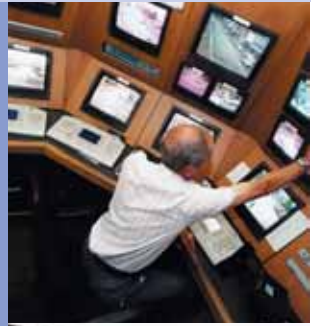




The North Lanarkshire Antisocial Behaviour Strategy 2005 - 2008

Building Better Neighbourhoods

*dealing with anti social behaviour
in our communities*





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Motherwell
ML1 1TW
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The North Lanarkshire Antisocial Behaviour
Strategy 2005 - 2008

The North Lanarkshire Antisocial Behaviour Strategy 2005-2008

Contents

Introduction	4
The National and Local Context	4
NLP Community Plan 2004 – 2008	4
Community Safety	5
The Antisocial Behaviour Etc (Scotland) Act 2004	6
Antisocial Behaviour	6
The Strategy	7
Strategy Working Group	7
Developing the Strategy	
- Nature and extent of antisocial behaviour	8
- What services do we currently provide?	8
- Community Regeneration Unit	9
- Information sharing	9
Children and Young People	9
Antisocial Behaviour Outcome Agreement	10
Communications/Engagement Strategy	11
Consultation	11
Diversity Issues	12
Mental Health Issues	12
Conclusion	12

The North Lanarkshire Antisocial Behaviour Strategy 2005-2008

Introduction

The North Lanarkshire Antisocial Behaviour Strategy has been developed in response to a requirement made under Part 1 of the Antisocial Behaviour Etc (Scotland) Act 2004 (hereinafter "the Act").

This places a duty upon Local Authorities and Chief Constables to develop, monitor and publish results on a joint Antisocial Behaviour Strategy.

Within North Lanarkshire the relevant bodies are the North Lanarkshire Council and Strathclyde Police 'N' Division.

A number of other partners have been involved in the development of the strategy, many of whom are members of the North Lanarkshire Partnership (NLP). The NLP is the strategic community planning body and it has developed and produced the Community Plan 2004-2008, one of the main themes of which is Community Safety dealing with antisocial behaviour issues.

The National and Local Context

This Strategy takes account of, and indeed cannot operate in isolation from, various national and local strategies and plans.

For example, at a National level the strategy takes account of;

- The Antisocial Behaviour Etc (Scotland) Act 2004 and associated Guidance
- The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 – Community Planning
- Closing the Opportunity Gap Objectives
- The Community Regeneration Fund
- Community Safety Partnership Award Programme
- National Standards for Youth Justice
- ACPO(S) Policing Priorities for Scotland

At a local authority level the Strategy takes cognisance of;

- NLP Community Plan 2004-2008
- Regeneration Outcome Agreement 2005-2008
- Community Safety Partnership Action Plan 2005-2008
- Integrated Children's Services Plan 2005-2008
- Youth Justice Strategy
- North Lanarkshire Council Corporate Plan 2004-2008

NLP Community Plan 2004 - 2008

The North Lanarkshire Partnership Community Plan 2004 –2008 states that our vision for North Lanarkshire is:

- **A place people want to live** because of the range, quality and affordability of the housing available, the safety of our communities, the quality and accessibility of the natural environment, and the quality of amenities and services in the area.
- **A place where people live well** because the health, well-being, and life chances of its people are as good as those elsewhere in Scotland.

The North Lanarkshire Antisocial Behaviour Strategy 2005-2008

- **A place where people choose to work** because of the range and variety of quality employment opportunities in the local economy.
- **A place where people choose to do business** because support for new and existing businesses, business sites, the transport network, and the quality of workforce are second to none in Scotland.
- **A place where people participate in learning** at all ages and stages of life, and achieve their full potential.
- **A place where all people have a fair chance in life** and where factors that presently limit some people's opportunities and prospects are overcome.
- **A place where children and young people** are safe, nurtured, healthy, achieving, active, respected, responsible and included.

Turning this vision into reality will take time and we recognise that there are a number of significant areas that impact on the quality of life of the people of North Lanarkshire that need our continuing attention.

Community Safety

North Lanarkshire is one of the safest areas in Scotland in terms of the risk of becoming a victim of serious crime. However, some areas still experience a higher rate of crime than others and the fear of crime amongst sections of the community is higher than the reality. The persistence of low-level anti-social behaviour within our communities adds to the perception of this fear.

Some of our communities remain blighted by graffiti, vandalism and wilful fire-raising, and considerable anxiety can still be created by gatherings of young people on the streets.

