



HOUSE OF LORDS

# Library Note

## **Debate on 12 May: Safe and Active Communities**

This Library Note provides background reading for the debate on 12 May:

### **“To call attention to the report *Our Vision for Safe and Active Communities*”**

The Note looks at Baroness Newlove’s recent report [\*Our Vision for Safe and Active Communities\*](#) which was published on 29 March 2011. The Note examines the content and recommendations included in the report, as well as the wider context of government policy on anti-social behaviour.

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## 1. Introduction

In October 2010 Baroness Newlove was appointed the government's champion for active, safer communities. Baroness Newlove rose to public prominence following the murder of her husband by a group of teenagers in 2007. In her maiden speech on 27 April she explained:

Since that terrible night when Garry died, I have campaigned for victims whose lives are blighted by thugs. Minor crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour should be a huge warning bell to us all. Unless this behaviour is nipped in the bud, it grows like a cancer, unseen and undetected until it blooms like a malignant flower, which, as we know, can kill. Stories like the Pilkingtons' or the Askews', where isolated and vulnerable people have been bullied and hounded to death, are a disgrace and must not continue to happen.

(HL *Hansard*, 27 April 2011, col 162)

In March 2011 Baroness Newlove published her Home Office commissioned report [Our Vision for Safe and Active Communities](#) which included a range of recommendations for communities, statutory agencies, the voluntary and community sector and central government. The report was published against a backdrop of greater interest in the role of communities in fostering a "big society", championed by David Cameron during the 2010 general election campaign, and the perceived role of anti-social behaviour in discouraging individuals from becoming involved in their communities. It is part of a wider package of reforms for dealing with anti-social behaviour which includes making police forces more accountable to local people through Police and Crime Commissioners<sup>1</sup> and street-level crime information, and identifying and spreading good ideas on dealing with anti-social behaviour.

This House of Lords Library Note gives an overview of the report *Our Vision for Safe and Active Communities* and its recommendations, and provides some information on the wider debate regarding anti-social behaviour.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Proposals for Police and Crime Commissioners are discussed in more detail in the House of Lords Library Note [Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill](#) (7 April 2011, LLN 2011/013).

<sup>2</sup> Further reading on the issue of anti-social behaviour can be found in the House of Commons Library Standard Note [Anti-social Behaviour: A Select Bibliography](#) (23 September 2010, SN/HA/3173).

## 2. Our Vision for Safe and Active Communities

In March 2011 the Home Office published the report *Our Vision for Safe and Active Communities*. The report was the result of visits to community activists by Baroness Newlove, the government champion for active, safer communities, to examine the way in which local communities, statutory agencies and the government could work together to create better outcomes for individuals. The report's foreword noted:

This report provides details of the research that I have undertaken and outlines my recommendations to government, to local agencies and to communities which, if acted upon, will help to make those safe and happy communities a reality for more people. No one person or organisation can make the changes that are needed—it's about all of us working together in a new, more unified way. This is the real "people power" which will help reclaim our communities.

This report is the result of my work, but also, I hope, the start of an on-going wider debate involving more local people, professionals, businesses and the media, all of whom have a really important role to play.

(Home Office, [Our Vision for Safe and Active Communities](#), March 2011, p 3)

In compiling the report, local communities and "best practice" projects were visited over a period of six months. In addition seven local areas were studied in detail.<sup>3</sup> These were chosen as representing a cross-section of areas with different levels of problems and at different stages of community development. The report also drew on a telephone survey of 183 Community Crime Fighters which took place in February 2011, and comments made by the public on Baroness Newlove's [blog](#).

The first section of the report provides advice for individuals interested in becoming more involved in their local communities, and uses the case studies of, amongst others, the seven local areas which the report focused on. Examples range from a music festival to an increased usage of technology and the need to focus on a clear purpose. The main recommendations for individuals are:

- Think about developing community spirit (not necessarily fighting crime).
- Start with your street and neighbours rather than having huge plans.
- Technology can help—for example by using email, social networking or blogs.
- Have a clear purpose: decide what needs changing and have achievable goals.
- Try to get everyone involved—involve a wide range of people, including the young.
- Do not reinvent the wheel—look at what local groups already exist and what you can learn from them.
- Work with local neighbourhood police and the council.

