The policing response to antisocial behaviour

PEEL spotlight report

Contents

Foreword

Antisocial behaviour makes people feel unsafe. It damages communities and it can destroy the lives of its victims. In the year ending 30 September 2023, about 1 million antisocial behaviour incidents were reported to the police. Each is potentially a cry for help from communities.

But antisocial behaviour is sometimes perceived, and referred to, as low-level crime by the police, the public and the media. This attitude doesn't reflect the significant impact it has on communities and on victims' lives, and the trauma sustained antisocial behaviour can cause – trauma that has led to loss of lives.

Dealing with antisocial behaviour effectively needn't be complex. In many cases, effective early intervention can prevent incidents becoming more complex and difficult to resolve.

This report brings together findings from our police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy (PEEL) programme, force management statements and a request for promising practice from the College of Policing to all forces in England and Wales.

We found good examples where the police are working hard, using a problem-solving approach to tackle antisocial behaviour and recognising the harm it can cause. Many forces understand that antisocial behaviour is a priority for their communities and have allocated trained resources to tackling it. We also found some forces that are using technology to encourage antisocial behaviour reporting.

But in too many cases, we found this commitment to tackling antisocial behaviour was undermined by difficulties in sharing data caused by inadequate IT systems, and a lack of analytical expertise to help better understand and tackle problems. We also found a lack of training, poor recording methods and limited evaluation of outcomes often hampered efforts. Some of these problems are national issues; others are a result of an inconsistent approach across all forces or within some individual forces.

The police must and can do better. It is vital that forces understand the complexity and prevalence of antisocial behaviour. They need to continue to work consistently and share resources with community-based partner services to prevent, respond to and reduce antisocial behaviour.

Forces must make sure that they consistently use the statutory powers available to take robust action against the minority of people who often repeatedly cause harassment and distress. Equally importantly, forces need to improve their responses to victims, the actions they take, and local communities' trust and confidence.

A renewed focus is needed on consistent resourcing for neighbourhood police teams – who are often first to deal with antisocial behaviour – and on the professionalisation and training of those working across local policing.

I urge forces to recognise the importance of how they and their partners identify, record and respond to antisocial behaviour. The effectiveness of forces' responses to incidents of antisocial behaviour will affect how safe people feel.

Understandably, antisocial behaviour is often a priority for local communities. It is vital that communities are confident their local force will respond to and tackle antisocial behaviour effectively. Their confidence in the police should be enhanced after they report any incidents.

Lee Freeman KPM
HM Inspector of Constabulary
HM Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services

Summary

Most forces need to improve how they identify and record antisocial behaviour

During our inspections, we found that many forces needed to improve how they record antisocial behaviour. This was particularly true when antisocial behaviour included or was connected to criminal behaviour. Correctly identifying antisocial behaviour and subsequently recording the correct crimes is important to make sure victims receive the service they expect and deserve. Call handlers using technical scripts appropriately can be very effective in achieving this.

We found multiple forces had inconsistencies and errors in recording antisocial behaviour. Many forces just dealt with errors and omissions after they identified them, rather than getting things right first time. We would strongly encourage forces to improve their initial recording.

Forces need to improve how they identify and protect vulnerable people

Forces need to identify and record whether someone is a vulnerable person when antisocial behaviour is reported. This helps inform an appropriate response from the very first point of contact and reduces harm. We were encouraged to see most forces have a clear and well-understood definition of vulnerability.

But in some forces, we found uncertainty about processes for identifying and recording antisocial behaviour and allocating resources, and about who had responsibility for work related to antisocial behaviour. And while we found that most forces carried out an initial risk assessment at first point of contact, they didn't always carry out effective antisocial behaviour risk assessments when things changed and when the incident was concluded. This must improve.

Some forces make good use of technology to encourage antisocial behaviour reporting

We were pleased to see some forces have made changes to their online reporting websites, to make them more user-friendly for people reporting issues such as antisocial behaviour. Some have invested in online reporting and advice portals that allow call handlers to deal with antisocial behaviour and nuisance calls using text chat. We also saw examples of innovative practice such as QR codes and apps to help the public report persistent antisocial behaviour.

But if they use this type of technology, forces need to make sure this is robustly supervised and subject to ongoing review, so that victims are both safeguarded and receive an effective service.

Too many forces don't understand the prevalence of antisocial behaviour

We found some forces made good use of data to tackle antisocial behaviour. Better-performing forces clearly identified those people who made many calls for help about antisocial behaviour and the locations where antisocial behaviour took place. This meant action could be taken to tackle problems, and the forces could plan effectively to address future demand.

But during our inspections, we found too many forces didn't understand the level of antisocial behaviour in their force area. Forces were poor at collecting, analysing and using data. They had difficulty obtaining data from partner organisations. And there was also limited analytical support to help frontline teams understand local problems. This lack of understanding hampered efforts to identify immediate risks and vulnerabilities, as well as long-term trends.

A lack of analytical support undermines efforts to tackle antisocial behaviour effectively

We found that many forces now have central teams to manage complex antisocial behaviour data, which helps to update and assign work to local neighbourhood teams. These central teams provide expert and technical guidance. Other forces have simple data analysis tools that give clear, accurate data to allow better decisions on priorities and activities.

Poorer-performing forces often had poor-quality data and inadequate IT systems, and lacked expertise dedicated to antisocial behaviour data analysis. They often didn't give their officers and staff the tools and training they needed. This meant these forces failed to fully understand the problem and to propose effective solutions to tackle antisocial behaviour.

Most forces are good at sharing antisocial behaviour data with partner organisations

A comprehensive approach to sharing data between the police and other relevant organisations allows a better understanding of antisocial behaviour problems. It also helps with problem-solving and learning from other activities and evaluations.

We found many good examples of information-sharing between forces and other organisations, including sharing problem-solving plans and data. Approaches to sharing data included IT systems that multiple organisations can access, and using technologies such as Microsoft Teams so that updating and discussing cases across and between organisations is easier.

Some forces need to address IT issues that prevent them using data effectively

Forces need fit-for-purpose IT systems so that they can use data or share information with external organisations to tackle antisocial behaviour. During our inspections, we found some forces in which data-sharing with partner organisations was difficult, or didn't happen at all. We were often told this was due to IT issues.

Forces must address issues of IT incompatibility and access, and make sure that IT solutions are fit for purpose – both for the police and partner organisations. Without this, they are less able to tackle antisocial behaviour.

Most forces make good use of problem-solving to tackle antisocial behaviour

We were encouraged to find most forces were good at using problem-solving approaches to deal with recorded antisocial behaviour incidents. Many forces were making sure preventative policing becomes a core part of policing. This maximises the opportunities to prevent harm.

Many forces used problem-solving approaches to identify issues as early as possible and work with external organisations to propose solutions. These forces made good use of data to plan interventions that made a real difference.

During our inspections, we found examples where identifying antisocial behaviour had helped to reveal wider criminal activity. We also saw examples of effective working across different police teams to tackle the root causes of antisocial behaviour, such as neighbourhood police working with covert surveillance teams to gather intelligence on criminal behaviour such as drug dealing linked to antisocial behaviour.

Some forces need to do more to make sure problem-solving is integral to tackling antisocial behaviour

Problem-solving approaches to tackling antisocial behaviour can be extremely effective in identifying and prioritising actions for the police and their partners. They can help provide proactive initiatives to resolve long-term problems in communities.

But in a few cases, we found some problem-solving plans lacked detail and had been completed to meet the minimum level required. We also found that some forces were unable to explain in their plans what would be considered a successful result. Often the plans weren't updated or evaluated, and had little meaningful direction from managers.

Many forces use early intervention approaches to prevent antisocial behaviour

We were pleased to find that forces were often good at using informal and formal interventions to deal with antisocial behaviour before it became a regular occurrence or spread to other areas. The use of warning letters, early intervention schemes and diversionary activities can help to reduce reoffending and the harms of antisocial behaviour in communities.

Many forces had initiatives that provided activities for young people to help prevent them being drawn into antisocial behaviour and criminality. These diversionary activities were usually done in partnership with other organisations and charities.

Forces generally use statutory antisocial behaviour powers well to address antisocial behaviour

Many forces made good use of statutory antisocial behaviour powers. They work with partners to identify the most appropriate interventions to deal with the root causes of antisocial behaviour and to tackle repeat and persistent antisocial behaviour offending. But we also found forces that used these powers inconsistently, and personnel who were unclear on when to use the different types of orders.

We urge forces to continue to invest time and resources into making good use of all statutory powers available to them.

Forces don't always record the use of statutory powers

Some forces' recording of the use of statutory powers was poor. When the use of specific orders and legal remedies for antisocial behaviour isn't clearly recorded, it is harder to learn from previous experience. Poor recording makes it more difficult to see repeat victims and locations, or to learn from previous similar incidents. We found some forces didn't always record their referrals or consider the effect of their referrals on other organisations.

There is limited data for England and Wales on forces' use of antisocial behaviour powers. This makes it difficult to understand how well these powers are used across all forces, and which forces are using which powers in which circumstances.

Forces are recognising that continuity within neighbourhood police teams helps to tackle antisocial behaviour

We were encouraged to find forces recognising the importance of keeping officers and police community support officers within neighbourhood police teams. It takes time to build trust and confidence within communities and to develop good working relationships. Many forces have protected their neighbourhood teams from being used to manage other police demand, other than in exceptional circumstances.

But in our inspections, we also found forces in which neighbourhood teams weren't as well protected. We found abstractions (diverting officers from their main duties) and unfilled vacancies in neighbourhood teams in underperforming forces. Several forces lacked key skills or enough personnel in neighbourhood teams to effectively problem-solve and address antisocial behaviour.

Specialist antisocial behaviour advisers can help make effective use of antisocial behaviour powers

Many forces have a central team of antisocial behaviour experts to provide guidance on the range of legal powers available to tackle antisocial behaviour, and when to use them. Others provide clear information to their personnel on available powers and legislation. This helps them make better decisions on priorities and activities to reduce and address antisocial behaviour.

Several forces had specialist resources to tackle particular antisocial behaviour problems, such as off-road motorbikes. They also had centralised portals for best practice. These forces were good at learning from previous incidents and using that learning to address antisocial behaviour.

Police training on antisocial behaviour is inconsistent

High-quality training is essential for personnel to understand what antisocial behaviour is, how it links to other crime, the harm it can cause and the available interventions. We found a mixed picture on training and awareness of antisocial behaviour issues, powers and tactics. In some forces, training was poor or outdated.

Better-performing forces provided training to student officers and non-neighbourhood personnel on neighbourhood issues, including antisocial behaviour. These forces also learned from other forces and academic research, and shared positive practice.

Many forces share resources with other organisations to deal with antisocial behaviour

In most forces, we saw good evidence of effective partnership working with relevant external organisations at both strategic and local levels. This meant that the most appropriate organisation took the lead to address antisocial behaviour and that all available information was shared among partner organisations. Taking a joint approach to problem-solving increased the likelihood of effective actions by the police and partners. Often, police teams were co-located with other organisations, which increased the speed and agility of any response to antisocial behaviour issues.

Some forces need to improve how they evaluate outcomes

Some forces have improved their understanding of the economic analysis of antisocial behaviour interventions. These forces often work with external experts and use public feedback to help identify and measure benefits. But too often we found that the final assessment phase of problem-solving – to see if interventions had worked and how learning is shared between teams – was inconsistent or missing entirely.

Introduction

Background

This report focuses on the police response to antisocial behaviour in England and Wales. We previously reported on antisocial behaviour in 2010 ('Anti-social behaviour: Stop the rot'), and in 2012 ('A step in the right direction: The policing of anti-social behaviour').

