Pathways

Some young people had received (occasionally multiple) youth justice sanctions before being given an ASB intervention – even at the lowest level. For others, ASB interventions constitute a young person's first formal contact with legal authorities concerned about their behaviour (outside of school). As such, they constitute simultaneously possible pathways into, and away from, youth justice.

A tracking exercise, whereby young people who received one or more ASB sanctions (excluding police ASB warning letters) during the first 12 months of our data collection period (i.e. 1 April 2008 – 31 March 2009) were tracked through agency records back as far as possible and forward to the end of the data collection period (i.e. for a minimum of 12 months), afforded details of young people's trajectories through ASB interventions. There were notable variations between sites in the proportion of young people whose trajectories included the highest level sanction (an ASBO). For example:

- In Site C, 40 of the 141 young people who received an intervention in the first year of the study had received an ASBO by the end of the follow-up period (28 per cent).
- In contrast, in Sites A and B the proportion of young people who received an ASB intervention in year one who attained an ASBO by the end of year two was just four per cent.

It is important to note that for those young people who avoided further offending or contact with authorities after an ASB intervention, our qualitative data show that few had been involved in serious ASB or delinquency prior to the intervention and for

some it was their first identified instance. Some of these young people might have desisted regardless of the ASB intervention. For many young people behavioural transgressions, low level offending and ASB are common aspects of risk-taking and mistake-making associated with the transition to adulthood. As practitioners and parents noted, it is important that young people learn from these mistakes but are not marked by such incidents. To a certain degree, they are an essential aspect of 'growing up'. As one mother explained in interview, reflecting on the reasons why her daughter had changed her behaviour:

'Partly because I was on her case all the time and I think partly because she grew up. You get to a certain age and you grow up... You just start growing up, don't you? I suppose. She's got a boyfriend and she's never really goes out around here and doesn't really mix with anyone round here anymore.' [CF1]

As another mother explained in relation to her daughter:

'[She]'s just growing up and if she grows up, if she carries on the way she is in school, she'll do well but if she goes the other way... We're trying to steer her away from that way...' [AF3]

For some young people, incidents of ASB afforded 'teachable moments' (Tyler 2013) that marked possible important 'turning points' in young people's transitions. Such incidents enabled others – be it parents, carers or ASB professionals - to explain possible trajectories that young people might be in danger of following if they didn't make adjustments to their behaviour.

ASB Interventions as a Hierarchical 'Ladder' or Individualised 'Toolbox'

Two contrasting metaphors dominate practice and policy-based conceptions of the inter-relationships between various formal and informal, civil and criminal interventions with young people to address ASB. These are the 'ladder' (sometimes referred to as a 'regulatory pyramid' to emphasise that most

activity occurs at the base of the structure) and the 'tool box'.

The 'ladder' evokes a clear hierarchy of activity in which there is a presumption to commence at, and that most regulatory action will occur near, the base of the ladder, with various attempts to foster compliance through persuasion. From this perspective, only when dialogue and voluntary compliance fail ought there to be incremental escalation up the ladder. Criminal sanctions sit at the top of the hierarchy as responses of last resort.

The 'tool box', by contrast, suggests an individualization of response, tailored to the perceived needs of specific individuals and his/her situation without any preconception of where this might necessarily fit within a fixed regulatory hierarchy: 'The right tool for the specific task' is the defining concern, with no presumption of movement in any particular direction.

Both metaphors are to be found circulating in policy and practice. Policy documentation makes liberal reference to 'tool-kits', whilst some guidance advocates an 'incremental' response to ASB (Home Office 2005; 2011). In at least one of the research sites, the official policy was that the 'ladder' was at the heart of the approach to ASB. Support for a 'ladder' of intervention lies in the view that interventions are most effective when a person causing antisocial behaviour is given a clear set of goals and expectations that must be met and the support to achieve these, while at the same time providing them with information on the consequences of not changing their behaviour.

