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**UNDERSTANDING PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR:  
PROBLEMS AND POLICY RESPONSES**

**VICTORIA HEAP**

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Huddersfield with the Home Office as Collaborating Establishment

July 2010

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## Abstract

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) has emerged as a major community safety concern over the past decade. Reducing the number of incidents of ASB and lessening the impact these have upon the public's quality of life have become key components of criminal justice policy. The British Crime Survey has provided evidence of the types of ASB being experienced and quantified the proportion of people perceiving high levels of ASB in their local area. This research suggests strong links between high levels of deprivation and perceiving high levels of ASB. Attempts have also been made to determine what factors drive these perceptions, in order to produce evidence-based ASB reduction policies.

This thesis builds upon existing research into public perceptions of ASB by exploring public perceptions in-depth, using a mixed methods strategy. A three phase, explanatory sequential design was employed. Phase one quantified public perceptions in selected hard-pressed ACORN areas. These findings were utilised to inform the topics for further qualitative elaboration in phase two. The third phase qualitatively explored how practitioners address public perceptions of ASB. Inferences were generated from all three phases of data collection, providing a holistic, coherent and contextualised discussion of potential policy implications of the findings.

The findings presented within this thesis uncover new attitudinal based factors that are statistically and independently associated with public perceptions of ASB. In addition, primary and secondary drivers of public perceptions were qualitatively identified in the hard-pressed areas studied. New insight has also been provided into the methods practitioners use to address public perceptions, particularly into the difficulties associated with measuring perceptions and the reciprocal relationship that exists between practitioners and the public.

The inferences generated suggest that public perceptions of ASB are complex, with the factors influencing perceptions often interconnected. This thesis calls for greater strategic clarification regarding the role perceptions play in ASB policy, in order for accurate, locally applicable perception measurement to be achieved and a reduction in perceived high levels of ASB to be obtained.

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# Foreword

## **i. Introduction**

This study attempts to shed new light onto the highly under-researched topic of public perceptions of anti-social behaviour (hereafter ASB). As the nature of ASB is multi-faceted and interconnected, a succinct overview of ASB is provided here prior to the main Chapters.

## **ii. What is ASB?**

Viewed simplistically, ASB is the term currently applied to various forms of nuisance behaviour that negatively impacts upon the quality of life of others. Nuisance behaviour includes acts such as: noisy neighbours, vandalism and graffiti. In reality, the legal definition of ASB and the impact this has upon attempts to tackle ASB has proved contentious, a factor that will be highlighted throughout this study.

The use of ASB to describe types of nuisance behaviour stems from the legislation introduced to sanction ASB, which forms part of the Crime and Disorder Act (1998). Since 1998, ASB has exploded into the public consciousness as a result of its high political profile, the introduction of numerous ASB reduction policies and sustained media coverage. According to Millie (2009), ASB has become a “contemporary obsession” (p.2).

## **iii. Where has ASB Come From?**

How ASB is commonly understood today is the result of a complex interaction of theory, political ambition and subsequent legislation. An in-depth, chronological account of the development of ASB as a discipline is provided in Chapter One. In brief, ASB has been traditionally referred to as deviant and/or disorderly behaviour. Scholars have attempted to rationalise the evolution of deviant behaviour (Elias, 1994) and commented upon sociological constructions of deviance (Moynihan, 1993; Krauthammer, 1993). Academics have also debated the nature of disorderly behaviour, suggesting that it is contagious (Wilson and Kelling, 1982; Skogan, 1990; Gladwell, 2000), with some types of disorder more likely to provoke feelings of increased risk (Innes, 2004).

The defining moment between the theoretical and practical conceptions of disorder and the emergence of ASB as it is known today, relates to a policy standpoint adopted by New Labour in the mid 1990's. While in opposition, under the leadership of Tony Blair, the mantra

'tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime' became synonymous with their new brand of politics. It was this pledge, alongside the desire to promote communitarian ideals and provide a means of sanctioning low-level crime and nuisance behaviour that fuelled the shift towards ASB. This was acted upon when New Labour was elected to government in 1997 through the Crime and Disorder Act (1998), which has evolved over the last decade into the obsession of which Millie (2009) speaks.

The evolution of ASB into a modern community safety concern has occurred rapidly. From 1998 the government made ASB a central policy area, introducing a range of tools and powers to address the various forms of nuisance behaviour. Over the past twelve years an 'ASB industry' has emerged (Millie, 2007), which serves to manage an array of sub-domains such as: social housing, young people, human rights and public perceptions.

#### **iv. Public Perceptions of ASB**

Public perceptions of ASB have become an increasingly significant aspect of ASB policy. There is an emphasis on the reduction of the proportion of people who perceive high levels of ASB in their local area, with local authority performance measured against this standard. Due to the centrality of perception measures, the high-profile British Crime Survey (BCS) and Place Survey both pose questions about perceptions of ASB, which together inform the performance management process. Findings from the BCS have demonstrated that area characteristics are the strongest predictor of perceived high levels of ASB (Wood, 2004; Upson, 2006; Flatley *et al.*, 2008). In addition to highlighting the factors associated with perceptions of ASB, the BCS also explores the sources of perceptions. Supplementary Home Office analysis suggests that those who perceive high levels of ASB in their local area develop these perceptions mainly from their own personal experience (Wood, 2004; Upson, 2006; Flatley *et al.*, 2008), opposed to the experience of others, media influences and information provided by the authorities. In relation to other aspects of ASB such as social housing and young people, very little research has been conducted into public perceptions. This is highlighted in Chapter Owo (Literature Review) and underlines the importance of this study.

#### **v. Scope and Structure of the Thesis**

This study is the result of an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Collaborative Award in Science and Engineering (CASE) studentship in partnership with the Home Office.

It reflects the government's desire to look broader and deeper at the issue of ASB, in particular understanding the factors that influence perceptions of ASB, within a policy relevant context. As such, the aim of this study is to explore the factors that drive public perceptions of ASB, addressing the paucity of research in this area.

Based on a period of intense fieldwork, involving members of the public and ASB practitioners, this study provides a holistic set of findings that explores public perceptions of ASB in-depth. A mixed methods research strategy was employed to generate inferences from three phases of research, one quantitative and two qualitative. Phase one represented the quantitative aspect and employed a public questionnaire to ascertain perceptions levels. Phase two qualitatively explored these findings in greater depth, by utilising public focus groups. Finally, phase three examined how ASB practitioners address public perceptions of ASB through the employment of semi-structured interviews.

The thesis itself provides a systematic and detailed account of the research undertaken into further understanding public perceptions of ASB. In order to assess the extent of current research into ASB and build upon the brief outlines provides above, Chapter One situates ASB and more specifically public perceptions of ASB, within theoretical criminology and the current ASB policy context. Some of the existing difficulties associated with ASB research and practice, such as the definition of ASB, are also highlighted. Furthermore, the Chapter emphasises topics and avenues of enquiry that lack any research to date, allowing an original contribution to the understanding of public perceptions of ASB to be pursued.

Chapter Two explains the research methodology implemented in this study. It details the overall research strategy, research design and data collection tools employed, justifying their selection above alternative techniques throughout. In addition, the three phases of data collection are communicated in detail, including details of the data analysis procedures employed. The ethical considerations taken into account in this study are also outlined.

Chapters Three, Four and Five present the findings from each phase of data collection. Chapter Three presents the findings from the phase one questionnaire, providing specific fieldwork details and additional methodological considerations. The questionnaire findings are then presented in two sections, firstly a detailed account of the descriptive statistics generated, before further statistical investigations in the form of Chi-square ( $X^2$ ) testing and logistic regression analysis are provided. Chapter Four details the findings from the phase two public focus groups, which explored the impact of various factors upon public

perceptions of ASB including: the definition of ASB, concerns about ASB, the perceived motivation for committing ASB, perceptions of local authorities and the media. Chapter Five contains the findings from the practitioner interviews conducted in phase three of this study. The interviews delved into the way practitioners address public perceptions of ASB and ASB in general and included topics such as: measuring perceptions locally, tackling public perceptions, communicating with the public, issues with communicating with the public, the priority of reducing public perceptions, problems experienced by practitioners, the definition of ASB, subjectivity and tolerance, reporting incidents of ASB, the courts system, public expectations of the authorities, and the media.

Chapter Six combines policy and theory alongside the inferences generated from the three phases of research, to present a coherent, contextualised discussion of potential policy implications from the findings. The main findings are categorised as follows: the impact of the definition of ASB upon perceptions of ASB, measuring perceptions of ASB, exploring public perceptions of ASB, public and practitioner relations, the role of the media, and Respect status.

Chapters Seven and Eight conclude the thesis. Chapter Seven reflectively appraises some of the societal changes that have occurred during this study, alongside reflecting upon the experience of the collaboration with the Home Office. The Chapter concludes with a critical appraisal of the methodology employed in this study. Chapter Eight provides a summary of the key findings and presents some of the emerging issues from this study, as well as outlining the contribution to knowledge and a number of suggestions for further research.

# Chapter One: Literature Review

## 1.1 Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to develop a greater understanding of public perceptions of ASB. In order to explore public perceptions and examine future policy implications it is necessary to highlight key events, concepts and criminological theories relating to overall ASB policy to gain an accurate insight into the current context. To reflect the dynamic nature of ASB policy the main concepts will be outlined systematically throughout this Chapter. Theoretical approaches to deviance will be discussed, followed by an examination of the political origins of ASB. A detailed appraisal of ASB legislation will then be given alongside the main criticisms this legislation has faced. The definition of ASB will also be considered before returning to examine whether concepts of deviance have evolved since the introduction of ASB legislation in 1998. The modest amount research into public perceptions of ASB will then be considered, exploring: public perception measurement and data, interventions that reduce public perceptions, research from the international context and the political significance of public perceptions of ASB. The Chapter concludes with a number of key ASB policy developments that have occurred since the undertaking of this study.

## 1.2 Theoretical Approaches to Deviance and Disorder Prior to 1998

ASB in the criminological sense is a relatively new concept, with the terms deviance and disorder having been used in the past to describe behaviour considered 'anti-social' by today's standards. Deviance can be defined as: "non-conformity to a given set of norms that are accepted by a significant number of people in a community or society" (Giddens, 2001:203). This is not to be confused with crime, which refers only to conduct that breaches the law. Deviance is a more expansive topic, which can relate to any behaviour that is considered non-conformist and may also include behaviour that breaks the law. A key factor before the introduction of ASB legislation, is that the majority of non-criminal, deviant behaviour remained unsanctioned by the authorities.<sup>1</sup>

Historically, one prominent social theory that attempts to explain the evolution of deviance and conformity is 'The Civilizing Process'. As Dunning (2002) neatly summarises, Elias (1994) proposed that:

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this study, the 'authorities' refers to: the police, local authorities and social housing providers that have the power to sanction ASB.

*“in the societies of Western Europe between the Middle Ages and early decades of the twentieth century, a long-term process took place involving the elaboration and refinement of manners and social standards, together with an increase in the social pressure on people to exercise stricter, more continuous and more even self-control over their feelings and behaviour” (Dunning, 2002:216).*

The process included a lowering of the ‘threshold of repugnance’, a reduced tolerance of physical violence and the internalisation of stricter taboos on the use of violence (Dunning, 2002). This implies that violence and disorder within society has become more dishonourable over time. Overall, this theory suggests a common standard of behaviour has been adopted by society and behaviour that does not conform to these standards will be judged as deviant. This is an important concept in relation to perceptions of ASB because it suggests how acceptable behaviour has evolved over time, setting boundaries of civil behaviour that acts as a benchmark for society.<sup>2</sup>

With this in mind, have behavioural expectations really changed over time? Elias’s sociological theory of the Civilizing Process has already been examined, but the field of criminology has developed its own debate. In an article published in the American Scholar, Moynihan (1993) tackles the issue of behavioural tolerance. He suggests that society is ‘defining deviancy down’, where “we have been redefining deviancy so as to exempt much conduct previously stigmatized, and also quietly raising the ‘normal’ level in categories where behaviour is now abnormal by any earlier standard” (p. 19). Moynihan explains how deviant behaviour has become normalised and almost expected, with the sense of outrage being lost particularly in relation to acts of violence. This suggests that tolerance has increased, although critics believe this is far from accurate. In response to Moynihan’s article, Krauthammer (1993) published ‘Defining Deviancy Up’ that suggests “as part of the vast social project of moral levelling, it is not enough for the deviant to be normalized. The normal must be found to be deviant” (p.20). He claims that while the traditional deviancy of criminals is being defined down, ordinary people are simultaneously guilty of new forms of deviancy, such as political correctness. Therefore the threshold and tolerance of certain behaviours has increased, while others have decreased. Both theories emphasise the subjectivity of deviant behaviour and how views towards such behaviour can change. This is particularly relevant to the definition of ASB and the resulting legislation, which will be discussed later.

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<sup>2</sup> The Civilizing Process has been criticised by those who subscribe to other schools of sociology such as Marxism. However, it is not within the remit of this study to enter this debate. The inclusion of the Civilizing Process in this thesis has been to demonstrate how thresholds of deviant and disorderly behaviour have evolved over time.

### 1.2.1 Nostalgia and Moral Panics

A further perspective about how deviance has been perceived through time is expressed by Pearson (1983), who claims that British society holds a deep nostalgia for the way things used to be and that each generation sees their issues as being disconnected from the past. In reality, “for generations Britain has been plagued by the same fears and problems as today” (p.iv). This implies that defining deviancy up or down is a product of social and moral panics, framed within a current period of time. Pearson gives examples of the Blitz Kids and Cash Boys in the 1940s and Teddy Boys in the 1950s. Work in this field by Cohen (2002) examines the moral panic generated by Mods and Rockers in the 1960s. A moral panic is defined when:

*“a condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; . . . the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible” (Cohen, 2002:9).*

The creation of a moral panic is an example of ‘deviancy amplification’ (Wilkins, 1964). This “refers to the unintended consequences that can result when, by labelling behaviour as deviant, an agency of control actually provokes more of that same deviant behaviour” (Giddens, 2001:211). Young (2009) suggests in the modern era, the mass media is “buttressed by scientific experts and other moral entrepreneurs” (p.13), reinforcing the legitimacy of the moral panic to a large audience. As such, deviancy can not only be defined up and down, but can also emerge for an indeterminate period of time through deviancy amplification and moral panics. However, in reality it must be acknowledged that there is no robust way of measuring a decline in behaviour over time, as there is no baseline available for comparison (Burney, 2005).

A further element to consider when examining deviance is the decline of deference. This relates to an acknowledgement that standards of behaviour have fallen in relation to a lack of respect, for example: swearing in public. The term is most commonly used when referring to young people (Burney, 2005). Moore and Statham (2006) argue this is the result of a decline in traditional interactions between young people and older generations, which previously facilitated informal social control. Whereas, Millie *et al.* (2005) consider the decline of deference as being one aspect of a cultural shift, which also includes a decline in the sense of community and increased individualism.

### 1.2.2 Theoretical Approaches to Disorder

Having discussed the manner in which perspectives of deviance have evolved, there are a number of theoretical approaches that contribute to the understanding of how deviance, and consequently ASB, has developed.

#### 1.2.2.1 Environmental Causation (Built and Social)

Some studies have focused on the environmental causation of disorder and found that the presence of disorder can act as a catalyst for further disorder. A seminal article by Wilson and Kelling (1982) proposed the 'Broken Windows Theory'. This suggests that neighbourhoods may decline into disorder if they are not managed or maintained, using the analogy of a broken window:

*"... if a window in a building is broken and is left unrepaired, all the rest of the windows will soon be broken ... one unrepaired broken window is a signal that no one cares, and so breaking more windows costs nothing ... untended property becomes fair game" (Wilson and Kelling, 1982:31)*

Wilson and Kelling claim the evidence of disorder demonstrates that nobody cares and the prevalence of disorder means that further acts will go unnoticed. Kelling and Coles (1997) expand this theory by suggesting that low level disorder, e.g. graffiti and fare dodging, despite being minor when considered as single offences, can lead to more serious crimes and an increase in the fear of crime.

Skogan (1990) enhanced the debate about catalysts of deviant behaviour by proposing the 'Contagion Theory'. This suggests that behaviour such as vandalism is infectious and "where it appears and is not quickly erased, its presence stimulates still more vandalism" (p.39). Skogan (1990) also suggests that "order is defined by norms about public behaviour, and these norms are only a subset of the manners and morals of the community" (p.4). This extends Elias's theory of the Civilizing Process by acknowledging that what is understood as civil behaviour is subjective, even at community level. This is important because it demonstrates how different communities expect different standards of behaviour.

A further contagion-based theory is provided by Gladwell (2000) who suggests that social epidemics, be they fashion, technology or crime oriented, occur as a result of tipping points. Tipping points transpire when small changes result in big effects and where these changes happen quickly to breach a threshold. He argues there are three agents of change which create the tipping point:

- i) The Law of the Few – where the actions or opinions of certain individuals are more influential than others.
- ii) The Stickiness Factor – where content of information/messages makes a large impact.
- iii) The Power of Context – where environmental circumstances/conditions prevail to influence behaviour.

The Power of Context, like Broken Windows Theory, suggests that disorder is a consequence of the environment where minor incidents of disorder combine to 'tip' the threshold of a crime/disorder epidemic. So not only does it reinforce the principles of the Broken Windows Theory, it intimates that once the tipping point has been exceeded, the social recognition of an epidemic occurs. It is at this point that an area is perceived to have high levels of disorder. Overall, the Broken Windows Theory and the accompanying contagion principles have had a significant effect on ASB policy, which is discussed in greater depth in section 1.3.

Conversely, some research has disputed the Broken Windows Theory. After conducting systematic observational procedures of public disorder in urban spaces, Sampson and Raudenbush (1999) concluded the relationship between public disorder and crime, as outlined in the Broken Windows Theory, is spurious except for robbery. "Essentially, Sampson and Raudenbush argued that economic decline undermined communities and that disorder and crime were the result, not the cause, of neighbourhood deterioration" (Burney, 2005:27). In addition, they suggested the presence of collective efficacy, when neighbourhood structural characteristics are controlled, accounts for lower crime rates and observed disorder. Sampson and Raudenbush (1999) define collective efficacy as: "cohesion among residents combined with shared expectations for social control of public space" (p.603).

Halpern (2001) also indicates collective efficacy as the causal factor when examining methods that communities can employ to control crime. In addition, he suggests social capital: "the quality of social networks and norms in a community that facilitate the action of individual agents and the community itself, particularly co-operative action" (p.237), may also be key to reducing crime and disorder. The crucial element here, which is not accounted for by Sampson and Raudenbush (1999), is the emphasis on the quality of community relationships. Halpern reports that co-operation is important, which intimates that positive relationships will facilitate disorder reduction. Although Burney (2005) highlights the opposite

scenario, where co-operative community relationships act as a catalyst for disorder by conspiring against authority. For example, communities unwilling to provide information to the police. Co-operative communities are considered to share behavioural norms and values. Although compliance to these norms is not universally adhered to. Millie (2006) suggests the behaviour of the majority is considered social, compared to that of the marginalised within the community who are deemed anti-social 'outsiders'. Subsequently, "simple pathological codes of 'other' are adopted as causal explanations of ASB" (Nixon and Parr, 2006), creating an 'us' and 'them' scenario. Elias and Scotson (1994) expand upon this concept using the terms: the 'established' and the 'outsiders', to refer those who have lived in a community for a number of years and new residents respectively. Their examinations include notions of group dynamics and power, where "the more powerful groups [the established] look upon themselves as the "better" people, as endowed with a kind of group charisma, with a specific virtue shared by all its members and lacked by others" (p.xvi). A similar notion of 'respectability' and 'roughness' has also been employed by Watt (2006).

A further theoretical approach that departs from the Broken Windows Theory is the Signal Crimes perspective provided by Innes (2004). It is based upon the principle that some crimes matter more than others when the public develop their understanding of risk. "This is because some crimes and some disorders . . . are especially 'visible' to people and are interpreted by them as 'warning signals' about the risky people, places and events that they either do, or might, encounter in their lives" (p. 336). This element of interpretation and judgement explains, to some extent, why non-victims are likely to perceive high levels of risk and vice-versa. Innes also suggests that exposure to a number of weak signals may lead to the interpretation of strong signals, known as an amplification effect. In contrast to Gladwell (2000), the Signal Crimes perspective focuses on the personal interpretation and impact of disorder opposed to the combination of external factors that tip the thresholds of social epidemics.

#### *1.2.2.2 Individual Explanations*

In addition to the above theories which propose that environmental circumstances facilitate disorder, other criminological and psychological perspectives suggest different reasons for the occurrence deviance and disorder. A number of theories attribute deviance to individual explanations. Developmental Criminology focuses on the evolution of individual criminality over time. Farrington (1997) suggests that "offending is one element of a larger antisocial behaviour that arises in childhood and tends to persist into adulthood, with numerous different behavioural manifestations" (p. 399). Although research has focused upon criminal

careers rather than a disposition towards conducting ASB, longitudinal research has given an indication of the risk factors associated with deviant behaviour (Farrington, 2006). In brief, these risk factors include: high impulsivity and low intelligence, family influences such as poor child rearing and/or criminal parents, socio-economic deprivation including low family income and poor housing, school factors, and situational factors such as the interaction between the individual and the environment (Farrington, 1997).

Further to the developmental perspective, “social process theorists believe that if we wish to understand social behaviour, we have to understand how individuals subjectively perceive their social reality and how they interact with others to create, sustain, and change it” (Walsh and Ellis, 2007:113). Differential Association Theory is a seminal social process theory produced by Sutherland (1939) and Sutherland and Cressey (1950). Differential Association Theory is formed by nine propositions (Sutherland and Cressey, 1950):

1. Criminal behaviour is learned.
2. Criminal behaviour is learned in interaction with other persons in a process of communication.
3. The principle part of the learning of criminal behaviour occurs within intimate personal groups.
4. When criminal behaviour is learned, the learning includes (a) techniques of committing the crime . . . (b) the specific direction of motives, drives, rationalisations, and attitudes.
5. The specific direction of motives and drives is learned from definitions of the legal codes as favourable and unfavourable.
6. A person becomes delinquent because of an excess of definitions favourable to violation of the law over definitions unfavourable to violation of the law.
7. Differential association may vary in frequency, duration, priority, and intensity.
8. The process of learning criminal behaviour by association with criminal and anti-criminal patterns involves all of the mechanisms that are involved in any other learning.
9. While criminal behaviour is an expression of general needs and values, it is not explained by those general needs and values since non-criminal behaviour is an expression of the same needs and values.

