



HM Government

# ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

## ACTION PLAN



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# Foreword by the Prime Minister

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Strong communities are bound by a golden thread – the idea that we should treat others as we would like to be treated ourselves. I know that’s how the vast majority of people in this country act. So much of our happiness and pride stems from that idea and having peace of mind in the places we call home. Yet, there’s a small minority whose anti-social behaviour makes other people’s lives a misery.

It is simply unacceptable that anyone should have to live in fear of intimidation from their neighbours or gangs terrorising their streets; that parks and children’s play areas should be littered with empty nitrous oxide canisters; that women and girls should feel unsafe walking alone at night; or that businesses and shops should close

down because town centres are no longer places that people want to be. That is not the kind of community anyone wants, and it is not the kind of country we are.

That is why we are launching this new Action Plan. Because anti-social behaviour is not a low-level crime. It is not just a nuisance or irritant. It ruins communities. We need to stamp it out—and we can. There is nothing inevitable about it.

This Action Plan builds on the work we are already doing to make our streets safer and invest in communities the length and breadth of the UK. It sets out how we will deal with anti-social behaviour for good by acting in three ways.

First, we will treat anti-social behaviour with the urgency it deserves by bringing in hotspot policing to target the worst affected areas. This will start with ten trailblazing places, before rolling out across England and Wales next year. It means we will have more police and more uniformed officers tackling the most prolific offenders. We will also introduce a new approach called Immediate Justice to make perpetrators repair the damage they have done. They will be forced to pick up litter, wash police cars or clean up graffiti within as little as 48 hours of being caught. Again, this will start in ten places, before being expanded across England and Wales in 2024. And to restore public trust we will launch a new digital tool for people to report anti-social behaviour and take a tougher approach in holding the police and other agencies to account.

Second, we will take a zero-tolerance approach – including cracking down on the illegal drugs that blight communities. We are going to ban nitrous oxide and expand the use of drug testing on arrest. We will broaden not just the types of drugs that police test for, but also the situations where tests are used to include anti-social behaviour and violence against women and girls. In addition, we will make it easier to evict tenants who are persistently disrespectful and disruptive to their neighbours, and we will bring in new tools to help those on the streets into proper support and care, and to prevent intimidation and loitering.

Third, we will give the police and other agencies the tools they need to act and restore pride in our communities. We will increase the amount for on-the-spot fines for litter, graffiti and fly-tipping and seek to increase their use. Councils will be given new funding to restore local parks and greater powers to revive their high streets by bringing empty shops back into use. And we will provide more help for young people to find positive ways to focus their energies, including one million extra hours of youth support in hotspot areas.

I want to strengthen that golden thread which binds us together – to build communities where families can flourish, where businesses want to invest and where people feel pride, optimism and hope. By stopping anti-social behaviour in its tracks, that is what this Action Plan will do.

**Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP**

Prime Minister

**This government is clear that acts of anti-social behaviour are unacceptable. Our Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan is not just words, but a plan to stamp out anti-social behaviour. We will:**

**1. Make sure anti-social behaviour is treated with the urgency it deserves, increasing the use of hotspot policing and enforcement, rolling out a new Immediate Justice service so anti-social behaviour perpetrators swiftly clean up their own mess, and giving communities more of a say over, and more visibility of, reparation:**

- Dedicated funding will support Police and Crime Commissioners, working with councils and others, to target enforcement in the areas where anti-social behaviour is most prevalent in their communities. Initially, we will support 10 trailblazer areas, scaling up to hotspot enforcement across all police forces in England and Wales in 2024.
- Perpetrators of anti-social behaviour will be made to repair the damage they inflict on victims and communities, with the ambition of reparative work starting within 48 hours of their being given a disposal by the police. Perpetrators will clean up graffiti, pick litter and wash police cars while wearing jumpsuits or high-vis vests, and under supervision – with communities given a say over the consequences they face through consultation.
- A new digital tool will be launched so members of the public have a simple and clear route to report anti-social behaviour, receive updates on the outcome of their case, find guidance, and challenge where they do not think this is satisfactory.

**2. Change laws and systems to take a zero-tolerance approach to anti-social behaviour, cracking down on the illegal drugs that blight communities and organised and harmful begging:**

- We will ban nitrous oxide, also called laughing gas, to put an end to intimidating groups of young people littering local parks with empty cannisters.
- The police will be able to drug test suspected criminals in police custody for a wider range of drugs, like ecstasy and methamphetamine, and test offenders linked to crimes like violence against women and girls, serious violence, and anti-social behaviour.
- New laws to replace the Vagrancy Act will enable the police and councils to direct individuals to engage with the support they need, prohibit organised begging by criminal gangs and begging which causes nuisance and undermines the sense of public safety, and address street activity so our public spaces are clear of debris and paraphernalia.
- Landlords and law-abiding tenants will benefit from stronger laws and systems to ensure those who are persistently disruptive are evicted. We will seek to halve the delay between a private landlord serving notice for anti-social behaviour and eviction and broaden the disruptive and harmful activities that can lead to eviction. We will also provide a clear expectation that previous anti-social behaviour offenders are deprioritised for social housing.

**3. Give the police and other agencies the tools they need to discourage anti-social behaviour, including higher on-the-spot fines, investment in positive activities for young people, filling empty shops and regenerating local parks.**

- The upper limits of on-the-spot fines will be increased to £1,000 for fly-tipping and £500 for litter and graffiti, and we want more of these fines handed out to offenders.
- One million extra hours of youth support will be made available in anti-social behaviour hotspots and we will invest more to intervene early with at risk young people via 1-1 support.
- Councils will have stronger means to revitalise communities, bringing more empty shops on high streets back into use, and restoring and renovating local parks.

This Action Plan is consistent with the devolution settlements, and we will work with the Devolved Administrations to ensure a collaborative approach in devolved areas.



# Introduction

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**[Anti-social behaviour] makes you feel unwelcome, like you're not wanted or loved, you don't feel you belong there. You're left with so many questions in your head when you don't know who is doing it or why – it does affect your emotional wellbeing. You don't feel safe there all the time and you don't know what is going to happen next. I've felt like this for the three years I've lived here, and I've been planning on leaving for the past year.**

*Research participant who witnessed anti-social behaviour, Liverpool<sup>1</sup>*



1. Everyone has the right to live without the fear of facing anti-social behaviour. To leave their home without dreading intimidation from neighbours, visit their local high street free of disorder and drug taking, take the train or bus to work without fear of abuse and walk down a pavement clear of dog mess and litter. Women and girls should not feel unsafe walking alone at night and families should not be intimidated away from parks by drug paraphernalia and groups of youths engaging in threatening behaviour. Businesses should not suffer and shops be shuttered because town centres are no longer places people want to be.
2. The Government is clear – acts of anti-social behaviour are unacceptable. They are the ultimate form of disrespect. They disrupt and damage our quality of life. They corrode communities, make victims feel powerless, and can leave places degraded and neglected. This is why the Government is doing everything possible to stamp out anti-social behaviour. It is central to the Government's mission of levelling up – because you cannot restore pride to places if people do not feel safe in their own community.
3. This is an action plan with safety, security and a basic respect for others at its heart. It is about restoring the right of people across the country to feel safe in, and proud of belonging to, their local area.
4. Through this action plan, and backed by £160m of funding, we are:
  - a) changing laws and tightening regulations to clamp down on anti-social behaviour – banning nitrous oxide, making sure more suspected criminals undergo drug testing on arrest, ensuring the police can move on those causing harm and blight while begging and making it easier for landlords to evict anti-social tenants who make their neighbours' lives a nightmare;
  - b) ensuring the police, councils and other agencies have all the powers and tools they need – increasing on-the-spot fines (Fixed Penalty Notices) to up to £1,000 for those who fly-tip and up to £500 for those who litter or graffiti, driving greater use of

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<sup>1</sup> Home Office. [Anti-social behaviour: impacts on individuals and local communities](#). 2023.



enforcement powers to protect the public and our public spaces, investing in positive activities to occupy young people in blighted areas and doing more to bring shuttered shops back into use and regenerate local parks; and,

- c) making sure anti-social behaviour is treated with urgency – with offenders facing immediate consequences and cleaning up the damage they cause through new Immediate Justice trailblazers, paying for more uniformed patrols to tackle anti-social behaviour, giving communities a voice and improving the data and information available to ensure the public can hold to account those who should be protecting their community.
5. Clamping down on anti-social behaviour requires many partners to work together. Building on the principles developed by the Anti-social Behaviour Strategic Board<sup>2</sup>, the plan sets out a new framework for the Government, police forces, Police and Crime Commissioners, local authorities and other partners – such as housing associations and youth offending teams – to work together to address the many drivers of anti-social behaviour and repair the damage to communities. This is alongside work to prevent anti-social behaviour, understand underlying behaviours and divert perpetrators. The following partners will have a range of responsibilities.
- a) **Police and Crime Commissioners** are accountable for delivering the key priorities of their local communities and victims of crime including on anti-social behaviour. Police and Crime Commissioners are well placed to use their leadership to reflect local priorities and will take a leading role in overseeing and convening efforts to reduce anti-social behaviour in their areas, working with local delivery partners.
  - b) **Police forces** will continue to have responsibility for the maintenance of order within communities, overseen by their Police and Crime Commissioner. Police forces will adopt a common-sense or “broken windows” approach to policing which means tackling problems of neighbourhood crime and anti-social behaviour where they occur and intervening early to prevent growing disorder. Police forces will work with local authorities and other partners to develop intelligence as to where their local hotspots are to target enforcement and use new powers and resources most effectively.
  - c) **Local authorities** will play an important role in tackling anti-social behaviour through prevention and enforcement using the range of powers and tools available to them. This includes neighbourhood wardens, working alongside police and other partners, to offer a visible and reassuring presence in local communities, handing out more on-the-spot fines for vandalism, and taking appropriate action against perpetrators.
  - d) **Probation Service** will continue to play a role in tackling the visible impacts of anti-social behaviour by delivering millions of hours of Community Payback every year. This will ensure offenders are visibly making reparations for their crimes by undertaking valuable work for their local areas as soon as possible after their crimes are committed.
  - e) **Youth Services Providers** will have an increasingly vital role, with some providing diversionary activity for all and others targeting support at those who risk being caught up in anti-social behaviour.

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2 Home Office. [Guidance: Anti-social behaviour principles](#). 2022.

- f) **Youth Offending Teams** will use the additional funding we are giving to do even more to tackle youth anti-social behaviour through early intervention and diversion. The Turnaround programme is providing more money to Youth Offending Teams across England and Wales over three years, to help them improve outcomes for children on the cusp of entering the youth justice system.
- g) **Housing Associations and Landlords** will work to ensure that no one lives in misery with anti-social neighbours. We will support landlords to use the tools they already have, to respond to reports of anti-social behaviour, work closely with the police and other local agencies to deal with problems and, where necessary, swiftly evict tenants.
- h) **Health Services** and the relevant Integrated Care Board should have an important role – at present, they are sometimes underused. They should be treated as standard for Anti-Social Behaviour Case Reviews that involve victims with health-related vulnerabilities.

