

The Work of the ASB Panel – Overviews and Detail

What is the ASB Panel and what does it do ?

The Anti-Social Behaviour Panel is a multi-agency consultative body which has met monthly since July 2001 . The Panel's function is to reduce the incidence of anti-social behaviour within the borough by focusing on the activities of individual offenders, usually in residential neighbourhoods.

The ASB Panel includes representatives from

- The Police
- Initial Response Team
- Housing Dept
- Youth Offending Team
- Education Welfare
- Richmond Mental Health Team
- Richmond Housing Partnership
- Richmond Churches Housing Trust
- Other Social Landlords attend sometimes.

People who have engaged in anti-social behaviour are referred to the Panel where their backgrounds and actions are examined. In appropriate cases an intercession is made to curb their behaviour.

Forms of intercession include

- Anti-Social Behaviour Order
- Acceptable Behaviour Contract
- Eviction from Tenancy

People recently referred to the Panel included

- Male, 15 years, for late night drinking and verbal abuse.
- Two males, both 20 years, for riding scooters off-road.
- Male, 21 years, for playing loud music in flat and drunken abuse of neighbours.
- Female, 36 years, for playing loud music and holding chaotic drunken parties in her flat.
- Male, 13 years, for graffiti.
- Two males, both 12 years, for bullying a girl from a neighbouring family.
- Married couple, aged 28 and 32, for verbal aggression towards neighbours.

Since 2001 a total of 298 referrals have been made to the Panel. During the 24 months ending December 2007, when a total of 114 such referrals were made :

- 65 referrals came from the police
- 21 from RHP
- 7 from RCHT
- Remaining 21 made by other RSL's.



How often are ASBO's and ABC's imposed by the Panel and how effective are they?

- An ASBO (or Anti-Social Behaviour Order) can only be made by a court which must find that a person has behaved anti-socially and that an ASBO is necessary to protect others from similar behaviour in the future.
- An ASBO may be imposed following a criminal conviction – known as a post-conviction ASBO, or CRASBO - or without any criminal conviction – known as a stand-alone ASBO.
- Any breach of an ASBO is a criminal offence.

An ASBO will contain conditions which will :

Prohibit a person from behaving in specific ways.

Be tailor-made to the particular person.

Be clearly understood and phrased unambiguously.

Apply for a minimum of two years to any person aged 10 or over.

Sample conditions for an ASBO

- Not to enter Richmond town centre unless attending at his solicitor's office by prior written arrangement, Richmond police station in accordance with bail conditions, Richmond Magistrates Court for a listed hearing as a defendant or witness, the YOT office for a specified appointment or to attend the pupil referral unit at Oldfield School, Hampton.
- Not to associate with (named persons) in any public place.
- Not to enter the following roads surrounding Greycourt School in Ham; Sandy Lane, Ashburnham Road, and Ham Street.
- Not to behave in a manner likely to cause any member of the public harassment, alarm or distress.

- Since 2001 a total of 34 ASBO's have been imposed on borough residents.
- 14 of them have been imposed on adults (aged over 17) and 20 on juveniles

3 of the 14 adults have been convicted of breaching their ASBO's

- 10 of the 20 juveniles have also been convicted of breaching their ASBO's. Of those 10 :
 - 4 convicted of 1 breach
 - 2 convicted of 2 breaches
 - 2 convicted of 3 breaches
 - 2 convicted of 5 breaches

An ABC (or Acceptable Behaviour Contract) is a written contract between one or more social agencies – usually the police or a registered social landlord - and a person whose behaviour has been anti-social.

- The contract specifies one or more types of behaviour which the person agrees to refrain from for a specified period – usually six months.
- When signing a contract the person is encouraged to recognise the negative impact of his/her behaviour and to take responsibility for it.
- ABC's are non-statutory. There are no formal powers to compel a person to sign an ABC or to enforce the provisions if they are broken.

Sample conditions of an ABC :

- I will not play loud or excessive music likely to disturb neighbouring residents.
- I will not create unreasonable noise.
- I will not threaten, harass or abuse residents, passers-by or visitors to neighbouring properties.
- I will not threaten to harm or damage staff or property of RHP.
- I will not use abusive language towards others in my neighbourhood or swear in public.
- I will not allow my visitors to threaten, abuse or harass other residents.