Proposition six is key, because “by associating with crime-oriented people, whether they are parents or peers, an individual will inevitably choose to engage in criminal behaviour because that is what he or she has learned” (Tibbetts and Hemmens, 2010:439). Burgess and Akers (1966) extended Sutherland’s theory to include principles of social psychology to create Differential Reinforcement Theory. The differential reinforcement standpoint suggests

that people are taught how to behave through operant conditioning and modelling. Operant conditioning is where behaviour (deviant or not) is influenced by reinforcements (rewards) and punishments. Hence, deviant behaviour is likely to occur when the rewards outweigh the punishments. Social Modelling is a concept introduced by Bandura (1969, 1977), which suggests that learning can take place without any conditioning. Instead behaviour is learnt by observing others and imitating, or 'modelling' what they do. Therefore poor social modelling, akin to proposition six of Sutherland and Cressey's Differential Association Theory (1950), is likely to elicit deviant behaviour. Therefore in combination, the four theories outlined above provide an indication of some of the individual explanations for committing deviant behaviour that are overlooked by the environmental causation theories outlined in section 1.2.2.1.

### *1.2.3 'Communitarianism'*

In addition to theories of deviance and disorder, the role of communities has also attracted scholarly attention. The occurrence of a decreased sense of community and increased individualism has been noted by Etzioni (1993), who was pivotal in forming the 'Communitarian' movement. Essentially its purpose was "to emphasize that the time had come to attend to our responsibilities to the conditions and elements we all share to the community" (Etzioni, 1993:15). This rights and responsibilities movement aimed to promote moral order by empowering communities, opposed to relying on formal government control in such areas as crime, the family and education. This development is important because it denotes a shift in perspective, where community members are encouraged to take action, opposed to models such as the Broken Windows Theory which focuses solely on the catalysts of, and disorder itself. The above concepts have influenced key political policy areas such as social exclusion, which is closely associated to ASB.

In summary, the theoretical perspectives of deviance and disorder outlined above have contributed to our overall understanding of deviant and disorderly behaviour. The insight they provide has contributed to the development of political, criminal and social policies created to deal with the problems caused by deviance and disorder.

## **1.3 The Political Origins of ASB Legislation**

The perspectives of different political parties can influence legislation and subsequently perceptions about deviant and disorderly behaviour. The criminological concept of ASB and relating legislation was introduced by New Labour in 1997. This section will examine some of

the political events which brought about legislative change and provide examples of how some of the theoretical perspectives outlined above have been practically applied.

### *1.3.1 The Conservative Years (1979-1997)*

Prior to New Labour gaining power in 1997, the Conservative Party had been in government since 1979. The years between 1979 and 1997 were characterised by neo-liberalism. “The neo-liberal explanation was that the welfare state had created a dependency culture of single mothers and feckless fathers, which had in turn, created a maladjusted population” (Mooney, 2003:105). Crime was seen as a product of the individual, with a poor family life seen as a cause for the increase in crime. An exclusive society was created where the underclass were demonised (Mooney, 2003). Traditionally the Conservatives are recognised for defining deviancy up (Moynihan, 1993) and focusing on the area of crime and disorder (Johnstone, 2004).

Historically, Labour had not been renowned for robust crime and disorder policies (Johnstone, 2004). However, during their period of opposition under the leadership of Tony Blair, New Labour had “chosen to make crime and disorder signature issues” (Johnstone, 2004:79). They proposed to achieve this by: recognising the normality of crime, demarcating the ‘Third Way’, being tough on punishment, deterrence and rehabilitation, and by adopting a policy of social inclusion (Matthews and Young, 2003). The Third Way relates to governance through community and this emerged as a central policy theme. As such “the neighbourhood is now being utilised as a moral framework through which urban problems in Britain are being identified, codified and addressed” (Whitehead, 2004: 59). Examples of Third Way neighbourhood policies included: extended active citizenship, volunteering and communal endeavours (Flint and Nixon, 2006).

True to Third Way politics, the two major developments relating to the escalation of ASB policy followed a community theme. During their time in opposition, New Labour produced a paper called ‘A Quiet Life: Tough Action on Criminal Neighbours’ (Labour Party, 1995). This contained elements of the Communitarian ethos championed by Etzioni (1993). It suggested there were inadequate criminal sanctions to deal with chronic and persistent nuisance behaviour and harassment in communities. Four reforms were recommended including: a community safety order, increased witness protection including the use of professional witnesses (such as council officials), a composite charge relating to a series of harassment incidents, and increased use of mediation for minor disputes. Undoubtedly, the spearhead was the community safety order, which outlined plans for a civil order, with criminal

standards of proof which was transformed into a criminal offence as a result of a breach. Their second paper entitled 'Protecting Our Communities: Labour's Plans for Tackling Criminal, Anti-Social Behaviour in Neighbourhoods' (Labour Party, 1996) reinforced and refined the original paper, stating New Labour's commitment to reducing nuisance and disorder. Extra elements to prevent malevolent orders and the stigmatisation of minority groups strengthened New Labour's commitment to this policy. New Labour's shift in direction, towards a stronger crime reduction agenda is an important aspect to consider when researching public perceptions.

### *1.3.2 New Labour, New Priorities*

New Labour was elected to Government in 1997 and swiftly introduced a version of the Community Safety Order. The Anti-Social Behaviour Order or ASBO (as referred to hereafter), was set out in Section One (subsequently abbreviated to S1) of the Crime and Disorder Act (referred to as the CDA) 1998. This act will be examined in detail in section 1.4. Crucially, was the introduction of ASB legislation a legitimate attempt to combat nuisance and disorder through the Third Way? Or, was it a calculated political strategy to build New Labour's law and order credentials?

In 1997 New Labour had the opportunity to highlight the reduction in crime, which had taken place since 1995 (Wood, 2004). "The fall in crime was not, however, celebrated. Instead the new administration embarked upon an ambitious programme of legislation centring around the control of anti-social behaviour" (Mooney and Young, 2006:398). This ranked alongside the Conservative's attempts to draw attention to disorderly Britain (Young, 2003). Mooney and Young (2006) contend that ASB issues were exaggerated by: defining deviancy up, distorting the boundaries between civil and criminal law, having a subjective definition (to be discussed later) and the flexibility of application. Therefore "faced with a declining crime rate, the Labour Government discovered, so to speak, a new territory of concern and a beguiled public found a new crime wave replacing the old" (Mooney and Young, 2006:399). This intimates the new legislation to tackle ASB was created primarily for the purposes of reputation building, opposed to reducing ASB itself. From a slightly different perspective, Burney (2005) argues that:

*"it was the perceived inefficiency of the criminal justice system that led to demands for something that would give the authorities a freer hand. It was this, rather than a more general concern about minor nuisances, that was the initial focus of the anti-social behaviour agenda" (p.4).*

While conveying a different opinion to Mooney and Young (2006) about the origins of the legislation, both authors concede that tackling ASB in itself was not the primary concern. Garland (2001) also observes how the change in legislative direction reflected “the tendency of state agencies to give more priority to dealing with the consequences of crime rather than its causes” (p.121). A further perspective is supplied by Hansen *et al.* (2003) who suggest ASB legislation was a response to “the failure of the criminal justice system to reflect cumulative harm, and an attempt to remedy it” (p.81).

Aside from these varying perspectives, at the early stage of ASB policy formulation it was apparent that New Labour sought to influence public perceptions of crime and disorder, to enhance their reputation on law and order issues.

### *1.3.3 Similarities to American Policy*

Developments in New Labour policies can also be paralleled to American crime policy. Perhaps the greatest influence on the political construction of ASB is the concept of zero tolerance policing, made famous in New York in the 1990's. New York's police Chief William Bratton and Mayor Rudolph Giuliani adopted a zero-tolerance approach towards nuisance behaviour such as graffiti, begging, fare-dodging and public drunkenness, thus reflecting the principles of Broken Windows Theory. The authorities reported that this had a major impact on the reduction of crimes such as homicide and robbery and celebrated its apparent success. Nevertheless, critics argued this approach was not solely responsible for the decline in crime. During the period of zero-tolerance, a worldwide decline in crime was occurring<sup>3</sup> (Mooney and Young, 2006) and a change in management style by Bratton was considered to have improved police efficiency (Burney, 2005). Consequently, “zero-tolerance arose as the result of the drop in crime, rather than the fall in crime being a result of zero-tolerance” (Mooney and Young, 2006:400). However, the manner in which its success was portrayed in New York, accompanied by the simultaneous reduction in crime, influenced New Labour to undertake ASB policies related to disorder and nuisance behaviour. “Thus in Britain, ironically influenced by US zero-tolerance policies, a problem of politics led to a change in focus of policing whilst the decline in crime, far from being celebrated, was sidelined and concealed” (Mooney and Young, 2006:404). These events demonstrate how New Labour policy was shaped towards reducing disorder, based on the success in New York thus setting the scene for ASB legislation. It is clear that a number of different influences have combined to create the political context in which ASB legislation is now set.

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<sup>3</sup> See Hope (2003) and Farrell *et al.* (2010) for further discussions about the ‘crime drop’.

By appreciating these circumstances, future arguments and explanations about legislation and perceptions of ASB will be situated within an appropriate context.

## **1.4 ASB Legislation**

As a result of the political shift towards tackling disorder, New Labour introduced a wide range of legislative powers and tools to tackle ASB. This section will outline the major policy developments in the area which include: pre-existing legislation that sanctions nuisance behaviour, the evolution of ASB legislation, S1 of the CDA (1998), the continued momentum of ASB legislation and the era of Respect.

### *1.4.1 Legislation Tackling Nuisance Behaviour Prior to 1998*

There were already measures in statute that could sanction disorderly and nuisance behaviour before New Labour came to power, as shown in table 1.1 (see page 31). The key piece of legislation enacted prior to 1998 is the Public Order Act (1986), which without explicitly using the term ASB, had the powers to sanction many behaviours that are considered anti-social today. Sections 4a and 5 of the Public Order Act used the phrase: 'harassment, alarm or distress', which as will be explained later, is now a crucial part of the legal definition of ASB. The Housing Act (1996) was also pivotal. As Flint (2006a) notes, much ASB policy was generated from a housing context, which will be detailed later in this section. The Act allows a local authority to apply for an injunction in order to:

*"prohibit a person from engaging or threatening to engage in conduct causing or likely to cause nuisance or annoyance to a person residing in, visiting or engaging in lawful activity in residential premises held under a secure or introductory tenancy or provided to a homeless person" (Manning et al., 2004:6)*

This was introduced to "combat the menace and nuisance caused by young persons, often in gangs, on local authority estates" (Card and Ward, 1998:100), with the legislation applying only to council and Registered Social Landlord (RSL) tenants. All of the above legislation demonstrates that aspects of disorderly behaviour were being targeted by the Conservative government before New Labour came to power. This reiterates that combating ASB was not unique to New Labour policy, although they vastly extended and publicised their new sanctions.

Table 1.1 Legislation to Tackle ASB Prior to 1998

| Act  | Section(s) | Powers  |
|--|------------|---|
| Criminal Damage Act (1971)                   | 1, 2, 3    | Prohibits behaviour that: i) destroys or damages, or threatens to destroy, property and behaviour, ii) intends to cause damage.                         |
| Local Government Act (1972)                  | 222        | Allows legal proceedings to take place against those causing trouble in the local authority area.   |
| Race Relations Act (1976)                    | 71         | Prevents unlawful racial discrimination.  |
| Public Order Act (1986)                      | 4a, 5      | Protects against intentional harassment, alarm or distress; and harassment, alarm or distress.  |
| Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (1994) | 61, 63, 64 | Powers to: remove trespassers from land and seize vehicles, remove people preparing for or attending raves, created the offence of aggravated trespass. |
| Housing Act (1996)                           | 152        | Power to grant injunction orders against the ASB of those residing in local authority housing.  |
| Noise Act (1996)                             | 2          | Compels local authorities to investigate complaints about noise from dwellings late at night.   |
| Protection from Harassment Act (1997)        | 1,3        | Prohibits conduct that harasses another person or which he knows, or ought to know, amounts to harassment. Civil proceedings allowed to be pursued.     |

#### 1.4.2 The Crime and Disorder Act 1998

The CDA (1998) spearheaded New Labour's ASB policy, introducing new legislation to tackle ASB and reduce crime. S1 deals primarily with ASB and the introduction of ASBOs. This part of the act provides the legal definition of ASB namely: acting "in a manner that caused or was likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household" (CDA, 1998, Section 1, (1a)). This is a broad definition that can be used to interpret a wide range of behaviour. The definition itself does not identify specific characteristics of behaviour, but focuses on the consequences that the behaviour has upon

the victim. There are advantages and disadvantages to having such a broad definition of ASB, which will be explored in section 1.6.

There are numerous additional parts to the CDA that although not directly relevant to tackling ASB, are particularly pertinent to the overall ASB debate. Sections 5 and 6 set out the responsible authorities<sup>4</sup> in each local government area that are statutorily bound to create multi-agency crime and disorder reduction partnerships (CDRPs), in order to produce and implement a strategy to reduce crime in their local area. Section 8 outlines parenting orders, which can be given to a parent or guardian and contain specified conditions to which they must adhere to in respect of the child in their care.

Section 17 requires every local authority to “exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area” (CDA, 1998, Section 17, (1)). Moss and Pease (1999) consider this to be the most radical section of the CDA as “‘crime drivers’ pervade every sphere of local authority responsibility” (p.16). The same is true when considering ASB. Many local authority departments such as housing, planning, environmental protection and licensing deliver frontline services to those affected by ASB. Therefore, their ability to work together under the remit of Section 17, as part of an overall partnership framework such as the CDRP, is potentially a key element of tackling ASB.

The final noteworthy aspect of the CDA is Section 115, which concerns information sharing. This states that “any person who . . . would not have power to disclose information . . . shall have power to do so in any case where the disclosure is necessary or expedient for the purposes of any provision of this Act” (CDA, 1998, Section 115 (1)). This means that personal data can be shared by the responsible authorities in order to reduce crime and disorder, without infringing any aspect of the Data Protection Act (1998). This is significant as it allows responsible authorities to share information about particular ASB perpetrators in order to develop a co-ordinated strategy to combat ASB.

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<sup>4</sup> The responsible authorities named in the act include; the local authority, police, police authority, probation committee or health authority.

### *1.4.3 ASBO Legislation*

The main thrust of S1 allows relevant authorities<sup>5</sup> to apply for an ASBO. The relevant authorities include the local council for the local government area and the police, who must consult each other about every application, to avoid unnecessary cases being pursued. However, in respect of young people, there is no obligation for the relevant authorities to contact the local Youth Offending Team (YOT). Since the CDA, the Police Reform Act (2002) has extended the relevant authorities who can apply for an ASBO to include RSLs and British Transport Police.

The ASBO itself is a civil order handed down by the Magistrate's Court to a person over the age of 10, in order to prevent behaviour that causes or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress. Although ASBOs are available to anyone over the age of 10, "the use of the powers against juveniles is intended to be exceptional" (Card and Ward, 1998:120), particularly due to the punitive nature of powers outlined in Section 8 relating to parenting orders. The ASBO became available to practitioners on 1 April 1999 and only applies to behaviour in the local government area where it was handed down, unless a neighbouring local government area is also named in the order or if it is assigned to the whole of England and Wales. This is an important aspect to consider because an ASBO is a civil order, hence it does not contribute towards a criminal record and is not held on the main framework of the Police National Computer (PNC).

ASBOs operate for a minimum of two years and maximum of five. There is no restriction on the type(s) of behaviour they can sanction or how many conditions the order may contain. There are four general types of ASBO conditions: geographical, restricting where the recipient can go; temporal, restricting the times the recipient can be in certain places; association, restricting who the recipient can meet; and behavioural, restricting certain types of behaviour. The ability to sanction these behaviours extends the powers of the Housing Act (1996), which only sanctions the nuisance behaviour of council and RSL tenants. There is nothing in statute to prevent an order being given for a single act of ASB, but local councils and ASB Units often ask victims to record an incident diary, where a pattern of persistent ASB can be identified, following Home Office guidance (Home Office, 1999). The behaviours sanctioned against do not have to be criminal acts, but criminal behaviour such as graffiti (criminal damage) can be prohibited by an ASBO. The reasonableness and circumstances

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<sup>5</sup> The authorities deemed as 'relevant' for ASBO applications differ to those considered 'responsible' in Sections 5 and 6 of the CDA.

of the alleged ASB are taken into consideration by the court (CDA, 1998, Section 1 (5)), therefore behaviour causing only minor harassment, alarm or distress may be dismissed. However, the court has no duty to consider the reasonableness of the reaction to the behaviour, which in some cases may be disproportionate to the behaviour itself. The tolerance of ASB is a very individual matter. What one person considers reasonable may constitute ASB for another. A disproportionate reaction towards the behaviour may be a consequence of the all-encompassing definition of ASB. Moreover, there is no legal stipulation that the acts causing harassment, alarm or distress are conducted intentionally. Therefore thoughtless behaviour affords the same sanctions as malicious ASB. Further discussions of subjectivity and tolerance follow in section 1.6.

ASBOs themselves should be granted when criminal proceedings are not appropriate and/or when criminal proceedings are not sufficient enough to stop the ASB in question. If a defendant is non-compliant with their order, a breach is said to have occurred. A breach constitutes a criminal offence where the defendant will be liable:

*“on summary conviction, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or to a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum, or to both; or on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years or to a fine, or to both” (CDA, 1998, Section 1 (10a&b))*

Prior to the CDA, the breach of a civil order was punishable with a maximum term of two years imprisonment for contempt of court, a non-criminal offence. The maximum punishment for ASBO breach exceeds the maximum sentence allowed to be handed down by the magistrate's court. This change in practice relating to ASBOs, where non-criminal acts prohibited under civil law and punished for breach under criminal law, has been termed 'hybrid law' (Pearson, 2006). The main concerns this generates relates to the quality of evidence and the standard of proof. As ASBOs are a civil order, evidence is admissible according to the rules of civil evidence and procedure. The evidence given is assessed with reference to the civil standard of proof. This allows hearsay evidence to be used by the court to determine whether ASB has been committed. This rule allows police officers, council ASB officers and other practitioners to act as professional witnesses to the court. The decision to admit hearsay evidence in ASBO cases was taken in order to prevent intimidated witnesses having to appear in court. This is an important aspect of ASB legislation because many witnesses are intimidated by ASB perpetrators, due to a fear of reprisals which can be a consequence of living within close proximity to the perpetrator (Hunter *et al.*, 2004). Without

the admission of professional witnesses and hearsay evidence, some ASB cases may have failed to result in an ASBO due to a lack of witnesses willing to provide evidence.

#### *1.4.4 Additional New Labour First Term Legislation*

Further criminal justice legislation was introduced which included ASB as a key theme. The Police Reform Act (2002) introduced a number of new measures to tackle ASB. Section 38 (2) introduced Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) to the policing family, in order to provide frontline reassurance policing and tackle ASB. Funding was made available to provide these extra posts, which came into effect in 2003/2004. Further ASB related aspects of the Police Reform Act (2002) include: Section 50 which gave police the power to require any person acting in an anti-social manner to give their name and address details. Section 64 set out the details for criminal or post-conviction ASBOs (known as CrASBOs) that retain all the features of an ASBO, but are obtained on the back of a criminal conviction. Section 65 made provision for interim ASBOs to be issued while the main application for ASBO is pending. The National Policing Plan (2002) was published in light of the Police Reform Act. This made tackling ASB and disorder one of the four three-year strategic priorities, reinforcing the commitment to ASB.

#### *1.4.5 Policy Momentum*

After the first tranche of legislation, attention focused on providing policy solutions to support and in some cases, facilitate the use of ASB sanctions. The Home Office published research into Acceptable Behaviour Contracts<sup>6</sup> (ABCs) in 2004. ABCs are voluntary written agreements made between a young person and a relevant authority, to curtail specific types of ASB in a similar fashion to an ASBO. There is no specified time limit for ABCs as they are often tailored to the needs of the young person, although the guidance states they should normally be enforced for six months (Bullock and Jones, 2004). Young people are generally involved in the development of the contract, encouraging them to take responsibility for their behaviour. ABCs are not legally binding and do not carry any sanction for breach, however failure to comply can be used as evidence in court to obtain a full ASBO. Many agencies use these contracts as a means of promoting good behaviour, with a positive outcome awaiting the completion of the agreement. A number of CDRPs used these agreements before 2004, but the Home Office endorsed their use when their research was published. The research suggests that practitioners favour the use of ABCs as it is seen as a constructive way of dealing with nuisance behaviour before resorting to an ASBO (Bullock and Jones, 2004).

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<sup>6</sup> Also known as Acceptable Behaviour Agreements (ABAs).

ABCs also provide practitioners with a tool to prevent and tackle ASB that negates the requirement to pursue action through the courts, saving time and money.

#### *1.4.6 New Labour's Second Term Expansion*

Following their re-election in 2002, New Labour continued their commitment to tackling ASB with the introduction of the Home Office Anti-Social Behaviour Unit in 2003. The unit's aim was to co-ordinate cross-departmental action on ASB. Following this, the white paper 'Respect and Responsibility' (2003) was published. This outlined New Labour's standpoint for their second term, professing "the need for a cultural shift from a society where too many people are living with the consequences of anti-social behaviour, to a society where we respect each other, our property and our shared public spaces" (Home Office, 2003:6). It adds: "our aim is a society where we have an understanding that the rights we all enjoy are based in turn on the respect and responsibilities we have to other people and to our community" (Home Office, 2003:6). This new terminology was indicative of the political origins and influences of the shift towards combating ASB. The foreword, by the then Home Secretary David Blunkett states:

*"we have seen the way communities spiral downwards once windows get broken and are not fixed, graffiti spreads and stays there, cars are left abandoned, streets get grimmer and dirtier, youths hang around street corners intimidating the elderly. The result: crime increases, fear goes up and people feel trapped" (p. 4)*

This clearly references the Broken Windows Theory, which has proven to be influential. Although, considering the additional research conducted in this area on topics such as collective efficacy and social capital, relying solely upon the Broken Windows Theory may have been over-simplistic when committing to tackle ASB for a second successive term.

The thrust of ASB policy continued unabated, with the launch of the TOGETHER campaign in autumn 2003. The campaign was designed to encourage local people to stand up to ASB and put the needs of the local community first. "The campaign represents a commitment by everyone involved to take a stand, be accountable for his or her actions and uphold standards of decency and behaviour" (Westminster City Council Website, 2007). This echoes the responsibility theme of the government white paper (2003). The TOGETHER launch was followed by the development of the TOGETHER website, an ASB Action Line that practitioners could telephone for advice, an ASB Academy of practitioners and a number of roadshows.

#### *1.4.7 The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003*

The greatest legislative change in this period was the introduction of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act (ASBA) (2003). Unlike previous legislation, this act concentrated solely on ASB and took the new direction of focusing upon cleansing the environment and public space.