# Background and context

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**I think you can tell in my voice. It just raises my blood pressure a little bit... because they're putting what they think is their views above everybody else's.**

*Research participant who witnessed anti-social behaviour, Leicester<sup>3</sup>*



6. Anti-social behaviour is the main reason people do not feel safe in their local area.<sup>4</sup> Everyone has experienced anti-social behaviour to a degree – a disturbance or disruption to the normal order of things; an attitude and show of disrespect for a place and the people that call it home. Often repetitive and oppressive, anti-social behaviour leaves victims and communities feeling powerless, spoiling their normal enjoyment of their spaces and chipping away at their peace of mind in their own homes. Anti-social behaviour covers criminal and non-criminal behaviour,<sup>5</sup> including:
  - a) intimidatory behaviour, such as threatening or unruly behaviour, drunkenness, harassment and loitering in public spaces;
  - b) drug use, and the paraphernalia, mess and disruption that can go with it;
  - c) vandalism, graffiti, and the plague of fly-tipping and littering; and
  - d) disruptive neighbours consistently playing loud music or letting their dog bark all night.
7. People are worried and frustrated by anti-social behaviour, and understandably so. Reducing anti-social behaviour, and crime overall, were the top reported priorities for levelling up in Britain, according to an Ipsos Mori index<sup>6</sup>; while people polled by Public First in December 2021 primarily blamed anti-social behaviour as the main reason why their area was a worse place to live versus 10 years ago, followed by a deterioration of the high street and more litter and rubbish<sup>7</sup> – all issues this action plan addresses.
8. There is also a growing gap between the anti-social behaviour that people are suffering, and what they report to police. While the total number of incidences of anti-social behaviour reported to the police has fallen by more than half since 2012<sup>8</sup> (outlined at Figure 1), last year 35% of people reported witnessing or experiencing anti-social behaviour.<sup>9</sup> This divide suggests that people are increasingly unwilling to report anti-social

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3 Home Office. [Anti-social behaviour: impacts on individuals and local communities](#). 2023.

4 [YouGov. Anti-Social Behaviour](#). 2023.

5 A legal definition of ASB can be found in the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2014: a) conduct that has caused, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to any person, b) conduct capable of causing nuisance or annoyance to a person in relation to that person's occupation of residential premises, or c) conduct capable of causing housing-related nuisance or annoyance to any person.

6 Ipsos. Ipsos Levelling Up Index: [Levelling up Panel](#). 2022.

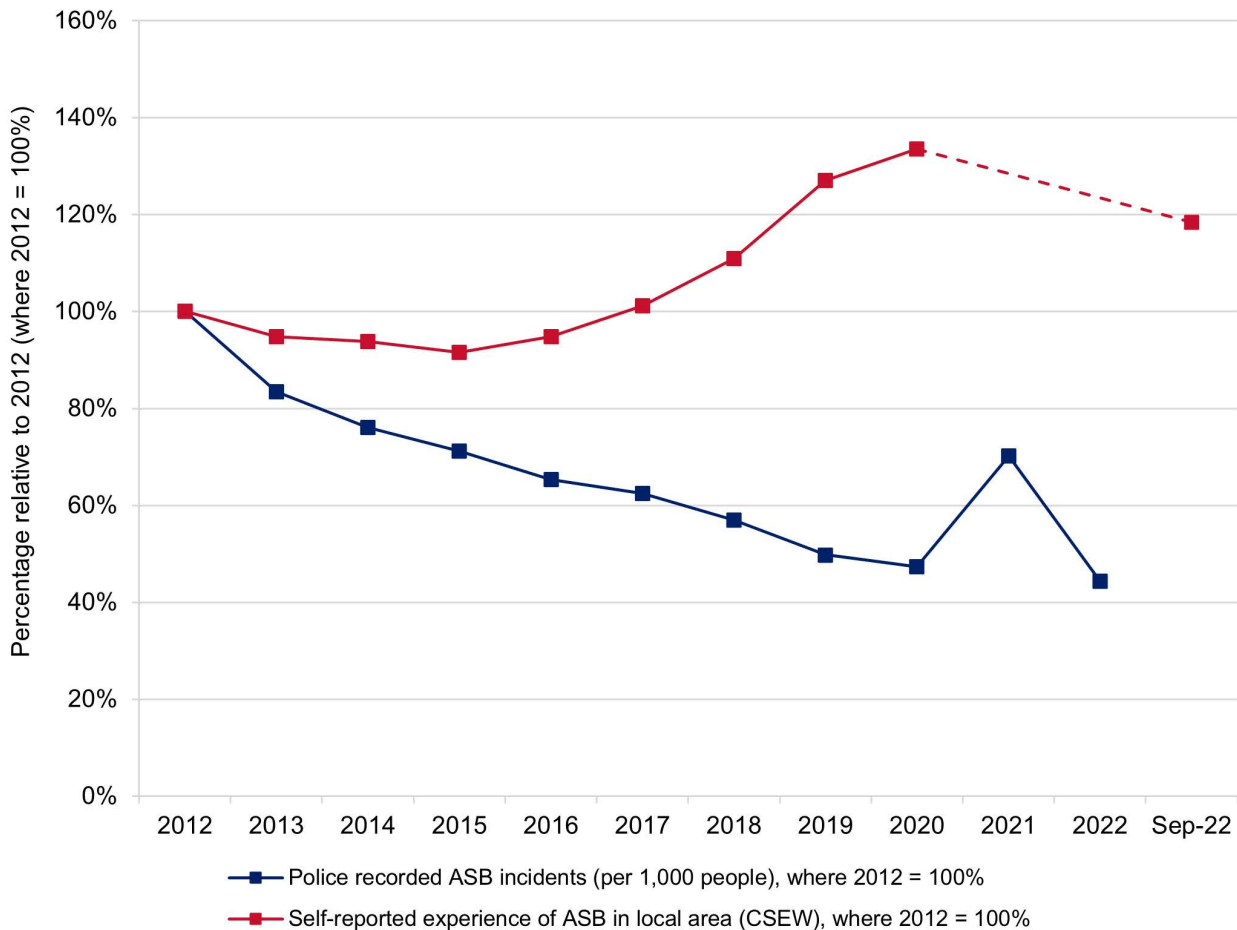
7 Public First. [Levelling Up Poll](#). 2021.

8 Office for National Statistics. [Crime in England and Wales: Other related tables](#). 2022.

9 Office for National Statistics. Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) estimates of personal and household crime, anti-social behaviour, and public perceptions, by police force area, year ending September 2022.

behaviour or have a much wider understanding of what constitutes anti-social behaviour compared to police recorded incidents. There can be little doubt that this is eroding public trust in those who are there to keep them safe and undermining the tradition of policing by consent.

**Figure 1: Police recorded anti-social behaviour incidents and self-reported experience of anti-social behaviour, 2012-September 2022<sup>10</sup>**



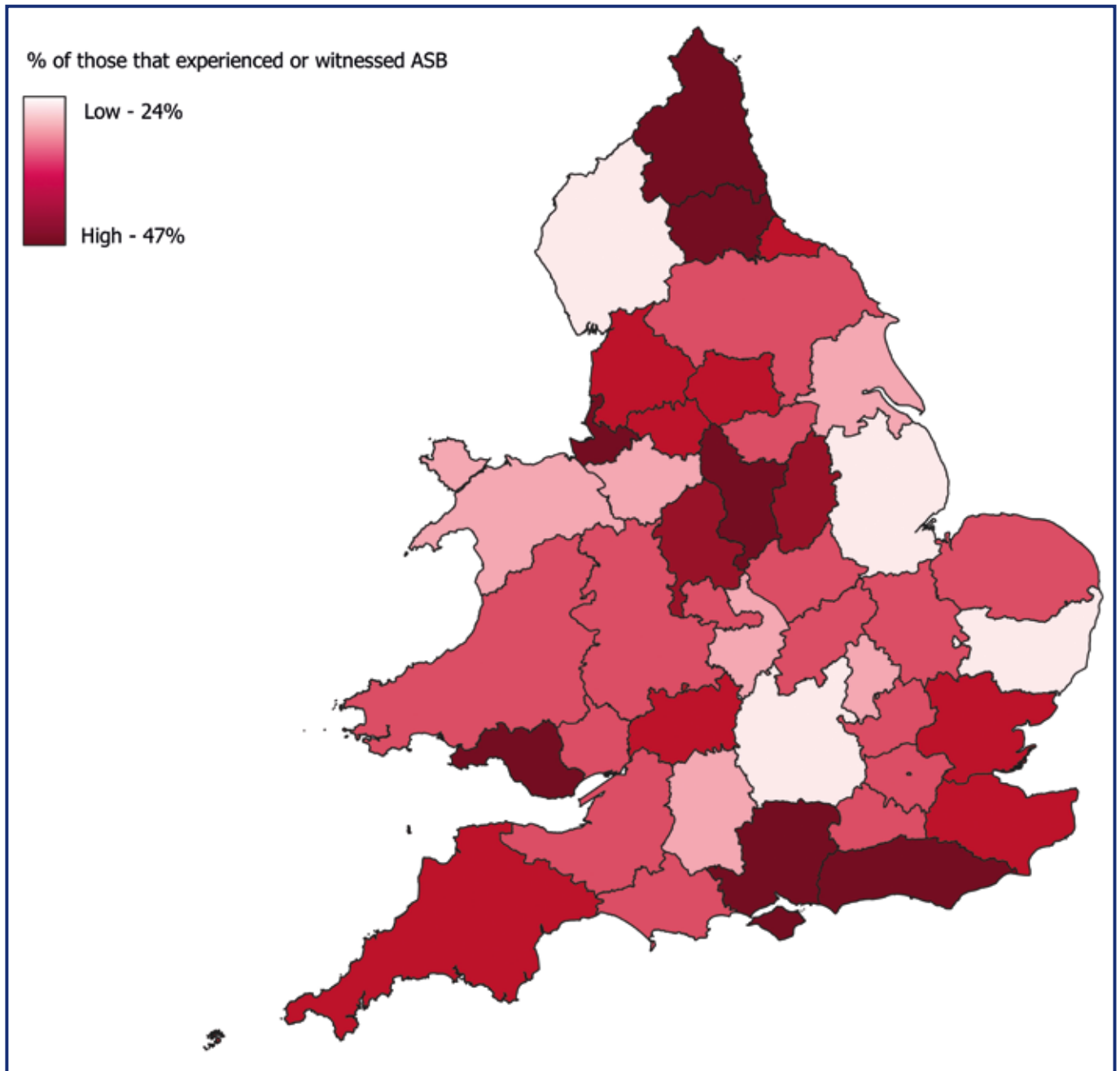
**Notes:**

Years refer to the preceding April-March period, except for the final point which refers to the year ending in September. Data is for England and Wales only. Furthermore, improved police recording means that public order offences, which have seen an increase in recent years, are no longer recorded as anti-social behaviour. This may explain the consistent decline seen until 2020. The spike in police recorded incidents in 2021 is due to lockdown breaches being recorded as anti-social behaviour.