We must also recognise that the misuse of alcohol and drugs is a significant factor that affects our communities through crime, disorder, anti-social behaviour and domestic abuse. Accidents caused as a result of such abuse can also be considered antisocial.

The North Lanarkshire Partnership will develop Community Safety strategies that will address community needs and ensure safer communities.

A number of priority areas need to be targeted, such as:

- Increasing people's confidence in their community to promote active citizenship and pride in their area and the quality of the environment in which they live.
- Working within communities where the identified rates of crime, accidents and perceived risk and insecurities are highest and support them to challenge, report and reduce unacceptable standards of behaviour.
- Working with all sections of the community to create awareness of the impact that their behaviour may have on other people's sense of safety and security.
- Working with the business community to address community safety issues that will ensure North Lanarkshire continues to be a safe and attractive place in which to operate.

The North Lanarkshire Antisocial Behaviour Strategy 2005-2008

The Antisocial Behaviour Etc (Scotland) Act 2004

The Act provides local authorities, the police, Courts and Children's Hearings with a range of new powers to assist in tackling antisocial behaviour and reducing its impact on individuals and communities. These powers include;

- Extending the range of Antisocial Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) to persons aged 12 – 15
- Attaching a power of arrest to ASBO's and enabling them to be issued as part of a sentence
- Allowing Police, with a Courts consent, to close any premises associated with antisocial behaviour
- Granting the Police powers to disperse groups habitually causing antisocial behaviour
- Allowing Police to seize motor vehicles used in the commission of antisocial behaviour
- Parenting Orders for parents failing their children
- Powers for Local Authorities to require private landlords to tackle antisocial behaviour associated with their properties
- Powers to Local Authorities requiring property owners to remove offensive graffiti on their property
- The issue of fixed penalty notices to persons committing a range of antisocial behavioural offences
- Community Reparation Orders requiring perpetrators to undertake community service within the communities affected by their antisocial behaviour.
- New powers for local authorities to deal with noise nuisance
- New powers to ensure local authority accountability to Children's Hearings
- Assisting agencies to legally share information to effectively deal with antisocial behaviour.

Antisocial Behaviour

The Act states that a person commits antisocial behaviour if they:

*“Act in a manner that causes or is likely to cause alarm or distress; or
pursues a course of conduct that causes or is likely to cause alarm or distress to at least one person not of the same household as them.”*

A course of conduct involves something done on at least two occasions, and it may be committed through speech, on foot, on a cycle, motor cycle or in a motor vehicle.

Antisocial Behaviour is very much perception based as different people have different tolerance levels dependant upon prevailing circumstances. People also have different views about what standards of behaviour are acceptable. It can cover a huge range of behaviour from serious harassment, playing persistent loud music and vandalism through to dropping litter, urinating or drinking in public places. Persistent shoplifting, drug misuse or begging can also be regarded as antisocial behaviour. Irrespective of perceptions, what all these things have in common is that they have a negative impact on people's quality of life, causing annoyance, offence, or distress.

The North Lanarkshire Antisocial Behaviour Strategy 2005-2008

Some types of behaviour, such as vandalism or threats of assault, are clearly examples of antisocial (and criminal) behaviour.

However, there are many activities, such as people congregating on a street corner or playing football in residential areas that are not illegal but which many people may perceive to be distressing or annoying, particularly if the behaviour is persistent.

The Strategy

Our aim is to effectively challenge, reduce and prevent antisocial behaviour by ensuring that appropriate, measured and properly targeted multi-agency use is made of the range of services available to partners in conjunction with new and existing powers

The challenge is to change people's behaviour. We recognise that enforcement measures alone do not change this. These will be most effective when there is multi-agency agreement and response to their use.

The strategy is based around the four pillars of Prevention, Intervention, Enforcement, and importantly, Rehabilitation to ensure that the problems do not recur. These pillars do not operate in isolation, indeed someone who is subject to enforcement action will also be receiving interventions and rehabilitation.

We therefore require to achieve effective co-ordination of services, both in our mainstream activities and in the new specialist services that we are now deploying such as Community Wardens, Environmental Wardens, Mobile CCTV and Night Noise Teams.

Strategy Working Group

A multi-agency Antisocial Behaviour Strategy Working Group was set up under the chair of the Assistant Chief Executive (Community Regeneration) to develop this strategy and to ensure integration with associated strategies and action plans.