Nevertheless, on the ground, practitioners had a more ambiguous interpretation of the appropriate approach:

'I've heard this, not in [this area], but where we've got to issue with an ABC that he can fail before we can give him an ASBO. Because we've got this ladder that we have to follow, ASBOs are the last resort. Complete rubbish in my view. The term "last resort" causes so many problems if interpreted in a certain way. Last resort was used, that terminology was

used in the first Home Office guidance, way back in relation to ASBOs. But it's quickly removed for the second edition. ASBOs, like any other form of intervention, should only ever be used if appropriate. That could be the first intervention, or it could be after a number of other interventions have been tried, but only when appropriate. So we never ever view it as a last resort, we never view it as a first resort, but "when appropriate"'.
[Area A: Police Sergeant]

The notion of an individualised 'toolbox' places considerable discretion in the hands of practitioners in a context in which there are considerable concerns over the quality of the data informing 'appropriate' decisions, doubts about consistency of approach, equity of treatment and proportionality of response, as well as a lack of transparency.

Data Issues

The quality of the information upon which decisions about the appropriateness of specific ASB interventions with young people are made may be hampered by inadequate information recording, incompatible and non-comparable data collation, 'silo' problems and a wider reluctance to share data between partner agencies. Data problems stymie the capacity of agencies to realise a coordinated and joined-up approach to youth behavioural problems. Good quality data matter in that they constitute the basis of information upon which decisions about interventions and the use of ASB powers are founded. Poor quality data mean that these decisions may be misleading or flawed. As a consequence, resources may be wasted, poor services may not be improved and policy and practice may be ill-founded. There is also a concern that good practice and effective performance may not be recognised.

Poor Quality Data Collection

In part due to their novelty and the fact that they are informal, sometimes falling outside of statutory responsibilities and at an arm's length from the formal youth justice system,

ASB interventions suffer from poor and inconsistent data collection. With the demise of the Respect agenda, even the limited requirement on CDRPs to count the number of interventions used via annual surveys no longer exists. Where data are collected they are limited and poorly kept. There is little systematic attempt to understand and evaluate variations in service delivery and their implications by age, sex, ethnicity, locality, etc. The absence of such data collection renders it very difficult for organisations to determine what constitutes best practice and use this knowledge to understand and improve organisational performance. This was almost uniformly acknowledged by practitioners across all sites; however, many felt that there was a lack of local capacity and political will to address the problem.

Incompatible and Non-comparable Data

Attempts to match data (within and between local partner agencies) are complicated by inconsistencies in the data held by agencies, diverse definitions of ASB, variations in the use of interventions and different case management systems.

'In terms of recording anti-social behaviour, we don't have one system that does it and we don't have systems that talk to each other. And I don't think we ever will have; certainly not in this financial climate.' [Area D: Community Safety Manager]

Incompatible IT systems serve to militate against the effective sharing of data:

'All these numerous databases – in excess of 12, I think – are not designed to talk to each other, so you can't cross check them'. [Area C: Multi-agency Panel Manager]

Tracking individuals across different organisations and information management systems is problematic and little effort is made to join-up and trace young people's pathways through different interventions across time. This renders ideas about 'nipping offending in the bud' which presuppose some developmental trajectory over time difficult

to realise and evaluate in practice. There is little attempt to track individuals and evaluate the impact of a particular intervention, in part because the data necessary to do so are not routinely collected in ways that enable such assessments.

Despite significant efforts at partnership working, from the perspective of data collection, it is often as if young people exist in 'parallel lives' with organisations working in 'splendid isolation'. Sometimes the same individual or family may be the subject of multiple interventions from several local agencies with little coordination or regard for the interactions between them.

In the absence of shared identifiers the only way to chart a young person's progress through prevention, ASB and youth justice services is to extract their details from different databases using personal identifiers (e.g. first name, surname, date of birth, address etc). Searching across databases is made difficult by the number of agencies concerned and multiple errors in data entry.