Part 1 grants closure powers for premises that are being used to supply or produce drugs, where there is related nuisance behaviour and disorder. Entry to the closed premises is prohibited and breach comprises a criminal offence. This is commonly referred to as 'Crack House' closure legislation. Part 2 tackles housing. This requires RSLs to devise and publish ASB policies. It also repeals Sections 152 and 153 of the Housing Act (1996) and introduces wider powers of injunction in Section 13. Part 3 focuses on parental responsibilities, with Sections 19 and 25 introducing the notion of a parenting contract – a voluntary document which outlines requirements with which parents have to comply in relation to truancy, criminal or ASB, similar to an ABC. Section 23 introduced fixed penalty notices for parents who fail to stop their children truanting from school. Other provisions in Part 3 modify the legislation relating to parenting orders which were first introduced by the CDA 1998. Part 4 covers the dispersal of groups. This gives the police powers to disperse groups of two or more people in areas where ASB is a problem. Section 30 also permits the police to return children under the age of 16 to their homes between the hours of 9pm and 6am, if they are not under the supervision of an adult. These dispersal orders can be applied in geographic areas which are suffering from high levels of ASB. Part 5 concerns firearms legislation, with Sections 37-39 prohibiting the possession of imitation firearms and air guns in public places.

Environmental aspects dominate Part 6 and form a key part of the ASBA. Sections 40 and 41 amend the Noise Act (1996) and give the police powers to issue a closure notice for any noisy premises causing a public nuisance. Fly-posting and graffiti are targeted in Sections 43-52. Fixed penalty notices were introduced for the above and the requirement of owners to remove graffiti at their own expense. The sale of aerosol spray paint to those under 16 was also made a criminal offence. Provisions for local authorities to deal with litter and fly-tipping are outlined in Sections 55-56. Part 8 introduces new legislation to control high hedges. Sections 65-84 permit local authorities to serve the owners of high hedges with a notice to reduce their height to below two metres. Failure to comply constitutes a criminal offence and gives the local authority power to reduce the size of the hedge at the owner's expense. Finally, a number of miscellaneous powers were introduced including: fixed penalty notices

for disorder (PNDs) conducted by 16 and 17 year olds (Section 87) and increased powers for police civilians (PCSOs) in order for them to serve fixed penalty notices (Section 89).

The shift towards environmental measures was the result of British Crime Survey (BCS) findings which highlighted the public's concern about these issues. Items such as "litter, graffiti, rubbish and abandoned cars are deemed 'anti-social' because of their psychological effect which feeds fear of crime" (Burney, 2005:36) and reducing this fear was a target for New Labour. Although overall crime had fallen by a quarter, the fear of crime remained stubbornly high (Home Office, 2003). By cleansing the streets of environmental disorder and curbing undesirable behaviour with fixed penalty notices, New Labour anticipated the creation of a society free from fear, based on the rhetoric of the Broken Windows Theory. Despite the intentions of these new policies, they did not tackle the underlying causes of ASB which have been shown to result in neighbourhood deterioration, as highlighted theoretically by Sampson and Raudenbush (1999). Therefore the ASBA (2003) moved towards combating wider aspects of ASB, but failed to use existing theory to its full potential to produce an all-encompassing piece of true 'Third Way' legislation.

#### *1.4.8 New Labour's Third Term – An Era of Respect*

The pace of legislative change slowed, with the next major policy development arriving during New Labour's third term in office. The Respect Agenda was launched in 2006 with the remit of "taking firm action to stop unacceptable behaviour, and sustaining this in the longer term by addressing the underlying causes" (Respect Taskforce, 2006a:9). The Respect Action Plan (2006) was published, which outlined a series of proposals to take the Respect agenda 'broader': addressing ASB in all sections of society, 'deeper': tackling the causes of bad behaviour, and 'further': introducing new enforcement powers to make a sustainable difference to ASB (Respect Taskforce, 2006b). The Respect Action Plan emphasised a dual approach between intervention and enforcement, with key measures including: providing constructive and purposeful activities for young people, improving behaviour and attendance in schools, supporting families through addressing poor parenting, taking a new approach with the most problematic families including greater persistence and joined up working, strengthening communities by giving the public a greater sense of ownership, and creating effective enforcement tools and community justice (Respect Task Force, 2006b). The actions were wide-reaching and cut across government departments to emphasise the government's commitment to tackling ASB. To compliment the Action Plan a Respect Squad comprising senior practitioners was established, which could be called upon by CDRPs experiencing particularly high levels of ASB. The Action Line was retained and re-branded

under the Respect theme, offering instant advice to ASB practitioners on any ASB-related topic. A website was also created, with both a public and a practitioner interface. This superseded the TOGETHER website and produced a single point of reference for the public to access information about ASB.

The Respect Action Plan was supplemented by the Respect Standard for Housing Management (2006), which set out a number of voluntary benchmark standards for social landlords to sign up to, to tackle unacceptable behaviour and improve quality of life. The six key themes of the Standard include: accountability, leadership and commitment, empowering and reassuring residents, prevention and early intervention, tailored services for residents and provision of support for victims and witnesses, protecting communities through swift enforcement, and support to tackle the causes of ASB (Respect Taskforce, 2006c). As alluded to previously, many ASB policies were formed from a housing context, which is outlined later in this section.

The Respect Agenda continued its momentum into 2007, when the Respect Handbook was published. This laid out a prescriptive set of measures and standards for local services to achieve (Respect Taskforce, 2007). By detailing local actions in this manner, the Respect Taskforce hoped to encourage joint-working by producing a transparent set of guidelines. This was a positive attempt to increase the awareness of everyone's responsibility towards ASB. Nevertheless, without placing a statutory responsibility on the actions, they may not have received high priority in organisations that are tightly regulated by statutory performance targets such as schools and local authorities.

#### *1.4.9 ASB Legislation and Social Housing*

Having considered the Respect Standard for Housing Management (2006), it is pertinent to briefly consider the influence housing policy has had upon ASB legislation and the links between ASB and social housing. Flint (2006a) claims that "social housing provides the most long-standing example of how acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, rights and responsibilities and conditionality in welfare are defined and governed" (p. 7). For example, social landlords have the ability to impose tenancy restrictions, obtain injunctions and seek eviction based on ASB. Carr and Cowan (2006) suggest a link between social housing control and deprivation as the "ethical values about poverty and pauperisation which have existed in this tenure since the heyday of private philanthropy and the development of the charitable instinct in housing" (p.58). Consequently, social housing estates are often perceived as problem areas that contain problem people (Papps, 1998; Card, 2006;

Johnston and Mooney, 2007). These perceptions may not be justified in all areas of social housing, but research has suggested a link between deprivation and ASB levels (Nixon *et al.*, 2003; Ames *et al.*, 2007; Flatley *et al.*, 2008), which will be expanded in section 1.8. This may have occurred as a result of a residual tenure of marginalised groups within these areas (Brown, 2004) and the fact that difficult tenants still have to live somewhere (Burney, 2000). Nonetheless, social housing policies, ASB legislation, the public's perception of those living in social housing and academic research have combined to forge an important link between social housing and ASB.

#### *1.4.10 New Labour's Change of Leadership*

The emphasis of ASB policy appeared to shift when Gordon Brown succeeded Tony Blair as Prime Minister in June 2007. The main change was the focus of ASB interventions being applied to young people. The Respect agenda and its Taskforce were re-located from the Home Office to the newly-established Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) in July 2007. This was quickly followed by the formation of the Youth Taskforce in October of that year, which was created from the Respect Taskforce. Alongside this bureaucratic change, new policies were also published which highlighted the shift towards young people. For example, the Children's Plan (DCSF, 2007), Youth Taskforce Action Plan (Youth Taskforce, 2008) and Youth Crime Action Plan (HM Government, 2008) all set out measures to tackle ASB through a combination of enforcement, support and prevention. Despite these policies including tools and powers regarding parenting, it was clear the focus was firmly upon young people. The priority of the ASB agenda then appeared to reduce, with few new policies emerging through 2008. Overall, the third term for New Labour not only witnessed a shift towards intervention as well as enforcement, it has also provided a shift towards tackling the behaviour of young people and for the first time, prevention.

Throughout the successive New Labour governments there have been wholesale changes to the way nuisance and ASB is legislated. Early legislation concentrated on enforcement aspects such as ASBOs, which complemented and streamlined existing legislation. This was followed by further sanctions to prevent and tackle environmental ASB. Finally, the wider ASB agenda was embraced with legislation and policy focusing on intervention, enforcement and prevention.

#### *1.4.11 The Construction and Control of ASB*

Having discussed ASB legislation, it is important at this juncture to acknowledge how the construction and control of ASB is broader than the public authorities and their associated

policies. Stenson (2005) argues there are competing levels of crime control, including the statutory sovereign agencies mentioned above such as the police, as well as other informal sites of governance such as vigilantism and organised crime. For instance, “ethnic, religious and other sites of governance in civil society do more than resist state power. They have their own agendas of governance, forms of knowledge and expertise deployed to govern and maintain solidarity in and over their own territories and populations (Stenson, 2005:267). These cultural dynamics, akin to those mentioned in section 1.2.2.1 regarding the ‘established’ and the ‘outsiders’ moderate behaviour. An example of this is the use of shaming mechanisms. Through the often exaggerated and untrue medium of gossip, ‘outsiders’ “could be shamed by allusions to . . . bad behaviour of their neighbours because by living in the same neighbourhood the blame, the bad name attached to it, according to the rules of affective thinking, was automatically applied to them too” (Elias and Scotson, 1994:101-102). In addition to socially constructed forms of informal social control, private forms of governance also exist. For example: CCTV, private security firms and gated communities.

A key element in this process of informal social control is the general loss of public confidence in the statutory crime control agencies. Stenson (2005) states:

*“there are concerns about the extent to which the local municipal authority, police agencies, prosecutors, criminal justice agencies and commercial corporations control the town centre, highways and poorer neighbourhoods, where competing illegal economies and models of governance may challenge sovereign authority” (p.274).*

Casey and Flint (2007) suggest this is fuelled by a dismissive attitude towards the police, the public being given excuses for inaction and a perception of ineffective action being taken, which in turn creates a culture of non-reporting. Theoretically this represents an example of ontological insecurity, whereby “in an external environment full of changes, the person is obsessively pre-occupied with apprehension of possible risks to his or her existence, and paralysed in terms of practical action” (Giddens, 1991:53). Examples of the ‘established’ and the ‘outsiders’, cultural diversity as well as issues of ontological (in)security demonstrate how communities are not represented by one general ‘public’ that agencies interact with. Consequently, “there is a problem with social policy rationales that conceptualise both enhanced formal social control and reinvigorated informal social control being developed within a social vacuum” (Casey and Flint, 2007:77). Stereotypes and prejudices are created by social actors such as the government, employers, local press and community residents (Watt, 2006), which demonstrate that communities are not a social vacuum.

In combination, these factors demonstrate how the control of ASB extends beyond that of the sovereign authorities into an intricate domain of informal social control.

## **1.5 Criticisms of ASB Policy**

The frequency and volume of new ASB policies attracted attention and subsequently criticism. This section focuses on the two main areas of condemnation highlighted by the ASB literature: human rights and ASBO legislation. Criticisms have been levelled at other ASB powers such as dispersal orders (see Smithson, 2005; Smithson and Flint, 2006; Crawford and Lister, 2007), but human rights and ASBOs are focused upon here due to their high public profile and the connection this may have to public perceptions of ASB as a result.

### *1.5.1 Human Rights Implications*

Although the civil standard of proof favours enforcement action and increases the opportunities available to the responsible authorities to obtain ASBOs, there are some concerns about the human rights implications for defendants. Ashworth *et al.* (1998) were particularly critical of ASBO legislation stating:

*“It takes sweepingly defined conduct within its ambit, grants local agencies virtually unlimited discretion to seek highly restrictive orders, jettisons fundamental legal protections for the grant of those orders, and authorises potentially draconian and wholly disproportionate penalties for violations of them” (p.7)*

The civil burden of proof has been questioned in light of Article 6 of the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR) (1998): the right to a fair and public hearing. “It is contended that where the court orders have a serious punitive effect, they should adhere to criminal procedures, particularly regarding the admissibility of evidence and the standard of proof” (Pearson, 2006:126-127). This is because sentencing for breach can take into consideration previous evidence that has not been proven or admitted under criminal standards of proof. Nevertheless, ASBOs have resisted challenges under Article 6 because of their interventional status, because preventative orders are usually regarded as a civil jurisdiction. More minor challenges under ECHR (1998) legislation have focused on Article 5: liberty and security of the person and Article 8: the right to a private and family life (Pearson, 2006). In relation to Article 8 Cracknell (2000) suggests that “the danger of making it easier to deal with anti-social households is that the net of social control is widened and new ‘inappropriate’ populations become subject to regulation, criminalisation and exclusion” (p.

112). What is considered 'inappropriate' is reliant upon the tolerance and interpretation of behaviour by the victim, despite provisions made in the CDA to prevent discrimination due to race, gender, sexuality and disability.

A further area of contention relating to ASBOs and Article 8 is the subject of publicity. Monitoring and policing ASBOs that contain numerous conditions is difficult, particularly when the number of conditions per order averages between ten and fifteen (Ashworth, 2005). Despite being a civil order, "the order in effect creates individualized criminal offences for each defendant" (Cracknell, 2000:109). Indeed, the Council for Europe Commissioner for Human Rights referred to ASBOs as "personalised penal codes" (Gil-Robles, 2005:34, para. 10). As a result, it is highly unlikely the responsible authorities will be able to police every individual ASBO and sanction every breach. Consequently, Home Office guidance promotes ASBO publicity and considers it "essential if local communities are to support agencies tackling anti-social behaviour" (Home Office, 2005:2). Publicity is considered necessary so the local community is aware of individuals' ASBO conditions in force within their locality, so breaches can be reported. The guidance clearly asserts that "publicising (ASBOs) should be the norm not the exception" (Home Office, 2005:2). Such publicity can take the form of leaflets, local print and television media, a CDRP newsletter and posters on public notice boards. This may intrude on Article 8 for ASBO recipients, however the guidance insists that the publicity should be proportionate to the level of ASB involved and that public protection should remain the priority (Home Office, 2005).

The greatest controversy surrounding ASBO publicity relates to young people. Under criminal law, the Youth Court deals with offenders between the ages of 10 and 17 and the public are not permitted to attend court proceedings. The names and images of young defendants are not normally allowed to be published by the press under Section 39 (1) of the Children's and Young People Act (1933). However, young people who receive ASBOs do so in the Magistrate's Court, due to the order's civil nature, where no reporting restrictions apply, unless they are enforced in exceptional circumstances. This allows the press to report complete details of the case. Even in relation to ASBO breach dealt with by the Youth Court, Section 141 of the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act (2005) overrules Section 39 (1) of the Children's and Young People Act (1933) to lift any restrictions on reporting. These measures therefore allow local ASBO publicity to be undertaken regardless of age. The Home Office guidance (2005) specifically states "the fact that someone is under the age of 18 does not mean that their anti-social behaviour is any less distressing or frightening than that of an adult . . . age alone is insufficient to justify reporting restrictions being imposed" (p.

4). Nevertheless, in comparison to the publicity of adult ASBO cases, the publicity of young people with ASBOs is potentially detrimental. “It enhances the outcast aura which can be very damaging to the personality and prospects of a child” (Burney, 2005:97). Some instances of public retribution towards the families of young people with ASBOs have also been reported (Burney, 2005). Human rights criticisms, particular in relation to young people have heightened the public profile of ASB policy.

#### *1.5.2 Criticisms of ASBO Legislation*

Much academic and public debate has centred on ASBOs. This is acknowledged here due to the pervasive nature of media reports and the link they may have to the development of public perceptions of ASB. The legislation outlined in S1 of the CDA provided local authorities with the powers to issue ASBOs, but the application of these powers across the country has been inconsistent. Figures reported to the Home Office at the end of 2007, demonstrated a marked difference in the uptake of ASBOs between areas. For example, the number of ASBOs issued between April 1999 and December 2007 in Greater London was 1808, in comparison to Dyfed Powys who issued just 51 (Home Office, 2009a). Comparing the highest and lowest values is problematical, as other external variables are likely to influence the number of applications, such as the population density and crime rates. Nevertheless, when you compare similar Metropolitan boroughs such as West Yorkshire and Merseyside, with 1122 and 489 ASBO issued respectively, a significant disparity in the number of ASBOs issued still remains. This inconsistency has persisted despite a call in the year 2000, from the then Home Secretary Jack Straw, to increase the number of ASBOs handed down in all areas.

This demonstrates how ASBO legislation can be applied very differently at a local level. It may be a product of the subjective and wide-ranging definition of ASB or the use of alternative interventions such problem-solving strategies. Subsequently, some people may receive ASBOs because they live in a particular area, when their behaviour may go without sanction if they lived somewhere else. This unfair application may be the result of an over-zealous council or police officer. Nevertheless, people may be receiving ASBOs unnecessarily, which not only criminalises them, but may fuel perceptions of local ASB and disorder.

The topic of young people and ASBOs has also evolved. Originally ASBOs were only to be given to young people in exceptional circumstances. However, Home Office guidance from 1999 suggests this should only be the case for 10 and 11 year olds. Whereas “in the case of

the older age group of 12-17 year olds, however, it is envisaged that applications may be made more routinely particularly if other measures have failed to prevent the offending and anti-social behaviour” (Home Office, 1999: 12). This shift in policy has been viewed as a way of ‘criminalising’ young people (Fletcher, 2005). For example, 626 ASBOs were issued in Greater Manchester to young people between April 1999 and December 2005 (Home Office Crime Reduction Website, 2007). This accounts for 50% of all ASBOs issued in the area during that time. Coupled with the suggested harm caused to young people by the publicity of ASBOs, evidence suggests that using ASBOs as a means of controlling young people has spiralled away from the intended purpose of the sanctions.

ASBOs have also been used by the relevant authorities as a means of curtailing the activities of persistent criminal offenders. Burney (2005) uses anecdotal evidence to indicate that the “police will admit to seeking ASBOS instead of prosecution, in the expectation that breach will subsequently lead to prosecution by an easier route” (p. 95). The researcher has also witnessed instances where CrASBOs have been used as a means of controlling the criminal behaviour of persistent offenders. For example, persistent shoplifters being excluded from shopping precincts. The use of ASBOs and CrASBOs for this purpose defies the original intention of the legislation, which demonstrates there are some loopholes that can be exploited to obtain rapid results. This could reflect a lack of suitable alternatives available to deal with persistent offenders.

Criticisms have also been levelled at the appropriateness of some of the conditions written into ASBOs. Two main issues are: the feasibility of the conditions and the capabilities of the people being given ASBOs. Some ASBO conditions are trivial and almost impossible to enforce such as: a boy being prohibited from saying the word ‘grass’, a man being prevented from shaving the name of his gang into his hair and brothers banned from wearing balaclavas (Fletcher, 2005). Many of these inappropriate conditions have been reported and ridiculed by the red-top newspapers, with headlines such as: ‘ASBO for Womble’, ‘Lout of Order: Soft ASBO Plan as Yobs Take Over Streets’ and ‘ASBO Dog Torched my Home’ (The Sun Newspaper, 2007c; 2007a; 2007b respectively).

There are further concerns about ASBO legislation being used against people with learning difficulties and mental health problems. The British Institute for Brain Injured Children (BIBIC) (2005) conducted research into the number of ASBOs given to young people with mental health problems and/or learning difficulties. They surveyed ASB Co-ordinators and YOTs and found that 5% of ASBOs reported by ASB Co-ordinators and 37% of ASBOs

reported by YOTs were given to young people under the age of 17, with diagnosed mental health problems or accepted learning difficulties. BIBIC argue that a number of vulnerable young people are being given ASBOs who do not have the capability to understand or comply with their expectations. Therefore, not only has the legislation been used to routinely sanction young people, it is claimed that vulnerable young people are also easy targets. Home Office research found that in around 60% of cases there was a high number of mitigating factors that could have contributed to their behaviour. “Almost a fifth had a drug abuse problem and a sixth a problem with alcohol. Problems with school were also common, with many being temporarily or permanently excluded, or noted as having learning disabilities” (Campbell, 2002:17). Overall, the legislation may be able to sanction some of this behaviour but it “also avoids putting in place wider social policies that would deal with the underlying problems of anti-social behaviour” (Fletcher, 2005:21).

The aforementioned concerns demonstrate how New Labour’s ASB policies have been met with criticism, particularly in relation to marginalising young people and the vulnerable. The widespread reporting of these cases has forced ASB into the public consciousness, indeed ‘ASBO’ entered the Collins English Dictionary in 2005 (BBC News Website, 2005). The integration of ASB into the everyday vernacular reinforces the necessity of research into public perceptions of ASB.

## **1.6 Defining ASB**

The Government’s legal definition of ASB, as set out in the CDA (1998), has proved controversial in the realms of academia, practice and politics. It is pertinent to discuss these controversies here to set the definition of ASB and future discussions about public perceptions of ASB in context. The legal definition focuses on the consequences of ASB, namely harassment, alarm and distress, instead of the behaviour that is causing the problem. Defining ASB in this manner allows what is considered anti-social to be interpreted by individuals, opposed to definite boundaries being determined by law. As such, what one person deems to be anti-social may be considered acceptable by others, making ASB a subjective phenomenon. This element of subjectivity allows what constitutes ASB to be governed by factors such as context, location, community tolerance and quality of life expectations (Nixon *et al.*, 2003).

### 1.6.1 Subjectivity

A broad, subjective definition can be a positive device. For example, it embraces all victims of ASB, as their personal experience of the behaviour and the consequences it has upon their quality of life is taken into account. From a victim's perspective "the use of such a permeable, all-encompassing definition is justified in terms of the need to protect the self-governing, law-abiding citizen from the dangerous, uncivilised 'other'" (Flint and Nixon, 2006:943). Nevertheless, a wide-ranging definition can simultaneously produce negative outcomes. For example:

*"the term 'anti-social manner' is characterised by breadth and vagueness, and is open to objection on the basis that it will catch conduct which is unorthodox or unusual, eccentric or bizarre, but which, nevertheless is conduct which ought not to be the subject of the legal process" (Card and Ward, 1998:108).*

A real-life example of this being a woman who was given an ASBO preventing her from answering the front door in her underwear (Fletcher, 2005). Therefore the definition of ASB has the potential to affect law-abiding citizens in a negative sense, by the way their behaviour has been interpreted by others.

Academically, debate has continued about how the CDA definition of ASB can be best understood. Budd and Sims (2001) note "the terms anti-social behaviour and disorder are often used interchangeably" (p.1), demonstrating how the interpretation of ASB can be loaded with preconceptions of disorder and incivility, when some of the behaviour that is considered anti-social is relatively innocuous, for example cycling on footpaths. Others propose a different approach to understanding ASB. Millie *et al.* (2005), having questioned 831 people about what the government means by ASB, found that people generally associated ASB with young people. They suggest ASB would be better viewed as a spectrum of behaviour, ranging from minor misdemeanours that warrant no sanction, to behaviour that could provoke criminal proceedings. Bannister and Scott (2000) consider ASB to contain three 'distinct phenomena', namely: neighbour problems, neighbourhood problems and crime problems. Although not as broad as a spectrum, it still attempts to classify behaviour in a manner that the CDA definition does not. Overall, academics have attempted to deconstruct the CDA definition of ASB in order to make it more specific to certain types of behaviour.