9. The types of anti-social behaviour that communities are most concerned about vary by area, and people living in some of our most deprived communities often suffer the worst from anti-social behaviour.
10. As Figure 2 shows, the percentage of adults who have personally experienced or witnessed anti-social behaviour in their area is highest in Police Force Areas in the North East, Midlands, and the South East. Derbyshire (47%), Northumbria (45%) and Durham (45%) are the Police Force Areas with the highest percentage of adults with experience of anti-social behaviour. Similar patterns are also evident in data showing people’s perceptions of anti-social behaviour in their areas (as demonstrated in Figure 3).

<sup>10</sup> Office for National Statistics. [Crime in England and Wales: Police Force Area data tables](#). 2023.  
 Office for National Statistics. [Crime in England and Wales: Other related tables](#). 2023.  
 Office for National Statistics. [Crime in England and Wales: Annual Trend and Demographic Tables](#). 2022.

**Figure 2: Percentage of adults who personally experienced or witnessed anti-social behaviour in their area, year ending September 2022<sup>11</sup>.**

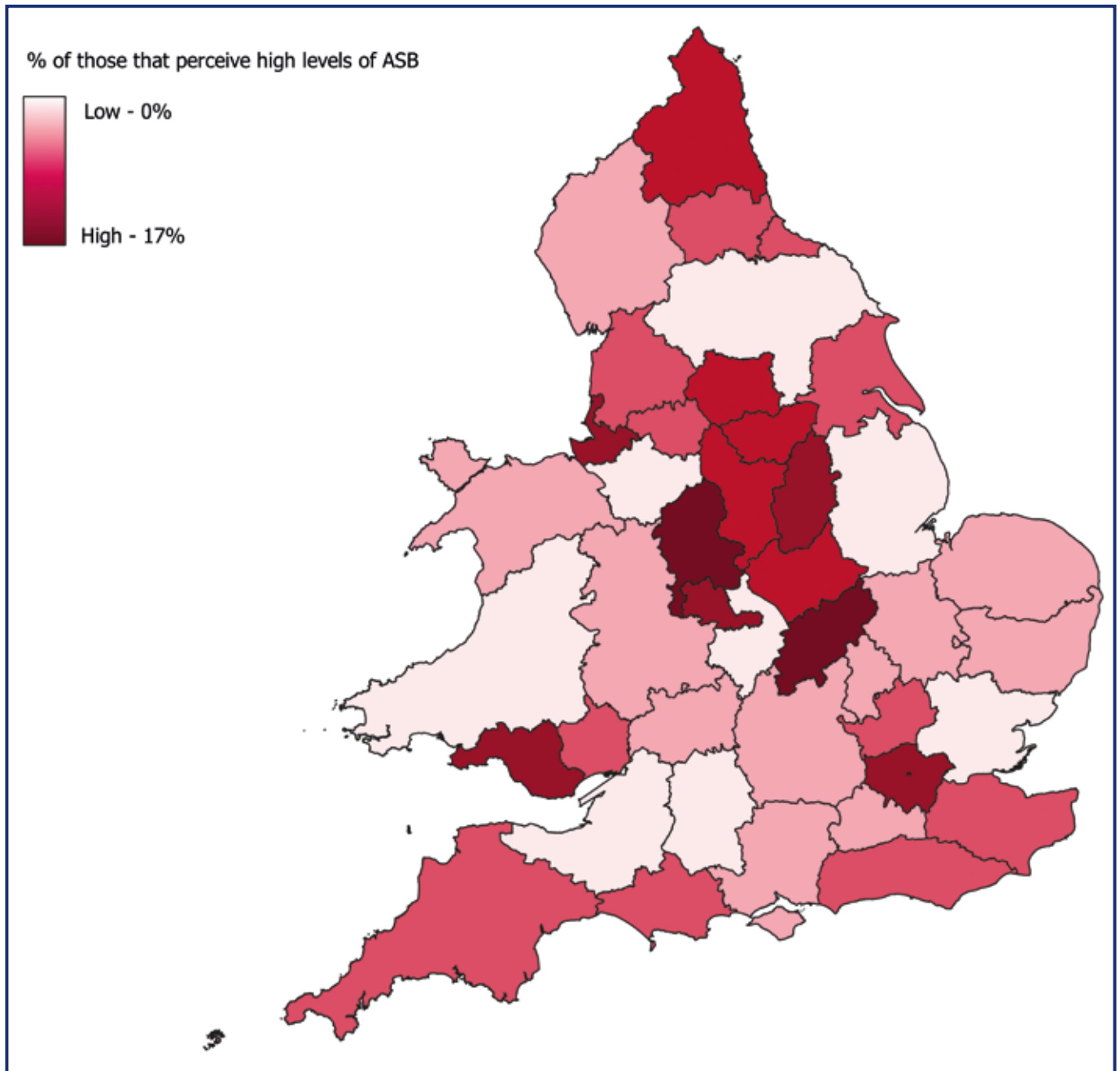


**Notes:**

Being based on small sample sizes, police force area estimates from the CSEW are less robust than national level estimates and should be treated with caution.

11 Office for National Statistics. [Crime Survey for England and Wales \(CSEW\) estimates of personal and household crime, anti-social behaviour, and public perceptions, by police force area, year ending September 2022](#). 2023.

**Figure 3: Percentage perceived high level of anti-social behaviour in their area, year ending September 2022<sup>12</sup>.**



*Notes:*  
Being based on small sample sizes, police force area estimates from the CSEW are less robust than national level estimates and should be treated with caution.

12 Office for National Statistics. [Crime Survey for England and Wales \(CSEW\) estimates of personal and household crime, anti-social behaviour, and public perceptions, by police force area, year ending September 2022](#). 2023.



# Tougher punishment

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**I think mental health takes a huge hit... a lot of people are constantly victimised as a result of anti-social behaviour... then [that] has a negative impact on their wellbeing. Their mental wellbeing, and physical wellbeing, actually, I know one of the victims has suffered quite heavily with heart problems over stress.**

*Local authority stakeholder, Leicester<sup>13</sup>*



11. Too often, anti-social behaviour goes unchecked or unpunished which is why this plan centres around safety, security and respect for others. It addresses victims' anger, alarm and frustration about disrespect, their personal safety concerns and their experience of community decline. Polling in January 2023 found that 54% of the public do not think that the police take anti-social behaviour seriously enough, and 68% believe the police have given up altogether on trying to solve 'low level' crimes.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Home Office. [Anti-social behaviour: impacts on individuals and local communities](#). 2023.

<sup>14</sup> Kimaram, A., Tryl, L., Burns, C., and Surmon, T. [Where are the police? Britons' attitudes to crime, anti-social behaviour and the police \(moreincommon.org.uk\)](#). 2023.



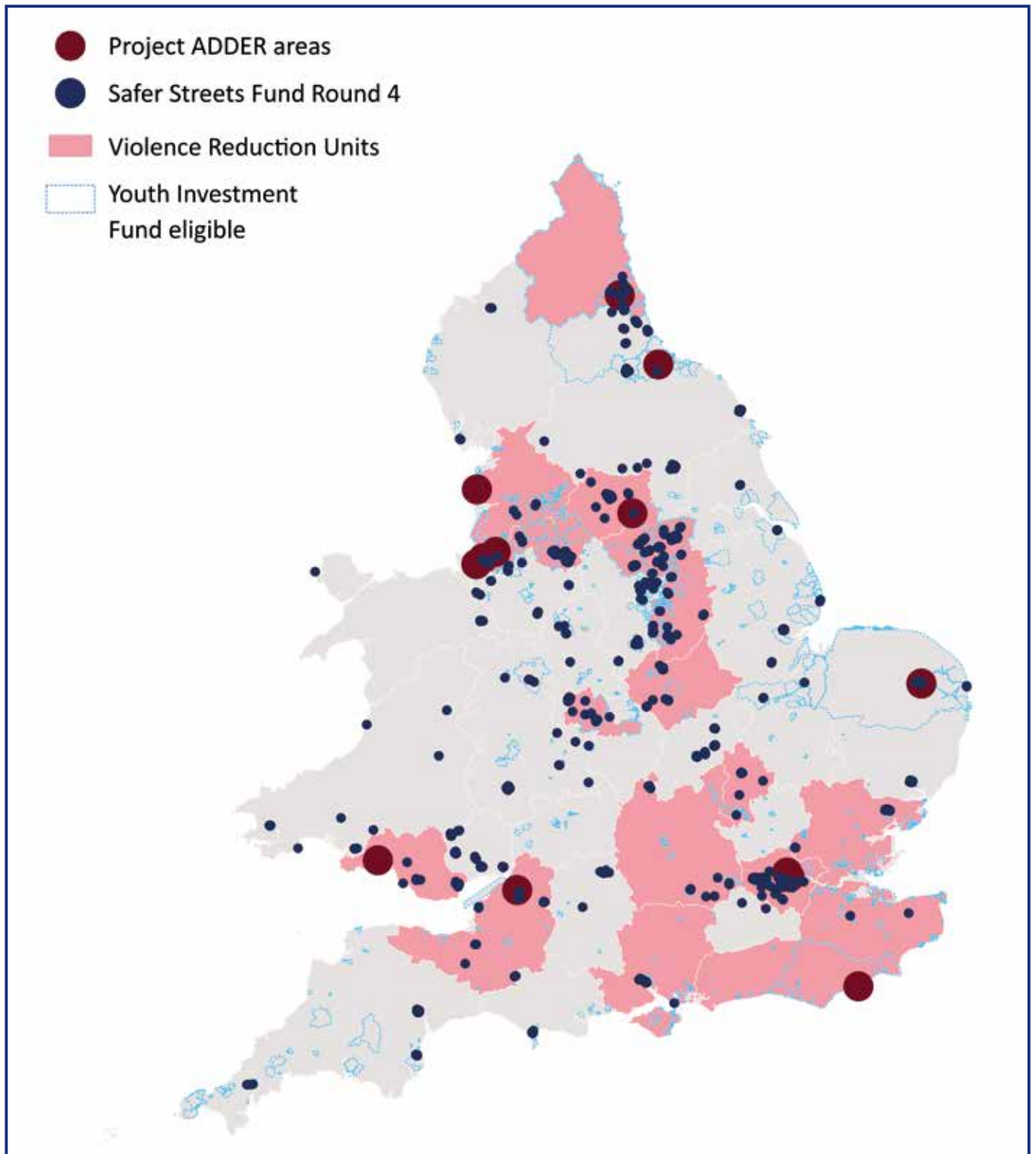
12. But anti-social behaviour is not 'low-level' or just a 'nuisance' crime. It should not be treated as such, especially by those responsible for enforcement and keeping communities safe. Actions have consequences and people have every right to expect that persistent perpetrators will face swift and certain 'Immediate Justice'. The measures we are introducing strengthen the array of powers and tools the police, councils and agencies are equipped with to deal with situations of anti-social behaviour that arise – reflecting the Government's determination to do all we can to stamp it out.
13. We will tackle anti-social behaviour through:
- a) **IMMEDIATE JUSTICE FOR PERPETRATORS:** Those found committing anti-social behaviour will be made to repair the damage they inflict on victims and communities, with an ambition for reparative justice to start 48 hours after their offence, and with communities involved in deciding the type of punishment or consequences they should face;
  - b) **CRACKING DOWN ON ILLEGAL DRUGS:** including a new ban on nitrous oxide and introducing greater use of drug testing on arrest to identify drug users and address the addiction that drives their behaviour;
  - c) **ENCOURAGING ORDERLY BEHAVIOUR:** by strengthening powers in the social and private rented sector to evict or sanction tenants who persistently commit anti-social behaviour, that has negative impacts on their neighbours.