Since 2001 a total of 63 ABC's have been signed in this borough. 21 of them were signed during the two year period January 2006 to December 2007.

- The following people signed up to ABC's during that period:
- 2 female adults (aged over 17)
- 2 female juveniles (aged 13 and 14)
- 6 male adults
- 11 male juveniles (aged 12 to 16)

- Both female adults and one female juvenile completed their ABC's without any breaches being recorded.
- The other female juvenile had three recorded breaches of her ABC.
- All six adult males and five male juveniles completed their ABC's without any breaches being recorded.
- Three male juveniles completed their ABC's with one recorded breach.
- Three male juveniles completed their ABC's with two or more recorded breaches.

And now for a *Quick Test* !

- How many referrals have there been since 2001 ?
- 298
- How many ASBO's have been imposed ??
- 34
- How many ABC's ???
- 63
- So how many referrals did not result in either an ASBO or an ABC ?
- 201- or just over two thirds.

So what happened to all those other referrals ?

- The majority of cases which are referred to the ASB Panel are resolved without any formal action being taken. When referrals are first made a letter is sent to the person concerned (or their parent in the case of a juvenile) which frequently leads to an improvement in behaviour. Other cases are informally resolved over a span of two or three months.
- No two cases are identical. Here are five cases referred to the Panel earlier this year and their outcomes:

Mrs A (late 50's)

- Jointly referred in February by police and an RSL. Resident in a small flat block, Mrs A had made repeated complaints of petty harassment by her neighbours. These had been investigated by the local SNT and found to be without any credible foundation. Mrs A had also been the subject of numerous complaints herself – shouting at her neighbours or gesturing at them through her windows.
- The RSL were concerned about the interests of their other tenants and considered obtaining an injunction to restrain Mrs A from harassing further residents. At the same time attempts were made through her GP to persuade her to accept a referral to the Mental Health Team. Those overtures were rejected by Mrs A but she ceased to either harass or complain about her neighbours and the RSL has not proceeded with their injunction application.

Mr B (early 20's)

- Living on his own with a previous history of domestic violence. Numerous complaints from neighbours concerning his habit of coming home alone late at night, playing loud music and dropping heavy objects on the floor of his flat.
- Mr B's behaviour quietened down for a while when first referred to the Panel. In consequence an ABC was not immediately imposed. At the end of the summer, however, there was a recurrence of complaints about his behaviour, he was invited to sign an ABC. Mr B declined to do so but his behaviour thereafter greatly improved.

Mr C (mid 80's)

- Resident in a sheltered housing scheme, Mr C indulged in displays of aggressive behaviour. On one occasion he had trapped a female care worker in her car for over an hour by threatening her with his walking stick.
- Mr C was moved out of sheltered housing accommodation and into a General Needs residential unit. There were no further incidents, he settled in well and was removed from the Panel's agenda.

Mr D (mid 30's)

- Lives alone; had made a number of verbal threats, some of which were homophobic, to a 13 year old boy living nearby. There was no indication that the boy had provoked any of the threats. Mr D had received a Harassment Warning from the police but the victim's family remained wary of him and the boy was afraid to go to school.
- As Mr D had behaved in a similar manner previously the RSL initially decided to take Possession Proceedings against him. He began to receive alcohol counselling, no further threats were made against the boy or his family and the RSL is now likely to withdraw the Possession application so long as an undertaking of future good behaviour is given by Mr D.

Group of seven teenagers (Six boys and one girl)

- The group all lived in or near a large flat block. Complaints were received of their hanging round in a group late at night, riding about on mopeds and otherwise being noisy.
- The RSL conducted a survey of all the residents from the block and found that only a minority saw the teenagers' nocturnal activities as a problem. Meanwhile the young people complained of having nowhere to go. Steps were taken to refurbish a nearby vacant commercial property as a location where the group could congregate. No further complaints were received about them and they have now been dropped from the Panel's agenda.

To conclude

- A majority of the people referred to the Panel are teenagers.
- There are quite a few adults too
- Some of them get ASBO's or ABC's – and usually comply with them.
- But most of them don't get either.
- However, being referred to the Panel usually results in improved behaviour.

If you want a set of these slides contact

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