The Government's 'Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan' identifies antisocial behaviour as the main reason people feel unsafe in their local area.

An estimated 34 percent of people aged 16 and over had experienced or witnessed some type of antisocial behaviour in the year ending 30 September 2023 (Crime Survey for England and Wales estimate). Police recorded about 1 million incidents of antisocial behaviour in that same period.

Continued and repeated experiences of antisocial behaviour can increase the risk of harm. Research has shown that long-term victimisation from antisocial behaviour can cause problems including significant mental health issues, loss of sleep, a desire to move home, changes to daily routines, and negative effects on others in the household, such as children.

The public don't draw a clear distinction between crime and antisocial behaviour. Much antisocial behaviour isn't reported to the police, and certain groups and communities are more likely to experience negative effects of antisocial behaviour. Perhaps most tellingly, research indicates that forces that were poor in responding to antisocial behaviour had less antisocial behaviour reported to them.

Despite its substantial negative effects, antisocial behaviour is often perceived (and referred to) as low-level crime. In Baroness Newlove's final report as Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales, 'Anti-Social Behaviour: Living a Nightmare', she stated:

> "I find it infuriating and quite frankly disrespectful to hear ASB [antisocial behaviour] being referred to as 'low level crime'. That description illustrates very neatly how ASB is often treated as a series of isolated incidents, rather than taking into account the cumulative effect that it has on its victims."

Several high-profile cases highlight the dangers of seeing incidents in isolation. In 2007, Fiona Pilkington took her own life and that of her disabled daughter

Francecca Hardwick after prolonged harassment and multiple reports to the police. David Askew died of a heart attack in 2010, after a ten-year campaign of bullying and harassment. In 2020, a victim of 'cuckooing' – where criminals exploit vulnerable people to take over their home – was found dead in their flat in Camden. Before this, there had been several interventions from police and other organisations concerning antisocial behaviour and criminal activity.

Since the late 1990s, antisocial behaviour has been a focus of successive governments, which have introduced related legislation and legal orders. It requires action from a range of public services to properly address it. The police are only part of the solution: they need the support of many public and private organisations, including local government, schools, drug treatment programmes, the NHS, charities and landlords, among others.

Defining antisocial behaviour

Defining antisocial behaviour can be complex. It can mean different things to different people and communities. Antisocial behaviour is generally characterised as persistent, repeated incidents that increase in severity of incident or impact on victims over time. Whether a person can't safely walk down a certain road, is missing out on restful sleep, can't enjoy the peace of their garden or an open space, or has to close a business, being a victim of antisocial behaviour can have devastating effects on people's day-to-day lives.

In this report, we use the current legal definition of antisocial behaviour, which is contained in the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014:

"(a) conduct that has caused, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to any person,

(b) conduct capable of causing nuisance or annoyance to a person in relation to that person's occupation of residential premises, or

(c) conduct capable of causing housing-related nuisance or annoyance to any person."

An assessment of antisocial behaviour needs to consider that victims may be affected by a series of related incidents, not just the severity of any individual incident. Antisocial behaviour includes acts that are crimes, as well as acts that by themselves aren't criminal, but could cause harassment, alarm or distress, or nuisance or annoyance, as laid out in the legislation. It is important that police forces address both criminal acts that are part of antisocial behaviour and the non-criminal behaviours that can blight communities or the lives of people living in those communities.

The Government's 2023 'Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan' expanded on the legal definition, describing antisocial behaviour as:

"a disturbance or disruption to the normal order of things; an attitude and show of disrespect for a place and the people that call it home. Often repetitive and

oppressive, anti-social behaviour leaves victims and communities feeling powerless, spoiling their normal enjoyment of their spaces, and chipping away at their peace of mind in their own homes. Anti-social behaviour covers criminal and non-criminal behaviour, including:

a) Intimidatory behaviour, such as threatening or unruly behaviour, drunkenness, harassment and loitering in public spaces;

b) drug use, and the paraphernalia, mess and disruption that can go with it;

c) vandalism, graffiti, and the plague of fly-tipping and littering; and

d) disruptive neighbours consistently playing loud music or letting their dog bark all night."

The scale of antisocial behaviour

Understanding the prevalence of antisocial behaviour is important. It helps the police and other organisations to put the right resources in the right places to deal with it. Looking at trends over time helps them to improve future plans, and also helps them to evaluate the actions public services have taken to tackle antisocial behaviour.

Crime statistics recorded by the police include how many crimes and incidents are reported to them. Antisocial behaviour incidents make up a substantial number of incidents that the police deal with – about 1 million incidents in the year ending 30 September 2023.

Figure 1: Number of antisocial behaviour incidents and all recorded crime in England and Wales, years ending 31 March 2018 to 31 March 2023
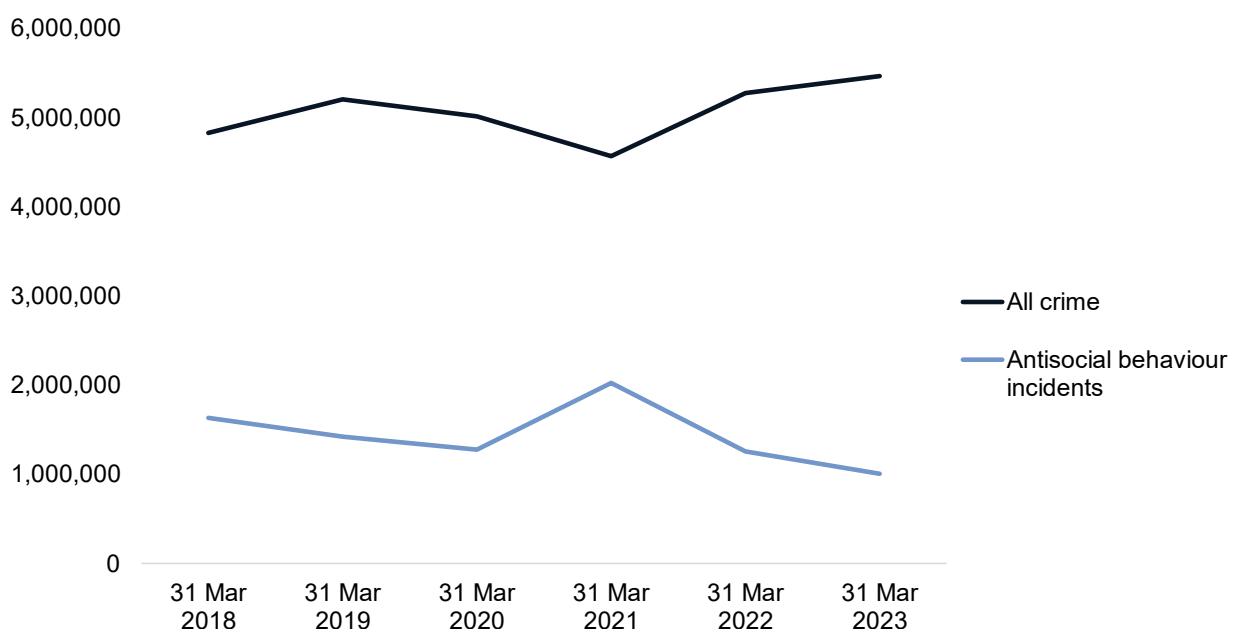
Sources: Police recorded crime open data Police Force Area tables, year ending March 2013 onwards from the Home Office and Police Force Area data tables from the Office for National Statistics

Some forces recorded COVID-19 breaches as antisocial behaviour, which may affect numbers for the year ending 31 March 2021.

Police forces record antisocial behaviour in three categories, in line with the National Standard for Incident Recording:

- personal: targeted at individuals;
- nuisance: affects the wider community rather than an individual victim; and
- environmental: affects the wider environment, such as public spaces and buildings.

As figure 2 shows, most of these incidents (74 percent) are classified as nuisance; 18 percent relate to personal antisocial behaviour that is targeted at individuals; and only 8 percent are environmental.

Figure 2: Proportion of types of antisocial behaviour out of all antisocial behaviour incidents in England and Wales in the year ending 31 March 2023
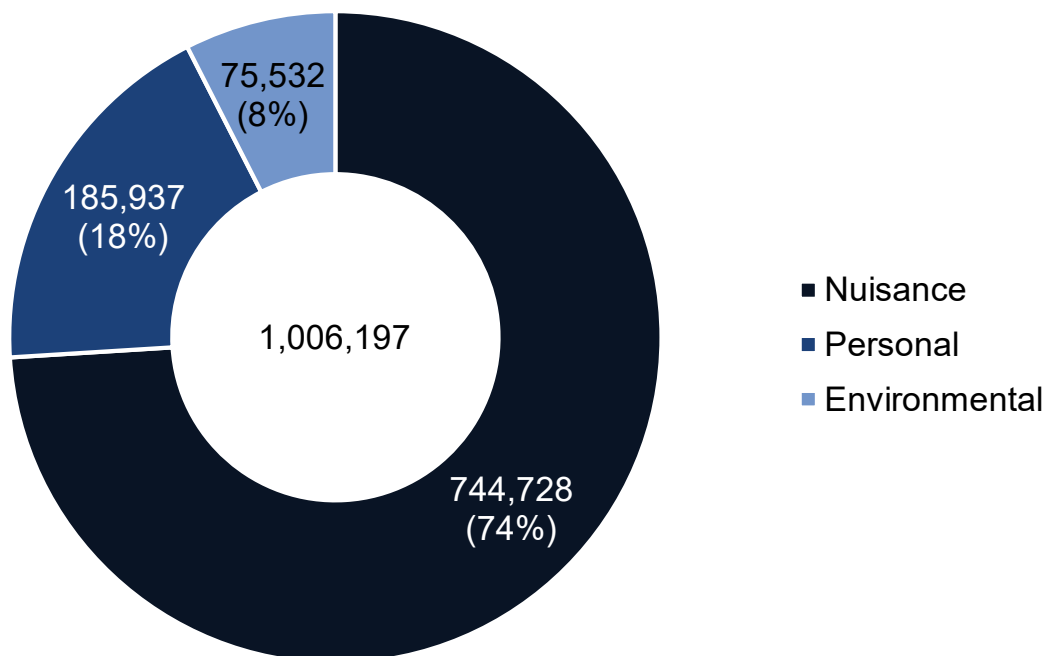
Source: Police Force Area data tables from the Office for National Statistics

The Crime Survey for England and Wales records the public's experiences of crime and antisocial behaviour. It estimates that, in the year ending 30 September 2023, 24 percent of people perceived antisocial behaviour to be a fairly or very big problem in their local area. Eight percent of people perceived their local area as having a high level of antisocial behaviour.

In the year ending December 2023, the top three antisocial behaviour issues that people most commonly thought were a problem were litter, people using or dealing drugs, and teenagers hanging around on the streets. But the antisocial behaviour most likely to be reported to the police was related to issues with neighbours.

Some incidents that are recorded as antisocial behaviour could be considered to be crimes but aren't recorded as such. For example, littering or dog fouling are crimes, but they aren't of a level of severity that they would be recorded as such. Antisocial behaviour is also reported to a range of public sector organisations, and not just to the police. For example, many people will report noise and environmental issues to the local council rather than to the police.

Understanding the scale of antisocial behaviour is challenging. This makes it more difficult to understand how prevalent antisocial behaviour is – police recorded incidents may represent an undercount of the true level of antisocial behaviour.

About us

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) independently assesses the effectiveness and efficiency of police forces and fire and rescue services to make communities safer.