Data Sharing

There exists a pervasive and deeply ingrained reluctance to share information between agencies. This is sometimes based on an over-interpretation (and occasionally a misinterpretation) of the current data protection legislation. There remains substantial ignorance about and misunderstanding of the implications of data protection legislation for data sharing. In line with other research, we found that the Data Protection Act is commonly cited as a reason not to release data, often in circumstances in which it may be perfectly legitimate to do so (Thomas and Walport 2008: 37).

'[Practitioners think] "no I can't share it with you because of the Data Protection Act" ... We've been doing some work about getting people to understand that actually it isn't quite as restrictive as that!...' [Area B: Police Inspector]

Once again, parallel realities were the awkward compromise in which practitioners

were more willing to share data in person than in electronic form.

'We've had some issues around sharing police data and sensitive individual's data ... we share information very well around the table, there isn't a sense of people not saying stuff ... but electronically it's become a little more problematic'. [Area A: Head of Community Safety Services.]

It is important that the current efforts targeted at delivering an effective call handling system for incidents of ASB to protect repeat and vulnerable victims and a joined-up approach to managing cases focused on harm to victims and the wider community (Home Office 2012) do not detract from improving the coordination and effective management of individuals identified as perpetrators of ASB. The focus on inter-organisational coordination and improved case management should extend to concerns for young people as perpetrators as well as victims rather than seeing these as inappropriately inversely related.

Good quality data collection, exchange and appropriate use matter because they:

- Allow for joined-up service provision and continuity of service over-time and between different service providers;
- Afford opportunities for joint analysis and coordinated working between relevant agencies;
- Provide the capacity to track individuals and families through service provision and diverse interventions, and assess their trajectories and pathways;
- Enable interventions to be used in a more strategic manner in which consideration is given to the relations between the various tools and how they interact;
- Provide an evidence-base from which to assess effectiveness and evaluate what works, for whom and in which contexts;
- Ensure the best use of resources and facilitate best practice;

- Afford opportunities to monitor performance and render services both accountable and reviewable.

In accordance with the Audit Commission's recommendations for good quality data in the public sector, data should conform with standards of: accuracy; validity; reliability; timeliness; relevance; and completeness (Audit Commission 2007). There remains a considerable way to go to achieve these standards in relation to ASB interventions with young people.

Early Intervention

There is a growing awareness of the benefits of early intervention. This combines with recognition of the associated need to shift resources, strategies and thinking away from a reactive mentality that responds to problems after they have expressed themselves towards interventions that seek to prevent the emergence of problems in the first place. As a policy domain in which diverse social and health issues come together and where the work of multiple public services and third sector organizations coalesce, ASB affords the potential to offer a problem-focused approach that puts people's needs and capabilities at the centre of interventions:

'In many respects, things like the riots during the summer have made senior officers appreciate that there is a real role for community safety in dealing with these issues... By putting things like the family intervention project in place and our work with younger siblings, we are more likely to make a difference. And that very often initially they were perhaps known to us because of involvement through the ABC scheme. It's interesting how those connections line up, the same names, the same families cropping up each time... But I think [the riots] helped to make a wakeup call that if you fail to invest, it will be more expensive upfront and actually that investment, although it doesn't work every time, will save money up stream.' [Site B: Community Safety Manager]

As the Allen Report recently noted: 'despite heroic frontline efforts tackling the symptoms, their causes often remain unaddressed' (Allen 2011: 3). Our research highlights the importance of prevention and support, rather than undue emphasis on enforcement which has often dominated traditional thinking in relation to crime and behaviour related problems.