## What we have already done

14. To deal with anti-social behaviour, the police, local authorities and other local partners have strong powers, and significant government investment.
- a) Since 2019, the Government has invested over £3 billion, including additional funding each year and that rolled into government grants, to enable the recruitment of 20,000 additional officers – a government priority and manifesto commitment.
  - b) To combat illegal drug supply chains, we are investing £300 million as part of the Drugs Strategy, including up to £145 million to crack down on county lines gangs.
  - c) To target street dealing and open use in hotspots, we have backed local partnerships under Project Adder with £59 million, funding more visible policing and treatment for drug takers.
  - d) We are supporting the areas most afflicted by organised crime, including through 'Clear, Hold, Build', a multi-agency partnership, set to be rolled out to all forces across England and Wales. In a successful pilot in Bradford, anti-social behaviour fell by 34%.
  - e) We are also continuing to deliver the twin-track Grip and Violence Reduction Unit programmes to tackle serious violence in public spaces. Since 2019, we have invested £340 million across both programmes into the 20 police force areas worst affected by serious violence in England and Wales and have already prevented over 136,000 violent offences.
  - f) We are injecting up to a further £93 million additional investment into Community Payback, to ensure criminals across England and Wales complete up to eight million hours of unpaid Community Payback per year. In high-vis, and under supervision, they will clean up graffiti, clear wastelands, and redecorate public places and buildings such as community centres.

g) We have launched a new expert panel to help social housing landlords tackle anti-social behaviour.

**Figure 4: Intervention funding by area: Violence Reduction Units, Youth Investment Fund, ADDER, Future ADDER and Safer Street Fund.**



# How we will go further

## Immediate justice for perpetrators



**Unless the changes [are] made, you can read as much as you like about being a good person, but actions speak louder than words, and people are getting away with things because they're a bully, or because they're being anti-social and they don't think the rules apply to them**

*Research participant who witnessed anti-social behaviour,  
Newcastle upon Tyne<sup>15</sup>*



15. The powerlessness felt by victims when anti-social behaviour goes unpunished means they are less likely to report anti-social behaviour at all, while offenders feel they can act with impunity. We are determined to change this. As part of changing the system to stamp out anti-social behaviour, we will provide the tools and funding to dispense Immediate Justice, by issuing out of court disposals with conditions to swiftly repair any damage – the aim being for them to start within 48 hours of the offence. In some circumstances, for example where the original damage has already been cleared up, they will support the local community in other ways, like unpaid work in shops and picking litter on high streets. Victims and communities will have a say in shaping the consequences perpetrators face and will see justice being done – offenders will wear hi-vis vests and be working under supervision – as they face the consequences of their actions and work to pay back their community. Backed by around £50m this will start in 10 initial trailblazer police force areas and be rolled out nationally in 2024. Police and Crime Commissioners will take a leading role, commissioning services for Immediate Justice to fulfil out of court disposals, working with local authorities, the police, youth offending teams and other agencies to do so.
16. For criminals who are sentenced in court to Community Payback, we will be increasing the number of Community Payback hours delivered by offenders each year to up to 8 million hours. These hours are spent improving local communities: removing graffiti, clearing wasteland, and decorating public places and buildings such as community centres. We will also be going further to ensure the Probation Service is doing everything it can to tackle anti-social behaviour, by:
  - a) piloting new ways of using Probation Service-delivered Community Payback rapidly to clean up particularly serious incidents of anti-social behaviour in specific local areas. The Probation Service will work with certain local authorities to develop new and quicker processes, enabling probation teams, made up of people serving Community Payback, to be deployed rapidly to places which urgently need cleaning up following antisocial behaviour taking place. This new, rapid model will offer certain local authorities a means to restore public places to normal as soon as possible.
  - b) extending offenders' involvement in Keep Britain Tidy's projects. Last year's annual Spring Clean week saw 1,500 offenders spend almost 10,000 hours on 300 community clean-up projects. This year, we will build on this success and run a

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<sup>15</sup> Home Office. [Anti-social behaviour: impacts on individuals and local communities](#). 2023.

second clean-up week in the autumn, which will focus on anti-social behaviour and raise awareness of the contributions of Community Payback teams. Each and every week, Probation Service Community Payback teams deliver thousands of hours of community payback work – and it is vital we use campaigns like Keep Britain Tidy to raise awareness of this work among the public.

17. We will also do more to ensure that we give local people a say in how and where Community Payback hours should be used to deter anti-social behaviour and clean up their park or high street. We will do this by:
- a) ensuring that the Probation Service, by law, consults key community leaders including Police and Crime Commissioners and local authorities on how and where our expanded eight million hours a year of Community Payback are used to improve public spaces and buildings. This will ensure that Community Payback hours are spent working on agreed local priorities.
  - b) giving local people a say in which projects local perpetrators complete. The Probation Service will be relaunching the Community Payback nominations website early next year, which will make it easier and more accessible for communities and members of the public who report anti-social behaviour to nominate potential Community Payback projects for offenders and the Probation Service to complete.

### Cracking down on illegal drugs



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**I find in the evenings, I’m a bit reluctant to walk down, because there’s people taking drugs, there’s the laughing gases, the little pellets all on the floor. Beer cans. And even in the parks, it is quite bad. So, I think when it gets dark, I’m a bit reluctant to leave the house now.**

*Research participant who experienced and witnessed anti-social behaviour, Newcastle upon Tyne<sup>16</sup>*

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16 Home Office. [Anti-social behaviour: impacts on individuals and local communities](#). 2023.



18. Drugs are a scourge on society. They ruin lives, blight our neighbourhoods and make our streets unsafe. Half of people that report they don't feel safe alone in their local area cite drug taking and dealing.<sup>17</sup>
19. As set out in the Drug Strategy and Beating Crime Plan, we are clamping down harder on drug dealers and are clear that 'recreational use' is not harmless. This action plan goes further, changing laws as needed to take a tougher approach to drug misuse and anti-social behaviour.
20. It is already illegal to sell nitrous oxide, sometimes known as 'laughing gas', for its psychoactive effect. Yet in England and Wales, nitrous oxide has been the third most used drug, after cannabis and cocaine, since 2012<sup>18</sup><sup>19</sup>. Use is prevalent amongst young people, and at the recent peak, almost one in ten 16-24 year olds reported using nitrous oxide in a 12-month period<sup>20</sup>. Clearly, some corner shops and online retailers continue to sell it without proper checks, and without facing consequences.
21. This is negatively affecting individuals and communities. In its 2023 review, the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs<sup>21</sup> found there have been anecdotal reports of an increase in social harms such as drug driving and littering of discarded canisters, as well as neurological harms, alongside widespread availability of nitrous oxide for illegitimate use. Some of these harms are felt acutely by communities, and from the public and police we repeatedly hear of links between nitrous oxide and nuisance or anti-social behaviour. Given the harm to communities, the health harms and prevalence amongst young people, we are taking a decisive approach and going further than the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs recommended.
22. We will ban nitrous oxide, intending to do so before the end of the year. When Parliamentary time allows, we intend to legislate to make nitrous oxide a Class C drug with potential prison sentences and unlimited fines for unlawful supply and possession.
23. We recognise there are many legitimate uses of nitrous oxide, and we do not want to hinder responsible medical, industrial and consumer use. We will consult on the ban of nitrous oxide and how best to protect people and communities from the harmful effects, while exempting legitimate uses so as to minimise the burdens on businesses.
24. We will also expand drug testing on arrest – so more suspected criminals can be tested, and more drugs tested for.
25. At present, suspected criminals can be drug tested in police detention only if they have committed certain offences, such as theft, robbery, burglary, drug possession and dealing, fraud and begging, without further approvals. We will expand this to also include night-time economy-related offending, offences linked to violence against women and girls, domestic abuse, serious violence, and anti-social behaviour.
26. Currently only certain opiates and cocaine (including crack cocaine) can be tested for. We will widen this to all Class A drugs, including ecstasy and methamphetamine. We will also bring forward further legislation to enable Class B drugs like cannabis, speed and ketamine to be tested for, as well as consider further broadening this to some Class C drugs.

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17 [YouGov. Anti-Social Behaviour](#). 2023.

18 Home Office, [Drugs Misuse: Findings from the 2012-2013 Crime Survey for England and Wales](#), 2013

19 Office for National Statistics, [Drug misuse in England Wales: year ending March 2020](#), 2020

20 Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs. [Nitrous Oxide – Updated Harms Assessments](#). 2023

21 Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs. [Nitrous Oxide – Updated Harms Assessments](#). 2023

27. We will also consult on expanding drug testing powers to enable ‘on the spot’ testing, so police can test individuals on the street who they suspect are committing crimes whilst under the influence of drugs.