In preparing our reports, we ask the questions that the public would ask, and publish the answers in accessible form. We use our expertise to interpret the evidence and make recommendations for improvement.

Methodology

We drew on evidence from a range of sources, including academic research, national guidance and findings from:

- our police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy (PEEL) programme, which assesses the performance of police forces in England and Wales (comprising all PEEL inspections between 2021 and February 2024, and including evidence from the period affected by the pandemic);
- force management statements (self-assessments that chief constables and their London equivalents prepare and give to us each year);
- a request for promising practice to all forces by the College of Policing; and
- publicly available data.

This report focuses on the police response to antisocial behaviour. It also highlights examples of positive practice and joint working between the police and other organisations vital to addressing antisocial behaviour.

Terminology in this report

Our reports contain references to, among other things, 'national' definitions, priorities, policies, systems, responsibilities and processes.

In some instances, 'national' means applying to England and Wales. In others, it means applying to England, Wales and Scotland, or the whole of the United Kingdom.

Identifying and recording antisocial behaviour

When a victim of antisocial behaviour reports an incident to the police, it is essential that forces correctly identify it, assess the risk and then record the right crimes. If they don't, victims won't receive the service they expect and deserve, and action can't be taken to prevent harm. As well as the police not dealing with the crime, it means the victim can't get help from Victim Support, which in most areas is only available to victims of crime. Accurate recording helps police forces allocate the right resources to the right areas. It is an important part of maintaining public trust and confidence.

In this chapter, we set out our findings on how well police forces identify and record antisocial behaviour.

Most forces need to improve how they identify and record antisocial behaviour

During our inspections, we found that many forces needed to improve how they identify and record antisocial behaviour. The three categories of antisocial behaviour – personal, nuisance and environmental – were used inconsistently across and within forces. This was particularly true where antisocial behaviour included or was connected to criminal behaviour.

It is essential that forces accurately record crimes when they have occurred, as well as incidents of antisocial behaviour, to build a full picture of what is happening with victims, locations and offenders. This is essential to maintain the trust and confidence of the public. Failures to record antisocial behaviour correctly can mean that victims receive an unacceptable level of service, and police forces may not get a true picture of risk and vulnerability.

We found inconsistencies and errors in recording antisocial behaviour across multiple forces. As part of our police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy (PEEL) inspection programme in 2023, we examined 550 incidents in 11 forces, reporting on performance in recording crimes appropriately (crime data integrity). This review included incidents recorded as antisocial behaviour that targeted a specific individual or group (known as antisocial behaviour personal) and considered how accurately crimes contained within these incidents were recorded. From these incidents, 103 crimes were recorded. But in our audit, we found that 182 crimes should have

been recorded, meaning that only just over half of this sample of antisocial behaviour personal incidents had crimes correctly recorded.

Often a single antisocial behaviour personal incident can contain several crimes affecting one victim or household. The victims are often vulnerable people. For example, one crime that was missed in an antisocial behaviour personal case was that of a man who reported ongoing problems with youngsters kicking and barging into his front door. They were also doing it to a neighbour, causing them distress. It had been going on for a while and the caller had video evidence of what was happening. There was a comment on the police incident record saying that it was being dealt with, but there was no detail of what had been done, nor whether the neighbours had been spoken with. Crimes of harassment affecting the victim and his neighbour should have been recorded but weren't.

> **Recommendation 1**
>
> By 31 March 2025, forces should review their processes for recording antisocial behaviour to make sure all antisocial behaviour and associated crime are recorded correctly.

Forces that were better at recording antisocial behaviour adopted a victim-focused approach. They had recognised and taken steps to address poor recording. These steps included producing short videos to explain antisocial behaviour and hidden crimes more clearly to their personnel, along with tailored in-person training for officers and call handlers to help them better understand when to record antisocial behaviour. We were also encouraged to find some forces had simplified the scripts for call handlers to make it easier to quickly identify antisocial behaviour.

Many forces carry out quality checks on crimes and antisocial behaviour incidents to identify under-recording. They report on trends and arrange advice and training for personnel who are making repeated errors. But interventions such as quality assurance can be expensive and time-consuming. We would strongly encourage forces to improve the recording at source, rather than just correcting errors after they have been made.

> **Recommendation 2**
>
> By 30 September 2025, forces should make sure personnel are appropriately trained to identify and record antisocial behaviour and associated crime when they are first reported.

Forces need to improve how they identify and protect vulnerable people

To keep victims safe, when antisocial behaviour is reported, forces need to identify and record whether someone is a vulnerable person, along with any vulnerability-related risks. This is of vital importance as it helps inform an appropriate response. It also helps personnel identify whether referrals need to be made to other police teams or external organisations.

We were encouraged to see most forces had a clear and well-understood definition of vulnerability, which helps to make sure all risks are recorded accurately and to reduce harm.

We found that high-performing forces were better at assessing risk and vulnerability. Structured antisocial behaviour risk and vulnerability assessment processes meant that officers and staff considered incidents more closely from beginning to end. This included carrying out risk assessments for individual incidents at the point of the initial call, if things changed, and again once the police and/or partner organisations had started to deal with the antisocial behaviour.

While we found that most forces had an initial risk assessment at first point of contact, they didn't always carry out effective further antisocial behaviour risk assessments when things changed and when the incident ended. This must improve.

Where forces had vulnerability officers within neighbourhood teams, we found stronger links with other units, such as those specialising in dealing with missing people and child sexual exploitation. This helps to identify and manage risk and vulnerability in reported antisocial behaviour incidents. We found one example that involved a housing association that provided accommodation for women from outside the area who were potentially vulnerable to exploitation. This risk was addressed with the housing association, and a neighbourhood watch scheme was set up to monitor and record any issues.

During our inspections, we found examples of forces using self-service portals that allowed victims to self-refer to relevant organisations for further support. Some forces were also good at making sure they completed follow-up visits to help victims with the support available to them. We were pleased to find some neighbourhood teams scheduled call-backs specifically for vulnerable victims of antisocial behaviour. These checked on their welfare and provided an opportunity to report any further incidents. This encourages ongoing risk assessment, which we urge all forces to adopt.

We were disappointed in some cases to find antisocial behaviour referred to as "low-level crimes" during our inspections. We heard phrases such as "just antisocial behaviour" and "antisocial behaviour as well as crime". A call handler in one force told us they would record "the serious crime … such as criminal damage" but wouldn't record antisocial behaviour "such as nuisance youths" as a separate incident. Such a

call might provide vital information to solve a wider community antisocial behaviour problem, or identify someone suffering antisocial behaviour in silence. This type of mindset needs to change. Although these examples weren't widespread, all forces need to make sure personnel recognise and understand the negative effects that repeated and long-term antisocial behaviour can have.

The risk and harm associated with antisocial behaviour can increase over time, even if the behaviour hasn't worsened, because the victim's tolerance and ability to cope are reduced the longer they experience antisocial behaviour. So it is essential that risk assessments are regularly updated.

Case study: West Mercia Police's response to antisocial behaviour helps to identify vulnerability

West Mercia Police understands the importance of responding to antisocial behaviour to identify vulnerability. The force received several repeat calls that were initially recorded as antisocial behaviour. Further investigation revealed that these incidents were linked to a 14-year-old girl assaulting her younger sibling and her mother. The child was assessed and found to be vulnerable, with behavioural issues and poor performance at school.

The officer identified other family members with a good relationship with the girl and arranged for them to become more involved in the family. This gave the rest of the immediate family some respite. The officer also discussed improved housing with the local authority, as the two children were sharing a small bedroom.

During this work, the 14-year-old again assaulted her mother. The officer arranged a voluntary attendance interview and referred the child to the local youth justice panel. She was then allocated a youth worker to help her with her anger management problems.

Since these interventions by the police and other organisations, the force hasn't received more calls about this behaviour, and the girl's behaviour at school has been much better.

Recommendation 3

By 31 March 2025, forces should:

- review their risk assessment processes for antisocial behaviour cases to make sure that risks are properly assessed from initial contact to case closure; and
- make sure completed risk assessments are retained in line with management of police information guidelines.

Some forces make good use of technology to encourage antisocial behaviour reporting

We were encouraged to see some forces have made changes to their online reporting websites, so they are more user-friendly for reporting issues such as antisocial behaviour. This may encourage people to take that first step to report antisocial behaviour, which is especially important when considering the needs of communities who have less trust and confidence in the police.

Some forces have invested in online reporting and advice portals that allow call handlers to deal with antisocial behaviour and nuisance calls using text chat. This can be a more efficient approach than voice calls. But some personnel we spoke with found managing multiple complex conversations difficult. We also found in some forces that, when online chat was used, the incident was given an inappropriate grading, which affects how quickly a police response is provided. Forces need to make sure that if they use this type of technology, its use is supervised and reviewed. The quality of service victims receive must be as good as when victims call for help.

During our inspections, we found some forces were using QR codes and apps to collect information from the public on local issues, and to share that information with external organisations. Data collected included noise nuisance and housing-related antisocial behaviour complaints. This approach helps the public report the place and time where they are experiencing antisocial behaviour, which helps forces to identify location-based issues. Police forces and partners can use this data to map local issues, set local priorities, and support funding applications and resource allocation.

Innovative practice: Some forces, including South Yorkshire Police, are using QR codes to get community feedback about antisocial behaviour

Some forces use QR codes – small barcodes that can be scanned by a smartphone – to get feedback from the community. The QR codes are placed at key locations and are linked to a website survey.

South Yorkshire Police is using QR codes to collect information from footpath users. The QR codes have been added to gates and stiles so that people can provide feedback on antisocial behaviour, such as use of off-road motorcycles.

Using data to tackle antisocial behaviour

Officers and staff need to uncover the main causes of antisocial behaviour and problem-solve to find lasting solutions. To do this effectively, forces need to make good use of their data and that of other organisations. Without a full picture of what is happening, and where and when it is happening, there is a risk the approach to tackling antisocial behaviour will be ineffective. Good quality data and data analysis mean forces and other organisations can plan interventions effectively, allocate the right resources and fully evaluate the effectiveness of their actions.

In our 2023 PEEL spotlight report 'Police performance: Getting a grip', we noted that too many forces make decisions based on poor data or insufficient analysis of data. This is also a problem in forces' approaches to tackling antisocial behaviour.

In this chapter, we set out our findings on how well police forces use data to deal with antisocial behaviour.

Too many forces don't understand the prevalence of antisocial behaviour

Antisocial behaviour can be much more effectively dealt with if forces better understand its prevalence. We found some forces made good use of data to understand levels of antisocial behaviour. This meant they could tackle problems and plan effectively to address future demand.

Better-performing forces clearly identified the people who made many calls for service and the locations involved. They also analysed and understood their data. For example, one force found that more affluent communities were more likely to report antisocial behaviour than less affluent ones, and that this meant areas with high calls for service weren't always those with the highest need.

We were encouraged to find some forces made good use of dashboards and IT systems, so that their personnel and external organisations could access relevant data and information. Neighbourhood teams used this information to identify repeat victims and locations, as well as key themes such as alcohol or drug-related issues.

But during our inspections, we found that too many forces didn't understand the level of antisocial behaviour in their force area. Some were poorer at collecting, analysing and using data. They often had difficulty getting data from partner organisations, or had poor-quality data. We also found limited analytical support to help frontline teams

understand the detail and the factors contributing to the problem. This hampered efforts to identify immediate risks and vulnerabilities, as well as long-term trends.