### *1.6.2 Tolerance*

In addition to subjectivity, thresholds of tolerance also determine what behaviours are deemed anti-social, particularly in relation to the context in which the behaviour is experienced. Bannister and Kearns (2009) propose that “the sociospatial situation in which we find ourselves both influences our predisposition towards tolerance and determines a set of other drivers of the tolerant response, so that our thresholds of tolerance are spatially specific and spatially variant” (p.182). Consequently, some behaviours may be tolerated in an urban setting that would not be tolerated in a neighbourhood setting. Therefore levels of tolerance and behavioural expectations may fuel or lessen perceptions of ASB.

Supplementary to these principles is the influence ASB policy may have upon tolerance levels. Burney (2009) suggests the Respect Agenda was a vehicle for decreasing tolerance by further marginalising the behaviour of those who did not meet community standards. By sanctioning these behaviours, tolerance levels are likely to decrease further by eliminating opportunities to interact with others that can build common trust and values (Bannister and Kearns, 2009).

### *1.6.3 Applying the Definition of ASB - Measurement*

Practically speaking, the CDA definition of ASB has proved contentious in terms of crime reduction, law enforcement and legal practice. Crime reduction and community safety came to the forefront through Sections 5 and 6 of the CDA (1998), making CDRPs a statutory requirement in each local authority area, placing crime reduction in the local context. Most CDRPs adopted the legal definition of ASB due to its inclusive and flexible nature (Harradine *et al.*, 2004). However, the Home Office have since encouraged CDRPs to create their own definitions of ASB that reflect local problems. To facilitate this process the Home Office produced a typology of ASB (Harradine *et al.*, 2004), which aimed to “provide a practical framework and guide to the main categories of behaviour that are widely accepted to be anti-social by both practitioners and the public” (p. 4). These categories included: the misuse of public space, disregard for community/personal wellbeing, acts directed at people and environmental damage. Contained within each category are examples of specific behaviours deemed by the Home Office to be anti-social, for example noisy neighbours and graffiti. Local definitions that contain the precise behaviours outlined in the typology “can be tailored to the local context, ownership of the problem is enhanced and, there is greater standardisation of monitoring practices where all partner agencies use the same definition” (Whitehead *et al.*, 2003:2).

Nevertheless, creating specific ASB definitions set within the context of local problems can provoke additional issues for practitioners, relating to performance management and measurement. Local definitions rely upon the co-operation of local partners, which is not always easy or successful. Complications arise because it is unclear what should be measured and which agency(s) are responsible for data collection (Whitehead *et al.*, 2003). Multi-agency data collection mechanisms are not statutory and are seldom available, making it difficult for a realistic picture of ASB to be obtained. Measurement issues are also evident at a national level, particularly when local definitions and counting methods of ASB are employed. If each CDRP area has a different definition of ASB and collects different data, it is very difficult to compare levels and problems of ASB between areas. This lack of consistent practice across England and Wales results in a national picture that may be inaccurate because “data relating to the levels of anti-social behaviour are limited and geographical and temporal comparisons are complex” (Armitage, 2002:3).

ASB more generally, however it is defined, is difficult to measure because of the way incidents are counted (Wood, 2004). For example, one single incident may affect a number of people in the same neighbourhood, who may all report it. Conversely, no-one may report it. Therefore the volume of reports may be affected by the definition adopted locally as well as the public’s willingness to report incidents. The public may also fail to report ASB “because they do not think any effective action will be taken to counter the problem or the costs of reporting outweigh any potential benefit” (Whitehead *et al.*, 2003:6). The number of ASB reports made by the public may also relate to the definition of ASB, their perceptions of ASB and their awareness of any systems in place to prevent and/or sanction the ASB in question.

In order to provide an indication of the extent of ASB, the Home Office conducted a ‘One Day Count’ of ASB incidents in September 2003. All reported incidents to key public agencies, such as the police and local authorities were counted over a 24-hour period. This provided a snapshot of ASB activity on that particular day and generated a figure of 66,107 incidents (Harradine *et al.*, 2004). This provided the first account of ASB incidents recorded at a national level and has set a baseline figure for any future counting exercises to be compared against. However, this type of data fails to highlight the impact ASB has upon individuals and communities and a similar exercise has not since been repeated. Currently, levels of ASB are obtained by a proxy measure, through the collection and analysis of public perceptions data. A proxy measure is a similar, indirect measure that is applied when it is

unfeasible to measure the actual entity. Measuring public perceptions of ASB will be explained fully in section 1.8.

#### *1.6.4 Applying the Definition of ASB – Law Enforcement*

The legal definition of ASB can also impact upon the police. Bland and Read (2000) suggest “the absence of a common definition of anti-social behaviour creates practical difficulties for the police in their efforts to tackle it, because their powers may be unclear and the solution may lie with other agencies” (p.v). The legal definition of ASB has also impacted upon the legal system. Card and Ward (1998) propose “the use of the term ‘anti social’ in S1 (CDA) has no real legal significance other than to mark, in judgemental terms through the label ‘anti-social’, the objectionable nature of such conduct, measured by the effects of the conduct rather than the conduct itself” (p. 108). As Manning *et al.* (2004) observe, “people are anti-social in all manner of different ways which may not share any common features” (p. 2), potentially making legal cases impossible. Although a flexible definition works favourably for the victims of ASB, it appears to have complicated the delivery of efficient services to victims by practitioners. It seems paradoxical to have a definition that suits the needs of victims, if their concerns cannot be adequately dealt with by the authorities for that same reason.

#### *1.6.5 Political Influences on the Definition of ASB*

The legal definition of ASB has also prompted discussion about its political significance. Bannister *et al.* (2006) claim that “such a broad-based definition serves a key political function. It helps to convey a populist message; we are all required to combat anti-social behaviour, as we all experience it” (p. 929). This suggestion intimates that the definition has been constructed in a way that has an affinity with public opinion. A sentiment reinforced by Flint (2006b), who attributes New Labour’s focus on ASB to a “responsive act of government” (p. 173), a decision made on behalf of public concern. It has been argued that “the desire of the New Labour government to be seen as responsive to popular concerns and moral panics over hooliganism and anti-social behaviour is resulting in the increased use of legislative responses that bridge criminal and civil law” (Pearson, 2006:125). This reflects the belief of some who think that the CDA definition of ASB is merely a product of New Labour’s punitive politics (Burney, 2005).

Despite the evidence above highlighting the issues surrounding the legal definition of ASB, the Home Affairs Committee<sup>7</sup> (2005) investigated ASB on request of the House of Commons. The Committee, whilst acknowledging some of the problems listed above, ruled out the possibility of recommending a change of definition as “it is a major strength of the current statutory definitions that they are flexible” (p. 20-21). This ruling reinforced the status of the definition and subsequently the continued presence of the issues outlined above.

## **1.7 A New Era of Deviance?**

Section 1.2 outlined the understandings of deviance and disorder and explored how the concept of deviance has evolved, prior to the creation of the CDA in 1998. This section will examine how legislation since the CDA has provoked changes to the way deviant behaviour is perceived and categorised, by discussing: political developments, re-definitions of deviance and further mitigating factors.

### *1.7.1 Political Developments*

Politically, policies towards deviant behaviour have changed since New Labour came to power. During their years in government, New Labour has demonstrated a shift away from class politics, becoming more focused on the regulation of conduct (Crawford, 2006). This has been achieved by making the conscious decision to focus the crime agenda on low-level disorder (Phillips and Smith, 2003). Squires and Stephen (2005) propose crime has now been ‘re-problematised’ as ASB, resulting in exclusion and intolerance. This conflicts with New Labour’s adoption of ‘Third Way’ politics, where governance is through community. Overall, these political developments have facilitated changes to what type of behaviours and what types of people are considered deviant and disorderly.

### *1.7.2 Re-defining Deviance*

What constitutes deviant and disorderly behaviour has changed in a variety of different ways. Burney (2005) suggests that “once the label ‘anti-social behaviour’ became current, it was very easy to adopt it as a description of any local irritation or the presence of any persons attracting disapproval in the public domain” (p. 4). This demonstrates how the term ASB now pervades everyday language and is applied as an umbrella term for any undesirable behaviour. Furthermore, Matthews and Young (2003) state there has been “a widespread decrease in tolerance with regard to crime and incivilities” (p.4). This reflects the

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<sup>7</sup> A multi-party select committee of MPs.

government's modified stance on combating anti-social and nuisance behaviour. It also demonstrates a practical application of Krauthammer's (1993) concept of defining deviancy up. This reduction in tolerance may be linked to the way New Labour have targeted certain groups of people (e.g. young people) and increased the priority of reducing environmental ASB. This is echoed by Bannister *et al.* (2006) who propose a new emphasis on conformity, as a result of the Respect Action Plan (2006). In this new era of deviance, some people who are viewed by the majority as not conforming to societal norms are marginalised, including young people, minorities and marginals<sup>8</sup> (Phillips and Smith, 2003). It is the presence of these marginals in public spaces that causes concern. Resonating the environmental aspect of the ASBA (2003), "the criminological agenda on incivility is concerned with infractions of the law in public settings rather than with the far wider pool of socially proscribed deviant behaviours" (Phillips and Smith, 2003:88). This has reinforced the marginal status of these groups, who already find themselves on the edge of society. It also demonstrates how this behaviour has been re-classified as deviant as a result of changes since the CDA.

Previously unsanctioned behaviour exhibited by young people has also been targeted by aspects of ASB legislation. This has led to some young people receiving ASBOs for behaviour that is not necessarily anti-social (Fletcher, 2005). Cracknell (2000) and Brown (2004) consider ASB policy to be 'net-widening' and 'mesh-thinning' in terms of the behaviour that is receiving sanction. Consequently, new people come into contact with the criminal justice system, who would not necessarily be in that situation under previous legislation (Home Affairs Committee, 2005; Flint and Nixon, 2006). Simultaneously, some newspapers have made sweeping statements that have branded young people as 'hoodies' (Ipsos Mori, 2005). This has contributed to the evolution of what constitutes nuisance and disorderly behaviour, as certain behaviour committed by young people has been re-classified from non-deviant to deviant. This reaffirms the claim by Pearson (1983) who suggests all generations have new concerns about the behaviour of young people. Although the Home Affairs Committee (2005) disagrees, and insists that tolerance towards young people has not decreased and that a lack of communication is to blame. These mixed views demonstrate how the discourse of deviance has evolved and remains a contested terrain.

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<sup>8</sup> The term 'marginals' represents people such as beggars and prostitutes.

### *1.7.3 Additional Mitigating Factors*

There are further mitigating factors that have influenced a shift in the understanding of disorderly and deviant behaviour. Politicians and housing practitioners consider ASB to be increasing (Flint and Nixon, 2006), despite Home Office analysis of the BCS suggesting that perceptions of ASB, the proxy measure for ASB, appears to be stable (Upson, 2006). The impression that ASB is increasing is confounded by extensive media coverage of ASB and the use of exaggerated language to communicate ASB problems (Pearson, 2006). There is no evidence to suggest that these two factors are linked, but it appears a general perception of increased disorder and ASB is permeating society. This may be a result of the legislation and interventions introduced by New Labour. “It may also be the case that government attempts to ‘enforce respect’ have the unintended effect of heightening anxiety about so-called dis-respectful behaviours” (Bannister *et al.*, 2006:930). This paradox is distinctly opposed to what New Labour set out to achieve through their ASB policies.

Overall, there has been a modification to the understanding of disorderly and deviant behaviour since the CDA in 1998. New legal sanctions, policies and political developments have played key roles in the way ASB is currently defined and punished. These factors have prompted a change in tolerance towards unacceptable behaviour, with more behaviour being considered anti-social. Consequently, “in a sanitised version of the city, we become less tolerant, more fearful and increasingly prone to overreact to minor representations of difference” (Bannister *et al.*, 2006:934). This has created a climate where “within a relatively short period of time the phrase ‘anti-social behaviour’ . . . has become part of the common lexicon” (Millie, 2008:379).

## **1.8 Public Perceptions of ASB**

Obtaining a better understanding of public perceptions of ASB is the focus of this thesis. As ASB policy has been put into context, it is appropriate to examine the current knowledge and application of public perceptions of ASB. As mentioned previously, this topic is a comparatively under-researched sub-domain of ASB. Consequently, what do the public really think about ASB and why does this matter? This section will include an examination of: the measurement of perceptions, local and national perceptions data, research into public perceptions, interventions that reduce public perceptions, research from the international context and the political significance of perceptions.

Before examining public perceptions of ASB it is important to clarify the terms 'perception' and 'attitude', in order to facilitate the understanding of the results presented in Chapters Three, Four and Five. It will also allow the findings to be placed in an appropriate theoretical context. Essentially, perception and attitude are constructed differently from a social psychological perspective. Perceptions are cognitive processes that are triggered by external events. Perception is about the interpretation of the event/object as well as the sensory characteristics of the event/object itself (Jones and Gerard, 1967). An attitude can be defined as "a relatively enduring organisation of beliefs, feelings, and behavioural tendencies towards socially significant objects, groups, events or symbols" (Hogg and Vaughan, 2008:148). This suggests that attitudes may affect the way an event/object is perceived, consequently influencing behaviour (Baron, Byrne and Johnson, 1998). Psychologists have produced models of attitudes that contain varying numbers of components, ranging from one to three. The three component model is generally favoured (Rosenburg and Hovland, 1960; Himmelfarb and Eagly, 1974; McGuire, 1989). In the three component model "an attitude consists of cognitive, affective and behavioural components. This threefold division has an ancient heritage, stressing thought, feeling and action as basic to human experience" (Hogg and Vaughan, 2008). According to Fazio and Roskos-Ewoldson (1994), 'moderators' influence the extent to which attitudes affect behaviour. These moderators include: aspects of the situation such as time pressure and the setting, as well as aspects of attitudes themselves such as the origins, strength and specificity of the attitude. Therefore examining public perceptions and attitudes towards ASB is important because it may provide an insight into whether these attitudes affect behaviour.

Perceptions play a central role in the crime and disorder reduction landscape, be they the perceptions of residents, victims of crime, offenders or practitioners. Moore and Statham (2006) suggest public perceptions of ASB represent the 'social constructed element' of ASB, which sits alongside the 'objective element' of actual incidents of ASB. Allen (2008) compounds this view and reaffirms the subjectivity of ASB that has already been discussed, proposing that "neighbourhood perceptions constitute arbitrary views, no matter how such 'problem areas' may appear to the 'naked eye'" (p.103). Understanding people's perceptions and constructions of ASB alongside the processes that influence these is a prerequisite for developing effective policy and practice in reducing the negative impacts of ASB (and its anticipation) upon people's quality of life. The importance of reducing perceptions of high levels of ASB is underlined by the national performance indicators for England and Wales within which they feature. Public Service Agreements (PSAs) 23 and 25, as well as National Indicator 17 (NI17) of the Assessment of Policing and Community Safety

(APACS) framework all contain targets relating to the reduction of perceived high levels of ASB. NI17 is particularly pertinent as it assesses local authority performance, requiring a reduction in the proportion of people perceiving high levels of ASB in their local area.

As stated previously, the most common method of assessing the impact ASB has upon communities is conducted by proxy, through the collection and analysis of public perception data. This overcomes some of the issues associated with counting incidents of ASB, as “such information provides an indication of the types of problems that are causing public concern and having an impact on quality of life” (Harradine *et al.*, 2004:14). Although measuring public perceptions is not without limitations. The relationship between actual experience of ASB and perceptions of ASB remains unclear. Innes (2004) suggests that many people are unable “to establish a clear distinction between crime and anti-social behaviour in constructing judgements about levels of risk in an area” (p.345). This may also be a result of the subjectivity of the legal definition of ASB. Furthermore, “there is likely to be a time lag between any change in incidence of anti-social behaviour and the public’s perceptions of it” (Harradine *et al.*, 2004:14-15). However, these issues can be acknowledged and considered when conducting retrospective crime surveying. By taking all measurement issues into account, measuring public perceptions of ASB is currently the most suitable method to assess the impact of ASB.

Due to the significance of measuring perceptions of ASB, two major government surveys include questions about the subject. This is important because surveys provide the most “robust and meaningful way of assessing changes in perceptions and hence play a vital role in determining the degree to which activity designed to tackle anti-social behaviour has been successful” (Ames *et al.*, 2007:7). Therefore, an overview of the current situation can be obtained alongside measuring progress against the above performance indicators.

### *1.8.1 Measuring Public Perceptions of ASB*

The BCS is a large-scale social survey conducted annually<sup>9</sup> in England and Wales. It was first carried out in 1982 and was originally “intended to obtain a picture of criminal victimisation as an alternative to statistics of offences recorded by the police” (Southgate and Ekblom, 1984:2). It now collects a wide variety of victimisation data, with perceptions of ASB constituting a small section of the overall survey.

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<sup>9</sup> Prior to 2001 the BCS was conducted biennially.

The BCS sheds light on a number of facets of ASB. These include: changes over time in levels of public concern about ASB, the socio-demographic profile of those who perceive high levels of ASB and factors that influence people's perceptions of ASB. Questions about problem behaviours in the respondent's local area have been developed since they were first asked in 1992. A greater number of ASB related questions are now posed to reflect New Labour's emphasis on ASB policy. Respondents must rate whether the types of behaviour are a: 'very big problem', 'fairly big problem', 'not a very big problem', or 'not a problem at all'.

Despite the increased variety of questions posed to improve the understanding of perceived high levels of ASB, there are seven questions that are of greatest importance to perceptions measurement. The Seven Strand Index (referred to hereafter as 7SI), provides a combined measure of perceptions of ASB. The Home Office decided a combined measure would be more appropriate than asking one broad question about perceptions, as this would ensure all respondents were considering the effects of the same types of behaviour. Principal component analysis was used to assess the suitability of creating a combined measure. This procedure is:

*"used to organise and reduce large numbers of variables that are measuring the same, or an overlapping, theme into a smaller number of components. This technique identifies themes within questions by using patterns of response to these questions identify how questions group together" (Upton, 2006:90)*

The process revealed seven of the problem behaviour questions demonstrated a common theme when measuring perceptions. The "resulting one-component solution explained 49 per cent of the variance in perceptions of anti-social behaviour" (Upton, 2006:90). The seven questions that constitute the 7SI ask about problem behaviours in the respondent's local area in relation to: noisy neighbours or loud parties, teenagers and young people hanging around, rubbish or litter, vandalism and graffiti, people using or dealing drugs, people being drunk or rowdy, and abandoned or burnt out cars. The measure is calculated using a scoring scale. The scores are as follows: 'very big problem' = 3, 'fairly big problem' = 2, 'not a very big problem' = 1, and 'not a problem at all' = 0. The scores for each of the seven questions are added together, with a maximum score of 21. Those who score 11 or more are considered to perceive high levels of ASB, which generates the overall percentage used to measure performance against NI17.

### 1.8.2 National Perceptions Data

The BCS and additional analyses conducted by the Home Office provide a measure of trends in ASB perceptions over time. Since the first data were generated in 2001/02, the proportion of respondents perceiving high levels of ASB has remained relatively stable, with the score remaining between 16% and 18% from 2003/04 to 2008/09 (Walker *et al.*, 2009). When examining individual behaviours, the most widely perceived 7SI behaviour has been teenagers hanging around on the street. This reinforces the discourse of young people being associated with ASB by the public, presented by Millie *et al.* (2005). In addition, Moore and Statham (2006) suggest the fear of crime is closely associated with young people hanging around. According to the data trends, noisy neighbours and loud parties, and abandoned or burnt out cars are the least problematical behaviours. Examining individual problem behaviours provides a context of perceptions over time and can indicate behaviours in need of policy intervention.

Although the combined perceptions measure is used to assess performance against PSAs and NI17, the overall proportion of those perceiving high levels of ASB does not align with the long term general view of ASB (Wood, 2004). This is based upon a separate BCS question that asks if ASB has become worse, stayed the same or got better in the respondent's local area in the past two years. The majority of respondents indicate that ASB is getting worse (Wood, 2004). Therefore a greater comprehension of the drivers of perceptions of ASB is required, in order to further understand these results. The BCS collects considerable amounts of additional information concerning the characteristics of those who perceive levels of ASB to be high. As Upson (2006:25) states, a number of factors, "interact to mean that the likelihood of perceiving problems or experiencing anti-social behaviour is not even across the population". Such factors include: the area people live in, personal demographics and lifestyle choices. The most recent BCS findings in this area published by Flatley *et al.* (2008) show that the characteristics most strongly and independently associated with perceiving high levels of ASB are:

- Living in 'hard-pressed', 'moderate means' or 'urban prosperity' ACORN areas
- The level of deprivation, particularly living in the most deprived wards
- Disagreeing that people from different backgrounds get on well in the local area
- Being a victim of crime in the past 12 months
- Not living in the Northern regions of England
- Age: being less than 65
- Having lived in an area for 3 years or more

‘ACORN’ (an acronym for ‘A Classification of Residential Neighbourhoods’) categorises households into five main groups according to their demographic, housing and employment characteristics, as outlined in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2 Outline of Main ACORN Groups from Flatley *et al.* (2008:42)

| ACORN Group       | Household Characteristics  |
|-------------------|--|
| Hard-Pressed      | Low income families, residents in council areas, people living in high rise, and inner city areas. |
| Moderate Means    | Asian communities, post-industrial families and skilled manual workers.                            |
| Comfortably Off   | Young couples, secure families, older couples living in the suburbs, and pensioners.               |
| Urban Prosperity  | Prosperous professionals, young urban professionals and students living in town and city areas.    |
| Wealthy Achievers | Wealthy executives, affluent older people and well-off families.                                   |

Overall, “the relationship between level of deprivation and perceptions of ASB remained the most strongly independently associated factor” (Flatley *et al.*, 2008:17). These findings are also supported by Millie *et al.* (2005) who identified an association between deprivation and ‘ASB concern’. In addition to highlighting the factors associated with perceptions, the BCS also explores the sources of perceptions. All previous Home Office analysis suggests that those who perceive high levels of ASB in their local area develop their perceptions from their own personal experience (Wood, 2004; Upson, 2006; Flatley *et al.*, 2008). However, it is important to acknowledge that “not everyone who had experienced such behaviour actually considered there to be a problem in their area” (Upson, 2006:9). This relates to some of the issues raised earlier regarding tolerance, subjectivity and definitions of ASB.