### Encouraging orderly behaviour



**Again, it’s more the persistent anti-social behaviour where that’s a problem. We have a lot of people with anxiety and depression. So yes, it can have such a negative impact on somebody’s life and again, more so when it’s somebody who’s living in it and can’t leave. So, if it’s a neighbour dispute or if it’s something, it tends to be a lot more severe.**

*Local authority stakeholder, Leicester<sup>22</sup>*



**[It] affects me because she obviously makes me sleep deprived and then I’m just annoyed for the whole day and I’m up at six in the morning for work and stuff and then it stresses me out... I’m tired in work, I don’t want to go to work and stuff like that.**

*Research participant who witnessed anti-social behaviour, Liverpool<sup>23</sup>*



28. Anti-social behaviour by neighbours is particularly stressful. Feeling on edge or frightened at home impinges on people’s wellbeing and security. A survey in 2022 found that over one in four social housing residents had been affected by anti-social behaviour in the past year<sup>24</sup>. Applied across the sector, it would be equivalent to one million households. Of those who reported anti-social behaviour to their landlord, 55% were dissatisfied with the outcome and 40% of those affected by anti-social behaviour who did not report it did not do so because they did not think their landlord would do anything about it.<sup>25</sup> In the private rented sector, one in three landlords who have ended a tenancy report that they did so because their tenant engaged in antisocial behaviour.<sup>26</sup> Nuisance, criminal and abusive behaviour which impacts people at home is both disrespectful and unacceptable.
29. Neighbours sometimes fall out over issues – after-hours noise if a neighbour works nightshift, occasional parties, or property left in communal areas – that they can settle between themselves, but this is not always the case. As a first step, residents should seek to resolve disputes, if possible. We are exploring ways to increase mediation in

22 Home Office. [Anti-social behaviour: impacts on individuals and local communities](#). 2023.

23 Home Office. [Anti-social behaviour: impacts on individuals and local communities](#). 2023.

24 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. [Social Housing Quality Programme Resident: Residents Survey Report executive summary](#). 2022

25 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. [Social Housing Quality Programme Resident: Residents Survey Report executive summary](#). 2022.

26 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. [English Landlord Survey 2021: Main Report](#). 2022.

the Private Rented Sector, for example with the new Ombudsman to support landlords when tenants commit low-level – but high impact – anti-social behaviour. This will prevent avoidable evictions.

30. Sustained acts of intimidating or disruptive behaviour are not acceptable. These should lead to the eviction of the tenant involved. Landlords must be able to act against persistently problematic tenants and relieve innocent parties living nearby. Through this action plan we are strengthening the system – changing laws and arming landlords with the tools to ensure that anti-social tenants face the consequences of their actions.
31. For those living in the private rented sector or in properties owned by Private Registered Providers, we will ensure landlords can act more quickly than ever before to evict anti-social tenants. Through our reforms for renters, we will make grounds for possession – the legal reasons a landlord can evict a tenant – faster and far easier to prove. This will mean landlords can take immediate action – rather than giving two months’ notice and waiting for the end of a fixed term, as they currently need to when relying on Section 21. We will support tenants and landlords by:
  - a) ensuring that all private tenancy agreements include clauses specifically banning anti-social behaviour – making it easier for landlords to use the breach of tenancy ground to evict anti-social tenants.
  - b) making the notice period two weeks for all anti-social behaviour eviction grounds as part of our reforms for renters. We will also ensure that landlords are aware of existing tools – such as injunctions and Criminal Behaviour Orders – to crack down on anti-social tenants.
  - c) planning to expand the discretionary eviction ground, to make anti-social behaviour easier to prove in court: clarifying that any behaviour ‘capable’ of causing ‘nuisance or annoyance’ can lead to eviction.
  - d) speeding up the process of evicting an anti-social tenant by working with His Majesty’s Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) to explore how to prioritise anti-social behaviour cases in Possession Lists in the courts.
  - e) bringing forward legislation which will set out the principles that judges must consider when making their decision, such as giving weight to the impact on landlords, neighbours, and housemates and whether the tenant has failed to engage with other interventions to manage their behaviour.
  - f) preventing short-term lets importing anti-social behaviour into communities, such as noise problems or drunken and disorderly behaviour. We will do this by setting up a new registration scheme giving local authorities the data to easily identify short-term lets in their area. If a let proves problematic, they can take action against guests and owners. We will publish a consultation on the registration scheme shortly.
32. Where premises themselves are a source of nuisance, we will consult on expanding Closure Powers. These currently allow police or council officers to quickly shut down premises that are being used, or likely to be used, to commit nuisance or disorder. We intend to extend these powers to Housing Providers, making it easier and quicker for them to directly tackle nuisance premises without needed to go through the police or council officers.



33. Social rented sector tenants must also be protected from the insidious effect of anti-social behaviour on their daily lives and in their communities. Social landlords already have powers to tackle anti-social behaviour, through their allocation of social housing and through existing powers of eviction. We will ensure those powers are being used by setting clear expectations they are exercised in a timely fashion, and we will go further to strengthen the position of all social landlords by:

- a) updating statutory social housing allocations guidance ('Allocation of Accommodation guidance'<sup>27</sup>) to be clear that evidence of committing anti-social behaviour can and should be used to de-prioritise anti-social behaviour perpetrators, who should be at the back of the queue for social housing; and
- b) speeding up the process of removing anti-social behaviour perpetrators from their communities by exploring a "three strikes and you're out" eviction expectation for all social landlords, meaning three proven instances of anti-social behaviour followed by three warnings from your landlord. After three strikes, the Government thinks it is right that perpetrators of anti-social behaviour face eviction and should be deprioritised for further social housing and will work with the sector to achieve this.

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27 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. [Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England](#). 2012.

# Making communities safer

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**You get that, sort of, lingering anxiety. You're checking over your shoulder and looking around as you are leaving your home or as you go about your day. For a while, I've felt, the best thing to do is leave the neighbourhood as quickly as possible. I just felt that I wasn't able to lead a safe neighbourhood life and was aware that was a really sorry affair to have to have this in mind.**

*Research participant who witnessed anti-social behaviour, London<sup>28</sup>*



34. Anti-social behaviour is the main reason people do not feel safe in their local area.<sup>29</sup> And given fear of anti-social behaviour is worsening, existing powers could be used more effectively by agencies.
35. Crime, including anti-social behaviour, tends to be highly localised. Nearly a quarter of all neighbourhood crime is concentrated in just 5% of neighbourhoods.<sup>30</sup> The issues facing communities also vary. Residents of Oldham, in Greater Manchester, for example, were most worried about groups loitering at tram stops and harassing passengers. For residents of Clacton, in Essex, it was the public drinking around the town centre fountain

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28 Home Office. [Anti-social behaviour: impacts on individuals and local communities](#). 2023.

29 YouGov. [Anti-Social Behaviour](#). 2023.

30 Home Office. Safer Streets Fund (2021-2022) Prospectus. 2021.

driving people away. In Walsall, in the West Midlands, the primary concern was the violent reputation of certain neighbourhoods that meant people felt intimidated and avoided driving through them. In these three areas, which featured in the Onward think tank's recent Levelling Up Locally report, residents said they felt powerless in the face of anti-social behaviour.<sup>31</sup> This plan has been designed with the diverse needs of local people and areas in mind, to ensure specific local challenges can be addressed.

36. We will tackle anti-social behaviour through:

- a) **SCALING UP HOTSPOT ENFORCEMENT:** by increasing police presence alongside other uniformed authority figures, such as wardens, in problem areas for anti-social behaviour, including public transport;
- b) **DISCOURAGING ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR:** by increasing the use and size of on-the-spot fines for littering, graffiti, and fly-tipping to keep our parks and streets clean – which local authorities can use to fund more enforcement activity.

## What we have already done

37. To tackle crime and keep our communities safe:

- a) We are on target to recruit the 20,000 additional officers by 31 March 2023, taking us to over 148,400 officers across England and Wales. This will be the highest number of officers in forces across England and Wales on record.
- b) The £120 million Safer Streets Fund has supported 270 projects across England and Wales, including 102 focusing on anti-social behaviour as part of round four.
- c) We have helped local authorities combat fly-tipping by introducing fixed penalty notices and strengthening their powers to stop, search and seize the vehicles of suspected fly-tippers. We have also consulted on preventing householders from being charged to get rid of DIY waste to help ensure people dispose of their waste in a responsible way, encourage recycling and reduce the risk of fly-tipping.

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31 Hawksbee, A., and Menon, S. H. [Levelling Up Locally](#). 2022.

# How we will go further

## Scaling up hotspot enforcement



**Yeah, just more police about and having more of a presence especially around town areas. It'll just invite people to feel more safe to travel into the town areas for entertainment. So if there's police around, feel a bit safer. That's all.**

*Participant, Northampton*<sup>32</sup>



38. We know people feel safer when there are more police and authority figures on the streets and the evidence also shows taking a 'hotspot' approach, where uniformed police spend time at problem areas on a regular basis, reduces levels of crime.<sup>33</sup>
39. With around £60m we will fund an increased police presence to clamp down on anti-social behaviour, targeting hotspots. Police and Crime Commissioners will drive and lead the approach, working with their police forces and local authorities to identify parts of their community where a stronger, focused approach is needed due to anti-social behaviour. Initially we will work with 10 police force areas, but from 2024 will support a hotspot approach across every police force area in England and Wales, which will see thousands of additional patrols taking place in places blighted by anti-social behaviour. We will also fund more authority figures which could include uniformed local authority wardens with Police and Crime Commissioners determining the most effective measures locally, guaranteeing extra enforcement presence to deter or punish offences, including fly-tipping and littering. To make this sustainable and led by community need, we will work with Police and Crime Commissioners and local authorities to encourage innovative local partnerships and matched investment from business and organisations that will benefit from reduced anti-social behaviour, such as Business Improvement Districts or large retailers.
40. While the police, local authorities and other agencies already have a range of powers to tackle anti-social behaviour, they do not use them consistently, or, at times, enough. As part of our new approach to ensuring all partners have the tools they need to protect the public, we will consult on changes to existing anti-social behaviour tools and powers to ensure a stronger response, including:
  - a) extending dispersal powers to local authorities and increasing the length of dispersal to 72 hours.
  - b) extending public spaces protection orders to police and ensuring they can be used quickly and effectively.
  - c) extending power of arrest to all breaches of civil injunctions.