One force told us that its internal analysis showed it had a very low level of antisocial behaviour incidents per 1,000 population. But this wasn't consistent with the much higher estimated level of antisocial behaviour experienced by the public within the force area, according to the Crime Survey for England and Wales. Another force with one of the highest rates of police recorded antisocial behaviour didn't understand the underlying causes of this level of antisocial behaviour.

The police need to make sure that they fully understand antisocial behaviour, both at a force level and at the level of individual victims. Many of these victims are vulnerable and are at high risk of harm.

Case study: Lancashire Constabulary's work in Operation Morano involves a partnership approach to collecting and analysing data to help tackle antisocial behaviour

Lancashire Constabulary uses a data-driven problem-solving process to tackle incidents of sustained antisocial behaviour and disorder. Operation Morano began in November 2022, after the constabulary had received reports that large groups of youths were congregating in public spaces in the Skelmersdale area. Public property had been damaged, and members of the public felt intimidated and threatened. Some of the youths were suspected to be carrying knives.

The increased calls to police and social media commentary made it clear that some businesses might be forced to close because of the problems. The issue was serious enough for local people to create a Change.org petition with 1,718 signatures, which was raised with the police and crime commissioner's office. It also received attention in the local and national media. One headline in the Daily Mirror stated that this was a "UK town ruled by teen gangs where mums are too scared to let their kids out at night".

Operation Morano was formed as a partnership approach to sharing information between police, schools and businesses to jointly identify victims and offenders. Analysis of shared data revealed that antisocial behaviour was occurring from early evening onwards. A core group of youths were involved in the antisocial behaviour, and were also linked to other violent crime and drug issues. Although the police had dealt with the youths involved in antisocial behaviour, other youths quickly took their place. The public were no longer reporting the antisocial behaviour because they had lost confidence in the police.

An environmental audit showed that the areas experiencing antisocial behaviour had poor security, unsuitable lighting and limited CCTV. Designing out crime surveys were carried out, and businesses were offered support and guidance on any changes they could make.

The partnership approach provided enough evidence to impose civil and criminal enforcement measures. It also helped to identify perpetrators whose individual and family vulnerabilities were often the reason behind their behaviour. Support and diversionary packages were created to guide offenders away from antisocial behaviour and prevent further offending.

The commitment from all partners continues. Responses from the community and businesses have been positive. The constabulary reported that, in the first month after the action plan was created, antisocial behaviour in the area was reduced by 58.3 percent. This reduction has been sustained since November 2022. Regeneration and investment in the area have continued, and businesses have reported an increase in customers.

A lack of analytical support undermines efforts to tackle antisocial behaviour effectively

During our inspections, we found that many forces now have central teams to manage complex antisocial behaviour data from police and partners, which help to update and assign work to local neighbourhood teams. These teams can provide expert and technical guidance as needed. We found forces were more effective at problem-solving when officers and staff had support from central analytical teams before they decided how to respond to antisocial behaviour.

Other forces make use of centralised portals and simple data analysis tools. These allow neighbourhood teams and others to access clear, accurate data so they can then make better decisions on priorities and activities. This approach of centralised data can help identify key harms and repeat victims.

But we found some forces were still using local solutions or many different systems to record data on antisocial behaviour. This can reduce a force's ability to identify repeat and vulnerable people and communities, and to develop effective interventions to help them. It also limits the ability of other parts of the force and external organisations to learn from good practice.

Poorer-performing forces had a series of issues that affected their ability to deal with antisocial behaviour effectively. They often had poor-quality data and inadequate IT systems, and lacked expertise dedicated to antisocial behaviour data analysis. They often didn't give their officers and staff the tools and training they needed. This meant they failed to fully understand the problem and to propose effective solutions to tackle antisocial behaviour.

In our 2023 spotlight report, we said that many forces needed to invest in both the number and the skills of their data analysts. At the time of writing, the National Police Chiefs' Council continues to consider and address the 2023 recommendations about forces' analytical capacity and capabilities.

Promising practice: Humberside Police uses an app called Visibeat to identify and monitor antisocial behaviour hotspot areas

Humberside Police commissioned a local company to develop a mobile IT application (app) called Visibeat, using Home Office funding. The app uses a data-driven hotspot approach to tackle crime and antisocial behaviour. A supervisor marks the hotspot area on a map, and the app then monitors and tracks all police activity and movement in the area. Humberside Police told us that it has 98 identified hotspot areas across the police force area.

Benefits of the app include helping the force to police known hotspots proactively. This in turn increases community reassurance through better police visibility. It allows the right resources to be directed to the right place. It also helps the force to analyse how police presence affects rates of antisocial behaviour and crime. This means the force can better analyse the effectiveness of preventative actions. The app can also automatically alert officers when they enter and leave hotspots. Notifications are sent when the nominated officer enters and leaves the area.

Phase two of the app is being planned and will link the activity data into other force data tools. This will improve managers' access to this information. The public will also be able to see what police activity has been carried out in their area.

Phase three will improve the processes personnel use in hotspot areas, such as completing stop and search forms. It will also allow managers to see officers' skills and qualifications, which will help in larger incidents and events.

The force's initial evaluation for the period December 2021 to March 2022 showed an increase in patrols of 1,718 hours in hotspot areas and an increased number of arrests and searches. The police recovered 40 weapons and seized 15 vehicles. Data within the hotspot areas showed a 39.6 percent year-on-year reduction in serious violent crime (compared to 36.1 percent in areas that didn't have the highly visible patrols).

Most forces are good at sharing antisocial behaviour data with partner organisations

A comprehensive approach to sharing data between the police and other relevant organisations allows a fuller understanding of antisocial behaviour problems. It also helps with problem-solving and learning from other activity and evaluations. Police forces are generally good at working with partners on antisocial behaviour and sharing data.

Forces can use section 115 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to promote information-sharing between partners to reduce crime and disorder. Partners also collect data that may be useful to police forces in tackling antisocial behaviour, such as details on problems reported to them rather than the police. It is important that this data is shared appropriately.

We found many good examples of data-sharing between forces and other organisations, including sharing data on incidents and problem-solving plans. Examples included IT systems that multiple organisations could access, and use of technologies such as Microsoft Teams to make it easier to update and discuss cases across and between organisations. Many forces had detailed information-sharing agreements to address legal and privacy issues.

Promising practice: Cumbria Constabulary uses Microsoft Teams to manage problem-solving and joint work to address antisocial behaviour

Cumbria Constabulary uses Microsoft Teams to share data about antisocial behaviour cases across many organisations. An update to Teams by one partner is visible to all who have access to that case.

In Cumbria, many organisations can make a referral about a problem or person to a central hub. The data is added to Teams, and each referral is assessed and scored. The scoring determines how quickly the partners will convene a case conference to discuss the referral and agree a response.

To manage this process, each case is assigned a tab on Teams, and all the tabs are represented on a planner. All relevant organisations can access the data that they need using this approach. All cases are recorded with detailed risk assessments and plans.

Objectives are clearly stated and relevant, and each plan uses a variety of information from partners and the police. After interventions have been made, there is a formal evaluation process. Lessons learned are shared within Teams.

Some forces had a strategic group that helped to co-ordinate partnership working where there were multiple local authorities and external partners. For example, Northumbria Police had a harm reduction and communities team. This was created to enhance the effectiveness of partnership working across the force. Team personnel attended all six local community safety partnerships. By operating in this way, the force believed it had increased the support from local authorities, and increased attendance and participation.

A joined-up approach to recording and using antisocial behaviour data helps forces to deal with the antisocial behaviour itself. And it also helps forces to tackle other serious crimes, and to divert potential victims and offenders before they become involved in more criminality. Some forces are good at using data in this way. For example, using

data to identify children who are at risk of being involved in antisocial behaviour can also help to identify children who may be at risk of sexual exploitation or of being exploited by organised criminal gangs.

> **Case study: Cumbria Constabulary works with partner organisations to collect antisocial behaviour data to identify trends, set local priorities and assess the outcomes of any interventions**
>
> Cumbria Constabulary collects internal and external antisocial behaviour data to identify and prioritise victims, and the locations and suspects involved, and to help manage risk.
>
> The constabulary has community intelligence analysts dedicated to working in one of six local focus hubs, whose role is to support neighbourhood police teams and external organisations. This team produces monthly reports containing police and partner data. Partner data includes that from local authorities, registered social landlords, and Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service. Neighbourhood teams also provide data from activities such as surveys and patrol-related activity. A monthly partnership meeting sets priorities based on the data in these reports.
>
> The police identify repeat, vulnerable and personally targeted antisocial behaviour victims at first point of contact and carry out an antisocial behaviour risk assessment. The assessment process determines the level of need and response, prioritising those who are at most risk.
>
> All neighbourhood teams have access to a wide range of data and reports. These allow closer analysis of crime and disorder, so the constabulary can identify trends, set local priorities and evaluate outcomes.

Some forces need to address IT issues that prevent them using data effectively

Forces need fit-for-purpose IT systems so that they can use data or share information with external organisations to tackle antisocial behaviour. During our inspections, we found some forces had difficulties sharing data with external organisations or didn't share any data. We were often told this was because of problems with IT systems.

One reason forces gave for IT problems was the short-term approach to police funding. Single-year budgets and wider funding pressures for the police and their partners meant complex IT projects weren't approved, particularly when multiple organisations were involved. In a few forces, we found that the systems used to record data weren't accessible to the right people, or lacked basic functionality such as a search tool. In one force, we found that only police personnel could access the system – key partner organisations didn't have access. But even this approach wasn't consistently applied across the whole force. In other forces, information was stored locally, only accessible to local personnel. This could prevent others, both

within and outside the force, from understanding risks and contributing to actions to solve problems.

Integrating IT systems across different organisations can be complex, but it is essential that police forces and partner organisations can access up-to-date, comprehensive and relevant information. Forces must address issues of IT incompatibility and access, and make sure that IT solutions are fit for purpose – both for the police and partner organisations. Not resolving these problems means they are less able to tackle antisocial behaviour.

Software tools, databases and apps can also be used to understand and tackle problems linked to antisocial behaviour. During our inspections, we found some positive examples of forces using these well.

Innovative practice: Humberside Police has developed a vulnerability tracker so it can produce up-to-date vulnerability demand reports and better tackle problems such as antisocial behaviour

Humberside Police has developed a vulnerability tracker, using Power BI. The system provides force personnel with up-to-date vulnerability demand data. This can be searched in several ways, including by type and location of vulnerability, victim type, violence, whether an incident occurred inside or outside the home, sex and ethnicity.

Information can be viewed by location to assess vulnerability at a local level, including times at which antisocial behaviour takes place. This information can be used to analyse the calls for service to both the police and partner organisations. The force uses this information to develop actions and problem-solving plans.

Promising practice: West Yorkshire uses an antisocial behaviour and vulnerability analytical tool called ASVAT to draw together force data on antisocial behaviour

West Yorkshire Police uses a tool called ASVAT (antisocial and vulnerability analytical tool) to manage its response to antisocial behaviour.

ASVAT was developed after the force became aware that some antisocial behaviour incidents "dropped through the cracks". The ASVAT tool draws incident data from force systems, particularly focusing on incidents flagged as nuisance, concern for safety, public order, antisocial behaviour, hate crimes and issues such as neighbours falling out (for example, boundary disputes). All other force systems that record incidents, crimes and intelligence are automatically linked to the ASVAT record related to a person or location.

This helps personnel to identify repeat victims, consider risk and harm across linked incidents, and create and record problem-solving approaches. The problem-solving approaches help to detail the problem, determine the response required and allocate actions to neighbourhood officers. Actions are recorded on the ASVAT tool and are available for others to learn from and adapt for similar situations in future.