The BCS provides a comprehensive analysis of the demographic factors associated with those who perceive high levels of ASB. In addition, this information is complemented by the information about what shapes perceptions, albeit fairly limited. The strength of the BCS is that it provides this data on a national scale. However, its major limitation is that it tells us little about why certain demographic groups are more likely to perceive high levels of ASB. It is also difficult to apply BCS perceptions data to a local context such as a CDRP. This is because local classifications of BCS data can only be achieved at police force level.

### 1.8.3 Local Perceptions Data

In addition to the research conducted nationally by the BCS, in England local information is also collected biennially by the Place Survey. The Place Survey is a statutory survey that collects data at a local authority level, with the results measured against a number of national performance indicators (including NI17). This was introduced in 2008 to replace the Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) User Satisfaction Survey (also previously known as the Local Government User Satisfaction Survey (LGUSS)). The overall remit of the Place Survey is to capture the views of local people on a range of local authority functions, so that future service delivery can reflect local priorities. The combined perceptions measure is employed to collect data about public perceptions of ASB, with results published by local authority area as well as for England as a whole. The Place Survey and its predecessor the BVPI have produced markedly different national results to the BCS in previous years, as demonstrated in Table 1.3. Although, the gap between the scores appears to be reducing.

Table 1.3 BCS and Place/BVPI Survey Results for the Proportion of People Perceiving High Levels of ASB in 2003/04, 2006/07 and 2008/09

| %                 | 2003/04 | 2006/07 | 2008/09 |
|-------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| <b>BCS</b>        | 16      | 17      | 17      |
| <b>BVPI/Place</b> | 38      | 23      | 20      |

Sources: BCS - Walker *et al.* (2009); BVPI - Ames *et al.* (2007); Place - DCLG (2009)

An element of caution should be exercised when comparing these figures, due to the Place Survey only sampling local authorities in England, compared to the BCS which surveys England and Wales. The Place Survey may not be as methodologically rigorous as the BCS but it does provide sufficient results at a local level, providing the sample size exceeds 1,100. Nevertheless, “the sheer numbers of people completing these surveys (around half a million households each sweep) means that they provide a robust indicator of shifts in public opinion over time” (Ames *et al.*, 2007:10-11). It also allows local authorities to make comparisons to their own previous performance as well as other neighbouring authorities and members of their most similar CDRP family group<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Most similar CDRP family groups represent the grouping of a number of CDRPs based on their similarities in demographic, socio-economic and geographical profile. These shared characteristics are known to demonstrate reasonably comparable levels of crime. Variations in crime and ASB are then monitored within the group to determine and share best practice.

Overall, the research into public perceptions of ASB is conducted on a national and local scale. The data is collected on a regular basis and is quantitative in form. These types of data provide a useful snapshot of perception levels, but do not provide any in-depth understanding into how perceptions of ASB are formulated.

#### *1.8.4 Research into Public Perceptions of ASB*

In relation to other ASB-related topics, public perceptions have been highly under-researched. Very little enquiry has been explicitly about perceptions of ASB, with the studies mentioned here having an overall focus on social housing and neighbourhood disorder.

Atkinson and Flint (2003) examined responses to crime and disorder in both affluent and deprived neighbourhoods using a resident's survey. They found perceptions of crime and disorder varied within neighbourhoods, citing the length of residence and levels of neighbour support as key factors in shaping these perceptions. Differences in ASB perceptions between different neighbourhoods were also uncovered by Flint *et al.* (2007a). The research was conducted for Glasgow Housing Association, to examine neighbourhood relations within their housing stock. Analysis of Tenant Satisfaction Surveys found that perceptions of ASB "varies considerably between and within local housing organisations" (p.2). Links were made between perceptions of ASB and property type, with decked access, multi-story and tenements perceiving the highest levels of ASB. This demonstrates that even within deprived areas, certain people are more likely to experience and perceive high levels of ASB than others. Further research into eight deprived neighbourhoods by Flint *et al.* (2007b) found that perceived levels of ASB varied significantly within and between neighbourhoods. Two-hundred residents were surveyed and asked how common eight types of ASB were. The eight behaviours included: noisy neighbours, vandalism, rubbish, neighbour disputes, harassing, drugs, rowdy behaviour, and setting fires/burnt out cars. The analysis used adjusted odds ratios to control for the affects of variables such as age, gender and tenure, and identified 'neighbourhood effects' that highlighted the differences in perceptions between neighbourhoods. Four neighbourhoods "indicated a localised pattern of high levels of perceived levels of antisocial behaviour" (Flint *et al.*, 2007b:47). In addition, the proportion of those witnessing ASB was less than the proportion that thought ASB was common, suggesting perceptions of ASB are generated through additional factors. Certain types of ASB were found to have a greater impact on perceptions of ASB, with gangs and drug dealing considered to have a 'very negative impact'.

Flint *et al.* (2007b) also examined public perceptions of local agencies attempts to reduce ASB and found that only a minority of respondents perceived their performance to have improved over the past 12 months. There was also a general dissatisfaction towards agencies' responses to complaints. Investigating local agencies added another dimension to perceptions research. The National Audit Office (2006) and Ipsos Mori (2007) have both studied practitioners' use and views on the tools and powers available to tackle ASB, although the way practitioners address perceptions of ASB has not yet been explored.

Other research linked to perceptions of ASB has focused upon neighbourhood disorder. Innes and Jones (2006) examined how crime, disorder and ASB can determine the way places change over time. After interviewing participants in four Wards that were part of the National Reassurance Policing Programme, they developed the 3Rs model of risk, resilience and recovery factors:

1. Risk: Signal crimes and disorders were found to affect perceptions and actions in relation to security. In addition, they established "that inappropriate responses from the police and other agencies, and a failure to take public concerns seriously, routinely amplify the insecurity felt by communities" (p.50)
2. Resilience: Collective efficacy (as outlined in section 1.2) was considered the prime source of resilience, which "sustains security and inhibits the spread of corrosive insecurity" (p.50).
3. Recovery: Actual neighbourhood changes are considered to demonstrate signs of recovery.

In practice, Innes and Jones (2006) suggest that a "sense of precariousness may be caused by the levels of antisocial behaviour and physical degradation" (p.53), suggesting a link between actual levels of disorder and perceived levels of ASB. Overall, research into neighbourhood disorder has provided an indication into public perceptions of ASB and how perceptions may vary within and between neighbourhoods.

Little research has focused directly on perceptions of ASB as defined by the BCS. Ames *et al.* (2007) used data from the 2006 BVPI survey, alongside other demographic information to develop "a model which enables us to predict the levels of perceived anti-social behaviour we might expect to see in an area, given the prevailing conditions locally" (p.13), known as

Frontiers Analysis. The data used alongside the combined perceptions measure included: local deprivation, population increase (net inflow), population density, percentage of the population aged under 25 and the recorded offence of violence against the person. The data sets listed above were the strongest predictive data based on their correlation with the 7SI. The predictive element was generated through stepwise multiple regression that was applied to all 387 English local authority areas in order to generate a national predictive forecast. The forecast scores were compared to the original 2006 BVPI scores and a gap in perceptions identified. Overall, 50% of the local authorities had a BVPI perception score which was lower than the predicted level, 40% had a higher BVPI score than predicted level and 10% generated the same result. This research also provided a further example of how perceptions vary between locations, because four out of the five local authorities with the highest index scores for perceiving high levels of ASB were urban areas<sup>11</sup>. Therefore, research has consistently highlighted a link between perceiving high levels of ASB and urban and/or deprived areas.

Overall, research has identified a number of themes relating to public perceptions of ASB. However, there has been little direct enquiry into perceptions aside from the BCS/Place survey, particularly in relation to qualitative data collection.

#### *1.8.5 Interventions that Reduce Perceived High Levels of ASB*

A small amount of research has identified that a police or a uniformed presence can act as a means of reducing perceived high levels of ASB (Atkinson and Flint, 2003; Flint and Kearns, 2005; Casey, 2008). Although contradicting studies suggest this could have a negative impact on the way communities view their neighbourhood and create an over-reliance upon the police (Crawford, 2003; Innes and Jones, 2006). Hinkle and Weisburd (2008) found that police 'crackdowns' in neighbourhoods based upon the Broken Windows Theory had a negative impact by increasing levels of fear. Therefore little is truly known about what interventions can reduce perceived high levels of ASB in any given context.

#### *1.8.6 Research from the International Context*

Due to the complexities of the legal definition of ASB and the rigorous measurement processes adopted by the BCS and Place Surveys, little research from overseas is relevant to the context of perceptions in England and Wales. However, a study from America highlights the relationship between crime/incivilities and perceptions of safety. Carvalho and

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<sup>11</sup> Newham, Tower Hamlets, Hackney (London Boroughs) and Blyth Valley (Northumberland).

Lewis (2003) found that fear is not always generated by crime and incivilities, after conducting in-depth interviews with residents of deprived neighbourhoods in Chicago. They suggest “a sense of safety, not fear, is the prevalent reaction to neighborhood disorder/crime. With this sense of safety, crime/incivilities (or the dangers they pose) are not central to individual life, rather peripheral” (p.806). This reiterates the suggestion of Upson (2006) that not everyone experiencing ASB (or disorder) considers it a problem.

#### *1.8.7 Political Significance of Perceptions*

The politicised nature of ASB has already been well documented and the issue of public perceptions is no exception. Tonry (2004) suggests that perceived high levels of ASB are a product of New Labour’s management of the issue. He states that “giving it sustained high visibility attention, Labour has made a small problem larger, thereby making people more aware of it and less satisfied with their lives and their government” (p.57). This implies that had the government not highlighted the problem of ASB, the public would not be as fearful. This perspective is reiterated by Mooney and Young (2006) who assert that the government created ASB for political gain when faced with a declining overall crime rate. Furthermore, Millie (2007) intimates the new ASB ‘industry’ is partly responsible for higher proportions of people perceiving ASB to be a problem, with the public coming into contact with ASB policies through housing management, ASB and Respect co-ordinators. He also highlights BCS data which demonstrates 66% of respondents did not have a problem with ASB and subsequently questions why ASB is such a high government priority. Squires and Stephen (2005) also draw attention to the gap between perceptions scores and enforcement priorities. All of these issues reflect the earlier discussions about defining deviance and disorder. By attempting to quantify perceptions, the government may be attempting to measure the perception of a problem they are responsible for creating and exacerbating. The impact of the government’s approach should be acknowledged when measuring perceptions. Nevertheless, bearing in mind the difficulties with measuring incidents of ASB, measuring perceptions still appears the most appropriate method of assessing the extent of ASB and measuring performance.

#### *1.8.8 The Mass Media and Public Perceptions of ASB*

A final area to consider is the influence of the mass media upon public perceptions of ASB. Although most research in this area has focused on the fear of crime (Reiner, 2007), there are salient links between perceptions of crime and perceptions of deviance and ASB, particularly because of the subjective nature of ASB. With the rapid developments in technology over the past decades, there are currently many media representations of crime

and ASB available to the public, including: newspapers, television, films, the radio, documentaries, video sharing internet sites such as 'You Tube', reality TV and 'true crime' programmes. As such, "the advent of post-modernity has meant that it is becoming increasingly impossible to distinguish between media image and social reality" (Carrabine *et al.*, 2004:332). Furthermore, "the risks of crime as portrayed by the media are both quantitatively and qualitatively more serious than the official statistically recorded picture" (Reiner, 2007:315). Subsequently, "the mass media have generally been credited with raising the public's fear of being victimized, heightened a sense of anxiety about crime, and propelling crime onto the top of the public agenda" (Callanan, 2004:53).

Callanan (2004) suggests five ways that crime and ASB coverage may influence public perceptions:

1. The percentage of crime coverage is increasing, saturating the media.
2. The majority of people rely on the media for crime and/or crime policy information.
3. There is an over-representation of certain crime types e.g. violence, homicide and robbery.
4. Crime victims and offenders are incorrectly portrayed as a consequence of the media relying on information from the police and courts.
5. Crime is presented in a simplistic and narrow fashion that views behaviour as 'right' or 'wrong', with nothing in-between.

Theoretically, the media is considered to affect public perceptions of crime and ASB. Gerbner (1970, 1995) suggests the 'Cultivation Hypothesis', which concurs that the media represents crime in a narrow and homogenous manner. With exposure to this media over a period of time, individuals are considered to believe what they are watching regardless of the accuracy of the depiction. Iyengar *et al.* (1982) take a different stance however, suggesting that the media does not necessarily manipulate public perceptions themselves, but influences the importance the public assigns to these perceptions. The importance level assigned to matters presented by the media, links to the concept of moral panics and deviancy amplification outlined in section 1.2.1. Hall *et al.* (1978) found that newspapers created an instance of deviancy amplification by stimulating a high level of public anxiety about 'mugging'. These brief examples of varying theoretical perspectives demonstrate that public perceptions of crime and ASB are not constructed in isolation to the media, regardless of the theoretical standpoint adopted. Therefore the influence of the mass media must be taken into consideration when studying public perceptions of ASB.

## **1.9 New Developments since Fieldwork Commenced**

Due to the dynamic nature of ASB policy, numerous political and academic developments have taken place since the commencement of this PhD. The main developments are briefly outlined here to demonstrate the progression of the subject, as well as to place the results of this study in a current context.

### *1.9.1 Policy Developments*

The fieldwork for this study commenced in summer 2008 when ASB had drifted from the political agenda. Perhaps the most significant development of 2008 was the nationwide roll-out of Neighbourhood Policing, where each neighbourhood in England and Wales was assigned their own dedicated police team. In relation to legislation, the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act was passed in 2008, with part 8 referring to ASB. The act provided: premises closure orders, the requirement to review ASBOs on a yearly basis for recipients under 18, and amendments to parenting orders. The main policy intervention during this period was the selection of 52 Challenge and Support areas that were given funding to co-ordinate efforts to deliver supportive interventions, alongside enforcement action in relation to young people (Respect Website, 2008).

ASB policy momentum began to re-build in 2009 with the introduction of the Policing Pledge, which has the aim of restoring public confidence in the police (Policing Pledge Website, 2009). The Policing Pledge sets out a list of ten promises that all 43 police forces have committed to deliver. These promises focus around the provision of information to the public regarding: response times, progress updates and high visibility policing (DirectGov Website, 2009). In relation to ASB, the Pledge commits local Neighbourhood Policing Teams to monthly public meetings, giving the public the opportunity to set local policing priorities, which could be ASB-related. These are often referred to as Police (or Partners) and Communities Together, or PACT meetings.

Policy documentation was also bolstered by the publication of the Youth Crime Action Plan: One Year On (HM Government, 2009), which outlined some of the successes of the Youth Crime Action Plan and set out additional pledges relating to additional support for parents and families. Communicating for Confidence: A Practical Guide (Home Office, 2009b) was also published to inform practitioners how to utilise communication strategies to build public confidence in their services.

In addition, Alan Johnson was appointed Home Secretary and claimed “we need a new drive on anti-social behaviour” (The Times Newspaper, 2009), which preceded the announcement of: a new ASB Action Squad deployed to work in 62 priority areas, the introduction of Minimum Standards for ASB reduction to be in place by March 2010 and the introduction of victim support for victims of ASB. One aspect of the Minimum Standards declares that perceptions of ASB will be reduced year on year. This reaffirms the government’s commitment to reducing perceptions, although as demonstrated above, there is little evidence to suggest how this can be successfully achieved. Indeed, the 62 CDRP areas chosen to receive the additional funding were done so on the basis of their combined perceptions measure score exceeding 25% in the 2008 Place Survey (DCSF, 2010). The focus on victims was re-emphasised by the publication of Redefining Justice: Addressing the Individual Needs of Victims and Witnesses (Payne, 2009), which recommended a number of improvements to the way victims are treated. Developments continued with the publication of the Safe and Confident Neighbourhoods Strategy (Home Office, 2010). Although this does not mention perceptions of ASB directly it reaffirms the commitment to the Policing Pledge as well as improvements in public confidence and involvement. Overall, measures to improve public confidence and involvement have characterised ASB policy during this period. A cynical perspective may attribute these measures to the New Labour campaign for the 2010 general election, although regardless of motivation, ASB certainly returned to prominence. Since the general election and the new Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition coming to power, the new Home Secretary Theresa May has indicated that tackling ASB will remain high on the policy agenda (The Daily Telegraph Newspaper, 2010).

### *1.9.2 Research Developments*

Two research studies have been published that directly link to perceptions of ASB. Cooper *et al.* (2009) investigated local variations in the application of ASB tools and powers. They found practitioners perceived there to be varying public perceptions regarding the type and amount of ASB within their CDRP, which reinforces the public findings from Flint *et al.* (2007a) and (2007b).

Most significantly, a Rapid Evidence Assessment<sup>12</sup> (hereafter REA) was conducted into the drivers of perceptions of ASB by Mackenzie *et al.* (2010). From the literature generated, they suggest a theoretical interpretive approach where ‘social connectedness’ is an important driver of perceptions of ASB. They state:

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<sup>12</sup> An REA is a systematic review of literature relating to a topic, governed by specific search criteria.

*“the connectedness of an individual to both other users of particular spaces and to particular types of ASB is important in their evaluation of whether that behaviour is problematic or not. . . By implication, the greater the connectedness of an individual, the less likely they would be to interpret any given behaviour as problematic ASB”*  
(p.i)

Mackenzie *et al.* (2010) also propose a number of suggestions to reduce perceived high levels of ASB which include both short and long term, local and national strategies, including:

- Short term/neighbourhood level: public information strategies, public reassurance messages and environmental intervention.
- Long term/neighbourhood level: increasing trust and community cohesion, actions to reduce concentration of socio-economic deprivation and crime problems in certain area.
- Short term/national level: development of a more prescriptive definition of ASB.
- Long term/national: actions to address the social and economic conditions associated with perceived high levels of ASB and public reassurance by the government.

### **1.10 Summary**

Overall, this Chapter has provided an important insight into the discourse associated with contemporary constructions of deviance, which has in turn situated the manifestations of ASB policy and legislation. The detailed account of ASB legislation and the number of criticisms it has faced has put the application of these tools and powers into context. The Chapter then centred on the issues of public perceptions of ASB, identifying their centrality to overall ASB policy, despite a paucity of research. This process also identified a number of gaps in perceptions of ASB research, particularly in relation to drivers of perceptions and how practitioners address public perceptions. Apart from the quantitative BCS and Place Surveys, a lack of perceptions-specific research was also apparent. Much of the current knowledge has been generated as a result of enquiries into other topics, with very little emphasis on qualitative explorations of public perceptions. This study will address some of these under-research topics in order to improve our understanding of public perceptions of ASB.

## **Chapter Two: Research Methodology**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this Chapter is to outline and justify the methods used in this study. Separated into eleven sections, this Chapter provides a logical documentation of how the research methods were developed. The aims of the research are given at the outset, before consideration is given to research philosophies. The overall research approach and sampling technique is then justified. Sections 2.6, 2.7 and 2.8 provide exact details of how the research methods were selected for each phase of the mixed method research. Attention is then focused upon the importance and process of generating inferences in mixed methods research, before an outline of ethical considerations are provided.

### **2.2 Research Aims**

The literature review Chapter thoroughly explored all aspects of ASB in relation to criminological theory, policy and research, culminating in situating public perceptions of ASB within the wider ASB context. From this exploration it is evident that public perceptions play a pivotal role in ASB policy, as it is the primary measurement used by the Home Office to gauge the extent of problems with ASB. Despite this, the topic of public perceptions of ASB is highly under-researched.

In addition to the information obtained from the literature review, the focus of this study was also determined in consultation with the Home Office as the collaborating establishment. This reflects the nature of the ESRC CASE studentship award by which this PhD was funded. It was agreed that knowledge in the area of public perceptions could be enhanced by:

- understanding what shapes people's perceptions/opinions of ASB
- further exploring the variation in perceptions between different localities
- investigating the different methods used by practitioners to reduce public perceptions of ASB

This could enable future ASB policies to be driven by targeting the underlying factors that cause harassment, alarm and distress and ultimately contribute to reducing the number of people perceiving high levels of ASB. Consequently, the aim of this thesis is to explore the

above factors in order to build a greater understanding of public perceptions of ASB and how this is managed in an applied setting. In order to meet these aims, the following research questions were employed:

#### Research Question 1

Attempt to establish the level of residents' perceptions of ASB in four areas and explore whether such perceptions of ASB vary according to: the combined perceptions measure, personal experience of ASB, general attitudes about ASB locally and nationally, attitudes towards crime and ASB, residing in a Respect area, attitudes towards local service provision, exposure to local/national media, and awareness of local/national interventions.

#### Research Question 2

What factors influence public perceptions of ASB in four areas?

#### Research Question 3

How do ASB practitioners in four areas address public perceptions of ASB in a local context?

The research questions were answered over three distinct phases. Phase one involved collecting data relating to research question one, in order to measure levels of public perceptions. Once these levels were established, phase two commenced with research question two, which re-visited some of the emerging themes from research question one and sought to enhance these topics by looking at the issues raised in greater depth. Finally, phase three of the research related to research question three and explored the views of ASB practitioners. This was in order to situate public perceptions in a real-world context and provide an insight into how public perceptions are addressed at a local level. The methods used to answer these questions are provided in sections 2.6, 2.7 and 2.8 respectively.

### **2.3 Philosophies of Research**

Viewed simplistically, research strategies can be divided into two categories: quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative strategies use numerical data and qualitative strategies use data in the form of language, text and visual images (Bryman, 2004). However, the relationship between these two positions is more complex. Quantitative and qualitative research methods uphold different epistemological and ontological considerations and “represent fundamental differences in outlook and (have) alternative assumptions about

generating legitimate knowledge” (Kraska and Neuman, 2008:71). Epistemology is “concerned with evaluating claims about the way in which the world can be known to us and, as such, involves issues as to what it is to know *anything*” (Hughes and Sharrock, 1997:5). Whereas ontology is “the study of the essence of phenomena and the nature of their existence” (Gray, 2009:579).

It is important to consider the theoretical positions of both quantitative and qualitative strategies in order to determine the most appropriate research strategy and data collection methods for the purposes of this research.

Epistemologically, the quantitative research strategy is strongly linked to positivist social science and the natural science model. Positivism is a “method for combining deductive logic with precise empirical observations in order to discover and confirm a set of probabilistic causal laws that can be used to predict general patterns of human activity” (Kraska and Neuman, 2008:72). Deductive logic suggests that research is guided by theory. Positivism also embraces a number of other key features. It emphasises phenomenism, where phenomena must be observable and replicable. It also has an essentialist orientation, where reality is considered real, patterned and ordered. Inductivism is also important as this is where knowledge is acquired through facts. Ontologically, positivism is characterised by an objectivist view of the social world, where social phenomena occur independently from social actors. This position adopts a structured view of the world and social processes.