This group now has overall responsibility for the implementation of the strategy, development of associated protocols and monitoring and evaluation. This will be carried out having regard to the National Accountability Framework, respective partners performance plans, and the action plans of strategies associated to, and aligned with, this strategy

The group functions as a strategic body reporting to the NLP Board through the Community Safety Partnership. It also reports to the Corporate Management Team and the Policy and Resources Committee within the council.

The North Lanarkshire Antisocial Behaviour Strategy 2005-2008

Developing the Strategy

The Act specifies that the Strategy must contain the following information;

- The nature and extent of Antisocial Behaviour across the local authority area
- The services that are currently available to people generally, under 16's, victims and witnesses, and
- How the Council and Police will co-ordinate their functions and exchange information.

Nature and extent of antisocial behaviour.

To determine the nature and extent of antisocial behaviour across the local authority area the indicators set out in the Scottish Executive National Accountability Framework were utilised in addition to a number of purely local indicators.

The data is produced as a separate appendix to this document.

What Services Do we Currently Provide?

A broad Audit of Services has been carried out across the Council, Police and other agencies to determine the nature of services currently available in respect of antisocial behaviour, particularly in relation to

- people generally,
- under 16's,
- victims, and
- witnesses

Combating antisocial behaviour is a priority for partners as part of their mainstream activities with substantial resources currently being committed to the aims of this strategy.

However, many existing and planned services would not be possible without the additional funding provided by the Scottish Executive as part of its strategic commitment to building safer communities. Continued funding by the Scottish Executive will be vital if we are to achieve our objectives.

In addition to mainstream council and police services, the following specialist services have been established to help deal with antisocial behaviour;

- Antisocial Behaviour helpline
- Environmental Wardens with enforcement powers for littering and fly tipping
- Community Wardens
- Mobile Wardens
- Night Noise Service
- Graffiti Hit Squad
- Abandoned vehicles initiative
- Rapid reaction CCTV
- Antisocial Task Force to tackle serious antisocial behaviour
- Mediation Service to resolve neighbour disputes
- Additional Victim Support Services
- Police Victim Focus unit
- Additional Community Police officers

The North Lanarkshire Antisocial Behaviour Strategy 2005-2008

- Mobile Community Police Offices
- Community Resource Vehicle
- A range of restorative practices within Social Work, Education, Police and Fire Services
- A range of youth services and initiatives

Community Regeneration Unit

North Lanarkshire Council and Strathclyde Police have shown their willingness to demonstrate co-ordination of functions in relation to antisocial behaviour and wider community planning issues.

During November 2004, the Chief Executive of North Lanarkshire Council restructured the Community Planning and Partnership Section of his Department. The new unit, under the leadership of the Assistant Chief Executive (Community Regeneration) now comprises two managers.

The Community Regeneration Manager oversees and co-ordinates Community Planning and Community Regeneration issues within the local authority.

Six local area regeneration managers have been recruited to lead the community planning process in the six local authority 'divisions'.

The Community Safety Manager has responsibility for co-ordinating all community safety and antisocial behaviour activity across both the local authority and the police.

A natural extension of this will be further development of joint problem solving approaches to tackling antisocial behaviour. This will result in effective tasking and deployment of a range of resources to deal effectively with specific issues in communities.

Information Sharing

Partners involved in tackling antisocial behaviour share information in accordance with the principles of the Data Protection Act 1998, The European Convention on Human Rights, the Common Law Duty of Confidentiality, The Freedom of Information Act 2003 and Section 139 of the Antisocial Behaviour Etc (Scotland) Act 2004.

Children and Young People

We must be careful that we do not unnecessarily demonise young people as the perpetrators of antisocial behaviour. Indeed they are most likely to be the victims of such behaviour.

In the 2001 census North Lanarkshire has a population of 321,067. Almost 14% (44,950) of these are young people in the age range 5 –15. Despite this, figures collated by Strathclyde Police show that juvenile offenders account for only 3% of all offences committed across North Lanarkshire, an extremely low figure.

The North Lanarkshire Antisocial Behaviour Strategy 2005-2008

Similarly just over 3% of the total child population in North Lanarkshire are referred to the Children's Reporter each year, with in excess of 2000 Children's Hearings being held.

The Children's Hearing System is the judicial system for children in Scotland. It is a unique system which upholds the welfare and rights of children whilst addressing their behaviour. At its centre are Children's Reporters who are officers of the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration. The Children's Reporter is independent from all other agencies involved in the Hearing system.

Children are referred to the Reporter from a number of sources for a variety of reasons. Each referral is investigated to decide if compulsory measures of intervention are required. If necessary a Hearing will be convened.