This joined-up approach results from the ASVAT tool linking information from different sources within the force. The force can better understand antisocial behaviour themes and provide neighbourhood teams with the information they need to consider appropriate actions.

Problem-solving approaches

Problem-oriented policing is a structured approach to dealing with antisocial behaviour. The College of Policing describes problem-oriented policing as an approach that tackles crime and disorder through identifying a problem in detail, gathering data and analysing that data to understand the problem fully. Interventions and actions are developed and then assessed to see how well they addressed the problem.

The College of Policing has found that problem-oriented policing can have a small but meaningful effect on crime and disorder compared to no intervention or alternative approaches.

Problem-solving approaches can also reduce harm to the public and demands on public services by addressing issues quickly and effectively. The National Policing Prevention Strategy sets out how preventative policing should aim to reduce harm, offending and demand by addressing underlying causes and using partnership-oriented problem-solving.

A range of models are used to manage antisocial behaviour, but most forces and many partners use the SARA model. This model has four stages:

1. scanning – identifying and prioritising potential crime and antisocial behaviour issues;

2. analysis – gathering and analysing information and intelligence to identify the underlying causes;

3. response – developing and implementing tailored actions to try to address those causes; and

4. assessment – measuring the impact of the response, to see if it had the desired effect and make changes, if required.

In this chapter, we set out our findings on how well police forces use problem-solving approaches to tackle antisocial behaviour.

Most forces make good use of problem-solving to tackle antisocial behaviour

We were encouraged to find most forces were good at using problem-solving approaches to deal with recorded antisocial behaviour incidents. Many forces were making sure preventative policing becomes a core part of policing. This maximises the opportunities to prevent harm.

We found that some force managers and leaders encourage the use of problem-solving approaches through award schemes and recognising excellent work by individuals and teams. Senior leaders in some forces also contributed to training events to underline the importance of problem-solving policing.

Often, problem-solving involved joint meetings between police and other local organisations, supporting a co-ordinated approach. These were most effective when they used police and partner data to make decisions and assign the most appropriate organisation to lead on specific issues. In high-performing forces, partnerships worked well when a range of partners supported action, and the response was based on a clear understanding of the problem and detailed risk assessment.

We found several forces use an enhanced version of the model (OSARA) that sets out a clear objective at the start of the process that is then reviewed throughout. This extra step helped all partners to align their work to tackle antisocial behaviour with their organisations' goals.

During our inspections, we saw how a full understanding of a problem could help identify simple solutions. For example, a takeaway was asked to stop sharing its wi-fi password, which reduced antisocial behaviour from large groups of youths congregating nearby. Work with a pharmacy to change the frequency with which drug users received their methadone prescriptions reduced antisocial behaviour incidents. Removing undergrowth and installing CCTV in parks was another solution.

We also found good examples of where using data to inform problem-solving interventions made a real difference. For example, analysis of data showed that one location with many calls for service was a supermarket. Although the store employed security guards at certain times of the day, offenders became aware of this. Thefts and antisocial behaviour started to happen when the guards weren't on duty. The local neighbourhood police team worked with the store to reduce offending by varying the times when security guards were on duty, and by increasing the police presence. This simple but effective use of data successfully helped to reduce both crime and antisocial behaviour.

Case study: Lancashire Constabulary's Operation Blackrock started as a neighbourhood investigation into antisocial behaviour but quickly identified that criminal gangs were exploiting children

Burnley's neighbourhood police team in Lancashire Constabulary became aware of an increase in antisocial behaviour. Concerns were raised about young people causing damage and taking drugs, and residents said they were afraid to be in certain locations. In response, the constabulary set up Operation Blackrock.

The neighbourhood sergeant listened to community concerns. The sergeant worked with local youth services, the local MP, police special constables and cadets, and others to gather information to build a complete picture of the problem.

Around the same time, the constabulary received information from a local school about children who were involved in antisocial behaviour also being used by organised criminals to deal drugs. The police used various tactics, including searching the children's bedrooms with parental consent. These searches revealed details of the children's escalating use of cannabis, which had allowed criminals to exploit them. Throughout the operation, police and partners made sure that the children were treated as victims and not offenders.

Using the skills of all partners led to a fast response that reduced the risks to the young people being criminally exploited. The neighbourhood police team reported that the result was an increase in public confidence and community satisfaction because the antisocial behaviour was reduced, and several young people were kept safe. The main person in the organised criminal group supplying drugs was convicted and received a custodial sentence.

During our inspections, we saw examples where identifying antisocial behaviour had helped to uncover wider organised criminal activity. In one case, detailed problem-solving revealed that a shop near an area with high levels of antisocial behaviour was being used by organised criminals to distribute drugs. The antisocial behaviour was a symptom of wider criminal activity, and tackling the root cause would also help to address the antisocial behaviour problem. A covert operation successfully gathered evidence and, using the local authority's licensing powers, the shop was taken out of the criminals' control. The force made nine arrests for drugs offences.

In some forces, we saw neighbourhood police working effectively with other police teams on antisocial behaviour problem-solving plans to address other criminality and harm. For example, we were encouraged to see forces checking on children in domestic abuse cases linked to antisocial behaviour, to see if they would be better treated as victims than offenders. Forces also considered if children present at antisocial behaviour hotspots were at risk of exploitation. In some cases, forces arranged appropriate support from partner organisations to help protect them.

Case study: Lancashire Constabulary works with partner organisations to decide the most suitable lead organisation to address problems associated with antisocial behaviour

In Lancashire Constabulary, a joint approach to managing antisocial behaviour, using the objective, scanning, analysis, response, assessment (OSARA) process, identified an antisocial behaviour hotspot linked to a new takeaway restaurant. The antisocial behaviour at this location affected nearby businesses and caused significant disruption to a local transport hub. Analysis showed a 40.5 percent increase in antisocial behaviour incidents in the area. Two antisocial behaviour dispersal orders had been issued to try to address this.

Further investigation revealed that the owner of the takeaway was supplying children with illegal vapes. This activity had encouraged loitering, antisocial behaviour and widespread disruption.

The constabulary worked with the local community safety partnership to decide that the local council would be the lead organisation. The police gave the council the evidence it needed for a closure order on the premises. This closure helped reduce antisocial behaviour, but the same person returned to the area to sell vapes in the streets nearby. As a result of further targeted police patrols, the person was detained by police. His details were passed to Trading Standards for further investigation and enforcement action.

The constabulary has since received thanks from local business owners who had previously complained about a perceived lack of action. Analysis has shown a fall in antisocial behaviour incidents in this specific area.

During our inspections, we were encouraged to find that most forces are making use of evidence-based policing tactics, such as hotspot patrols, to reduce antisocial behaviour. Hotspots are areas with persistent and high levels of crime and/or antisocial behaviour. Using data, hotspot policing places police and partner resources in the right place at the right time to target appropriate actions and activities there. By focusing on a specific area, the police and partners can reduce antisocial behaviour as well as crime. Importantly, this visible police presence reassures communities that their issues and concerns about antisocial behaviour are being taken seriously.

Several forces are involved in trials of hotspot policing and immediate justice approaches, as laid out in the Government's 'Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan'. These tactics are expected to be rolled out across all forces in 2024. Early data from two hotspot trial forces indicates reported antisocial behaviour has been reduced by 60 percent in the hotspot areas, although further evaluation is needed.

Case study: South Yorkshire Police has a team that focuses on reducing nuisance, antisocial behaviour and crime associated with off-road motorbikes

South Yorkshire Police has a team of six full-time officers who carry out hotspot patrols to address antisocial behaviour involving off-road motorbikes. The force's area includes large open spaces and rural areas, which have significant problems with antisocial behaviour and criminality involving quad bikes, motorbikes and electric bikes.

The team focuses on reducing nuisance, antisocial behaviour and crime associated with off-road motorbikes and quad bikes in key locations. Officers target known offenders and locations to help reduce community concerns and provide reassurance to the public. They deter offenders with visible patrols and enforcement, and also work with people to help reduce offending. As well as rural areas, the team also tackles antisocial behaviour and crime in urban areas caused by gangs and people riding on pavements, riding without insurance and involved in other criminal activity and antisocial behaviour.

Between January and May 2024, the force seized assets worth nearly £50,000, including 8 quad bikes, and recovered 19 stolen vehicles. It made eight arrests. In 2023, it seized assets worth over £188,000, recovered stolen property worth £229,500, seized 1 quad bike, and made 12 arrests.

Some forces need to do more to make sure problem-solving is integral to tackling antisocial behaviour

Good problem-solving plans to tackle antisocial behaviour should clearly identify and prioritise actions by the police and partners. It is important that they aren't simply seen as a box-ticking exercise to be completed as part of a force policy. If leaders focus solely on compliance with a process, it can prevent problem-solving plans identifying the most effective way to solve a particular issue or vulnerability. In some cases, we found some problem-solving plans lacked detail. We also found that some forces were unable to explain in their plans what would be considered a successful result. Often, the plans weren't updated or evaluated, and had little meaningful direction from managers. How a problem-solving process is administered should never inhibit actual problem-solving activity.

All forces need to make sure their problem-solving governance processes are robust and help promote effective problem-solving.

Recommendation 4

By 31 December 2024, forces should:

- make sure all antisocial behaviour problem-solving plans fully specify the problem, contain sufficient detail, are effectively supervised; and

- evaluate all antisocial behaviour problem-solving plans for an outcome in line with National Police Chiefs' Council Neighbourhood Policing Outcome and Performance Guidelines.

Early interventions

Having a range of interventions to tackle antisocial behaviour is important because there are a range of behaviours that could be classified as antisocial. Sometimes, one simple intervention at the right time is all that is needed. But sometimes the problem is more complicated. The earlier a problem is identified and addressed, the more effective an intervention tends to be.

Early interventions can be cost-effective and help prevent community issues. They can divert people from antisocial behaviour, reduce harm and the likelihood of further offending, and prevent people becoming involved in other forms of criminality. People can sometimes act inappropriately without realising this is antisocial behaviour. Early interventions are also important for both victims and perpetrators. They begin a formal record of the antisocial behaviour intervention the police decide to carry out.

Early intervention includes providing advice and support, and issuing warning letters and acceptable behaviour contracts. It can also include more formal interventions, such as mediation and diversionary schemes and activities.

In this chapter, we set out our findings on how well police forces use early intervention approaches to deal with antisocial behaviour.

Many forces use early intervention approaches to prevent antisocial behaviour

We were encouraged to find that many forces were good at using informal interventions, such as words of advice, and more formal approaches, such as warning letters and diversionary activities, to intervene early to tackle antisocial behaviour. This can prevent reoffending and antisocial behaviour becoming a regular occurrence or spreading to other areas. We found some forces had invested in early intervention teams.

Better-performing forces provided personnel with clear guidance on interventions. This included the range of options available for both youth and adult offenders, and links to other relevant documents such as risk assessments.

We also found good examples of forces evaluating with partners what the anticipated result of interventions would be against what happened. One force told us that, in a local force area, only 8 percent of people issued with an antisocial behaviour warning letter came to the notice of the police again.

But in forces that didn't use early interventions, or hadn't told all personnel about them, we found antisocial behaviour and related issues became much more regular and serious.

Sometimes, breaking down barriers in communities can prevent people being criminalised. In West Yorkshire Police, analysis of antisocial behaviour and vulnerable people revealed issues between older and younger people. Part of the response included visits between students and care home residents. The police focused on how antisocial behaviour can affect individuals and compared this to something in the young people's lives, such as a family member of a similar age. School visits by police also helped to both build relationships with young people and reduce antisocial behaviour by explaining the impact of disruptive behaviours.