Conversely, the qualitative research strategy takes an opposing stance. It provides “an approach to research that emphasizes the systematic analysis and detailed study of people and text in order to arrive at understandings and interpretations of how people construct and maintain meaning within social worlds” (Kraska and Neuman, 2008:74). It is based around Max Weber’s concept of *Verstehen*, which is concerned with generating an empathetic understanding. This is seen epistemologically, as an interpretivist standpoint. Interpretism opposes positivism and respects the differences between social actors and the objects of natural science (Bryman, 2004). The qualitative strategy also takes an inductive approach to research and theory, research generates theory. Ontologically, constructivism is preferred to objectivism. This is where social phenomena are created by social actors.

In principle, quantitative and qualitative research strategies are essentially opposites. Although both stances offer sound theoretical platforms that could be applied to the research questions outlined above.

## 2.4 Research Approach

### 2.4.1 Selection of Research Strategy

When considering which research strategy to employ, the most crucial decision was whether the chosen strategy would produce valid and credible results. In view of the theoretical standpoints outlined above, it would appear that research question one would be best served by employing a quantitative research strategy. This would allow perception levels in the four areas to be numerically established, quantified, statistically analysed and compared. This strategy would not be applicable to research questions two and three, which appear more suited to the qualitative strategy. This is because understanding both the factors that influence public perceptions and practitioners methods of addressing public perceptions would require exploration and interpretation. Therefore, is it acceptable to use more than one research strategy in a single study?

Historically,

*“each faction (quants vs. quals) have traditionally viewed the other in adversarial terms, and therefore adopted a type of binary exclusion logic, in which our methodological choices are limited to either one or the other approach, with both camps viewing each other’s as inferior” (Kraska and Neuman, 2008:454).*

Despite this paradox, mixed methods research has emerged as a discipline in its own right. Johnson *et al.* (2007:129) define mixed methods research as:

*“An intellectual and practical synthesis based on qualitative and quantitative research; it is the third methodological or research paradigm (along with qualitative and quantitative research). It recognizes the importance of traditional quantitative and qualitative research but also offers a powerful third paradigm choice that often will provide the most informative, complete, balanced, and useful research results.”*

The basic premise of mixed methods research is that “by mixing the datasets, the researcher provides a better understanding of the problem than if either dataset had been used alone” (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:7). Subsequently, “a major advantage of mixed methods research is that it enables the researcher to simultaneously answer confirmatory and exploratory questions, and therefore verify and generate theory in the same study” (Teddle and Tashakkori, 2003:15). Therefore, employing a mixed methods strategy enables questions to be answered that other methodologies could not do alone, while being able to make stronger inferences about a greater diversity of findings (Teddle and Tashakkori, 2003). By using a combination of strategies, the weaknesses of one strategy can be off-set by the other (Jick, 1979). For example, the qualitative strategy compliments the weakness of

the quantitative strategy regarding context setting and understanding, and vice versa for issues such as the generalisation of findings. The advantages of this strategy are counterbalanced by some practical and theoretical disadvantages. Practically speaking, mixed methods studies are often time consuming, with two sets of data requiring collection and analysis, which complicates the research procedure. It also relies upon the researcher being competent at conducting both quantitative and qualitative research (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007).

Theoretically, there are two established 'epistemological version' arguments against the use of a mixed methods strategy: the embedded methods argument and the paradigm argument. The embedded methods argument suggests that research methods are entrenched in their respective epistemological and ontological stances. Subsequently, a decision to utilise a data collection method is also a commitment to an epistemological/ontological attitude (Bryman, 2004). The paradigm argument regards the contestation of superiority between one or the other of the major social science paradigms, quantitative or qualitative. A paradigm is the belief system or worldview that guides researchers (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). The "paradigm wars have been fought across several "battlefields" concerning important conceptual issues, such as the "nature of reality" or the "possibility of causal linkages"" (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998:3-4). It was argued that the quantitative and qualitative research paradigms were not possible to be combined, based on the interconnectedness of epistemological assumptions (Bryman, 2004). However, "the problem with the paradigm argument is that it rests, as with the embedded methods one, on contentions about the interconnectedness of method and epistemology in particular that cannot – in the case of social research – be demonstrated" (Bryman, 2004:453). Subsequently, authors purporting a link between the established paradigms and mixing methods were termed pragmatists (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998), thus creating a third research paradigm.

Whilst taking into consideration the theoretical and epistemological considerations of mixed methods research, the 'technical version' argument aligns more with the applied criminological research conducted in this study. This argument "gives greater prominence to the strengths of the data collection and data analysis techniques with which quantitative and qualitative research are associated and sees these as capable of being fused" (Bryman, 2004:454). Therefore, whilst acknowledging the philosophical concerns about mixing research methods, it has become widely acceptable to adopt a mixed methods approach because it is the quality of the results that is of ultimate importance. Mixed methods research

“should be used when the nexus of contingencies in a situation, in relation to one’s research question(s), suggests that mixed methods research is likely to provide superior research findings and outcomes” (Johnson *et al.*, 2007:129). This is particularly relevant to this study, due to the nature of the research questions and justifies the decision to adopt a mixed methods research strategy.

According to Maruna (2010), unlike other social science disciplines, the mixed methods “approach remains under-appreciated and under-utilized in contemporary criminological research” (p.123). Examples of mixed methods studies conducted within the field of criminology include: investigations into public opinion of criminal justice issues (Maruna and King, 2004; 2009), the displacement of crime (Weisburd *et al.*, 2006) and violent behaviour (Collins, 2008).

A mixed methods explanatory sequential design is most suited to the research questions in this study. The main aim of this design is that the quantitative element is used to identify themes that can be explored in greater depth in the qualitative element. This is categorised as the ‘participant selection model (QUAL emphasised)’ variant of this design. This is where quantitative information is initially required to identify important themes to be followed up in-depth by qualitative methods (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007). This approach is advantageous because it is: straightforward to implement and report sequential phases of research, it has multi-phases as well as multi-methods and it has a strong quantitative base (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007). A similar approach was employed by Maruna and King (2004 and 2009), where interview respondents were used to elaborate the findings of an initial quantitative public opinion survey.

The majority of literature regarding explanatory designs reports studies with two phases, one quantitative and one qualitative. This study however, is different as two qualitative phases were necessary to coincide with the second and third research questions. The inclusion of the third element is integral to this study as the practitioner research contextualises the views of the public. What practical application could there be if the public’s views were not understood within the framework of public service provision? Put simply, there are two sides to every story. The inclusion of three phases in the explanatory design is unusual. However, it has been utilised by Slonim-Nevo and Nevo (2009) in their three-phase study of immigration.

When using sequential designs it is common for one aspect of the data collection to take priority. In this study, the emphasis was on the qualitative data. This is because it enhances the findings of the quantitative data, which has been collected to provide an indication of perceptions that complements and extends existing findings from the BCS. The qualitative work will add value by bringing a new dimension to the study of perceptions, looking at public opinions in-depth as well as complementing this with the views of practitioners.

Another crucial aspect of mixed methods research is the integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches. Collecting and analysing quantitative and qualitative data alone is insufficient, “they need to be mixed in some way so that together they form a more complete picture of a problem than they do when standing alone” (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:7). This is considered by some to be the ultimate advantage of using a mixed methods strategy (Teddle and Tashakkori, 2003). This is determined by the overall purpose of the mixed methods strategy. The purpose of this mixed methods study was Complementarity and Initiation. Complementarity is where the methods “are combined to measure overlapping but also different elements of a phenomenon” (Gray, 2009:213). In addition, initiation “uncover(s) paradoxes, new perspectives and contradictions” (Gray, 2009:213). This study embraced both of these concepts with the aim of uncovering similarities and differences, as well as new perspectives to add to the body of ASB research. The triangulation of methods is not appropriate in this instance as this focuses on the extent to which one method compensates for the weaknesses of another, when measuring the same phenomenon (Hagan, 2005). The focus is therefore on “forging an overall or negotiated account of the findings that brings together both components of the conversation or debates” (Bryman, 2007:21).

The mixed methods term used for integrating the two research strategies is inference. This is used “because it may take a variety of meanings ranging between a purely qualitative connotation to a purely quantitative connotation” (Teddle and Tashakkori, 2003:35). One final element of the mixed methods strategy to clarify is the subject of validity. The term Inference Quality is used “to refer to issues such as internal validity (QUAN term) or credibility (QUAL term)” (Teddle and Tashakkori, 2003:36). This term is used to reflect the accuracy of a mixed methods study and transcends the qualitative/quantitative divide and will be adopted throughout this study.

Overall this study employed a mixed methods research strategy, using the explanatory sequential design. Research question one was served by the quantitative element of the study and comprised phase one of the research. Research questions two and three were

answered using the qualitative element, encompassing phases two and three of the research respectively.

#### *2.4.2 Selection of Research Design*

Once the research aims and the mixed methods research strategy had been decided, it was essential to assess which research design would be most suitable for this study. In view of the duration and resources available, the feasibility of the design was crucial.

In discussion with the Home Office it was agreed that an in-depth study would be most appropriate, given the existing large-scale national public surveys currently operating that measure public perceptions of ASB (the BCS and Place Survey). In addition to this criterion, the Home Office were keen to build upon previous findings from the BCS. Since 2004, living in a 'hard-pressed' ACORN area has been the most significant predictor of those who perceive high levels of ASB. Those considered to be hard-pressed "are experiencing the most difficult social and economic conditions in the whole country, and appear to have limited opportunity to improve their circumstances" (ACORN User Guide, 2006:82). The hard-pressed category is broken down into fourteen types of people it represents, see table 2.1. These types of people have been characterised by words such as: struggling, burdened, hardship and adversity, reiterating the levels of deprivation experienced in these areas. The literature reinforces this, stating that ASB is widespread in such areas (Nixon *et al.*, 2003; Ames *et al.*, 2007; Flatley *et al.*, 2008). It was therefore agreed to target the research into areas displaying these characteristics.

Table 2.1: Hard-Pressed ACORN Types (Adapted from the ACORN User Guide, 2006).

| Type ID | Type  | Group ID | Group                |
|---------|---|----------|----------------------|
| 44      | Low income larger families, semis               | N        | Struggling Families  |
| 45      | Older people, low income, small semis           | N        | Struggling Families  |
| 46      | Low income, routine jobs, unemployment          | N        | Struggling Families  |
| 47      | Low rise terraced estates of poorly-off workers | N        | Struggling Families  |
| 48      | Low incomes, high unemployment, single parents  | N        | Struggling Families  |
| 49      | Large families, many children, poorly educated  | N        | Struggling Families  |
| 50      | Council flats, single elderly people            | O        | Burdened Singles     |
| 51      | Council terraces, unemployment, many singles    | O        | Burdened Singles     |
| 52      | Council flats, single parents, unemployment     | O        | Burdened Singles     |
| 53      | Old people in high rise flats                   | P        | High Rise Hardship   |
| 54      | Singles and single parents, high rise estates   | P        | High Rise Hardship   |
| 55      | Multi-ethnic purpose built estates              | Q        | Inner City Adversity |
| 56      | Multi-ethnic crowded flats                      | Q        | Inner City Adversity |
| 57      | Unclassified                                    | Q        | Inner City Adversity |

In addition to targeting specific hard-pressed ACORN areas, it was also desirable to explore whether the factors influencing perceptions varied between different geographical areas. This allowed comparisons to be made between areas to provide insight into how perceptions of ASB are formed.

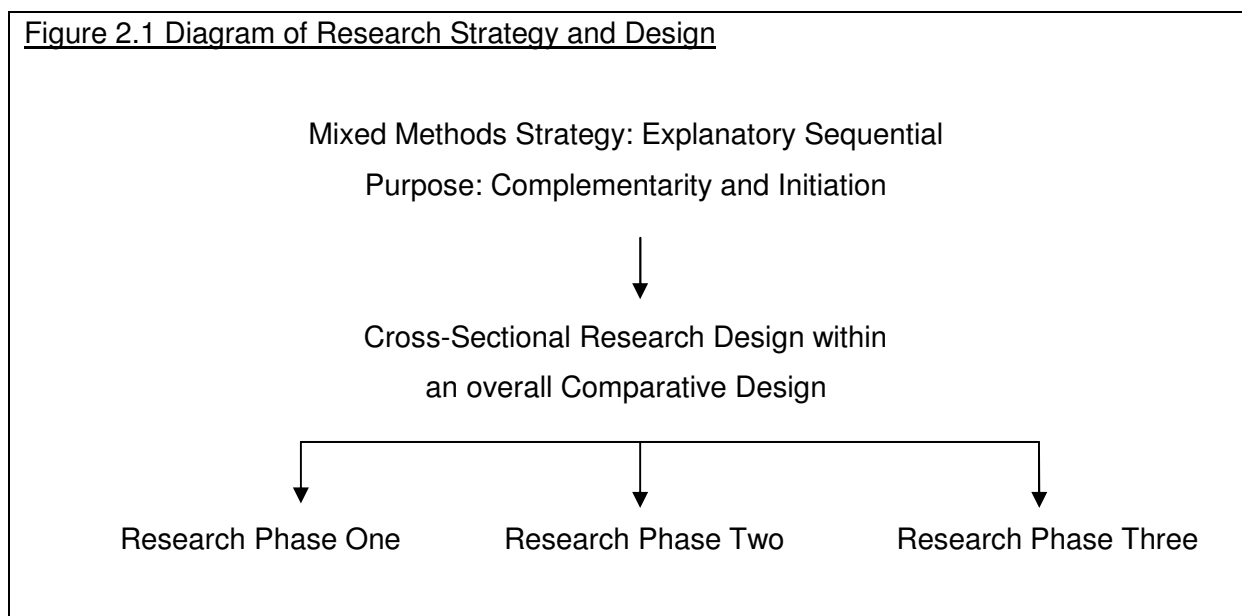
This type of research reflects a comparative design, as the same methods were applied to a number of different areas. Essentially, this design “embodies the logic of comparison in that it implies that we can understand social phenomena better when they are compared in relation to two or more meaningfully contrasting cases or situations” (Bryman, 2004:53). This type of research design can also incorporate quantitative and qualitative research, which reflects the overall research strategy. Comparative designs are often employed when making comparisons between different countries or cultures (Kraska and Neuman, 2008), but it is also applicable for the cases to consist of different communities (Bryman, 2004). It is within the context of studying different communities or areas, that the comparative design was employed in this study. In addition to the overarching comparative design, an additional research design was necessary, within which the research methods were conducted. The most appropriate research design for this study was a cross-sectional design because a

comparative design is essentially two or more cross-sectional pieces of research conducted at the same time. Fundamentally, “a cross-sectional design entails the collection of data on more than one case . . . and at a single point in time in order to collect a body of quantitative or quantifiable data in connection with two or more variables . . . , which are the examined to detect patterns of association” (Bryman, 2004: 41). This approach was appropriate for phase one of the research, allowing the perceptions of a large number of cases to be measured at one point in time, providing an insight into perceptions that would be built upon later in phase two of the research. Phases two and three of the research, although qualitative, still adopted a cross-sectional design as it involved conducting a number of semi-structured interviews and focus groups at a single point in time.

Other types of research design could have been implemented in this study. The most applicable would have been a longitudinal design. This would have allowed perceptions to have been measured and explored on a number of occasions, building up a picture of how perceptions develop or are addressed over time. Although linked to the research questions, this type of research would not have been feasible in a three-year PhD study.

Overall, a comparative design with a cross-sectional approach was implemented in this study. Figure 2.1 provides an overview of the research strategies employed.

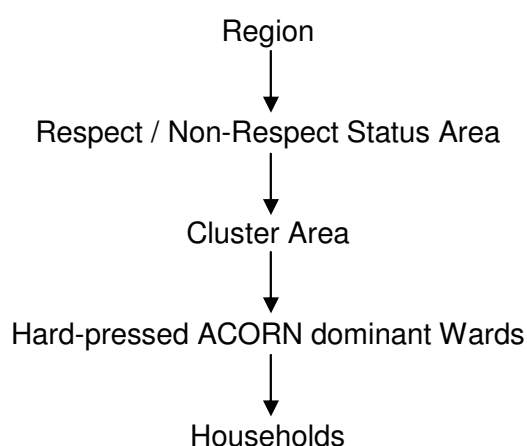
Figure 2.1 Diagram of Research Strategy and Design



## 2.5 Sampling

In response to the criteria set down by the Home Office, the type of sample design had to be considered. The applied nature of this research demanded a systematic approach to sampling, taking into account the feasibility of the proposed fieldwork. In order to achieve this, a multi-stage cluster sample was employed. “Multi-stage sampling involves combinations of stratified, cluster, simple random samples, and/or other sampling procedures” (Hagan, 2005:138). The approach reflects the mixed method research strategy adopted. Figure 2.2 demonstrates the process of the multi-staged cluster sample used in this study.

Figure 2.2 Process of Multi-Staged Cluster Sample



Primarily, a convenience sample was used to select the geographical region to be researched. Due to the short time duration and limited financial resources available, it was essential the cluster areas were in the North of England for accessibility purposes. Nevertheless, the cluster areas selected all exhibited the required criteria, therefore employing a convenience sample did not detract from the overall validity and purpose of the study.

In order to fulfil the Home Office prerequisite of an in-depth research inquiry, a decision was made to examine four different cluster areas. The term case study was deliberately not applied to represent the areas studied in this research. This was because, although the areas being studied do represent case study areas in the colloquial sense of the term, methodologically they do not represent a case study. This is because a true case study examines one case in-depth, a person, an event or an organisation (Bryman, 2004). This

was not reflected in this study, as the research spans both the general public and practitioners in four different settings.

For ease of classification, each cluster area represented one local authority area (for the remainder of this thesis, these will be referred to simply as areas). This was particularly important for the practitioner-focused element of the research and any future policy implications, should they arise. By selecting a number of areas it was possible to examine perceptions of ASB in-depth, using the different areas as a basis for comparison to determine whether any variations existed. Crucially, this type of approach was compatible with each of the research questions outlined above.

The areas were selected through a stratified sample due to the areas' Respect status. A stratified sample is "a random sample in which the researcher first identifies a set of mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories, divides the sampling frame by the categories, and then uses random selection to select cases from each category" (Kraska and Neuman, 2008:219).

It was decided that Respect area status would be used as the strata for selection, with two Respect areas and two Non-Respect areas being chosen, totalling the four areas to be studied overall. The decision to select Respect and Non-Respect areas as a basis for comparison was due to the additional ASB-related funding and support that Respect areas received. The government established forty Respect areas in 2007 to lead its Respect Agenda. The Respect areas were selected because they had "earned the right to be exemplars of the Respect programme by their strong track record in tackling anti-social behaviour, and a willingness and capacity to do more" (Respect Website, 2007). The chosen areas then signed up to: provide family intervention projects, offer additional parenting classes, hold face the people sessions for local accountability, use the full range of tools and powers, and to implement the Respect Standard for Housing Management; receiving additional funding to fulfil these commitments. Despite ASB policy having progressed from the era of Respect, it was felt that it would be an interesting dimension to take into account when determining whether perceptions varied between different areas. It was also considered important to explore whether there were any differences between the two areas in the same Respect status category, justifying the selection of four areas overall. Respect Trailblazer areas were not considered for selection as these areas received additional funding and support compared to the 'ordinary' Respect areas, which may have compromised the findings. It was also important to select areas that possessed a similar

public service infrastructure, as this would ensure congruent services from the local council and social housing provider. For example, service provision may differ between unitary and two-tiered local authorities, the mixing of which, may have affected the validity of the findings. All areas selected were Metropolitan boroughs, with each having a large Arms-Length Management Company (ALMO) responsible for the social housing in that area.

In order to protect the participants involved in this study and fulfil the researcher's ethical obligations, the geographic locations of the areas studied will be anonymised and referred to throughout as Respect Area 1, Respect Area 2, Non-Respect Area 1 and Non-Respect Area 2. A comprehensive review of the ethical considerations implemented in this study follows in section 2.10.

Other policy driven strata could have been utilised instead of Respect status. For example, it would have been possible to select areas from the same most similar CDRP family groupings. These already function as predefined comparison groups and would have allowed similar performing areas<sup>13</sup> to be studied. However, this option was rejected due to accessibility factors linked to resources and the more specific nature of the Respect policy to the topic of ASB.

The next element of the multi-stage cluster sample involved the selection of hard-pressed ACORN participants for research questions one and two. Two hard-pressed dominant Wards were selected to be the sampling frame in each area. The decision to sample hard-pressed dominant Wards instead of specific hard-pressed ACORN residences was made with the forethought of potential policy implications. It would be impractical for ASB practitioners to target hard-pressed ACORN residences at such a micro level. Examining hard-pressed dominant Wards provided a realistic neighbourhood setting, with greater relevance to practitioners who, through CDRPs and Neighbourhood Policing, operate at Ward level. CACI Ltd, the company who produce the ACORN classifications nationally, were contacted and a list of the five most hard-pressed dominant Wards in each of the areas was supplied. The most recent data available was from 2003. The actual Wards selected in each area were determined in collaboration with local ASB practitioners. A list of the five most hard-pressed Wards was sent to the main ASB practitioner. The researcher then contacted the practitioner to discuss which Wards were most appropriate to sample. This combination of ACORN data and local intelligence ensured the most appropriate Wards were selected in

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<sup>13</sup> Performance in relation to crime reduction.