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<sup>3</sup> These were Cutsbye in Wakefield, Offerton in Stockport, the Briar Road Estate in Havering, Park and Twyn Wards in Merthyr Tydfil, St John's Parish in Hackney, the Flower Roads Estate in Southampton and Folkestone East and Cheriton in Shepway.

- Remember to include local schools, charities and businesses.
- Be imaginative when looking for funding.
- Persevere with changes and try and get councillors, the local media and MPs involved.

Statutory agencies are advised to get closer to the communities they are working with through neighbourhood police teams and by using restorative justice. Central government is advised to strip back bureaucracy by simplifying legislation and providing more information to the public. The key recommendations for central government and local agencies outlined in the report are:

- Reward communities who come together to reduce crime by giving them money to re-invest in crime prevention.
- Give the community cash from assets seized from drug dealers and other criminals.
- Create a national information source, a hub for activists, and support it with an award for the best examples of activism.
- Provide the public with a single point of contact for reporting non-emergency crime and anti-social behaviour—make sure other partners are linked up for the roll-out of the 101 number.<sup>4</sup>
- Let communities set their own speed limits.
- Back a community “power of competence” with a helpline to give the public advice to overcome cautious agencies standing in their way.
- Follow the neighbourhood policing example and get the justice system out of the court room and into communities, and put victims’ needs and their protection at the heart of any action.
- Pool agencies’ budgets locally and give the community a choice about how money is spent.
- Ask Police and Crime Commissioners to commit at least one percent of their budget to grass roots community groups to decide on and use.
- Take crime maps to the next stage—do not just show where crime happens, but what action has been taken against local crooks.
- End the 9 to 5 culture. Agencies need to be there for their community when they need them.
- Get public servants out and into communities, and volunteering their time and expertise to support local groups.

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<sup>4</sup> The 101 number is a 24-hour telephone line to deal with non-emergency crime, community safety and anti-social behaviour issues. Currently this is only available in Wales, Hampshire, the Isle of Wight and Sheffield.

On 27 April 2011 it was announced that Baroness Newlove would be joining the Department for Communities and Local Government.<sup>5</sup> Here she would continue work started at the Home Office advising the government on how to take forward the report's recommendations and develop further policy regarding local communities.

### 3. Levels of Anti-social Behaviour

The term “anti-social behaviour” has gained currency in recent years and is generally taken to mean a range of behaviours that are not necessarily criminal acts, but that nevertheless have a harmful effect on individuals and communities. As a 2003 white paper published by the previous government acknowledged, “anti-social behaviour” encompasses a range of activity:

Anti-social behaviour means different things to different people—noisy neighbours who ruin the lives of those around them, “crack houses” run by drug dealers, drunken “yobs” taking over town centres, people begging by cash-points, abandoned cars, litter and graffiti, young people using airguns to threaten and intimidate or people using fireworks as weapons.

(Home Office, [Respect and Responsibility—Taking a Stand Against Anti-social Behaviour](#), 12 March 2003, Cm 5778, p 6)

The British Crime Survey uses seven indicators to measure public perceptions of anti-social behaviour in their area. These are: abandoned or burnt-out cars, noisy neighbours or loud parties, people being drunk or rowdy in public places, people using or dealing drugs, teenagers hanging around on the streets, rubbish or litter lying around and vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property.

Figures from the British Crime Survey show that there were 3.7 million recorded incidents of anti-social behaviour in 2008/9, compared to the 4.7 million recorded crimes over the same period.<sup>6</sup> The 2010 report *Anti-social Behaviour: Stop the Rot* published by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary noted:

We must not underestimate the extent of ASB, or ignore the fact that it is one of the public's top concerns when it comes to crime and disorder locally. It is estimated that the public only report just over a quarter of incidents of ASB to the police—about 28 percent.

(Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, [Anti-social Behaviour: Stop the Rot](#), 2010, p 2)

This would mean that the real level of anti-social behaviour was nearer 14 million incidents, a fact noted by the *Daily Telegraph*: “Police have lost control of the streets, the forces' watchdog warns as new figures show that an estimated 14 million incidents of anti-social behaviour take place each year—one every two seconds”.<sup>7</sup> However, in spite of media coverage of high profile cases such as those of Fiona Pilkington and David Askew, recent figures from the British Crime Survey show that perceptions of anti-social

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<sup>5</sup> Department for Communities and Local Government press release, '[Baroness Newlove Joins the Department for Communities and Local Government to Promote Active, Safer Communities](#)' (27 April 2011).

<sup>6</sup> Home Office Statistical Release, [Crime in England and Wales 2009/10: Findings from the British Crime Survey](#) (July 2010).

<sup>7</sup> Richard Edwards, 'Police Give Up the Fight as Yobs Take Over', *Daily Telegraph*, 23 September 2010.



behaviour are down marginally. As the table reproduced in the Annex to this Library Note shows, in 2010 the overall proportion of people with high levels of perceived anti-social behaviour in their local area fell by one percentage point (to 14 percent) compared to the year ending December 2009. There was also slightly greater confidence from the public that police and local authorities were dealing with anti-social behaviour and crime in the local area: up from 51 percent to 52 percent.<sup>8</sup> In addition the rate of anti-social behaviour orders issued by all courts, as reported to the Ministry of Justice by the Court Service, was down from 2,027 in 2008 to 1,671 in 2009.<sup>9</sup> However, it should be noted that this may not accurately reflect levels of anti-social behaviour, as anti-social behaviour can be dealt with in a number of different ways.<sup>10</sup>

Despite the small change in the public's perception of anti-social behaviour, the topic has remained politically important, in part because of the impact of anti-social behaviour upon government plans to encourage a "big society". The recent HMIC report *Re-thinking the Policing of Anti-social Behaviour* notes:

Stated simply, the argument is that "the big society" cannot do the "heavy-lifting" in tackling chronic ASB problems. Rather, effective management of ASB by the police and their partners is an agent for community mobilisation. The data mapping the harm caused by ASB clearly demonstrates how ASB corrodes community cohesion and trust. Therefore, particularly in areas with a higher intensity of ASB problems, police have an important role in "gripping" the problems in order to create a "space" where community mobilisation can be "seeded and grown". Untreated ASB undermines precisely those qualities such as social trust, routine interactions with co-present strangers and confidence in public institutions that are necessary conditions for community directed social action.

(Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, [Re-thinking the Policing of Anti-social Behaviour](#), 2010, p 48)

#### 4. Anti-social Behaviour: Stop the Rot

In 2010 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary released the report [Anti-social Behaviour: Stop the Rot](#). The aim of the report was to identify best practice to deal with anti-social behaviour. The report found that anti-social behaviour was largely considered by the public to be a police issue (in reality low level, non-criminal, anti-social behaviour is dealt with by local councils) and that the public did not make a distinction between crime and anti-social behaviour. Research informing the report also noted that people repeatedly exposed to anti-social behaviour, particularly where there was an element of intimidation, were the most likely to be impacted upon by it. Those who were self-defined as disabled or having a long term medical condition were found to be more susceptible to being harmed by anti-social behaviour.

*Anti-social Behaviour: Stop the Rot* found that the police forces who performed best in terms of the perception of anti-social behaviour victims and the public were ones which: briefed all relevant officers and staff regularly; gathered and analysed data and information about anti-social behaviour and used this information to allocate resources to

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<sup>8</sup> Home Office Statistical Release, *Crime in England and Wales: Quarterly Update to December 2010* (20 April 2011).