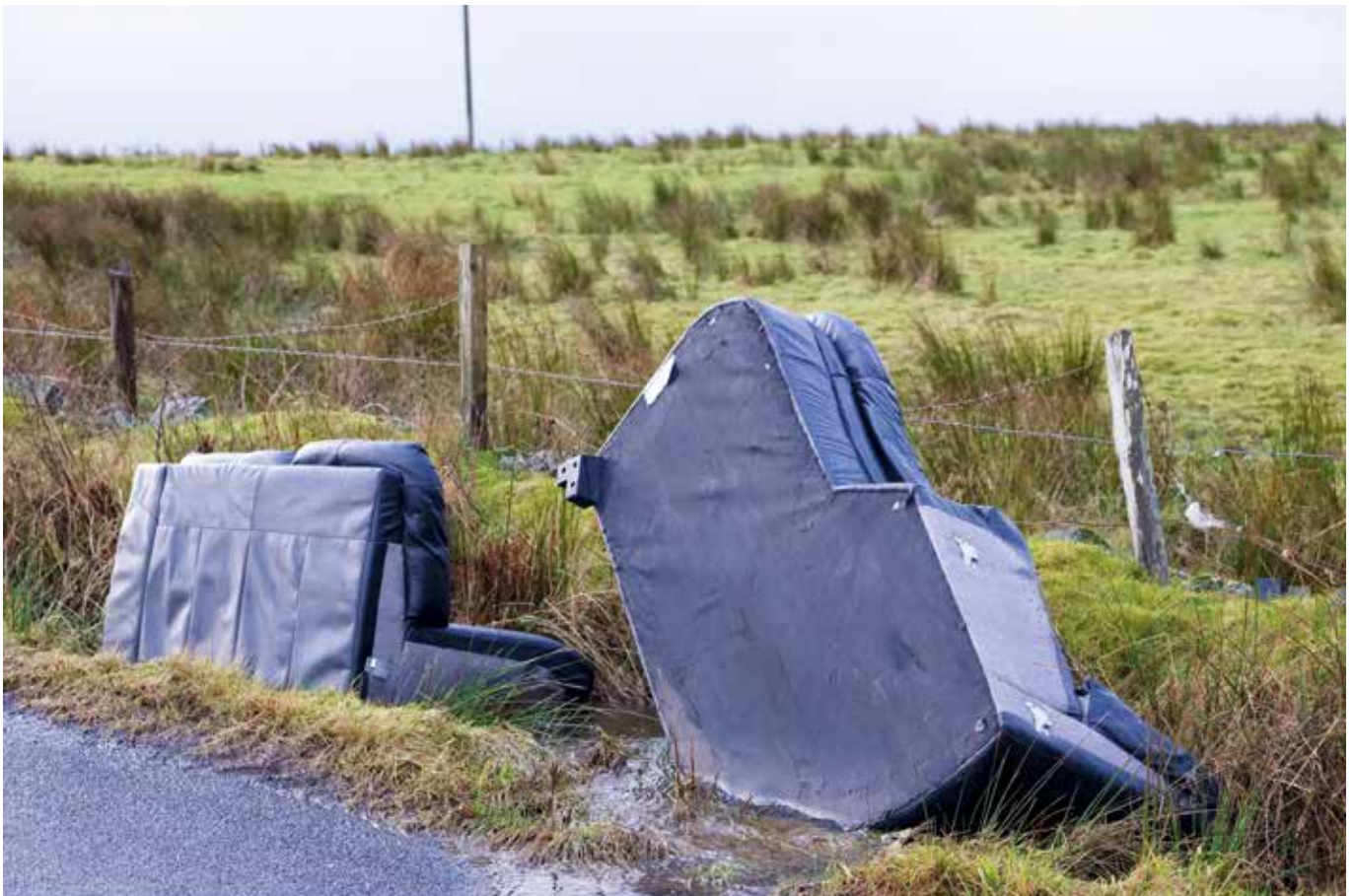
32 Kimaram, A., Tryl, L., Burns, C., and Surmon, T. [Where are the police? Britons' attitudes to crime, anti-social behaviour and the police \(moreincommon.org.uk\)](#). 2023.

33 Braga, AA, Turchan, B, Papachristos, AV, Hureau, DM. [Hot spots policing of small geographic areas effects on crime](#). Wiley Library – journal: Campbell Systematic Reviews. 2019.



- d) lowering the age limit of community protection notices to include younger perpetrators.
  - e) increasing the upper limit of fixed penalty notices for breaches of community protection notices and public spaces protection orders to £500.
  - f) extending Community Safety Accreditation Scheme powers to include relevant anti-social behaviour powers.
  - g) to make public transport safer, building on the model seen in the West Midlands, we will pilot an expansion to Transport Safety Officers with up to £2.5m additional funding – specially-trained staff to deal with low-level nuisance and disorder, who target hotspot routes and locations.
41. We will support local areas to make more use of existing powers with the statutory guidance and new toolkits.
- a) We will update the Manual for Streets, a key piece of design guidance which supports local areas to create safer streets for people. It will include guidance on how local areas can use design to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour.
  - b) We will work with the College of Policing and Police and Crime Commissioners to publish best practice for responding to anti-social behaviour and to help police forces consistently treat these crimes with the urgency they deserve.

### **Discouraging anti-social behaviour**



42. Litter, graffiti and fly-tipping make our neighbourhoods look and feel ugly and neglected. Dumping unwanted furniture and dirty mattresses in alleyways, chucking food wrappers and cigarette packets in the street, and spraying shopfronts or statues with graffiti are acts of vandalism or neglect borne of disrespect for others and our environment. Perpetrators should face consequences.
43. We want to see councils take a much tougher approach to this form of anti-social behaviour. We remain clear that the use of on-the-spot fine powers (called Fixed Penalty Notices or FPNs) should never be used to target accidental littering, or to punish those who are trying to do the right thing when education would be the better approach. But taking proportionate and effective enforcement action against people who intentionally or carelessly damage their local environment is a practical step authorities can take to change behaviour and deter others from offending. To equip them with everything they need and strengthen their arm, we will change laws and provide statutory guidance on the proportionate use of litter fining powers.
44. As a first step, this year we will increase the upper limits for on-the-spot fines:
- a) Those caught fly-tipping could be fined up to £1,000 (from £400 now)
  - b) Those who litter or graffiti could be fined up to £500 (from £150 now)
  - c) Those who breach their household waste duty of care could be fined up to £600 (from £400 now)
45. Currently, research suggests 92% of councils do not give out any on-the-spot fines to people for carrying out graffiti<sup>34</sup>. And while in 2021/22, councils issued 91,000 fines for fly-tipping, along with other enforcement actions, in total they dealt with almost 1.1 million incidents.<sup>35</sup> We want to see councils use these on-the-spot fines much more. Local authorities will have the freedom to set the rates that offenders should pay, within the limits above. Revenue from fines will be reinvested locally in clean up and enforcement – meaning perpetrators pay for local councils to continue toughening their approach in future years. We will increase transparency of the data on the use of on-the-spot fines, including publishing league tables on fly-tipping to show which local authorities are taking a muscular approach. This will support them to investigate, identify and catch perpetrators by triangulating known vandalism hotspots, investing in CCTV and paying for more wardens on patrol.

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34 Defra, [Graffiti and Fly-posting research report, 2022](#).

35 Defra, [Fly tipping incidents and actions taken in England, 2022](#).

# Reducing rough sleeping and begging



**I felt like I had anxiety, it was very distressing. When I walked back onto the road and I was walking really, really fast, trying to get into my car. I didn't even go to the shop, I thought, No, I'm not going to go into the shop, just in case [the man begging] is following me.**

*Research participant who experienced anti-social behaviour, Leicester<sup>36</sup>*



46. Restoring pride in place with safe streets and clean parks means we must maintain and enhance our public spaces. Crucial to this is dealing sensitively yet firmly with those who, in being unable or not always willing to access the support they need, can cause distress or harm to themselves and others. This in turn undermines the overall atmosphere of public safety and community pride.
47. The starting point to solve these issues is to prevent people ending up on the streets in the first place. Last year the Government published its plan to end rough sleeping for good. We committed an unprecedented £2bn over three years, focused on preventing rough sleeping – ensuring, for example, that those leaving a public institution, whether prison, hospital or care, won't find themselves on the streets with no place to go.
48. We now want to do more to safeguard the welfare of those who are vulnerable and sleeping rough, to move them off the streets and into support programmes. This response needs to reflect their often-complex problems, with accommodation often only one part of what they need to integrate back into society. A whole system approach should also ensure access to drug and alcohol treatment and more help to sustain people in work.
49. People may refuse help owing to their complex needs and a lack of trust in services, at a cost to their own welfare or to the welfare of others. Our response must enable local authorities and the police, when working with a wider set of agencies, to direct people at risk on the streets to take up the help that is on offer. But it must also ensure that they can robustly address issues caused by criminal activity as well as intervene where an individual's anti-social behaviour causes real distress to the public, creates a nuisance or undermines people's sense of safety and pride in the community.

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<sup>36</sup> Home Office. [Anti-social behaviour: impacts on individuals and local communities](#). 2023.



## What we have already done

50. To end rough sleeping and support people off the streets we have:
- a) Invested up to £500m through our flagship Rough Sleeping Initiative 2022-25 so that local authorities can provide tailored support to end rough sleeping.
  - b) Launched the £200m Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme that will deliver up to 2,400 homes for vulnerable people sleeping rough or at risk of rough sleeping (in addition to the 6,000 homes being delivered by the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme).
  - c) Committed £42m of funding since 2018 towards the sub-regional Housing First pilots to support the most entrenched rough sleepers in the West Midlands, Greater Manchester and Liverpool City Region.
  - d) Committed up to £186.5m in funding for substance misuse treatment services through the Rough Sleeping Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant over three years.

## How we will go further

51. Nobody should be criminalised for simply having nowhere to live. That is why we are repealing the Vagrancy Act. We have already embarked on a strategy to shift the focus to prevention and move vulnerable individuals into multi-agency support. Police forces and local agencies have, however, made clear they need more direct tools to help deal with individuals whose behaviour is causing a nuisance to the public and, where possible, to move those individuals on and into the support they are eligible for, including where they have refused the help before. This will both ensure individuals' needs are met and reduce the damage done to communities by criminal activity and other forms of anti-social behaviour that can often accompany street activity.
52. We want to go as far as possible to ensure vulnerable individuals on the streets can be directed to the support they need, while cracking down on conduct that is anti-social, intimidating, or criminal. We will introduce new powers for local authorities and the police, coupled with improved multi agency working between local partners. Among other measures, informed by further engagement with stakeholders, we will:
- a) introduce new tools to direct individuals to engage with positive pathways, including accommodation, mental health support, substance misuse support, and immigration or asylum services, so individuals who may have turned away help before access the support they need;
  - b) prohibit organised begging, which is often facilitated by criminal gangs to obtain cash for illicit activity;
  - c) prohibit begging where it is causing a public nuisance, such as by a cashpoint, in a shop doorway, on public transport, approaching people on the street or in their cars, and any broader incidence that cause nuisance, distress or blight; and,
  - d) introduce powers for the police and local authorities to address rough sleeping and other street activity where it is causing a public nuisance, such as by obstruction of doorways and pavements, and to clear the debris, tents and paraphernalia that can blight an area, while ensuring those genuinely homeless and with complex needs are directed to appropriate support.

# Building Local Pride

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**I think it stops people behaving like a community. I think people retreat to their own house a lot, there isn't an awful lot of community feel. People don't want to be out when there's fireworks going off, people don't want to be out when they're in danger of bumping into crowds of people.**

*Research participant who witnessed anti-social behaviour, Cardiff<sup>37</sup>*

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**People go about their business, they don't say hello to people, they put their heads down, they go home, lock their doors and that, they don't integrate like they used to, and I think it's become like that as well with people think, Oh, it's not my problem, let somebody else report it.**

*Research participant who witnessed anti-social behaviour, Liverpool<sup>38</sup>*

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53. The Government's Levelling Up agenda has pride in place at its heart. The focus is on restoring community pride and belonging. The public spaces we share are a vital part of thriving communities. As 'social infrastructure' they bind us together and create a sense of attachment and association. Neglect of this vital infrastructure soon takes its toll. Empty shops and buildings are visible signs of decline.<sup>39,40</sup>
54. We know that people are concerned about anti-social behaviour in public spaces, particularly in local parks and high streets.<sup>41</sup> And research shows that when asked to choose one local improvement, people say cutting crime.<sup>42</sup>
55. The economic and social harms caused by anti-social behaviour are all too clear. People grow reluctant to use local facilities, whether it is to let children play in the park or to take public transport to the shops, the mosque, or the library. Footfall in the high street goes down, depressing the local economy, and community assets go to waste. With the onset of decline, pride in place deteriorates – creating a vicious circle.
56. In this context, anti-social behaviour can have a particular impact on communities already most at risk of economic decline. And as anti-social behaviour gives rise to more serious offences, already vulnerable communities become ever more susceptible to rising crime.