We found that many forces had initiatives that provided activities for young people to help prevent them being drawn into antisocial behaviour and criminality. These diversionary activities were usually carried out in partnership with other organisations and charities. They ranged from sporting events to boxing clubs, and from skateboarding competitions to painting murals.

Case study: Cumbria Constabulary's 'It's Your Choice' is an early intervention scheme for young people involved in antisocial behaviour

Cumbria Constabulary has an early intervention scheme called 'It's Your Choice'. This initiative addresses youth-related antisocial behaviour and is part of the constabulary's child-centred approach to children and young people. It recognises that involvement with the police can have a significant impact on children's lives, both in the short term and long term.

'It's Your Choice' has three intervention stages. At stage 1 (first incident), the constabulary sends a letter to the child's parents/guardian. If the incident is drug or alcohol-related, it makes a referral to a health specialist.

If another incident occurs within 90 days of stage 1, then stage 2 is implemented. Officers visit the family to discuss the behaviour. They help the family to identify sources of support, and inform the young person's school about the incident.

If a further incident occurs within 90 days of stage 2, then for stage 3 the constabulary refers the young person to Cumbria Youth Offending Service for support and other interventions. Cumbria Youth Offending Service completes an assessment to propose prevention work and consider the appropriateness of more formal interventions, such as an acceptable behaviour contract. These contracts involve the young person voluntarily agreeing to abide by the terms in the contract and to work with support organisations.

Promising practice: South Yorkshire Police works with the Lifewise Centre to hold safety training for 10–11-year-olds that covers antisocial behaviour

The Lifewise Centre in South Yorkshire is home to the Joint Community Safety Department of South Yorkshire Police, South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue, and the South Yorkshire Safer Roads Partnership. It is an interactive safety centre that provides training in a realistic setting. The centre works with schools and other organisations or groups working with vulnerable people. It aims to reduce the future risk of victimisation and criminalisation.

The centre has several mocked-up full-scale street scenes that can be used when providing safety training and carrying out other community work. The centre runs Crucial Crew training, which South Yorkshire Police carries out with key safety partners, such as the local fire service and First Bus. This is age-appropriate training on subjects such as the criminal exploitation of children, hate crime, knife crime and antisocial behaviour. Training topics change and are designed and implemented in response to both local and national emerging trends.

The Crucial Crew programme targets young people in year 6 (10–11-year-olds) and provides the sessions as an early intervention. The force gives this training to about 15,500 pupils annually, which represents about 98 percent of primary school students in South Yorkshire.

The Lifewise Centre provides an effective early intervention approach that equips young people with the skills required to protect themselves from vulnerability, victimisation and criminalisation. The specific skills taught through Crucial Crew help young people to recognise and remove themselves from risky behaviours.

Promising practice: Dyfed-Powys Police is involved in the INTACT initiative, which combines early interventions and diversionary activities to help reduce crime and antisocial behaviour

Dyfed-Powys Police is part of the INTACT initiative, which is designed to provide an early intervention and prevention service to protect those most at risk of serious violence and organised crime, whether as victims or offenders.

The force has 11 police community support officers and a central co-ordinator in place, working across the force area to assess risks and put measures in place to reduce offending. INTACT also helps to reduce antisocial behaviour by offering young people diversionary activities, such as boxing. Combining early and diversionary interventions aims to improve the life choices for the families, children and young people involved. It also aims to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour and the associated demand on the police and other services.

The force told us that, as at June 2023, more than 600 children, young people and vulnerable adults had taken part in targeted interventions. Seventy-two percent of people hadn't had any further police contact three months after the intervention. The force estimates that the programme saves public services around £9,000 per individual taking part in targeted inventions.

Promising practice: Merseyside Police's 'Turning the Tables' programme provides activities that help young people to develop life skills and avoid crime and antisocial behaviour

Merseyside Police's 'Turning the Tables of Sefton's Young People' programme is a six-week intervention led by officers from Sefton's community engagement team. They work with an external training company to help support young people and divert them from being exploited or drawn into crime and antisocial behaviour.

One intervention involved more than 20 students taking part in an innovative DJ and music course, funded using money seized through Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 legislation. In 2022, two groups of students, assessed as being at increased risk of criminal exploitation, took the course and were given practical DJ lessons, as well as computer-based teaching that showed them how to create their own music. The course helped the students take part in education in a positive way, to support them to fulfil their potential and divert them from antisocial behaviour, crime or violence.

There are plans for a hair and makeup course, aimed at 14–16-year-old girls at risk of sexual exploitation. Girls will receive their own hair and makeup kits, attend lessons over 13 weeks and take part in a makeup masterclass from a popular makeup artist in Merseyside.

The force has also recently run a football tournament for 120 young women aged between 15 and 18 from areas where diversionary activities would have the biggest impact. This initiative aimed to help deter these young women from crime and help them to develop important life skills.

Use of statutory powers

When early intervention fails to stop antisocial behaviour, there are several statutory powers and legal orders that the police and partners can use. These statutory powers can be applied to people, places or businesses as needed, and include:

- community protection warnings;
- Community Protection Notices;
- Criminal Behaviour Orders;
- injunctions;
- dispersal powers (sections 34 and 35 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014);
- civil injunctions;
- closure notices, partial closure orders and full closure orders; and
- public spaces protection orders.

Whichever intervention is used, it is essential that the victim is at the centre of the process, and that they are supported. Research into antisocial behaviour has highlighted gaps in knowledge and understanding among all those involved in tackling antisocial behaviour. There are significant variations in how police forces and partners manage antisocial behaviour, and in how and when they use different interventions.

In this chapter, we report our findings on how well police forces use statutory powers and legal orders to tackle antisocial behaviour.

Forces generally use statutory antisocial behaviour powers well to address antisocial behaviour

We found several examples of where statutory powers had been used well to address antisocial behaviour, with police working with partners to identify the most appropriate intervention. This included identifying support from other organisations and local businesses to deal with the root causes of antisocial behaviour.

Statutory powers can be aimed at people or places. For example, community protection warnings and Community Protection Notices are used to stop a person continuing with behaviour that affects the community or a business unacceptably, such as aggressive begging. Public spaces protection orders can be used to target a location affected by particular behaviours, such as large-scale outdoor parties in the

street, inappropriate disposal of rubbish and household waste, and people drinking alcohol and using psychoactive substances in public spaces. Forces can use hearsay evidence to support the public in obtaining these orders if people are afraid of the repercussions of applying for them.

Case study: Cumbria Constabulary's Community Alcohol Partnership aims to use all powers available to tackle underage street drinking and alcohol-related antisocial behaviour

Cumbria Constabulary is part of a Community Alcohol Partnership to tackle underage street drinking and alcohol-related antisocial behaviour. Several incidents linked to drink and drug use in Whitehaven town centre had been reported, and local businesses and residents' quality of life were being affected. The police, council and local housing associations used all the tools available to tackle the problems. These included housing injunctions and evictions, a Public Spaces Protection Order banning street drinking, and increased police patrol activity. Police warrants and Criminal Behaviour Orders were also used, where appropriate.

Some early interventions and quick solutions resulted in improvements, but it took 18 months to put all the measures in place. The constabulary told us that, after all the measures were introduced, there were very few antisocial behaviour incidents. During this operation, the neighbourhood police team gathered 111 pieces of evidence, which led to 35 arrests for various offences. They carried out 53 stop and searches, issued 17 warrants and seized 16 vehicles. The courts issued 11 civil injunctions after the largest housing provider involved made applications.

Case study: Gloucestershire Constabulary and its partners have targeted alcohol-related antisocial behaviour in Gloucester and enforced a no alcohol Public Spaces Protection Order

Gloucestershire Constabulary and partner organisations have successfully addressed city centre drinking and related antisocial behaviour. In August and September 2023, the police, city council, Solace (a police and city and borough councils partnership to tackle antisocial behaviour) and city protection officers targeted alcohol-related antisocial behaviour and breaches of the Public Spaces Protection Order banning people from drinking alcohol in particular public spaces in the city.

Members of the public and local businesses had raised concerns about the problems caused by city centre drinking and antisocial behaviour. An operation was set up to address these problems. The constabulary didn't divert neighbourhood officers to carry out other duties, so officers could focus on supporting partners with this operation. The police and their partners increased their visibility and work with the community, and also proactively enforced the ban in the city.

Using the powers under the protection order, police officers, police community support officers, city protection officers and designated council officers enforced a zero-tolerance approach. The team worked with people who breached the protection order, seized alcohol and, where required, made referrals to support organisations, including housing and substance misuse support.

The constabulary told us that in the two-month period of the operation, the team made 1,302 offers of support and seized 563 containers of alcohol. During this time, the Solace antisocial behaviour team also obtained several injunctions against people who continued with their negative behaviours. These injunctions helped to manage the behaviours of the worst offenders where other attempts at intervention had failed.

There has been an overwhelmingly positive response to this operation from the community, businesses and partners. The seized alcohol has now been handed over to a local charity to be turned into artwork.

During our inspections, we saw good use of full and partial Closure Orders, which prevent access to premises that are (or are likely to be) used for antisocial behaviour. Forces used these orders to address persistent and highly disruptive antisocial behaviour and crime. They were used to protect some of the most vulnerable within communities and to provide respite from antisocial behaviour while police and partners worked together to introduce longer-term measures. Such orders are often used to address serious harms; for example, to ban offenders who have taken over victims' homes from entering these properties, and in some other cases to tackle domestic violence.

Many forces also made effective use of dispersal orders to reduce antisocial behaviour in town and city centres. These orders can be used to break up groups of people who may be causing nuisance, harassment or distress.

We also saw examples where forces had used Criminal Behaviour Orders to tackle antisocial behaviour. These orders are available on conviction for a criminal offence and are designed to prevent recurrence of criminal or antisocial behaviour. Often we found forces applied for these orders for retail crime offences.

Case study: Kent Police uses Criminal Behaviour Orders to prevent antisocial behaviour

Kent Police successfully applied for a Criminal Behaviour Order on an individual who was repeatedly racially abusing a shopkeeper who refused to serve him alcohol. He was also regularly intimidating members of the public, including shouting and swearing at them. After police applied for an order, the court prohibited the person from going within a defined area inside the city for a period of two years. If he breached the order, it would mean further court sanctions.

Case study: West Yorkshire Police uses antisocial behaviour injunctions to deal with people riding bikes in an antisocial manner, and to address violent crime

In Leeds, West Yorkshire Police has used antisocial behaviour injunctions to deal with people who repeatedly ride bikes, such as motorbikes and mopeds, in an antisocial way. Specific conditions were imposed, preventing serial antisocial behaviour offenders from associating with each other, gathering in certain locations or using bikes. The force's antisocial behaviour team also worked with the housing providers of offenders who breached the injunction. These offenders and their families faced possible actions affecting their tenancies.

The force recognised that catching offenders in the act of riding in an antisocial manner is dangerous and difficult to prove. In response, it adopted this wider problem-solving approach to using antisocial behaviour legislation in a more flexible way.

The force has also used injunctions to tackle more serious offences, such as knife crime. For example, a court granted injunctions after officers received intelligence that a gang member's funeral was likely to result in serious violence. The injunctions were used to stop four known members of an urban street gang from associating with each other, wearing face coverings, carrying knives and attending a designated area.

We encourage forces to continue to invest time and resources in using statutory powers appropriately to tackle repeat and persistent antisocial behaviour offenders.

Forces don't always record the use of statutory powers

There is no data collection requirement on the use of antisocial behaviour powers. This means how forces record data on the use of statutory orders is inconsistent. This makes it more difficult to see how well these powers are used across all forces, and which forces are using which powers in which circumstances.