'Do we want to just go and slap an ASBO on everybody and stop anybody doing anything? Or let's actually work with young people to make a change. We're not going to stop them, we're not going to just put a block on them and say "you can't do this". We're going to say; "actually, what do we need to do to stop this happening?"' [Site C: Youth Activities Worker]

Much of the 'heroic frontline effort' (amply evident across the research sites) is put into applying temporary plasters to the wounds that ASB express rather than addressing the long-term causes of problems. As a manager in one of our sites emphasised, the shift from short-term thinking to long-term strategies is a challenging but fundamentally important one:

'Enforcement over prevention, we've never done that! Our enforcement activity is a very small percentage of our trying to solve the problem before it escalates that you need enforcement, which I think is the right way around. I think if you're working in a city where you do 50 per cent prevention and 50 per cent enforcement, there is something wrong with your prevention! Prevention is all about the long-term. Whereas with enforcement – it is very short-term in most cases. In some cases it's exactly what you need for a neighbourhood... But you just need to be a little bit more patient with prevention.' [Site D: Community Safety Manager]

The availability of good quality support services was pivotal to the endeavours of prevention. The experience of service providers in the field of prevention and early intervention work suggests a preference for presenting and justifying preventative services in terms of children and young people's existing needs and problems, rather than purely in terms of future risks of

criminality. They are also acutely aware that labelling children as possible future criminals can be counter-productive to gaining the trust and participation of parents.

Consequently, many practitioners prefer to operate universal or widely available programmes over targeted ones, despite their obvious resource implications.

Furthermore, there is often a presumption in favour of voluntary involvement on the part of young people.

These tensions were especially apparent in relation to Youth Inclusion Projects (YIPs), where it was felt that some young people might be entering YIPs as a requirement of signing an ABC which may be experienced as less than voluntary. This raises questions about the role of coercion and possible sanctions in the process, particularly if young people were reluctant to take part.

ASB Interventions and Youth Justice

In much police and public debate, there are two largely erroneous assumptions that are challenged by the research evidence. The first assumption is that ASB interventions and youth justice sanctions are distinct responses to different sorts of problems. Related is a secondary presumption that ASB interventions, given their greater informality, constitute forms of early intervention before problems escalate to the level of criminality. From this perspective, they respond to lower level forms of behaviour which cumulatively have a disproportionate impact on individual and community well-being and/or may lead to serious offending. In this vein the Government's consultation paper declared:

'Where the behaviour is criminal, it should be dealt with as such. But informal measures can nip problems in the bud before they get that far.' (Home Office 2011: 5)

The research highlights that it is a mistake to conceive of ASB interventions as simply a lower tier of early intervention sitting below the formal criminal justice system. In many senses, and for many young people, ASB interventions sit alongside, supplement

and/or provide alternatives to youth justice interventions.

In one research site the stated policy was that young people who first came to official notice for ASB received an ASB warning letter from a neighbourhood police link officer. If they subsequently came to police notice for further ASB they were referred to the area's ASB Team which took further action, pursuing an ABC. If that failed, an ASBO was pursued, details of which were held on the ASB Team's data-bases. Across the site, on two further data-bases, YOS held details of prevention and youth justice interventions with young people. We tracked young people subject to ASB interventions through these data-bases and were surprised to find that; first, most of those who received an ABC do not appear to have had a police warning and second, many of those who had signed an ABC were already known to the YOT (i.e. had already been charged with a criminal offence). In fact, some had lengthy criminal histories. This suggests that in this site at least, rather than operating on some sort of continuum, ASB and youth justice interventions are actually operating in parallel. But practitioners do not know this because data on the same individuals who are being processed through different systems are held separately and little attempt is made to join these data together.

Nevertheless, ASB interventions also constitute a gateway through which young people may enter the youth justice system. As such, policy-makers need to be aware of the manner in which quasi-informal measures and tools at the earliest stages of development can propel young people further up the sanctions pyramid and influence the constellation of other civil/criminal interventions. This is evidenced by the close links between the use of ABCs, the fact that breach can provide evidence for an ASBO application, the high levels of breach of ASBOs and the use of custody for ASBO breaches. Such chains of causation produce (quite short) new routes from informal early interventions to the deep end

of the criminal justice system, never previously envisaged.