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37 Home Office. [Anti-social behaviour: impacts on individuals and local communities](#). 2023.

38 Home Office. [Anti-social behaviour: impacts on individuals and local communities](#). 2023.

39 UK in a changing Europe. [Levelling Up: what England thinks](#). 2022.

40 Cardiff University. [Security, Crime and Intelligence Innovation Institute: The Signal Crimes Perspective](#).

41 [YouGov. Anti-Social Behaviour](#). 2023.

42 UK in a changing Europe. [Levelling Up: what England thinks](#). 2022.

57. We will reinforce our support for local areas and make sure public spaces are thriving:
- a) **TACKLING EMPTY SHOPS AND PROPERTIES AND SUPPORTING LOCAL MARKETS**, by giving local businesses, entrepreneurs and communities the chance to take over vacant properties through High Street Rental Auctions, making our high streets fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century with new High Street Accelerators and lifting restrictions on the number of days local people can hold markets can be held and encouraging more people into the town centre;
  - b) **IMPROVING ACCESS TO GREEN SPACES**, by supporting communities to restore their parks and green spaces through an up to £5 million boost to the areas most in need.

## What we have already done

58. To revitalise communities and town centres, we:
- a) are investing £2.35 billion across 101 Town Deals, investing up to £25 million in each place (and more in exceptional cases) to support local jobs and businesses, local infrastructure and town centres.
  - b) have funded 216 projects via rounds one and two of the Levelling Up Fund, totalling £3.8 billion, regenerating town centres and high streets, upgrading local transport and investing cultural and heritage assets. Further detail on round three will be announced shortly.
  - c) are supporting 72 places across England with over £830 million to reinvigorate high streets.
  - d) have committed £95 million to the High Street Heritage Action Zones (HSHAZ) initiative which will drive the regeneration of over 60 towns and cities. Historic England is working with councils and residents to transform historic buildings and streetscapes by improving their physical and economic condition, including restoring over 500 shop fronts and over 1,800 heritage assets, building and developing pride in our places;
  - e) have launched the £9 million Levelling Up Parks Fund, giving new money direct to towns and cities that need it most to create and refurbish their parks and green spaces.

## How we will go further

### Tackling empty shops and properties and supporting local markets



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**It's just getting worse, the streets are dirty, the shops are empty, you've got drunks on most corners...it's just not nice.**

*Participant, Onward Research, Clacton<sup>43</sup>*

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**Not a chance you walk round Oldham town centre on your own. I have a daughter and I'd rather let her walk round the Arndale [Centre]. I don't think it's safe.**

*Participant, Onward Research, Oldham<sup>44</sup>*

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<sup>43</sup> Hawksbee, A., and Menon, S. H. [Levelling Up Locally](#). 2022.

<sup>44</sup> Hawksbee, A., and Menon, S. H. [Levelling Up Locally](#). 2022.

59. We know people see empty shops and buildings as a sign of decline. They make them feel unsafe. Undoubtedly, too, our town centres are adjusting to significant challenges. The proliferation of online retail has changed how we shop. The high street must find new ways to attract people and kindle local pride.
60. It will take leadership from the public, private and third sectors together to make this happen, as well as involvement from communities and residents themselves. To help revitalise our high streets and prevent further decline, we are changing laws and arming councils with new tools:
- a) To breathe new life into shuttered shops we will introduce High Street Rental Auctions across all local authorities this autumn, following passage of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill. These auctions will allow local authorities to sell off the rental rights for empty properties to willing tenants, such as businesses and community groups, for a short period of time. To supercharge use, we will provide up to £2m of financial support to make sure that areas which need this the most are not priced out by prohibitive refurbishment costs to bring the properties up to standard.
  - b) At the same time, we will also pilot High Street Accelerators which will incentivise and empower local people to work together to develop ambitious plans to tackle vacancy and reinvent their high streets so that they are fit for the future. We will support this programme with up to £2.5 million of funding for up to 10 key areas.
  - c) To ensure that tackling anti-social behaviour remains the focus of reshaping high streets and neighbourhoods we will produce guidance highlighting the links between good design and reducing anti-social behaviour once the amended National Planning Policy Framework is published and the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill is in place. This could include more street lighting and CCTV. We will also consult on whether the National Planning Policy Framework should explicitly refer to the need for planning policies and decisions to reduce anti-social behaviour.
  - d) Because complex commercial leasing rules are holding back high streets, we will launch the Landlord and Tenant Act Review – led by the Law Commission – with a view to their reform. Our aim is to make the system easier to understand and more transparent and attract more investment into UK commercial property.
  - e) So that local authorities can move quickly when a private property is left vacant, we will make changes to the Empty Dwelling Management Order regime, cutting the minimum time period for action from two years to six months specifically for properties which have become a magnet for anti-social behaviour or occupied by squatters.
  - f) We will consider changes to the guidance for Section 215<sup>45</sup> notices, which local authorities can use to make owners and occupiers fix and tidy their land and buildings, so that it includes notices on empty buildings that are ruining the local amenity. We are also removing the upper limit on fines for landlords and building owners who do not comply with a Section 215 order, encouraging them to fix disrepair that can attract anti-social behaviour.
  - g) Additionally, we intend to target the awful practice of ‘cuckooing’ or home invasion and will engage with stakeholders on making it a new criminal offence. By ‘cuckooing’ we mean criminals taking over a premises (often the home of a vulnerable person, such as an individual with limited physical or mental capacity, or substance addiction) to use for illegal activities. This has a serious impact on the victim being exploited

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45 MHCLG. [Town and Country Planning Act 1990 Section 215: best practice guidance 2005](#).



but can also affect local communities that are likely to suffer a range of anti-social behaviour as a result.

61. We know that the high street is going through a period of significant change, and that such change brings both risk and opportunity. The actions that we will deliver through this plan will provide additional tools and support for local leaders so that our high streets not only survive, but flourish. By helping local authorities tackle persistent and long-term vacancy, we will see more opportunities for local businesses and communities to rent and own property on the high street, helping to transform empty and derelict buildings into thriving hubs of activity.
62. We want our high streets to be vibrant, safe and welcoming environments regardless of the time of day. As we see vacancy reduce and footfall increase, it is essential that the people living, working and visiting high streets are able to enjoy themselves without fear of anti-social behaviour or abuse. Our new guidance on high street design will support local authorities actively to consider the ways in which their high streets can be developed to help people feel confident and safe.
63. The future of the high street should be shaped by local people and communities and it is our hope that with more opportunities to rent and own vacant property, and with our new accelerator pilot to bring local people together, we will continue to see more communities, residents, and local businesses having a direct say in how their high street evolves.
64. We will give local people more flexibility to host local markets, attracting people and traders to the town centre. We have already abolished the requirement for local areas to apply for planning permission to set up a market, and we will go further by doubling the number of days markets can be held – in line with other uses of outdoor space.

### **Improving access to green spaces**

65. We know that having access to parks and green spaces is important to people. More than nine in ten people say parks and green spaces are important to creating a sense of pride in place.<sup>46</sup> And being able to spend time in your local park can have significant health benefits as well as providing a space for people to meet, play, exercise and socialise.<sup>47</sup> We want to improve access to green spaces for everyone, but particularly in urban areas where access is more limited. Last year, we provided £9 million to areas in need to support the creation and refurbishment of parks – whether formal gardens, town parks or ‘pocket parks’ – and planting of more trees. As part of this Action Plan, we will boost our investment in green spaces by providing up to £5 million funding to areas most in need to restore their parks and green spaces, giving more people access and improving pride in place.

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46 Research carried out by [YouGov](#) for [Keep Britain Tidy](#).

47 Public Health England. [Improving access to greenspace. A new review for 2020](#). 2020.

# Prevention and early intervention

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**Anti-social behaviour is almost always a product of the environment and the, kind of, socio-economic background, but also it comes from boredom. People don't take part in anti-social behaviour when they've got better things to do.**

*Research participant who witnessed anti-social behaviour,  
Newcastle upon Tyne<sup>48</sup>*



66. Around 80% of prolific adult offenders begin committing crimes as children. As well as the personal cost in human suffering and missed life chances, the estimated cost of late intervention to the economy is nearly £20.6 billion per year. Of this, £850 million is attributed to anti-social behaviour (2023/24 prices)<sup>49</sup>.

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48 Home Office. [Anti-social behaviour: impacts on individuals and local communities](#). 2023.

49 Chowdry, H., Fitzsimons, P. [The cost of late intervention: EIF analysis 2016](#) | Early Intervention Foundation. 2016.



67. Yet this is often driven by young people having nowhere to go, and can have links to challenges in education. When home and school are not safe havens, for a range of reasons, anti-social behaviour can take root. While the vast majority of children persistently absent from school are off because of illness and are not involved in anti-social behaviour, persistent unauthorised absence for other reasons can be a risk factor for getting in trouble. The strengthened measures in this plan will boost support for young people, to prevent anti-social behaviour and protect the wider public.
68. Working with Youth Offending Teams, youth and probation services, and local authorities, we will:
- a) **INTERVENE EARLY** with ‘at risk’ young people to steer them away from anti-social behaviour and crime; and
  - b) **INCREASE LOCAL ACTIVITIES** by building on our National Youth Guarantee with further support and additional youth service hours in anti-social behaviour hotspots.

## What we have already done

69. Alongside clear expectations of parents, the Government has committed significant provision for young people:
- a) The Turnaround programme will support 17,000 children on the cusp of the justice system, to turn them away from further or more serious offending and anti-social behaviour, by completing an assessment to understand their needs and engage the whole family in interventions to meet their identified needs to address the root cause of the issues bringing them to the attention of agencies such as the police.
  - b) The Alternative Provision Specialist Taskforces pilot is operating in 22 alternative provision schools and is focusing on targeted support for children most at risk, including those who have been excluded from mainstream school. The programme co-locates a diverse specialist workforce (like mental health professionals, speech and language therapists and youth workers) in a school, to work directly with children to offer intensive support. The programme is running until March 2025 and has already worked with over 2,500 children.
  - c) To help families with multiple complex needs, we have committed £695 million to the Supporting Families programme, taking the total investment over the last 10 years to £1.9 billion. This aims to address problems early and improve the lives of 300,000 families by 2025.
  - d) Priority support for areas of deprivation, including anti-social behaviour hotspots, is available through the £16.5 million Uniformed Youth Fund<sup>50</sup>. This supports organisations such as the Scouts and Police Cadets to reach around 20,000 more teenagers across England.

