

Dealing effectively with persistent young perpetrators in Norfolk

Issue

Improved partnership working between the police and the YOT was key to effectively tackling anti-social behaviour by young people.

Approach

Regular liaison meetings of YOT and youth inclusion and support panel (YISP) staff were held at the Safer Communities Unit. Community reparation projects were planned which impacted on sensitive communities or resonated with vulnerable members of the community. Police officers forged contact with youth groups and educational centres. Part of the action plan required YISP workers to attend a police tasking and co-ordination meeting.

Outcomes

The YOT discussed, and was helpful to and supportive of, community reparation

projects that added to increased public reassurance. Work commissioned included graffiti clearance in priority areas, and the cleaning of 'Home Watch' street signs that were covered in algae, and where householders were elderly and not able to carry out that work. Two respected local officers maintained their links with a local community youth project through a weekly radio broadcast, 'On the Beat', on the first community radio station in Norfolk. The Safer Communities inspector became a member of the steering group of that project. Community team officers enjoyed good relations with the Excellence Centre, a unit for excluded or disengaged children of school age, as evidenced by the support of the centre manager for the Constabulary's recent 'Chartermark' award.

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open to the general public and has no automatic restrictions to prevent public and press access or to prevent reporting of the proceedings or to protect the identity of a child or young person (or adult) who is the subject of an application.

- The court should have a good reason, aside from age alone, to impose a discretionary order under section 39 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 to prevent the identification of a child or young person concerned in the proceedings.
- The applicant may resist a call from the defendant's representatives for such restrictions if the effectiveness of the ASBO will largely depend on the wider community knowing the details.

The applicant should note the following.

- Under section 98 of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980, evidence will be given on oath, except the evidence of a child under 14 years of age, which is given unsworn.
- Section 34A of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 requires the attendance of a parent or legal guardian at court for any person under 16 years of age. Every effort should be made before a hearing to

ensure that this takes place to avoid unnecessary adjournments.

- The court will require information about the child's or young person's background, home surroundings and family circumstances. Such information should be available to avoid the need for an adjournment.

Assessment of needs

When applying for an order against a young person aged between 10 and 17, the YOT should make an assessment of their circumstances and needs. This will enable the local authority to ensure that the appropriate services are provided for the young person concerned and for the court to have the necessary information about them.

It is vital that any assessment does not delay the application for an order. The lead agency should therefore liaise closely with the local social services department or YOT from the start of the process so that, where a new assessment is required, it can be begun quickly. In some cases an up-to-date assessment may already be available.