It is clear from the research that the relationship between ASB interventions and youth justice sanctions is uncertain, ambiguous, sometime overlapping and often confused. This indeterminate relationship between the criminal infrastructure of youth justice and the novel, quasi-civil configuration of ASB interventions demands that careful consideration is given to the unintended interactions between the two 'systems'. It also calls attention to the ways in which informal and non-criminal interventions can act as conduits drawing young people into processes of criminalization and deeper into delinquent identities and criminal careers.

The Role of Housing Tenure

Many of the ASB tools are either tenure specific or seen by practitioners as more effective in relation to those young people living in social housing where threats of eviction, tenancy demotion and housing injunctions often accompany (or stand in the background behind) early interventions, preventative work and low-level enforcement approaches, including ABCs. Given these and allied additional levers available to practitioners in relation to those families in social housing, the research highlights considerable concerns that young people and their parents who live in the social housing sector are subject to greater disciplinary regulation and more likely to be drawn into ASB-related interventions and possibly receive as a consequence a more intensive and punitive response than those living outside this sector. This gives rise to concerns about differential experiences of 'justice by tenure'.

'Really, there's a limit to what you can do, in terms of enforcement, there's a limit to what ASB enforcement can do. The tenancy agreement is a massive one and it's one of the only major things I think that you could do to enforce. So, I'd say that yes, in many ways until you get into the criminal justice system

there's not a lot else [to ensure compliance].'
[Area A: YOS Manager]

'If somebody's tenancy is at risk then there's a little bit more impetus to say: "well actually, you can't behave like this". It's a bit carrot and stick, sometimes you've got to be out and out supportive but other times you've got to use those sticks to actually get people to respond.'
[Area C: ASB Team Manager]

Nevertheless, there was recognition that eviction should only be used as a last resort, albeit that the threat of eviction was quite routinely used. Injunctions, demoted tenancies and family intervention tenancies were used by some as intermediary responses:

'What we tend to do more now is look at family intervention tenancies before we go for eviction. I think we try and avoid evictions, as much as possible. There are some cases where it is necessary but we try and avoid getting to that stage. We'd rather use injunctions, ASBOs, those sort of things to try and stop the problem rather than just moving families because ultimately with eviction it's just going to move the problem if you're not addressing the behaviour. We're doing this at an increasingly earlier stage, trying to get the family intervention tenancies in place if we can put support in place and give guidelines to the family to try and deter the behaviour.'
[Site D: Housing Office]

However, there was a general feeling among many practitioners that most ASB problems are rooted in social housing because this is where the most vulnerable people are located:

'I would say that generally speaking, it is predominantly council tenants, or tenants in social housing who cause ASB... and that's because social housing caters for the most vulnerable people in society. More people out of work, more people in deprivation and they're the things that can often lead to anti-social behaviour. So that sounds like a generalisation but that's an observation I would make. But you don't want to tar everybody with the same brush!' [Site D: Local Authority Housing Manager]

This stark reality raises a more fundamental public policy question about the extent to

which ASB policies may contribute to and express a redefinition of 'need' away from structural concerns for social deprivation and economic inequality to 'behaviour' as a product of choice.

Resources

All the sites reported having experienced substantial budget cuts in the year up to the end of 2011, although the nature of, and response to, these have been different. Some sites lost both resources and personnel in a way that was perceived to impact on their ability to deal effectively with ASB. The impact of funding cuts on third sector and voluntary organizations that are pivotal in providing support for young people and families in difficulty was highlighted as of particular concern. As a consequence, it is feared that the approach to ASB intervention in the future may lose its preventative orientation:

'As a result of the cuts... I think all we're going to be about is short-term dealing with a problem over a number of months to suppress it. I think that's what we're going back to. I think long-term things like orders will become secondary... I think we're going back 15-20 years in our approach.' [Area A: Police Officer]

The capacity of local authorities to provide appropriate support for young people and families has been highly dependent on the relevant services being available in particular areas, which our research suggests is very uneven and geographically contingent. The impact of fiscal restraint and cuts to services is likely to make this patchy provision even more variable and undermine the ability of ASB professionals to offer suitable support.