The Children's Hearing system has wide and far-reaching powers available to it, designed to ensure that the best interests of the child are met, and where appropriate their behaviour is addressed.

The Scottish Executive has consistently stated that the Children's Hearing system should remain the primary forum for dealing with antisocial or offending behaviour by under 16's, and that court based orders should only be pursued for a small number of persistently antisocial young people for whom alternative approaches have not been effective in protecting the community.

To assist this process multi-agency Youth Offender Groups have recently been established across North Lanarkshire. These groups pool information on the young people who are presenting communities and agencies with the most difficulty through their antisocial behaviour. The groups assess the range of options and interventions available to them and develop action plans to address behaviour. Ultimately, enforcement action may be the only way to proceed. The aim of the groups is to achieve a level of consistency and quality in the delivery of services to young people and the affected communities.

Antisocial Behaviour Outcome Agreement

The Scottish Executive has developed an accountability framework to measure the success of strategies at national, local authority and neighbourhood level. This will measure whether:

- Incidents of antisocial behaviour have reduced;
- People's perceptions of antisocial behaviour as a problem have reduced;
- Performance of partners in tackling antisocial behaviour has improved, and;
- People's perceptions of the performance of partners have improved.

The North Lanarkshire Antisocial Behaviour Strategy 2005-2008

The accountability framework uses a number of core indicators to monitor progress at local authority level. These are drawn from various existing statistical and survey data and focus on:

- Disregard for community well-being: Noise and nuisance behaviour
- Acts directed at people: Intimidation and harassment and neighbour disputes
- Environmental damage: Vandalism and fly tipping
- Misuse of public space: Drugs and alcohol use

In addition, due to other significant amounts of funding from other sources that are directed towards antisocial behaviour North Lanarkshire have used additional indicators to monitor progress in the areas of;

- Agencies performance in relation to tackling antisocial behaviour
- Young people, and
- Other links (e.g. Regeneration Outcome Agreement, Local Action Fund and Children's Services Plan).

Realistically we will not see any improvements in terms of pure statistics for at least three years. This is because we expect the strategy, attendant publicity, other new measures such as telephone helplines, greater public confidence and easier and expanded methods of reporting particular issues to generate a higher number of complaints over this coming year and the next.

Communications/Engagement Strategy

Information is central to this strategy and its effectiveness in the eyes of the public. Accurate monitoring of patterns of antisocial behaviour will enable partners to assess precisely how to target resources where they are needed.

The sharing of information will ensure an effective and co-ordinated response to incidents when they occur.

An effective communications strategy will publicise how we are tackling the problem and highlighting successes will assist in building public confidence and reducing the fear of crime and antisocial behaviour.

We are required to publicly produce information on antisocial behaviour to inform the strategy and assess its effectiveness.

The North Lanarkshire Partnership have developed a Community Engagement strategy that will be implemented to improve community involvement in strategic and local decision making processes in the local authority area.

Consultation

A range of public and employee consultations were carried out in relation to this strategy during the month of June 2005. The responses received during that process have resulted in the updating of the draft strategy originally published in March 2005.

This document should be read in conjunction with the Antisocial Behaviour Outcome Agreement 2005 – 2008.

The North Lanarkshire Antisocial Behaviour Strategy 2005-2008

Diversity Issues

The North Lanarkshire Partnership is committed to respecting and protecting diversity in our community. We believe that prejudice has no place in our communities.

Antisocial behaviour that targets individuals specifically because of their race, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion or any other reason will not be tolerated.

We will ensure that all incidents of this type are properly recorded, monitored and fully investigated.

It is important that minorities are not disadvantaged in any way by the implementation of this strategy. We shall also continuously review current procedures to ensure that all diversity groups are treated fairly irrespective of whether they are victims, witnesses, or alleged perpetrators of antisocial behaviour.

Mental Health Issues

It is recognised that mental health issues may manifest themselves as antisocial behaviour in many individuals.

It is incumbent upon all agencies to ensure that where individuals who are brought to their attention for antisocial issues are identified as suffering from mental illness, that appropriate health care is sought. This recognises that the criminal justice system is not the appropriate route for persons suffering from such illness.

Conclusion

We believe that the people of North Lanarkshire deserve an excellent quality of life, free from the blight of antisocial behaviour and crime.

The North Lanarkshire Antisocial Behaviour Strategy 2005-08 will help us achieve that goal by ensuring that the skills and experience of a wide range of partners are properly focussed and targeted on preventing antisocial behaviour occurring, providing effective interventions when it does, and supporting the witnesses and victims who suffer distress as a result of such behaviour.