We found some forces didn't always record or consider the effects of their use of statutory powers, or their referrals to other organisations, or even their own actions beyond simply noting a reduction in calls for service. Poor recording of the use of orders can make it harder to identify repeat victims and locations, or to learn from similar incidents.

At the time of writing this report, there were proposed amendments in the Criminal Justice Bill 2023. These would introduce a requirement to record the number of antisocial behaviour incidents reported, their type and where they occur, and the number of antisocial behaviour case reviews and their outcomes. But this falls short of recording the use of each formal antisocial behaviour power.

Recommendation 5

By 31 October 2024, the Home Office should develop a set of requirements for a process to collect force data on the use of statutory antisocial behaviour powers for consideration by the Home Office Policing Data Requirement Group.

Recommendation 6

By 30 April 2025, if the set of requirements for a process to collect force data on the use of statutory antisocial behaviour powers is approved by the Home Office Policing Data Requirement Group, and subject to ministerial approval, the Home Office, in collaboration with the National Police Chiefs' Council, should pilot the collection and analysis of data on the use of statutory antisocial behaviour powers on a voluntary basis.

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By 30 April 2026, subject to the outcome of the pilot of the collection and analysis of data on the use of statutory antisocial behaviour powers, the Home Office should roll out a mandatory process for collecting, analysing and publishing data on the use of statutory antisocial behaviour powers for all forces.

Use of police resources to tackle antisocial behaviour

Longer-term problem-solving to reduce antisocial behaviour requires a deep knowledge of the local area and the attention of personnel who are comprehensively trained with the right skills and knowledge.

Sufficiently resourced and trained neighbourhood police teams are well positioned to develop effective problem-solving approaches to antisocial behaviour, and to see whether interventions have been effective.

In this chapter, we set out our findings on how well police forces use their resources to tackle antisocial behaviour.

Forces are recognising that continuity within neighbourhood police teams helps tackle antisocial behaviour

In our 2023 PEEL spotlight report 'Police performance: Getting a grip', we noted that in most forces there was a tendency to remove neighbourhood officers from their usual duties to deal with emergency response incidents. This is called abstraction. Taking neighbourhood officers away from their role routinely can make it difficult for neighbourhood teams to problem-solve and tackle antisocial behaviour.

During our inspections, we were pleased to see several forces had invested in resources dedicated to addressing community issues, including antisocial behaviour. Many other forces had protected their neighbourhood teams from being used for other police roles, other than in exceptional circumstances.

We were also encouraged to find several forces that recognised having continuity of the same personnel within neighbourhood police teams is important to maintain a deep understanding of the community. It takes time to build trust and confidence within communities – especially those who may not be so confident to talk about or formally report antisocial behaviour. Building understanding and relationships with specific groups within communities makes it easier to address issues such as youth antisocial behaviour. This helps with the flow of information between the police and the public. It also takes time to develop good working relationships with other partners who work to solve antisocial behaviour.

Case study: South Yorkshire Police has three antisocial behaviour support officers who make sure applications for court orders contain all available information and problem-solving plans are updated

In Rotherham, three antisocial behaviour support officers are the leads for the use of statutory powers such as Criminal Behaviour Orders and Community Protection Notices. Once assigned by the police and partners, the officers gather evidence, including taking additional statements to prove the elements of the order being applied for, and create the application. This means there is a consistent approach. It also helps to make sure opportunities to gain orders aren't missed because of poor pre-court file preparation, which had happened previously. They update problem-solving plans with activities and details of the orders obtained.

These officers also work with other organisations that are the leads for other antisocial behaviour powers, such as Public Spaces Protection Orders for banning drinking in public. These are council-led but enforced by police.

Other forces had a considered approach that allows them to distribute personnel across the force area as needed, while still maintaining a local focus. Some forces had adjusted their shift patterns to periods with high calls for service, such as during the university term.

Better-performing forces had a comprehensive policy for when to allocate neighbourhood personnel crimes to investigate. For example, one force told us that antisocial behaviour officers were never taken away from their core role, and another force said that antisocial behaviour was the priority of local police community support officers. These policies were clear about the role of neighbourhood teams and when it was appropriate for them to be allocated crimes for investigation. This is a sensible approach that allows the neighbourhood teams to use their deep local knowledge and contacts, without allocating them investigative work that could be better dealt with by others. We were encouraged to see forces making efforts to recruit volunteers and special constables to support local policing.

But we also found examples where this type of policy existed but wasn't followed, and incidents were sometimes allocated to neighbourhood teams for investigation as a quick fix. These included incidents where the complexity and type of crime wasn't appropriate for neighbourhood teams. And in other forces, we found a clear approach of diverting personnel involved with tackling antisocial behaviour to other priorities, resulting in missed opportunities for early intervention and problem-solving.

We found abstractions and unfilled vacancies in neighbourhood teams in underperforming forces. In one force, we heard that this meant intelligence on antisocial behaviour couldn't be dealt with. The lack of resources also meant that

longer-term proactive problem-solving was limited and there was a tendency to react only to short-term issues.

We urge all forces to protect and invest in their neighbourhood police teams, because they are essential for tackling antisocial behaviour.

Specialist antisocial behaviour advisers can help make effective use of antisocial behaviour powers

Decisions about the range of legal powers and orders available to tackle antisocial behaviour, when to use them and which agency is best placed to use a particular power aren't always straightforward. This is why it can be very beneficial for forces to have experts who personnel can consult.

We found several forces with individual experts or teams who had specialist knowledge on antisocial behaviour powers and legislation. Lancashire Constabulary actively monitored and evaluated the use of civil orders. This helped it to make sure they were being used effectively and proportionately. Many forces relied more on the knowledge within individual teams rather than having this expertise available specifically.

High-performing forces in our inspections understood the various legal powers available to them, used them appropriately, and provided access to specialist and legal support. Personnel in forces that didn't use powers well described a key constraint being a lack of specialist support. In one force, we found inconsistencies in the use of formal protection orders and that police personnel lacked understanding about when to use the different types of orders.

Ongoing expertise and support should be provided to personnel applying for these orders. Forces should also make sure that when powers are applied for through the courts, the most appropriate officers or staff are present to support the application.

We would encourage all forces to make sure enough expert support and advice are available to frontline personnel so they can apply antisocial behaviour legislation effectively. Where this expertise is available, we found forces deal with antisocial behaviour in a more efficient way, leading to better results for victims and communities who are affected by it.

Police training on antisocial behaviour is inconsistent

It is essential for the effective handling of antisocial behaviour that police forces provide comprehensive training. Without high-quality training, personnel can't be expected to understand what antisocial behaviour is, how it links to other crime, the harm it can cause and the available interventions. Training needs to equip police personnel to deal with the complexities of antisocial behaviour effectively.

We found a mixed picture with regard to training and awareness of antisocial behaviour issues, powers and tactics. In some forces, training was poor or outdated, with officers and staff stating that they hadn't received training at all, or not for a significant period. In other forces, neighbourhood officers told us that they had never received training on antisocial behaviour and lacked confidence in their powers. One officer with specific responsibility for antisocial behaviour told us that they were trying to learn on the job, but it was complicated and difficult to understand. Given the scale of antisocial behaviour and the harm it causes, this is simply not good enough.

We found better-performing forces made sure neighbourhood teams received adequate training. They provided comprehensive training on neighbourhood issues, including antisocial behaviour, to student officers as well as non-neighbourhood personnel. This included training crime investigators on the effective use of closure orders, and call handlers in police force control rooms on identifying antisocial behaviour and associated crime issues. These forces included partners in their training and shared good practice examples from the force, the College of Policing and elsewhere. In these forces, personnel felt that they received the right amount of training to do their job. Neighbourhood policing was seen as a good place to work for career progression and development. And antisocial behaviour wasn't seen as solely the preserve of local policing teams.

High-performing forces also made sure that training was updated when there were changes to legislation or guidance, and included details of where to go for advice and guidance. For example, South Yorkshire Police made good use of one-page guides on working practices in neighbourhoods, and booklets explaining the powers of police community support officers to tackle a range of issues, including antisocial behaviour.

We were encouraged to see that many forces were professionalising their neighbourhood police teams and offering relevant qualifications. For example, in Northamptonshire Police, at the time of our inspection, the local university had agreed to provide a level 4 certificate in problem-solving and community engagement. The force was planning for this to be for 36 neighbourhood police officers and police community support officers in the first instance, so that all 34 area teams would have someone who has completed this training. In South Yorkshire Police, all the personnel responsible for working with partners to design out crime were qualified to diploma level to make sure they gave professional advice and guidance.

We were pleased that some forces had assessed themselves against the College of Policing neighbourhood policing framework, or used it for advice or as part of their training approach. This helps forces to make sure they consistently apply the knowledge and skills needed to provide effective evidenced-based neighbourhood policing.

But disappointingly, many forces appear slow to adopt the College of Policing's toolkits and guidance on antisocial behaviour. Other resources, such as the College of Policing's What Works Centre for Crime Reduction and smarter practice as well as the

Youth Endowment Fund's Toolkit, are also available. We would urge all forces to make these resources available so that personnel understand what works and when to use certain powers and approaches.

The College of Policing is piloting the new neighbourhood policing programme in 11 forces from June 2024. The pilot phase will include three modules, one of which is antisocial behaviour. The College will evaluate the programme in 2025, before rolling it out across all forces. We will be interested to see the results of the pilot programme.

Recommendation 8

By 30 September 2025, forces should give all neighbourhood policing teams antisocial behaviour training that makes best use of the College of Policing's antisocial behaviour guidance and resources.

Promising practice: West Midlands Police has an internal website that holds comprehensive information about antisocial behaviour, relevant legislation and local authority case review processes

West Midlands Police's internal website shows the force's commitment to tackling antisocial behaviour. The site provides a comprehensive source of antisocial behaviour information. The home page describes the history of developments in antisocial behaviour and explains the Fiona Pilkington case.

The website includes information about the powers available to tackle antisocial behaviour, along with definitions, force policies on attendance and incident processes, and tactical options based on academic research.

Personnel can refer to 'go to' guides on antisocial behaviour that cover powers, legislation, and Community Protection Warnings and Community Protection Notices. There is detailed guidance on the use of dispersal orders. The site has links to the antisocial behaviour case review process for each of the seven local authorities in the force area, and contact details for the force's antisocial behaviour co-ordinators.

The force uses feedback to continue to refine the website's content, including from antisocial behaviour co-ordinators.

We were encouraged to see some forces working with other police forces in their region to peer review their approaches to issues such as problem-solving. This widens the pool of good practice and opportunities for learning. In one force, we saw an example of adopting a good practice approach from a neighbouring force to successfully tackle antisocial behaviour related to street drinking. Some police forces had a regional co-ordination approach to antisocial behaviour that makes sure information and advice can be shared.

Many forces share resources with other organisations to deal with antisocial behaviour

Given the range and scale of antisocial behaviour – from neighbour disputes to littering to street drinking and more – a range of organisations need to work together to find sustainable solutions. Joint working also helps make the best use of people and resources from a range of organisations, and prevents duplication of work.

During our inspections, we found that many forces were working effectively with external organisations to improve the management of risk and the effectiveness of interventions.

In some cases, sharing resources includes sharing funding to address antisocial behaviour issues. This has been affected by the need for savings across the public sector, which may lead to fewer opportunities for multi-agency working. One force told us that, due to funding problems, a local authority was simply trying to hand over its responsibilities to the police. In another force, we heard that some local authorities were supportive of the use of injunctions to address antisocial behaviour, but others objected to applying for injunctions because of the costs. Such differences between local authorities will undoubtedly reduce effective problem-solving and lead to a postcode lottery in both problem-solving and support for victims.