Implications for Future Directions in Policy

The White Paper (Home Office 2012) offers a timely attempt to streamline the diverse *ad hoc* powers that have been created over recent years. It should afford an opportunity for a strategic consideration of developments and their implications. In so doing, it is

incumbent to draw on research findings and practice lessons to promote evidence-based policy and practice.

There are a number of proposals with regard to youth interventions which this research suggests are to be welcomed. First, the provision that positive requirements, as well as negative prohibitions, be attached to the proposed Crime Prevention Injunction and Criminal Behaviour Order is consistent with the findings from this research study about the fundamental role played by support mechanisms underpinning interventions. If well designed, and not disproportionately onerous, such support offers opportunities for constructive engagement with young people about their behaviour with encouraging implications for compliance. As such, it may be anticipated that it will reduce the high level of breach associated with current ASBOs.

Second, our research suggests that the requirement to consult a young person about the reasons for their misbehaviour before a Crime Prevention Injunction is issued is in line with good practice. Whilst young people's views may not take precedence in the decision, their engagement in the process is likely to have benefits for perceptions of legitimacy and compliance (Crawford and Hucklesby 2013). So too, the requirement to consult with the local Youth Offending Services where the application is in respect of a minor is consistent with best practice.

The White Paper understandably places much emphasis on the speed of response and in meeting the demands of victims and communities. However, our research highlights a number of significant concerns regarding specific proposals and the more general direction of Government policy.

First, there is a danger that the demands of victims and communities are misconceived as somehow inversely related to those of possible perpetrators of ASB. The assumption that 'victims' and 'offenders' are in a zero sum relationship – as evident in the unduly simplistic language of 'rebalancing' rights away from offenders to victim - is

misplaced. This is especially salient when considering young people's interests. Young people are as likely to be the victims of ASB as its perpetrators. Young people may be consecutively *at risk from*, and *a risk to*, others; simultaneously, the *producers of harm* as well as the *survivors of harm*. It is important then that young people as victims **and** as perpetrators are treated by legal authorities fairly, proportionately and with due respect and dignity.

Furthermore, whilst the reforms to the ASBO are presented in the context of prioritising victims, some aspects - notably the test that conduct is 'capable of causing nuisance or annoyance' - do not require any actual victim.

Second, concerns were expressed across the research sites that the current government's approach to 'localism' and their critique of central data reporting and monitoring may actually serve to exacerbate the poor quality of data collection, amplify inconsistencies and increase differential practices and experiences of justice. This is likely to result in further disjointed inter-agency relations, poor tracking of individuals across diverse interventions, and a weak evidence-base on which to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions:

'I think the systems will get even more complicated as so much more of this stuff gets permissive... rather than necessary for us to report. Then some of that emphasis will go, some of the qualities of the data might go. It's a double-edged sword, youth justice board were quite robust with us about the data and about what they recorded and that sort of thing... But actually, getting that data was really important for us, to then look and be able to analyse what we're doing and where we go from that data. And as we no longer have the requirement to collect a lot of that data, if it starts going by the wayside, then I think we'll be worse off for it.' [Area C: YOS Manager]

Despite justified criticisms of the previous New Labour administration's overly prescriptive and micro-managing approach, the current philosophy is likely to mean that

gathering robust data from local areas will become intrinsically more difficult. In this context, accurate comparison will be rendered more problematic and learning lessons of effective practice is likely to be unfeasible. Our research supports the conclusions of the Allen Report:

‘The general absence of robust evaluation and comparative data has greatly handicapped the progress of evidence-based Early Intervention in the UK. Without robust information with which to make comparisons, budget holders and potential investors face the problems of equivalence and accountability for outcomes.’ (Allen 2011: 59, para. 82)