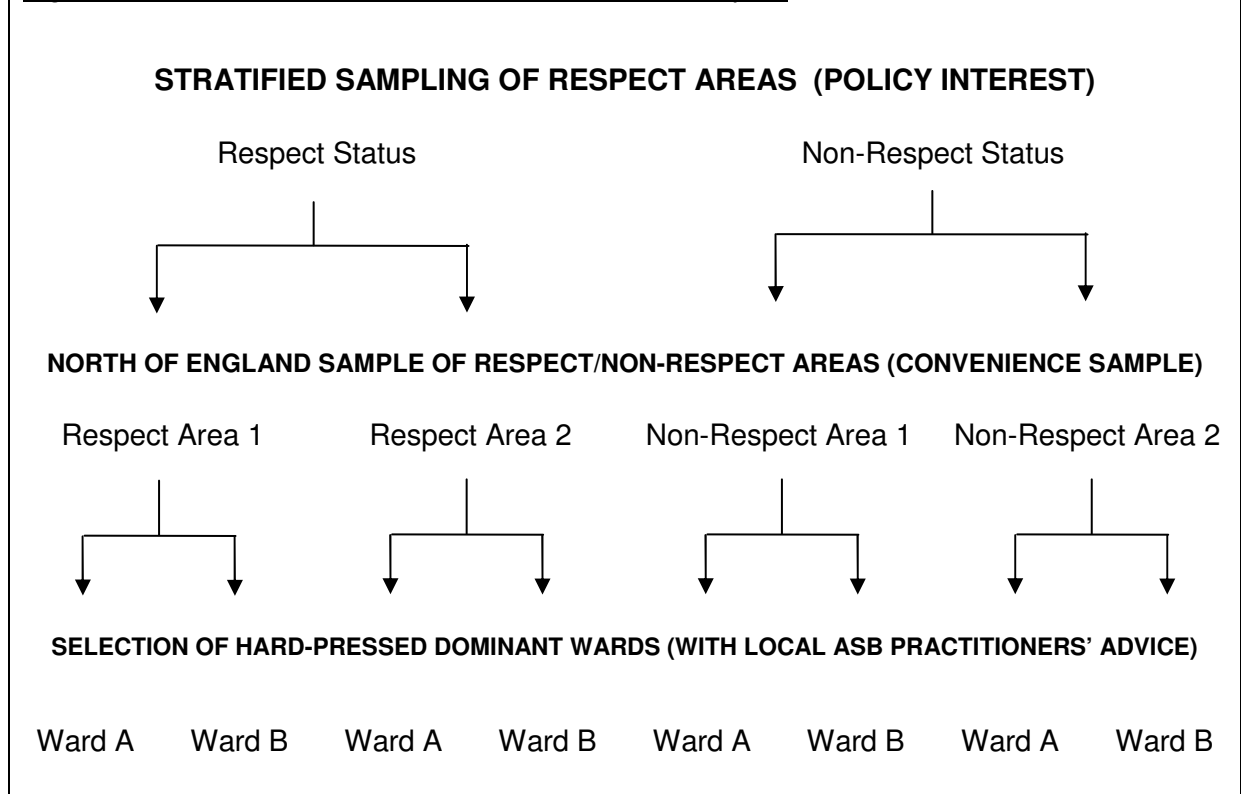
terms of their hard-pressed status and meaningfulness to local ASB priorities. The Wards selected for the study varied in the proportion of hard-pressed residences from 99.5% to 33.3%, reflecting that some areas contained a higher percentage of hard-pressed residents than others. Nevertheless, the social composition of all the Wards selected was hard-pressed dominant.

The actual electoral Wards used to create the sampling frame were based on the 2003 Ward boundaries as appointed by The Boundary Committee for England. These boundaries were revised slightly in 2004, but in order to align with the ACORN data the 2003 Ward boundaries had to be used.

In addition to the selection of hard-pressed dominant Wards, contact was made with the focal ASB practitioner in the four areas via letter and research business case (see Appendices 1a and 1b), requesting a commitment to co-operate with the research. The business case outlined the proposed research and the time commitment involved for each practitioner. It also contained a request for additional local contacts for the ALMO, police and other high profile members of the community. This commitment was reciprocated by an agreement to share any information/data gained about their area. The initial contact was successful with all four first choice areas agreeing to participate and assist the research wherever possible.

Overall, the areas and hard-pressed dominant Wards have been selected for this study in a thorough and systematic fashion. Data for each research question was collected in every area, providing four in-depth areas of study. Additional sampling details for the research methods used will be provided for each phase of the research. Figure 2.3 details the sample selection process.

**Figure 2.3 Outline of Rationale, Areas and Wards Sampled**



## **2.6 Phase One Research**

### *2.6.1 Research Methods*

Phase one of the research embraced the quantitative element of the mixed methods strategy employed in this study. As research question one was concerned with measuring the perceived levels of ASB in the four areas, the most appropriate research method to employ was a self-completion postal questionnaire. Questionnaire research (also referred to as survey research) “has many purposes and can address many scientific problems beyond a simple count of opinion” (Hagan, 2005:145). By conducting the statistical analysis of the data produced, rival causal factors are removed thus controlling extraneous variables and eliminating any potential incidents of invalidity (Hagan, 2005).

A self-completion postal questionnaire was used because it could be easily distributed to a large number of respondents in each area. There were a number of practical and theoretical advantages to this approach. Practically speaking, the time and cost to the researcher of conducting postal questionnaires is low in comparison to face to face or telephone interviews, with postage costs being the main outlay (Robson, 2002). In addition, theoretical

advantages include a greater element of privacy for respondents (Hagan, 2005). This is complemented as being recognised for being the best medium to investigate sensitive topics (Robson, 2002). ASB could be considered a sensitive issue, particularly by someone who has personally experienced it. Questionnaires can also be completed at a convenient time by the respondents without any interviewer bias (Hagan, 2005) or variability (Bryman, 2004). Nevertheless, self-completion postal questionnaires are subject to a number of limitations. Many authors cite a low response rate as being a considerable problem for this particular research method (Robson, 2002; Bryman, 2004; Hagan, 2005; Kraska and Neuman, 2008). However, measures can be taken to maximise the response rate, as will be discussed later. Other disadvantages to conducting a self-completion postal survey include: the potential for questions to be misinterpreted, the possibility for differences between respondents and non-respondents e.g. demographically (Hagan, 2005). In addition: the researcher is unable to prompt the respondent or probe for further information, the questionnaire could be read as a whole before any questions are answered, it can be difficult to answer a lot of questions due to 'respondent fatigue' and there is a greater risk of missing data (Bryman, 2004). Despite these limiting factors, a self-completion postal questionnaire remained the most appropriate tool for collecting the desired information. Consideration was taken in the design and administration of the questionnaire to eliminate or reduce the impact of as many of the aforementioned limitations as possible. All limitations will be fully acknowledged when presenting the findings of this study.

### *2.6.2 Sampling for the Questionnaire*

In addition to the multi-stage cluster sample used to generate the areas studied, additional sampling took place to determine the questionnaire sample. A sampling frame was created for each electoral Ward using the OS Address-Point dataset. Address-Point is "created by matching information from the Ordnance Survey digital map databases with more than 27 million postal addresses recorded in the Royal Mail Postal Address File (PAF)" (Ordnance Survey Website, 2008). A Geographical Information System (GIS), ArcGIS 9.0, was used to create a spatial join to cross-reference the Ward and ACORN data into a single file, which was converted into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

A random probability sample design was employed to generate the sample addresses. The probability method of sampling was preferred because it produces a sample where each unit in the sampling frame has a known, and equal chance of being selected. "It is generally assumed that a representative sample is more likely to be the outcome when this method of selection from the population is employed" (Bryman, 2004:87). Consequently, a non-

probability sample was rejected. Non-probability sampling involves selecting cases for inclusion based on convenience or opportunity (Robson, 2002). This would not have generated an appropriately representative sample for this study.

The 'select random cases' tool in SPSS was used to generate a random probability sample of 500 addresses for each of the 8 Wards, giving a total sample size of 4000. In order to achieve the desired 500 per Ward, a sample of 550 addresses was initially generated. The first 500 were then examined using the 'string' variable in SPSS, to ensure only residential addresses were included. In the event that a business address was found, the data was deleted and replaced by the next residential address after 500, e.g. 501. This process was repeated until 500 residential addresses per Ward were obtained. Although time consuming, this process was required to ensure the questionnaires were delivered to the correct sample of the population, avoiding this being a cause of non-response.

The total sample size used was calculated with reference to 'Definitions and Survey Guidance of APACs Measures of User Satisfaction 2008/2009' (Home Office, ACPO, APA, 2008). This document provides guidance on the sample sizes required for populations at a 50:50 variability and 95% confidence level. Given the combined population of the areas was over 12,000 (Office for National Statistics, 2004) 572 completed questionnaires would have been enough to meet the above significance levels. Taking this into consideration, plus the difficulties associated with self completion postal questionnaires, a figure of 4000 was selected. This meant a response rate of 14.3% would have been sufficient to obtain a 50:50 variability and 95% confidence level. This level of response rate was realistic, based on the self completion postal questionnaire response rate obtained in deprived areas by Atkinson and Flint (2003), of 15% and 16%.

### *2.6.3 The Questionnaire*

Given the limitations associated with self-completion postal questionnaires, careful consideration was given to the way the questionnaire was developed. It was crucial to ensure the format of the questionnaire was clear, with the use of sub-headings, defined sections of questions and bold text where appropriate, to facilitate easy completion. Research into the selected areas demonstrated that some Wards had a high proportion of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) residents (Office for National Statistics, 2004). It was essential the language used was simple enough for people with English as a second language to understand. Additionally, it is established that hard-pressed ACORN areas, or deprived areas, have low levels of educational attainment and literacy (Mortimore and Blackstone,

1982; ACORN User Manual, 2006). It was anticipated that these two factors may lower the response rate, but the need to sample hard-pressed areas was a Home Office priority and highlighted by the literature. Clear instructions were given about how the questionnaire should be completed to avoid any confusion. Most of the questions were 'closed' with predetermined answers that simply required a box to be ticked, with many following a five-point Likert scale response, for example: 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'neither agree nor disagree', 'disagree', 'strongly disagree'. Some questions employed a ranked response (questions: 3, 6 and 10), with respondents required to select the top three behaviours which they considered were for example, most common. Some participants may have found this task difficult. Nevertheless, the characteristics of ASB, due to its subjective nature and pervasiveness, warranted this type of response method to obtain a more accurate reflection of what respondents were experiencing and how it affected their perceptions. One 'open' question was used, which was linked to the definition of ASB in order to gain insight into its subjectivity.

The aim of the questions posed was to generate new data that could stand-alone, but would also facilitate the qualitative data collection in phase two of the research. In order to build upon the demographic information provided by the BCS, the emphasis of the questionnaire was placed on a number of attitudinal factors to determine whether there were any significant associations between certain attitudes and perceiving high levels of ASB. The new attitudinal questions focused around topics such as: whether ASB is deliberately motivated, does ASB or crime cause greater worry, do residents feel informed about what is being done to tackle ASB in their local area, and, are residents aware of any local/national projects running in their area to tackle ASB. These new questions were a product of the literature review process and created with the forethought of potential policy implications, such as the changes and factors that could be potentially implemented in a practical setting. Socio-demographic characteristics were also collected in order to identify whether any differences in perceptions were associated with particular groups of people e.g. gender, age, ethnicity, housing tenure and length of residence at their current address. Collecting this information also allowed additional comparisons to be made to the BCS.

To ensure the questionnaire was suitable for distribution, a pre-test was conducted. It has been suggested that "the draft questionnaire is best pre-tested informally, initially concentrating on individual questions. Colleagues, friends and family can usually be cajoled into reading them through and providing (hopefully) constructive comments on wording" (Robson, 2002:254). Six versions of the questionnaire were drafted and the content was

finalised through detailed discussions with the Home Office, as the collaborating establishment. The drafting process involved questions and topics being considered, added or removed and utilised the experience of the Home Office in conducting similar research. A pre-test pilot sample took place within the Applied Criminology Centre, University of Huddersfield and with a small convenience sample of non-specialists to test the wording and understanding of the questions.

The final questionnaire contained 26 questions (see Appendix 1c). A number of the behaviours listed in question 1 were adapted from Millie *et al.* (2005)<sup>14</sup>. In addition, it was essential to use four questions from the BCS (see Appendix 1c: question numbers 2, 6, 8 and 11). This was necessary for a number of reasons. It was highly desirable for the combined perceptions measure question to be included as this is the nationally accepted measure for perceived high levels of ASB and is used by the Home Office. The other BCS questions were included to see whether BCS findings were replicable in the hard-pressed dominant setting. Some of the other questions used were adapted from themes similar to those used in the BCS, but were expanded upon to obtain a greater depth of knowledge. It was inevitable that some themes from the BCS were replicated in this questionnaire as the BCS asks 65 questions about various forms and effects of ASB<sup>15</sup>.

#### *2.6.4 Administering the Questionnaire*

A number of measures were employed to elicit the highest response rate possible. The questionnaire was accompanied by a covering letter on University of Huddersfield headed paper, to demonstrate the legitimacy of the study (see Appendix 1d). The incorporation of the Home Office logo, to represent the sponsorship of the study, was not included at the request of the Home Office. This was to ensure the response to the survey was not biased by their involvement. The covering letter provided a thorough explanation of the research as well as details assuring confidentiality and anonymity. In addition, an incentive was offered to respondents returning completed questionnaires, as this has been demonstrated to increase response rate (Edwards *et al.*, 2002). The incentive involved a prize draw for supermarket vouchers, which respondents could enter by completing a separate entry form enclosed with the questionnaire. This was stored independently to the completed questionnaire to guarantee anonymity. Three prizes were available in the draw: first prize a £75 voucher,

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<sup>14</sup> These behaviours included: traffic noise and pollution, mugging, speeding and burglary.

<sup>15</sup> This figure relates to the number of ASB questions posed in the 2006/2007 BCS questionnaire, in the ASB module and the 'Problems in Area' section. This was the most recent questionnaire available to be referenced when the questionnaire for this study was constructed.

second prize a £50 voucher and third prize a £25 voucher. Supermarket vouchers were chosen because of their versatility. Being able to purchase food was considered important to the hard-pressed areas, particularly as the country was beginning to enter a period of financial instability. In addition, a range of white goods, clothes and entertainment (DVDs/cds) can also be purchased from supermarkets as well as food. It was anticipated the flexibility of the prizes would foster a good response rate. A freepost envelope was included for respondents to return the questionnaire, which is considered good-practice in postal surveys. Other measures shown to increase response rate were not possible. For example, putting the respondent's name on the front of the envelope, as these data was unavailable. However, the mailing was made to look professional as the address labels were typed and good quality envelopes were used (Robson, 2002).

The questionnaire was mailed to the sample of 4000 residents in the four areas in November 2008. The questionnaire generated a response rate of 10.6% (422 valid questionnaires). A detailed analysis of the survey including information about the respondents can be found in Chapter Three. A low response rate was anticipated, due to the findings from Atkinson and Flint (2003) mentioned above. Furthermore, the low response rate could also be attributed to a number of additional factors. The timing of the questionnaire distribution unfortunately coincided with the distribution of the Place Survey, which under its new branding was conducted at this time of the year for the first time. This was beyond the researcher's control as it was unfeasible to administer the questionnaire at any other time due to the strict time constraints associated with this PhD study. In addition, there may have been issues with the questionnaire format itself due to the low level of educational attainment in hard-pressed areas (ACORN User Guide, 2006) and English being spoken as a second language by others. One measure that could have combated this was to have the questionnaire translated into different languages. This was not a practical measure due to cost, both of the translation and redistribution. A general follow-up letter containing another copy of the questionnaire could also have been circulated to bolster the response rate. However, this measure was again limited by financial resources.

Nevertheless, the responses to the questionnaire produced a large enough number of cases to conduct a significant statistical analysis, despite not reaching the 14.3% response rate required to obtain a 50:50 variability and 95% confidence level, which means the findings cannot be generalised. It is important to remember in this circumstance that the main aim of phase one was to generate factors and themes for discussion in phases two and three. The qualitative data enhanced the quality of the study and advanced the subject area beyond

what could have been achieved by a survey alone. Therefore the low response rate, albeit disappointing, was not an issue that invalidated the purpose and noteworthiness of this study.

#### *2.6.5 Questionnaire Data Analysis*

A number of methodological decisions had to be made about the type of statistical analysis to conduct. All data from the completed questionnaires were entered into SPSS. The data (apart from the responses to the one open question) were initially analysed using descriptive statistics. Frequencies, providing information about the proportion of respondents' perceptions were produced. Additionally, cross-tabulations were generated with significant Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) testing, to determine whether there were any associations between the survey questions and respondents perceiving high levels of ASB. The Pearson  $\chi^2$  value was used to measure the significance of the association at the  $p < 0.05$  level. In some circumstances, it was necessary to 'collapse' five category variables into a smaller number of categories in order to obtain a frequency of at least 5 in each cell of the cross-tabulation. For example, respondents who indicated they 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' were grouped into an agree category.

To situate this study within the same context as the research conducted into perceptions by the BCS, it was vital to conduct a logistic regression analysis. The BCS has used forward stepwise logistic regression to predict factors that are associated with perceptions of high levels of ASB for a number of years. This would allow basic comparisons to be made with the BCS data, bearing in mind that this is a sample of hard-pressed dominant Wards.

The logistic regression analysis determined whether any of the survey questions (independent variables, also referred to as predictor variable(s) and co-variables) were significantly associated with predicting those respondents who perceive high levels of ASB (the dependent variable, also referred to as the outcome variable). Logistic regression is a method that models the probability of an event occurring, the event in this case being whether or not the respondent is more likely to perceive high levels of ASB. An odds ratio (also known as a score statistic) is produced which "provides a directly understandable statistic of the relationship between the outcome variable and a specified predictor variable (given all the other predictor variables in the model are fixed" (Afifi *et al.*, 2004:287). Logistic regression differs from other types of regression as it relies upon having a dichotomous dependent variable. In this instance the dependent variable used in all the analyses was, perceiving high levels of ASB / not perceiving high levels of ASB.

There are two different methods of logistic regression that determine how the predictor variables are entered into the statistical model. The default method of logistic regression is known as the forced entry method or 'enter'. In this circumstance "all of the co-variables are placed into the regression model in one block, and parameter estimates are calculated for each block" (Field 2000:168). The second method is the stepwise method, which has two sub-methods: forwards and backwards. As such "any stepwise procedure for selection or deletion of variables from a model is based on a statistical algorithm which checks for the 'importance' of variables, and either excludes them or includes them on the basis of a fixed decision rule" (Hosmer and Lemeshow, 1989:106). The importance of a predictor variable is determined by the statistical significance of the coefficient for the variable. In this study the significance level was set at 0.05.

The forward stepwise method is the model that includes variables, it "begins with a model that includes only a constant and then adds single predictors into the model based upon a specific criterion" (Field, 2000:168). The criterion is the odds ratio value, with the predictor variable having the most significant odds ratio being the next variable added to the model. SPSS continues this process until none of the remaining predictor variables has a significant odds ratio. Stepwise methods also have three removal criteria, one of which must be selected for analysis. The first is the likelihood ratio statistic, referred to as the Forward: LR method. This compares the model to the model created when each predictor variable is removed. If the predictor variable in question makes a significant difference to the model it is retained because the model is stronger with its inclusion. The other removal criteria are the Forward: Conditional method and the Wald Statistic. The Forward: Conditional criteria is less statistically rigorous than Forward: LR, therefore its selection above the LR method is unjustified. The Wald statistic, where predictor variables are removed due to the significance value of the Wald statistic opposed to the odds ratio, has been suggested as unreliable (Field, 2000). Therefore the stepwise analyses in this study all used the LR removal criterion.

In contrast, the backward stepwise method excludes insignificant variables. Instead of beginning the model with a constant, all the predictor variables are included. "The computer then tests whether any of these predictors can be removed from the model without having a substantial effect on how well the model fits the observed data" (Field, 2000:169).

Logistic regression is rarely employed in the social sciences due to a number of methodological concerns. This is because the computerised, mathematical technique of selecting variables for inclusion takes away the input of knowledge and insight from the

researcher. Consequently, the computer driven model could be influenced by random sampling variation, resulting in variables being included in the analysis based on their semi-partial correlation instead of their theoretical significance to the research (Field, 2000). Further limitations of logistic regression will be outlined when discussing which method of logistic regression was employed.

Despite the criticisms, applying logistic regression in this context was justified due to the mixed method approach of the study overall. Significant predictors from the logistic regression analysis provided a statistical guide to factors and topics to investigate in the qualitative aspect of this study. These factors were explored in-depth through phases two and three of the research, thus generating a thorough investigation into what influences and drives public perceptions of ASB.

#### *2.6.6 The Logistic Regression Process*

The logistic regression analysis was conducted in a systematic manner, with models being created for the full sample, along with the Respect and Non-Respect sub-samples. Logistic regression analysis was not appropriate to conduct at a smaller sub-sample level than Respect status due to the sample sizes being too small to produce results of suitable validity (Green, 1991). A detailed explanation is provided in Chapter Three with the calculations available in Appendix 2g.

The independent variables selected for inclusion in each of the separate logistic regression models were selected based upon: significant  $X^2$  associations (Hosmer and Lemeshow, 1989),  $X^2$  variables with a significant value of  $p < 0.25$  (Mickey and Greenland, 1989; Bendel and Afifi, 1977) and strong predictors from previous research (Norusis, 2003; Field, 2005), in this case the BCS. A final caveat for inclusion was that no independent variables were to demonstrate correlation with other independent variables at a value of  $> 0.4$ , which has been applied in previous BCS analysis (Flatley *et al.*, 2008). A more rigorous value of  $p \leq 0.05$  is often applied when selecting  $X^2$  variables for inclusion. However on this occasion, due to the exploratory nature of the research and the desire to “minimize type II error in selection” (Mickey and Greenland, 1989:136), using a  $p < 0.25$  level was justifiable. A type II error would have occurred if a variable had been rejected in error.

Prior to the data analysis, collinearity diagnostic tests were conducted to determine whether any intercorrelations among the independent variables existed. Tolerance and Variance Inflation Field (VIF) values were produced and analysed. Tolerance “is an indicator of how

much the variability of the specified independent is not explained by the other independent variables in the model” (Pallant, 2007:156). A tolerance value of less than 0.1 indicates correlation with other variables (Menard, 1995). The VIF represents the inverse of the tolerance value and therefore a figure greater than 10 would indicate multicollinearity (Myers, 1990). A test was conducted for each sample/sub-sample, as the independent variables differed in each model due to the selection criteria outlined above.

A further dimension to consider was the method of logistic regression to employ. As the basis for conducting logistic regression was to initiate loose comparisons to the BCS, consideration was given to the method employed by the BCS, the forward stepwise method. Stepwise methods are used when building a non-theory testing, exploratory model and in circumstances where causality is not of concern (Field, 2005). This represented an appropriate type of model to use with this data. However, there are methodological issues with applying stepwise methods. Pallant (2007:166) reports that “stepwise methods have been criticised . . . because they can be heavily influenced by random variation in the data”. If a stepwise method is appropriate for the data, a further choice has to be made between using the forward and backward methods. Field (2005) suggests the backward method is superior, which is the opposite method to that employed by the BCS. The forward method is more likely to generate “suppressor effects, which occur when a predictor has a significant effect but only when another variable is held constant” (Field, 2005:169). Consequently, the forward method is more prone to producing type II errors.

To see whether parity with the BCS could be achieved while maintaining a high degree of methodological integrity, two methods of logistic regression were initially tested. For the full sample and two sub-samples of Respect and Non-Respect, logistic regression models were built using both the forward and backward stepwise methods. The results were compared, with identical results produced for the full samples and Non-Respect sub-samples, regardless of stepwise method employed. The main difference between the methods was identified when comparing the results for the Respect sub-samples. The number of significant predictors varied between the two methods, as did the odds ratios and significance levels produced. As a consequence of these findings and in light of the methodological criticisms of the forward stepwise method, the results generated by the backward method will be reported. As a result of this decision, the methods no longer align to the analysis conducted by the BCS. However, the quality of the findings from this study should be enhanced by this decision.