Promising practice: Dorset Police's Operation Luscombe is a partnership approach to addressing antisocial behaviour linked to homelessness

Operation Luscombe is a nationally recognised problem-solving approach to providing early interventions and immediate help for people experiencing longstanding homelessness and the antisocial behaviour linked to it.

It is an integrated partnership approach that includes the police, housing organisations, local authorities, drug and alcohol teams, and local charities. People who are homeless are provided with a contact person who works closely with them. This contact person can escalate and accelerate solutions for different needs. If the person who is homeless and involved in antisocial behaviour refuses to take part, other processes are followed, and enforcement action can be taken.

In Dorset, all partners meet weekly to assess progress and any opportunities to keep people out of the criminal justice system. Dorset Police's evaluation of this initiative found a 30 percent drop in reports of nuisance antisocial behaviour. Hotspot mapping has shown that there have been some slight shifts of the problem to other areas, but these are uncommon.

Promising practice: Derbyshire Constabulary supports Derby City's MARSH project with the homeless to help tackle antisocial behaviour

Derbyshire Constabulary works with the local authority as part of the MARSH project in Derby to safeguard and help people who are homeless to move on from the streets. The constabulary provides personnel to support the project's work, supporting people who are homeless and are vulnerable to, or take part in, antisocial behaviour.

The police carry out joint patrols with project staff to find people who are homeless. If people don't wish to accept the help offered, the police and local authority then take follow-up patrols and actions. Further action includes Criminal Behaviour Orders and Public Spaces Protection Orders, where justified, to prevent antisocial behaviour and crime.

During our inspections, we found examples of joint training and co-location of antisocial behaviour teams from multiple organisations. These included local authorities, housing associations and fire and rescue personnel. When working well, this approach increased the ability to share information, learn from each other and provide an improved service to the community.

Case study: Cumbria Constabulary and partner organisations are working together through Copeland Hub to address antisocial behaviour

The coastal borough of Copeland, in western Cumbria, has had a multi-agency local focus hub in place since November 2016. The hub was initially funded by the Office of the Cumbria Police and Crime Commissioner.

Copeland Hub aims to help organisations, including the police, to work together to deal with issues including antisocial behaviour, low-level crime and criminal damage, where a multi-agency response would be effective. The Hub is based in Whitehaven police station. Key partners are Copeland Borough Council, which employs the Hub manager, and Cumbria Constabulary, which provides a police constable who is Hub co-ordinator, two police constables who work as problem-solvers, and a Hub police community support officer. Other partners include local housing providers, district council teams such as environmental health, housing and licensing, Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service, NHS organisations and Cumbria County Council. Voluntary sector partners include Age UK, mental health groups, and drug and alcohol services.

Each organisation agrees preventative action to help reduce antisocial behaviour and crime, working with schools and the voluntary and community sector on projects aimed at developing good citizenship.

Any partner organisation can refer to the Hub an incident or issue that would benefit from a partnership approach. By pooling local knowledge and expertise, patterns can be identified quickly. Any response can then bring partners together to provide effective early intervention.

There are now six local focus hubs across the constabulary area.

Evaluating outcomes of antisocial behaviour interventions

Police forces need to understand what interventions have worked to reduce risk and prevent further antisocial behaviour. Without this evaluation, they and other organisations won't learn and improve. Effective evaluation is a key element of the scanning, analysis, response, assessment (SARA) problem-solving approach. It is essential to organisational learning, effective use of scarce resources, and dealing with antisocial behaviour in the best way possible.

In this chapter, we set out our findings on how well police forces evaluate the effectiveness of antisocial behaviour interventions.

Some forces need to improve how they evaluate outcomes

During our inspections, we found examples of forces evaluating the anticipated result of interventions against the actual result. This evaluation was then shared with partner organisations to improve future interventions.

Some forces use feedback from community surveys to assess if police interventions have improved public perceptions of safety, trust and confidence. Other forces made good use of perception surveys to give local people the opportunity to write to the police anonymously.

But too often we found that the evaluation phase of problem-solving – to see if interventions had worked and how learning is shared between teams – was inconsistent or missing entirely. For example, in one force, we heard it didn't know if what it was doing worked, and that poor data quality was affecting the force's ability to manage its work to tackle antisocial behaviour effectively.

Evaluation is only effective if it is carried out on the right priorities and correctly identifies problems. Some local neighbourhood teams couldn't show how they gathered or recorded local data from their communities to support local priority-setting. In one force, we heard that neighbourhood team activity was more focused on force priorities than issues raised by the community. In some forces, there was little up-to-date information on force websites to explain how the public could get involved or give their views on issues that affected them or their community. The views of the public are important in assessing the effectiveness of antisocial behaviour approaches, and getting information from the public helps to assess outcomes.

Some forces had worked to improve their understanding of the economic analysis of antisocial behaviour interventions. Benefits included reduced calls for service and improvements for the community and local businesses. These forces often worked with external experts to help identify and measure benefits. We were pleased to find many police forces worked with academics to try to get a better understanding of antisocial behaviour and what worked in addressing it. We would encourage police forces to make use of academic research opportunities to better understand the prevalence of antisocial behaviour, and how it can be addressed effectively.

> **Promising practice: South Yorkshire Police is taking part in University of Sheffield research into light levels and fear of crime**
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> South Yorkshire Police's evidence-based practice board is working with the University of Sheffield on a project comparing light levels and perceived safety and fear of crime.
>
> The research aims to support the street-lighting strategies the force has proposed in order to help reduce crime and antisocial behaviour. The results of the research will help to inform work with local authorities when they are considering replacing street lighting, with regard to the amount of lighting and specific lighting times.

The antisocial behaviour case review (previously known as the community trigger) was introduced in 2014. It gives victims the opportunity to request a case review if they feel that the antisocial behaviour affecting them hasn't been addressed properly. The threshold to qualify for a review is set no higher than three qualifying antisocial behaviour complaints in six months, but this can be set at a lower level locally and so can vary greatly. If the local threshold is met, a case review meeting is held that involves the police, local authority, NHS and social housing providers (and potentially other organisations) to agree recommendations and an action plan to address the antisocial behaviour. But concerns have been raised – for example, by ASB Help and in academic research – about the effectiveness of the case review process.

It is important to note that police forces are often not the lead for reviews, but are participants. During our inspections, we found that several forces had processes to help them learn from these case reviews, working with partners to address problems and propose solutions. In one force, we heard that when a case review was activated, the partnership working group was effective, and a specialist problem-solving adviser helped the partners generate problem-solving ideas to resolve the problem.

Case study: Hertfordshire Constabulary and partner organisations used the antisocial behaviour case review process to identify improvements

Hertfordshire Constabulary was involved in dealing with a dispute between rival groups in a residential community. The antisocial behaviour case review process was triggered after several formal complaints.

As a result of the review, further analysis of constabulary and partner data identified the key antisocial behaviour hotspots. It also revealed which days and times had the most antisocial behaviour or crime reports. The constabulary planned increased patrols around these times and places. After joint work between the police and the local housing association, several people were served with formal orders.

To resolve the problem in the longer term, a community mediation project was set up. Residents were encouraged to share their views and to listen to other people's concerns. The local ward officer was directly involved in the mediation project because of complaints about the police. As a result, one resident directly involved in antisocial behaviour reports agreed with the housing association to move to a new home. This defused the situation, and crime reports and antisocial behaviour reduced.

The police and partners reviewed how the case review process had worked. They agreed to change the process, and to include using the scanning, analysis, response, assessment (SARA) model to decide what actions are needed to resolve antisocial behaviour.

In many forces, we found processes to administer antisocial behaviour case reviews, including structured processes to audit and record them. But too often we found little or no evidence of the force learning from a review, understanding the impact on the public who had triggered a review, or evaluating the effectiveness of the actions that resulted from a review.

For the antisocial behaviour case review process to be a success, it is important that the public know about it, and that police learn from it. But in our inspections, we found only some forces had clear links to the case review process on their websites, with explanations of what it is and how to access it.

Overall, we are disappointed to find that the antisocial behaviour case review process appears to be underused and, where it is used, it isn't used consistently. During our inspections, we also found limited evaluation of the process. Police forces should deal with antisocial behaviour effectively when they first receive a report of it. But the antisocial behaviour case review process is essential to allow victims to be heard and make sure police forces address mistakes when they happen.

Case study: Dyfed-Powys Police has taken the ASB Help Pledge to make sure victims of persistent antisocial behaviour know they can request an antisocial behaviour case review

Dyfed-Powys Police was the first force in Wales to take the ASB [antisocial behaviour] Help Pledge. The Pledge encourages statutory agencies – including the police and registered providers of housing in England and Wales – to promote the use of the antisocial behaviour case review process (previously known as the community trigger).

Taking the Pledge shows a clear commitment to victims of antisocial behaviour.

The charity ASB Help described Dyfed-Powys Police as exceptional in how it had embraced the tools and powers of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

The force believes that the Pledge has helped it to standardise its service across the force, and its work with all relevant local authorities. It has also helped to raise awareness of victims' rights and the antisocial behaviour case review process. Now, all victims of antisocial behaviour can attend a review and can provide a victim impact statement.

Conclusion

This spotlight report focuses on the prevalence and harmful nature of antisocial behaviour and the importance of an effective police and partnership response to it.

We found some forces had invested in tackling antisocial behaviour, through good use of data, training, effective problem-solving with partners, and dedicated teams. But too many forces have neglected this important area of policing.

These forces need to do better, to help build safer, stronger communities.

Police forces should:

- collect the right data on antisocial behaviour and work with other organisations to share and understand their data;

- identify and record antisocial behaviour appropriately, including when it involves or is connected to crime;

- make sure they have enough suitably experienced personnel to analyse antisocial behaviour data and to provide expert guidance on tactics and legal powers to address antisocial behaviour, in partnership with other organisations such as local authorities when appropriate;

- use problem-solving approaches and plan interventions with other organisations that address the root causes of antisocial behaviour;

- make sure neighbourhood police teams remain focused on local issues, including antisocial behaviour, and aren't diverted from their main duties to carry out other work;

- make sure all relevant personnel receive appropriate training on antisocial behaviour and problem-solving approaches;

- record the use of formal and informal interventions, and assess how well interventions have worked, so that forces and other organisations can learn from previous experience; and

- make sure the public can access the antisocial behaviour case review process and that this process is effective.

We will continue to focus on antisocial behaviour in our police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy (PEEL) inspections. We will also be monitoring progress against the recommendations we make in this report.

List of recommendations

Recommendation 1

By 31 March 2025, forces should review their processes for recording antisocial behaviour to make sure all antisocial behaviour and associated crime are recorded correctly.

Recommendation 2

By 30 September 2025, forces should make sure personnel are appropriately trained to identify and record antisocial behaviour and associated crime when they are first reported.

Recommendation 3

By 31 March 2025, forces should:

- review their risk assessment processes for antisocial behaviour cases to make sure that risks are properly assessed from initial contact to case closure; and

- make sure completed risk assessments are retained in line with management of police information guidelines.

Recommendation 4

By 31 December 2024, forces should:

- make sure all antisocial behaviour problem-solving plans fully specify the problem, contain sufficient detail, are effectively supervised; and

- evaluate all antisocial behaviour problem-solving plans for an outcome in line with National Police Chiefs' Council Neighbourhood Policing Outcome and Performance Guidelines.

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