Third, an opportunity has been missed to take a strategic look at the range of formal and informal ASB interventions and how they interact with the criminal justice system. There has been much focused and media controversy on the ASBO, and its replacement by the new Crime Prevention Injunction and Criminal Behaviour Order, understandably perhaps given that breach of the new civil injunction will nevertheless carry criminal penalties, including the possibility of custody for young people. However, as our research demonstrates, most of the work in recent years has been conducted below (and before) this, by way of earlier interventions through the use of informal out-of-court warnings and ABCs. These have a greater track record of success. There is some considerable unease that the new Crime Prevention Injunction will lower the threshold of court-based intervention as a consequence of its standard of ‘nuisance behaviour’, thereby disrupting and displacing existing preventative pre-ASBO work by partner organisations. As such, its future use may well interfere with the various early interventions and the scope that they afford for restorative responses. There are evident dangers that the crime prevention injunction will foster ‘net-widening’, whereby a wider range of young people are drawn into formal court-based processes (with potential stigmatising consequences), both at an earlier stage and more rapidly than might otherwise have occurred.

‘Across the country, we have radically reduced the number of first time entrants into the youth justice system. And we’ve radically reduced the number of young people who offend, whether first time entrants or not. And that is maybe [a result of] some changes in behaviour but, more importantly, it’s a change of prosecution behaviour. So there is much more diversion than there was several years ago. And that probably means that behaviours that, yes, would previously have come into the criminal justice system, particularly because of previous policies like offences brought to justice which have gone, are now being diverted into cautions, early local interventions, restorative justice on the ground by police officers... I think the future challenge will be just what the balance is between sanction, enforcement, support and prevention.’ [Area C: YOS Manager]

Finally, the emphasis on speed of response and short-term solutions raises concerns that more strategic and long-term problem-solving is marginalised. Take, for example, the new direction to the police to disperse people from certain problem areas. Under current legislation, to obtain a dispersal order there has to be an authorisation process that includes consideration of preventative solutions, joining up the work of different agencies such as housing, youth provision and education. Previous research has shown that where dispersal powers are effective, the local authorities employing them analyse the nature of the problem and devise strategic multi-agency responses engaging local communities (Crawford and Lister 2007). Speedy responses are not always the most considered, effective and enduring ones in the longer-term. Furthermore, the underlying characteristic of ASB is that it is stubbornly persistent. Until that persistency is dealt with by addressing the wider causes of ASB, incidents will continue.

Principles and Ethical Implications

The predictive capacity of practitioners to intervene with young people destined to proceed to more serious criminality remains circumspect. The available evidence suggests

significant flows into, and away from, 'at risk groups' over the life course. In the context of early intervention, this generates considerable scope for 'false positives' and 'false negatives' amongst cohorts of young people. Hence, this research highlights concerns about the ethics of labelling young people under the auspices of ASB and the services that they access given the conditionality that attends to them. Furthermore, it reinforces the right of children not to be classified as future delinquents, whether they go on to become delinquents or not.

Consequently, many practitioners prefer universal rather than specifically targeted programmes, despite their obvious resource implications. Research reminds us that greater contact with legal authorities can often serve to undermine desistance, prolong persistence and draw young people deeper into offending (McAra and McVie 2007).

Given the position that ASB interventions occupy as simultaneously the gateway into, and possible diversionary routes away from, youth justice, as well as access to crucial behavioural support services for individuals and families in difficulty, their use should be informed by key normative principles. Echoing the findings of the Independent Commission on Youth Crime and Antisocial Behaviour (2010), early intervention with young people should:

- * Emphasise **parsimony** over *precaution* – the least possible (minimum) intervention necessary for the attainment of the preventative goals rather than a shot-gun approach that overburdens young people with multiple strategies of regulation '*in the hope that*' some of it might bear fruit.