<sup>9</sup> Home Office Statistical Release, *Annual Anti-social Behaviour Order Statistics—2009 Results* (January 2011).

<sup>10</sup> Further details on this subject can be found in the House of Commons Library Standard Note [Anti-social Behaviour Orders](#) (2 August 2010, SN/HA/1656).

tackle the problems; and provided their neighbourhood policing teams with the right tools and resources to tackle anti-social behaviour. However, the report remarked that the graded response system which prioritises calls for attendance or non-attendance could adversely affect victims, with call operators unaware of the impact of the anti-social behaviour. Only 22 of 43 police forces in England and Wales had a system to identify and prioritise repeat calls. In addition, community safety partnerships were seen as being too focused on longer term investment rather than timely responses, which were key to creating confidence in the police and local services amongst victims.

## 5. Consultation on Anti-social Behaviour Orders

In a speech on 28 July 2010, the Home Secretary, Theresa May, indicated that the government would look to alternatives to anti-social behaviour orders, proposing instead a community led approach and more restorative justice measures. The Home Office launched a consultation on the future of anti-social behaviour orders in February 2011. The consultation document noted the high number of breaches of ASBOs and stressed the overly bureaucratic nature of the current system, with 18 formal powers currently available. It proposed replacing these with the following five tools:

Community triggers—where local agencies will be compelled to take action if five people from five different residences in the same neighbourhood have complained and no action has been taken, or the behaviour in question has been reported to the authorities by an individual three times, and no action has been taken.

Criminal Behaviour Orders—issued by the courts after conviction, the order would ban an individual from certain activities or places and require them to address their behaviour. Under the new criminal behaviour orders, police will be able to apply for a court order to tackle low-level nuisance behaviour.

Crime Prevention Injunctions—designed to nip bad behaviour in the bud before it escalates. The injunction would carry a civil burden of proof, making it quicker and easier to obtain than previous tools.

Community Protection Orders—these are place-specific orders, bringing together a number of existing measures. There will be one for local authorities to stop persistent environmental anti-social behaviour like graffiti, neighbour noise or dog fouling, and another for police and local authorities to deal with more serious disorder and criminality in a specific place, such as closing a property used for drug dealing.

Police “direction” powers—the ability to direct any individual causing or likely to cause crime or disorder away from a particular place and to confiscate related items.

(BBC News website, [‘Q & A: New Powers to Replace ASBOs’](#), 7 February 2011)

The Home Office consultation, [More effective responses to anti-social behaviour](#), runs until 17 May 2011.

## Annex: Anti-social Behaviour Indicators

Percentages	England and Wales, BCS		
	Interviews from January 2009 to December 2009 <sup>1</sup>	Interviews from January 2010 to December 2010	Statistically significant change <sup>2</sup>
		<i>Percentage</i>	
High level of perceived anti-social behaviour <sup>3</sup>	15	14	**
		<i>Percentage saying very/fairly big problem in their area</i>	
Abandoned or burnt-out cars	5	4	**
Noisy neighbours or loud parties	11	11	
People being drunk or rowdy in public places	24	24	
People using or dealing drugs	26	26	
Teenagers hanging around on the streets	27	26	**
Rubbish or litter lying around	29	28	
Vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property	24	22	**
<i>Unweighted base<sup>4</sup></i>	43,261	43,333	

1. BCS estimates based on interviews from January 2009 have been revised based on revised LFS microdata and may vary slightly from previously published estimates—see Section 8 of the User Guide to Home Office Crime Statistics (Home Office, 2010).
2. Statistically significant change at the 5 per cent level is indicated by a double asterisk. For more information on statistical significance, see Section 8 of the User Guide.
3. This measure is derived from responses to the seven individual anti-social behaviour strands reported in the table.
4. Unweighted base refers to high level of perceived anti-social behaviour. Bases for each individual strand will be similar.

(Home Office, *Crime in England and Wales*, April 2011, p 8)

