

Ministerial foreword

It is now seven years since anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs) were introduced following the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. Since then over 7,300 ASBOs have been issued. We often hear from residents up and down the country about how useful they are in bringing respite to communities suffering anti-social behaviour. The drive to tackle anti-social behaviour has been pioneered by anti-social behaviour practitioners and other interested parties all over England and Wales.

During this time much has happened:

- For our part we have adjusted policy and response to changing demands prompted by practitioners to ensure that the tool continues to be effective.
- The Together ActionLine, website and Academy events have provided an excellent source of advice and ensured spread of good practice.
- Practitioners have developed protocols and helpful leaflets to improve communication between themselves.
- A number of organisations have also organised seminars and conferences to bring practitioners together, debate problem areas and resolve issues between them.
- The courts have responded and played their part and we particularly welcome Lord Justice Thomas's guidance, which has been referred to substantially for the revision of this guidance, and which provides the latest case law for practitioners in a very clear and methodical manner.

The fundamental ethos of ASBOs remains that they combine the twin-track approach of enforcement and support.

However, there have also been some developments and policy adjustments as the courts have interpreted ASBO legislation as more and more cases come before them.

After ASBOs were first introduced, orders on conviction were introduced to improve access and timing; and interim orders for extreme cases where communities needed protecting urgently. Since May 2004 courts have been able to issue individual support orders to juveniles issued with ASBOs on application. This is a positive measure, attaching positive conditions to ensure that young people get all the support they need to change their behaviour. I urge agencies to make the greatest possible use of them.

We are also extending the power to apply for orders to the Environment Agency and Transport for London.

We continue to listen to the views of practitioners and stakeholders and to adjust policy and legislation accordingly. One illustration of this has been the development of the one-year review of ASBOs issued to young people, which is explained in this guidance. Although it is not yet enshrined in legislation, we feel that this formalises existing good practice to ensure that young people are provided with the right support throughout the duration of their ASBO. We also hope to introduce later this year measures to empower the courts to apply rigorous case management in ASBO proceedings.

This guidance is also issued in the context of the Respect programme which builds on the Government's anti-social behaviour strategy. Under the Respect drive, we will maintain and build on the strong enforcement action that has helped us make so much progress, but extend this further through a comprehensive strategy to deliver:

- a new approach to tackling problem families;
- a wide-ranging programme to address poor parenting;
- measures to improve behaviour and attendance in schools;