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50 <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-outlines-ambitious-plans-to-level-up-activities-for-young-people>

- e) Children and young people in some of the most deprived areas of England will benefit from 278 new multi-use games areas through a £30 million investment from the Government’s Football Foundation in the PlayZones programme, offering healthy and attractive alternatives to anti-social behaviour.
  - f) We are also delivering a National Youth Guarantee: by 2025, every young person will have access to regular clubs and activities, adventures away from home and opportunities to volunteer. This is supported by over £500 million of investment in youth services.
  - g) In the ‘Built on Love’ Strategy, we have outlined our plans to build on the strengths of current early help services, through the creation of Family Help. Through the £45m Families First for Children Pathfinder programme, we will test how multi-disciplinary family help teams can improve the support children and families receive.
  - h) We are investing around £300 million to enable 75 local authorities to create family hubs and improve ‘start for life’ services. Family hubs bring services together for families, including young people. Some family hubs will provide youth services on site, and all family hubs will be able to provide information and connect young people to local youth services and other support, such as mental health or drug and alcohol support.
70. Good attendance at school is essential, and parents have a responsibility – and a legal duty – to ensure their children attend, with the law protecting a child’s right to education. There are a range of interventions, including enforcement, to protect this right. This includes parenting contracts, to formalise the actions the parent will take to improve attendance, and the support provided to enable this, and attendance prosecution, where failure to ensure regular school attendance can result in a parent being fined up to £2,500.

## How we will go further

### Intervening early and increasing local activities



**Just kids bored, nothing else to do, nowhere to go. I’m not just justifying it but yeah that seems to be what it is to me.**

*Participant, Northampton*<sup>51</sup>



71. The Youth Investment Fund is integral to the National Youth Guarantee – investing over £300 million in up to 300 new and refurbished facilities in levelling up priority areas as safe spaces where young people can take part in a range of activities with the support of trained adults. Over 80% of top tier local authority areas eligible for the Youth Investment Fund contain at least one anti-social behaviour hotspot . When the facilities open their doors, we will be prioritising resource funding to expand the offer to young people in those areas.

51 Kimaram, A., Tryl, L., Burns, C., and Surmon, T. [Where are the police? Britons’ attitudes to crime, anti-social behaviour and the police \(moreincommon.org.uk\)](https://www.moreincommon.org.uk). 2023.

72. By giving young somewhere safe to go, something engaging to do, and someone trusted to talk to, they help to steer young people away from bad life choices. We will invest in more of these opportunities. With up to £11m we will fund one million more hours of provision for young people over the next two years in areas where anti-social behaviour is worst. This is the equivalent of up to 200 local youth clubs opening an extra night a week for young people for two years, supporting them where they need it most.
73. For young people who are on the cusp of offending, or have other more complex needs, we will:
- a) Expand the eligibility criteria for the Turnaround programme so it can intervene even earlier, and investing more to help a further 500 young people via 1-1 support. Through the programme, we are already providing tens of millions of pounds to Youth Offending Teams across England and Wales to support them to work with children on the cusp of the criminal justice system, supporting them from going on to be involved in and commit further anti-social behaviour and crime. We will go further still and expand the programme's eligibility criteria so children can get support at an even earlier stage, and increase government investment in the programme so even more young people are supported.
  - b) Outside the classroom, we will work with delivery partners on the National Youth Guarantee to ensure a stronger focus in areas where young people are most at risk of being drawn into anti-social behaviour. They will have the opportunity to join activities such as The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme and the National Citizen Service, and uniformed youth groups such as Scouts, Girlguiding, and Cadets.

# Improving data, reporting and accountability for action

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**And when you get anti-social behaviour, you tend to think, Right, I'm going to report it to the police, you ring the police, the police then tell you, It's not our problem, you've got to contact the council. You ring the council and they turn round and say, Well it's a police matter, nothing to do with us. So we're left in between, thinking, Where do we turn to?... it does leave us with a feeling of being dumped to one side.**

*Research participant who experienced anti-social behaviour, Leicester<sup>52</sup>*



**I think [anti-social behaviour] genuinely is one of the only areas, really, where the onus is on you to know where to report to. And if you get it wrong, the onus is still on you to find the right person to report to. And I've seen that first-hand.**

*Member of police force, Newcastle upon Tyne<sup>53</sup>*



74. Data equals knowledge. Good data about anti-social behaviour is required to take effective action and improve people's lives. But the people who suffer anti-social behaviour need to give the authorities the evidence and the present system does not encourage them to do so. This plan changes that, because we need their help to build a clear picture of where anti-social behaviour happens, how often and what type. Which anti-social behaviour worries victims most, and where do they most want the police and councils to intervene?
75. There are a range of reasons why many people do not report anti-social behaviour. They have no faith that it will be dealt with seriously; they do not understand what anti-social behaviour is or how to report it, or they fear repercussions from offenders. We also know that when people do report anti-social behaviour, the challenges that they face during the process often put them off from reporting it in the future<sup>54</sup>. But all this creates a vicious circle. The very lack of reporting data means anti-social behaviour is not tackled as a priority, and even fewer people report it as a result – only exacerbating the

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52 Home Office. [Anti-social behaviour: incident journey – from reporting to resolution](#). 2023.

53 Home Office. [Anti-social behaviour: incident journey – from reporting to resolution](#). 2023.

54 Home Office. [Anti-social behaviour: incident journey – from reporting to resolution](#). 2023.

negative impacts of anti-social behaviour, increasing feelings of helplessness and reducing trust in agencies. This then serves to reduce reporting even further.

76. We need to break this cycle, to ensure the public's voices are heard and to improve how anti-social behaviour is acted upon, by:
- a) **IMPROVING HOW ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR IS REPORTED AND ACTED UPON** so members of the public can have a simple and clear route to report anti-social behaviour, access advice and guidance in one place, and be updated on the outcome of their case. To ensure victims can challenge any unsatisfactory response, we are also relaunching Anti-Social Behaviour Case Reviews, providing greater clarity for victims on when it can be used.
  - b) **HOLDING ALL LOCAL PARTNERS TO ACCOUNT** through expanded data collection and publication and setting clear expectations on their role in tackling anti-social behaviour.

## Improving how anti-social behaviour is reported and acted upon



**When there's no resolve, you feel helpless because it's like, you've got no power over this and the people that have got the power over this are not really doing their job, you know?**

*Research participant who experienced anti-social behaviour, London<sup>55</sup>*



**I think actually if we dealt with Community Triggers earlier and maybe pushed people towards them sooner, they wouldn't be such a big job when we do get them... if we signposted a lot earlier and asked those people to come forward if they were unhappy earlier, then we'd have less have to work do.**

*Local authority stakeholder, Leicester<sup>56</sup>*



55 Home Office. [Anti-social behaviour: incident journey – from reporting to resolution](#). 2023.

56 Home Office. [Anti-social behaviour: incident journey – from reporting to resolution](#). 2023.



77. We know that people who report anti-social behaviour find the process lengthy and difficult to navigate, often without sufficient communication and feedback from agencies. We will radically change how anti-social behaviour is reported across England and Wales.
- a) In the first phase, we will establish a central anti-social behaviour hub on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk), which will act as the central source of the latest information on anti-social behaviour. The hub will bring together guidance and tools available at the local level to tackle anti-social behaviour, and clear information on what action you should expect if you report an incident. This will be updated regularly.
  - b) Over the next 12 months we will provide funding to develop a digital one-stop-shop where people can report anti-social behaviour to the right local responders and get feedback on the response. This will include ensuring the public have easy and flexible ways of reporting anti-social behaviour – whether online, by text, email or phone – and will receive an update on what has happened as result. This will also enable local agencies to share information on perpetrators of anti-social behaviour within communities better, identify repeat offenders and take necessary action.
  - c) The Anti-social Behaviour Case Review, formerly known as the Community Trigger, which gives victims recourse to challenge where a local response is currently underused: in 2022, 94% of people surveyed had never heard of the tool.<sup>57</sup> We will relaunch the ‘Anti-social Behaviour Case Review’, providing greater clarity on how and when it can be used, and encourage agencies to automatically conduct reviews once the threshold has been hit (as opposed to waiting for victims to request).
  - d) Through the upcoming Community Safety Partnerships review, we will explore whether Community Safety Partnerships should be required to report to Police and Crime Commissioners on local anti-social behaviour data and strategy and we will set out the role of Police and Crime Commissioners in the Anti-social Behaviour Case Review process.

## Holding all local partners to account

78. To better understand where anti-social behaviour is happening, how to tackle it and hold agents to account for enforcing against anti-social behaviour, we will:
- a) provide over £5m funding to increase the sample size of the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) from 35,000 to 55,000 for the survey year 2023/24 and to 70,000 in future years, enabling people’s experience and perception of anti-social behaviour to be reported at a more granular local level than is currently possible;
  - b) consider the use of new technology to survey people about anti-social behaviour in local areas on a rolling basis, which will provide an easy channel to communicate local priorities;
  - c) work with local authorities and the police to establish mandatory reporting of key anti-social behaviour metrics, and work with the courts and housing providers to improve overall quality of local data;

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<sup>57</sup> Resolve. [We hear you – a victim-focused approach to community safety](#). 2022.

- d) with local government partners, identify outcomes relating to anti-social behaviour which should be included in the set of comparative data on local authorities' performance produced by the Office for Local Government (Oflog). Oflog has the purpose of increasing transparency, fostering accountability, and helping drive the improvement of local government performance; and
  - e) provide additional guidance to agencies on data sharing, to make sure key information does not fall through the cracks between agencies when responding to anti-social behaviour incidents.
79. The Government expects local partners to work together to deliver a multi-agency approach to tackling anti-social behaviour and delivering the proposals set out in this plan, with Police and Crime Commissioners playing a key role in coordinating implementation at a local level, working with Community Safety Partnerships, police forces, local authorities, and other relevant delivery partners such as Youth Offending Teams, housing associations and the Probation Service.
80. It is also vital that we measure the overall success of this plan in tackling anti-social behaviour to ensure that it is meeting the commitments we have set out. We will assess the impact of our proposals on both communities' experience and perceptions of anti-social behaviour and their effectiveness in tackling it. To achieve this, we will draw from the wide range of data enhancements outlined throughout this plan, alongside wider measures, to monitor and evaluate its success and to further inform our understanding of what works in driving down anti-social behaviour.
81. We will oversee the implementation and delivery of this action plan with a new Anti-Social Behaviour Taskforce jointly led by the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Levelling Up that will bring together national and local partners, with a sole focus of addressing anti-social behaviour and restoring pride in place in communities.













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