

## 3. Managing the application process

This section focuses on the main issues involved in applying for an order. For an ASBO to be effective, the process of evidence gathering and applying to the courts should be as swift as possible.

Groups of organisations and partnerships such as crime and disorder reduction partnerships (CDRPs) may wish to consider buying specialist legal advice in blocks or pooling expertise and experience. This is likely to be more cost effective than buying in legal advice on a case-by-case basis.

### Partnership working

A fully co-ordinated approach is essential if anti-social behaviour is to be tackled. Effective defence of communities depends on all agencies - including housing organisations, social services, education authorities and youth services - accepting that the promotion of safe and orderly neighbourhoods is a priority, and working together to agree a response to unacceptable behaviour. The consultation arrangements are important but should be organised so that they do not cause delays in dealing with cases.

### Agencies and communities join to tackle anti-social behaviour in Slade Green

#### Issue

Slade Green in Bexley was once described as 'a cluster of low-rise estates centred on a precinct of shops and Slade Green railway station, where vandalism, burglary and drugs blight the lives of residents'. Slade Green has experienced high levels of crime and social deprivation and features among the top 16% of the most deprived wards in England. Bexley Police identified Slade Green as a hot spot for residential and non-residential burglary, auto crime, disorder, domestic violence and race crime. Residents, local housing providers and the leader of the Slade Green Community Safety Forum were alarmed at the escalation of anti-social behaviour in the area. Residents regularly experienced threats and actual violence, making them afraid of giving evidence to the police.

#### Approach

A meeting between residents and the local partnership team produced an outline action plan. Community meetings, local press coverage and 'Have A Say' days led to key witnesses being willing to give evidence.

The partnership team applied for ASBOs against the six men identified as the most prolific perpetrators. In total, 30 witnesses gave evidence, most in the form of hearsay, with nine giving evidence in person at the court hearing. The policing team involved in the case supported witnesses by being at court to provide additional reassurance. Victim Support's witness support service also helped. Strong witness evidence and a compelling case prepared by the police and the council legal department convinced the court to agree to all six applications.

#### Outcome

The impact of these ASBOs on crime and fear of crime in the area was significant. For the period 2003/04, robbery incidents fell by 53%, burglary by 21% and auto crime by 40%. Of the original six to receive an ASBO, one person has been prosecuted for breach of the ASBO condition relating to criminal damage to a car, for which he received a custodial sentence.

A community safety action zone (CSAZ) was established in Slade Green with the aim of reducing crime and disorder in the area. A multi-agency operations group was formed