- * Prioritise **diversion** from youth justice rather than *criminalisation* through formal criminal justice processes and sanctions where possible, but otherwise seek deliberately to limit and restrict young people's formal engagement with youth justice agencies and processes.

- * Due concern should be given to **proportionality** of the response in terms of the behaviour itself rather than an over-riding concern for what *might* happen.

- * Focus on the goals of **prevention** rather than *punishment* alone.

- * Ensure the **avoidance of harm** to those affected by the interventions either the young people or parents/carers at the same time as protecting vulnerable victims and communities from the harms caused by ASB.

- * Emphasise tools and strategies: (i) for which there is evidence of **effectiveness** (in their longer-term implications as well as their short-term effects) without generating unnecessary unintended consequences; (ii) that are procedurally fair and just – treating the parties with due respect and giving them a voice; and (iii) that are responsive to the capacity of young people and families to regulate themselves and sensitive to the conduct of those they seek to regulate and the conditions in which regulation occurs.

- * Be capable of **equitable** applicability (in that they apply as equally to all young people) and **do not discriminate** unnecessarily against certain groups or serve to sustain and reproduce existing social injustices and inequalities (rather than simply those defined by the housing tenure they happen to occupy).

- * Promote **consistency** of application and impact such that the experiences of justice are not determined by geography, gender or housing tenure.

- * Ensure **transparency** and the accountability that this provides by ensuring good quality data collection and monitoring performance, to inform good practice and evaluation that enables evidence-based policy and practice.

The principles of parsimony and proportionality demand a mature and robust understanding of the appropriateness of thresholds of intervention with young people. As one Youth Offending Service manager commented whilst reflecting on the

reasons for a decline in the use of ASBOs and ABCs in the area:

'That would indicate to us two things. One is that there were more young people being effectively diverted, secondly that maybe there's more maturity about; where is the threshold? And there has to be a threshold about what is boisterous behaviour, what is kids being kids. What needs sanction and what doesn't, and I think there is probably a greater understanding of that.' [Area C: YOS Manager]

Conclusion

There is an essential and fine balance to be struck between, on the one hand, not overburdening young people (and the organisations that work with them) with data collection, monitoring and surveillance demands and, on the other hand, not ignoring the benefits that accrue from preventative early intervention work due to the evident challenges of providing robust data collection systems for tracking vulnerable and needy young people in their transitions to adulthood and across diverse service providers. If early intervention is to be taken seriously, it requires investments in data collection, management, sharing and use that enhance the capacity to generate the data-sets that enable practitioners to: assess robustly the impacts of their work on young people; track the preventative benefits of early intervention endeavours; join-up service provision and support; and evaluate the effectiveness of different interventions.

Conversely, it is necessary to acknowledge the risks of labelling and inadvertently drawing youths deeper (and faster) into the criminal justice system that attend to early intervention initiatives. The capacity for ASB intervention to serve as diversionary measures, thus avoiding the well-documented (unintended) counterproductive tendencies of contact with the formal youth justice system where possible, is pivotal to their ultimate success. Otherwise there are real dangers that overly punitive early interventions may serve to attribute and affix 'troublemaker' and 'troublesome youth'

identities and reputations on young people which become difficult to shed in their transitions to adulthood. Subjecting certain young people at an early age to more intense surveillance and monitoring on the part of formal authorities may set them up to fail by rendering minor infractions more likely to be noticed and by drawing them more precipitously and deeper into processes of criminalisation (McAra and McVie 2005). The key challenge is to continue to design, develop and promote constructive forms of early intervention and prevention that support and work with (rather than against) genuinely informal (familial and communal) process of regulation and social control that foster cooperation, compliance and desistance, whilst avoiding stigmatisation, unnecessary coercion and criminalisation.

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Further Information

A full report entitled *Anti-Social Behaviour Interventions with Young People* will be published by Policy Press – further information is available at: <http://www.policypress.co.uk/>