In order to conduct a successful logistic regression analysis the data for the independent variables had to be coded appropriately. This required the creation of a 0 and 1 coding scheme. In instances where there were only two categories e.g. a yes or no response, “it’s easiest to interpret the coefficient if you code the categories as 0 and 1. Then the coefficient for the variable is the effect of the category labelled 1” (Norusis, 2003:253). Nominal and ordinal independent variables with more than two response categories had to be converted into a set of independent variables by creating a set of ‘dummy variables’ (Norusis, 2003). The number of dummy variables created is one less than the number of response categories in the original variable, with the response not created as a dummy variable acting as the reference category. The coefficients produced are then interpreted as the difference between the categories and the reference category. In order to maintain the dummy variable coding during the analysis, the categorical variables were defined in SPSS as ‘indicator’ with the reference category defined as ‘first’.

Overall, the logistic regression was conducted in a highly methodical and systematic manner. Taking the time to ensure all aspects of the analysis were properly considered, provided a strong base upon which the qualitative aspects of the study were built.

#### *2.6.7 Phase One Limitations*

A number of limitations with the methodology of phase one emerged. Conducting a large scale self-completion postal questionnaire was very time consuming. A vast amount of time was spent filling envelopes and folding questionnaires, which lengthened the research process. A low response rate was anticipated as a potential weakness, but the rate achieved was lower than expected, affecting the external validity of the results. Nevertheless, the results from this phase of the research were primarily intended to act as an indicator for the qualitative element. The body of quantitative data on perceptions accrued by the BCS and Place survey is substantial, therefore it was unlikely the questionnaire in this study was going to challenge such established large-scale findings.

### **2.7 Phase Two Research**

#### *2.7.1 Research Methods*

The second phase of this study was concerned with identifying factors that influence public perceptions of ASB. This was to build upon the results of the questionnaire, in order to discover what reasons were behind the findings and also to gather new in-depth information. As mentioned previously, the second phase of research would embrace a qualitative

strategy. As such, the most appropriate method of collecting these data was through focus groups with members of the public from the four areas studied. A focus group is where “the researcher asks specific questions and guides the discussion to ensure that group members address these questions, but the resulting information is qualitative and relatively unstructured” (Bachman and Schutt, 2008:195). Using focus groups was relevant in this study because insight into the preliminary research was required (Krueger, 1994). Focus groups can be combined with quantitative methods in a mixed methods study (Wilkinson, 2004) and even facilitate the interpretation of quantitative data (Kraska and Neuman, 2008). The optimum number of participants required for a focus group varies between authors with some suggesting between 7-10 participants (Krueger, 1994; Bachman and Schutt, 2008) and others between 6-12 (Kraska and Neuman, 2008). Accessing a number of participants is seen as one of the advantages of a focus group, as qualitative data from a large number of participants can be collected in a short period of time (Wilkinson, 2004). There are also additional advantages to using focus groups. The natural setting facilitates the expression of opinions, where participants can challenge each other to explain their answers (Kraska and Neuman, 2008). The natural setting also allows the moderator to probe participants for more in-depth opinions (Krueger, 1994).

### *2.7.2 Sampling*

In order to maintain the overall cluster sampling process, the focus groups were recruited from the hard-pressed dominant Wards selected as the focal point of the study. Sampling in a mixed methods study requires extra consideration. Should the same respondents from the survey in phase one be invited to a focus group in phase two? According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), selecting the same participants is the general approach, as the samples from each stage of the research can be easily compared. However, this procedure was not followed in this study, mainly as a result of feasibility issues. It would have been time and cost intensive to organise participants and venues in each of the four areas. In addition, Krueger (1994) reports that focus groups are best when the participants are from a homogenous group. This would have been difficult to achieve based on sampling the survey respondents. It was decided that the most effective way of obtaining focus group participants would be to contact local community groups and request a time slot either prior to, or following a meeting or to attend their group for one session as a guest. In addition to selecting groups by this means, the groups approached were chosen to reflect the overall demographics of the community, for example different age groups, genders and ethnicities.

Various sampling techniques were employed in order to generate a wide ranging sample of community groups, such as: Tenants and Residents Associations (TARAs), Public Crime Reduction Groups<sup>16</sup>, social groups and Sure Start Children's Centres. The first approach employed was the snowball sample, "where the researcher makes initial contact with a small group of people who are relevant to the research topic and then uses these to establish contacts with others" (Bryman, 2004:100). The practitioners involved in phase three of the research were asked to recommend local groups and/or meetings that could be approached. This local knowledge provided the contacts for some relevant groups in each area. However, the number of group contacts provided was insufficient to secure the required number of focus groups, as a number of groups were unwilling to participate in the study due to a fear of local repercussions. These issues are reflected upon in Chapter Seven.

Consequently, a purposive sampling technique was employed in order generate additional community groups to approach. A purposive sample is where "the researcher uses a wide range of methods to locate all possible cases of a highly specific and difficult to reach population" (Kraska and Neuman, 2008:228). Subsequently, a number of internet databases were searched and local authority websites visited. This generated a list of contact details. Moreover, in three of the areas the local Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) was contacted and recruitment information distributed through their community newsletter and/or e-bulletin. Information about the focus group process was provided and willing groups were invited to contact the researcher for further details (a copy of the information sent to the CVSs can be found in Appendix 1e).

### *2.7.3 Focus Group Administration*

Once contact details for a group had been found, the leader of that group was either contacted by telephone, letter or email. The letter and email contained details about the proposed focus group including: the number of participants needed, the duration of the discussion and the requirement for all participants to be aged over eighteen. Information was also provided about: the focus group being recorded, confidentiality and anonymity arrangements, the use of pseudonyms in any research output, the purpose of note taking during the focus group and the secure storage of the data produced. In addition, an information sheet and consent form were attached (a copy of the letter/email, focus group information sheet and participant consent form can be found in Appendices 1f, 1g and 1h respectively). If the group leader was contacted via telephone the purpose and nature of the

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<sup>16</sup> Actual title of group not given to preserve anonymity.

research was fully explained. The above documents were then sent through the post to the group leader.

A focus group script was produced that included a number of questions generated by the literature review and significant questionnaire results from phase one. A particular emphasis was placed upon how the group's perceptions of ASB were formed, in order to uncover the factors that influence these opinions. The questions in the script were themed in order to build up the discussion slowly. It was considered important to begin with a theme about the definition of ASB in order to place the rest of the discussion in the context of how ASB was understood in that locality. The script then progressed onto themes such as: the extent of problems with ASB, concerns about ASB, the motivation behind ASB, the authorities, and communication. A copy of the focus group script can be found in Appendix 1i.

A total of 10 focus groups were conducted. Table 2.2 outlines how many were conducted in each area. Full group details including demographics are provided in Chapter Four.

Table 2.2 Number of Focus Groups Conducted in Each Area

| Area               | Number of Focus Groups Conducted |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|
| Respect Area 1     | 3                                |
| Respect Area 2     | 3                                |
| Non-Respect Area 1 | 3                                |
| Non-Respect Area 2 | 1                                |

All focus groups were moderated by the researcher. At the outset the purpose and nature of the research were explained again. The strict adherence to confidentiality and anonymity guidelines was heavily emphasised before an invitation for questions was made.

Approximately five minutes was then allocated for the participants to complete the consent form. In addition, the combined perceptions measure from the BCS and phase one questionnaire was also completed by the participants. This was to measure the perceived level of ASB held by the group. The results were used in the analysis to determine whether the opinions articulated by the group reflected their combined perception measure score. This was considered important because a link between qualitative opinions and the combined perceptions measure had not been previously explored. All of the focus groups lasted approximately one hour. The dynamics of each group were very positive and all group members participated fully. Biscuits were provided for each group as a gesture of thanks.

#### *2.7.4 Qualitative Data Analysis*

All of the focus groups were digitally recorded, transcribed and analysed. The focus group transcripts were analysed manually, using thematic coding. Coding involves selecting excerpts from transcripts that express similar subject matters or theoretical standpoints (Gibbs, 2007). The themes selected for coding were based upon the main topics highlighted by the phase one questionnaire, in order for these findings to be elaborated for the purposes of complementarity. Topics generated independently through the focus groups were also coded, widening the scope of the research. Once the transcripts had been coded, the data was organised into a number of key themes which are reported in Chapter Four.

#### *2.7.4 Phase Two Limitations*

The greatest difficulty regarding the use of focus groups was the recruitment process, which stems from the overarching methodology of researching hard-pressed dominant Wards. This restricted the number of groups available to approach, particularly because in some of the areas, a Ward constituted one large housing estate. This therefore narrowed the overall sample of potential groups and produced an over-reliance on the willingness of the one or two local community centres and/or groups to participate, which was not always adequate. This challenge was in addition to the general acceptance that focus groups are difficult to arrange (Krueger, 1994). The recruitment of groups therefore took a considerably larger amount of time than was anticipated, despite the difficulty of recruitment being acknowledged from the outset. The number of groups available may also have been restricted by the hard-pressed nature of the area, with the provision of fewer community centres and/or groups. In addition to the issues with recruitment in general, those who did attend focus groups may not have been wholly representative of the hard-pressed community because they could be classed as active citizens by participating in the community, particularly those from TARA or crime reduction groups. However, this would have been extremely difficult to overcome in this study bearing in mind the resources available. The use of monetary incentives or a professional research company may have alleviated this issue, but this was not feasible due to cost. Methodologically, there were also some disadvantages to conducting focus groups. The moderator's control over the group is reduced due to the large number of participants (Wilkinson, 2004). In addition, the number of people involved may limit the discussion to only a few topics, the attitudes towards which could be polarised due to attitudes becoming more extreme in a group setting (Kraska and Neuman, 2008). The quality of the group may also vary, for example: their willingness to disclose opinions. This could be overcome by careful selection, but the potential for a poor discussion cannot be ignored. The experience and skills of the moderator can impact upon

the success of a focus group. Despite being inexperienced, the researcher conducted each focus group in a consistent manner as well as asking the questions accurately and acting neutrally in all situations to minimise any weaknesses. Qualitative data analysis is also subject to limitations. Criticisms are levelled at a loss of context because “by plucking chunks of text out of the context within which they appeared . . . the social setting can be lost” (Bryman, 2004:411). In a similar scenario, the data can also become fragmented (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). These issues can be balanced by a contextualised reporting of the findings, which is provided in this study in Chapters Four and Six.

Despite there being a number of limitations to using focus groups as a data collection method, numerous steps were taken in order to maximise their validity and reflect the hard-pressed dominant areas being studied.

## **2.8 Phase Three Research**

### *2.8.1 Research Methods*

The third phase of the study represented the final aspect of the qualitative element. As research question three was concerned with how ASB practitioners address the issue of public perceptions of ASB, the most appropriate research method to employ was interviews. This is because interviews are “a powerful tool for eliciting rich data on people’s views, attitudes and the meanings that underpin their lives and behaviours” (Gray, 2009:370). They allow the researcher a degree of flexibility to adapt the line of enquiry based upon the situation (Bryman, 2004), with the use of probes to gain information in greater detail and clarification (Gray, 2009). In addition, interviews “lend themselves well to use in combination with other methods, in a multimethod approach” (Robson, 2002:270). These factors reinforced the decision to use interviews to answer research question three. Semi-structured interviews were selected as they provided a structured approach, where the same questions were posed to all participants, while maintaining the flexibility to ask additional questions if necessary. This facet was important due to the range of different practitioners involved and their different priorities in terms of perceptions of ASB. Adopting structured interviews would not have allowed this, making it impossible to pursue potentially vital lines of enquiry. Conversely, an unstructured approach would not have provided the foundation data required to understand the roles of each of the participants and their respective organisations. This would have made comparisons between the areas difficult and unreliable.

### 2.8.2 Sampling

A purposive sampling strategy was employed to recruit the first participants for this phase of the research. This type of non-random sample is where a researcher locates a sample “based in the researcher’s skill, judgement and needs” (Hagan, 2005:139). This sampling technique was employed to make initial contact with a Strategic ASB Practitioner in each area. This individual was interviewed and then asked to provide any relevant contacts in the area for those based at the organisations identified as ASB authorities in the literature review (local authority, police, ALMO), replicating the snowball sampling technique utilised in phase two. This allowed the most relevant frontline practitioners to be targeted. It also provided valuable inside information about who not to approach for an interview! The snowball sampling allowed varying service structures to be taken into account, as the person recommending the contacts did so based upon their knowledge of local working practices. The roles of the participants varied. In each area the aim was to interview: a Strategic ASB Practitioner, a Frontline ASB Officer (local authority), a locality based Police Inspector and an ASB Enforcement Officer from the ALMO or a local social housing provider. Table 2.3 details which practitioners were interviewed in each area.

Table 2.3: Type of Practitioner Interviewed in Each Area

| <b>Area</b>        | <b>ASB Practitioner Interviewed</b>   |
|--------------------|---|
| Respect Area 1     | Frontline ASB Officer (Police)<br>Police Inspector<br>Frontline ASB Officer (Local Authority)   |
| Respect Area 2     | Strategic ASB Practitioner (Local Authority)<br>Police Inspector<br>Frontline ASB Officer (Local Authority)<br>Housing Enforcement Officer      |
| Non-Respect Area 1 | Strategic ASB Practitioner (Local Authority)<br>Police Inspector<br>Frontline ASB Officer (Local Authority)<br>Housing Enforcement Officer      |
| Non-Respect Area 2 | Strategic ASB Practitioner (Local Authority)<br>Police Inspector<br>2 x Frontline ASB Officers (Local Authority)<br>Housing Enforcement Officer |

The diversity of practitioners interviewed in each area represents the different delivery structures in place. Many of the housing practitioners did a similar job, but had different job titles in each area. Police Inspectors were approached for an interview due to their strategic role in Neighbourhood Policing, these Inspectors were responsible for either one or both of the hard-pressed dominant Wards surveyed. It was considered important to interview one strategic and one frontline officer from the local authority. This was in order to obtain a reflection of how ASB is dealt with at a higher level e.g. information sharing, partnership arrangements, areas of responsibility for each service provider, as well as opinions from the frontline personnel managing ASB cases. This range of roles aimed to provide a diverse account of how perceptions of ASB were addressed by different organisations for comparison, with the ability to then compare approaches between the areas.

### *2.8.3 Interview Process*

Fifteen semi-structured, face to face interviews were conducted with a variety of ASB practitioners, generating a total number of sixteen participants (one interview had two participants). A total of eighteen participants were approached, with one participant not willing to sign a consent form and another organisation not willing to take part.

Invitations to an interview were sent by email (a copy can be found in Appendix 1j) to the participants identified by the sampling process above. The medium of email was recommended by the Strategic ASB Practitioners contacted at the outset of this study. The email fully explained the purpose of the research and the support received from the Home Office as the collaborating organisation. The nature of the research was outlined along with the selection criteria which led to their invitation and the fact that participation was optional. In some circumstances the Strategic ASB Practitioner specifically said to quote their name in the email, as this would increase the likelihood of a positive response, this was done in those cases. Full details about confidentiality and anonymity were included, as well as the use of pseudonyms in any research reports. Specifics about the interview process were also outlined including: interview duration, the desire to record the interview with note taking and the researcher's willingness to travel to the location of the participant's offices. In addition to the email, a separate information sheet containing further details of the research and a participant consent form were attached (see Appendices 1k and 1l).

The interview questions were formulated using the literature review, the researcher's previous experience as a practitioner and some of the significant findings from the public questionnaire completed in phase one. An interview schedule was produced, which was

formatted into sections that outlined themes that logically progressed from one to another. The themes included: organisation structure and strategy, Respect/Non-Respect status, definitions of ASB, perceptions of ASB, and communication. A copy of the interview schedule can be found in Appendix 1m.

Due to the semi-structured nature of the interview, some of the questions on the interview schedule were not relevant to some of the organisations or areas (Respect and Non-Respect in particular), but these were omitted as appropriate. On occasions, probes were used in order to clarify some of the responses.

At the interview itself, the purpose and nature of the research were explained again, with the participant given the opportunity to ask any questions. The participant was asked whether they still wished to continue. In the instance where participants were nervous, reassurance about the confidentiality of the interview was given. All participants were assured that any comments made 'off the record' would not be used in the research and that the recording device could be switched off and re-started again if necessary. The process at the beginning of each interview and the manner in which questions were asked was kept consistent "so that we can trust that the findings are neither the product of the research instruments, nor of the interviewer's quirks or improvisations" (Arksey and Knight, 1999:53).

All participants agreed for the interviews to be recorded and these were transcribed. Most of the interviews lasted approximately 50 minutes, with all lasting over the recommended duration of 30 minutes (Robson, 2002). The transcripts were analysed using the same qualitative techniques outlined in section 2.7.

However, producing an interview with complete reliability is unattainable (Arksey and Knight, 1999), but reliability can be maximised. This was achieved by reducing interviewer bias as much as possible by conducting the interviews consistently and accurately in all situations, replicating the approach implemented in the focus groups. In order to reduce interviewer bias as much as possible, the researcher undertook additional training at the University of Huddersfield. This involved completing an MSc module in Interviewing Skills as well as a workshop about qualitative data collection and qualitative data analysis. The interview schedule was also carefully formulated to avoid leading questions. One further aspect that facilitated the interview process was the researcher's experience of working as a crime reduction/ASB practitioner. This allowed rapport to be developed during the interviews. Rapport is "the term given to that comfortable, cooperative relationship between two people

in which there are maintained both feelings of satisfaction and an empathetic understanding of each other's position" (Keats, 2000:23). This enhanced the quality of the probes asked and aided the flow of the interview as many of the acronyms, contexts and service structures were understood without explanation.

#### *2.8.4 Phase Three Limitations*

There were some limitations to phase three of the research. The time taken to arrange, conduct and transcribe the interviews was considerable, particularly because of the location of the four areas. This made it a less convenient method of data collection compared to conducting a questionnaire, although the information obtained was of greater quality which outweighed the time commitment. The time taken to arrange and select interview participants was lengthened by the necessity to build up a number of influential contacts in each area. It took time for the practitioners to get to know the researcher as more than just 'another student' and for them to appreciate the nature of the research proposed, as well as the potential policy implications. Some areas were easier to build contacts with than others and demonstrated a high level of interest in the research. Other areas were willing to participate, but not do anything over and above what they were asked. This was affected by organisations in some areas going through a transition period of re-structuring, with some relevant practitioners not in post.

A further limitation is that interviews provide less anonymity than surveys, which did deter one potential participant from being involved, who would not sign the consent form in case of future identification, despite numerous assurances. The issue of interviewer bias may also have been apparent despite attempts to limit its impact. The researcher's previous work consisted of quantitative methods and was therefore less experienced at conducting interviews.

### **2.9 Generating Inferences**

In order to fulfil the potential of conducting a mixed methods study, the successful integration of the data produced from the qualitative and quantitative methods was crucial. In keeping with the sequential nature of the research design and for the purposes of complementarity and initiation, the quantitative data analysis was completed after research phase one to generate themes for further enquiry in the qualitative phases. Subsequently, once the qualitative data collection was complete the qualitative data analysis took place. Once all the data had been analysed the interpretive process of combining the results took place. This

involved comparing the findings from each of the three research phases to highlight any similarities and/or differences within the main research themes, namely: the impact of the definition of ASB upon perceptions, measuring perceptions of ASB, exploring public perceptions of ASB, and public and practitioner relations. The synthesis of these findings constitutes the main findings of this study. The results from phases two and three enhanced and clarified a number of the findings from phase one. In addition, comparing the results from phases two and three elaborated the findings from each individual phase, providing additional insight into the relationship between the public and ASB practitioners. The inferences generated are presented in Chapter Six and are contextualised within relevant theoretical and policy perspectives.

## **2.10 Ethical Issues**

This study upheld the highest possible ethical standards at all times. The researcher operated within the Code of Research Ethics/Code of Practice compiled by the British Society of Criminology (2006), along with the requirements of the Data Protection Act (1998). The research outlined above took place after receiving approval from the Human and Health Sciences School Research Ethics Panel (HHS-SREP) at the University of Huddersfield. The following considerations were approved and enacted:

### *2.10.1 Access to Participants*

As detailed previously, the research methods employed required contact to be made with various participants that fall into two broad categories: general public participants and practitioner participants.

### *2.10.2 General Public Participants*

Phases one and two required participants from the general public, who were identified through the sampling procedure outlined above. For both the questionnaire and the focus groups, members of the public were asked to participate on an 'opt in' basis.

### *2.10.3 Practitioner Participants*

The practitioner participants were identified by the post they held in their organisation. Using a similar recruitment technique to the general public participants the practitioners were asked to participate on an 'opt in' basis.

#### *2.10.4 Confidentiality*

All data collected was done so in the strictest of confidence and only used for the purposes of research. All possible measures were taken to ensure every participant was aware of this. Prior to any data collection the participant(s) were reassured that their responses would be kept confidential. For the public postal questionnaire it was made clear that names and addresses would not be recorded and no links could be made between them and their responses. It was also explicitly stated that the data would not be passed on to any third parties and would be stored securely at the University of Huddersfield, either in a locked cabinet or on removable media that was encrypted and password protected ("128 bit AES encryption"). All data was stored and used within the terms of the Data Protection Act (1998). Any printed copies of interview/focus group transcripts will be disposed of securely in accordance with the University's guidelines. The researcher conducted all data entry and interview/focus group transcriptions and was therefore the only person with access to the data.

#### *2.10.5 Anonymity*

The researcher ensured the anonymity of all participants by using pseudonyms in all research output. No research output will contain any information leading to the identification of areas, practitioners or general public participants. It is for this purpose that areas have been assigned as Respect Area 1, Respect Area 2 and so on.

#### *2.10.6 Informed Consent*

The principle of informed consent was crucial. Before any data was collected, the key facts about the research were outlined to all participants in suitable language. This included the purpose and nature of the research, confidentiality and anonymity issues, voluntary participation and the right to withdraw from the research at any time. If the participants agreed to take part in the research, they were asked to complete a consent form, with one copy retained by the participant and the other being stored by the researcher. The consent forms contained the University of Huddersfield logo in order to reinforce its legitimacy (see Appendices 1h and 1l).

#### *2.10.7 Psychological Support for Participants*

There was little anticipated risk of psychological harm to participants. However, due to the potentially sensitive nature of ASB, the Victim Support Supportline was made available to all participants, as well as local support information.

#### *2.10.8 Researcher Safety*

Throughout the study, researcher safety was a priority. All focus groups and practitioner interviews were held at local authority offices, police stations or neutral public venues. All potential health and safety issues, potential risks and hazards were fully discussed and recorded on a University of Huddersfield Risk Analysis and Management form and submitted to SREP. Researcher support was provided by the supervision team for the duration of the research.

#### *2.10.9 Data Collection Tools*

The postal questionnaire, practitioner interview schedule and focus group script were developed in order to: avoid unnecessary intrusions into privacy, take into account the sensitivities of the participants, and avoid labelling and stigma.

#### *2.10.10 Dissemination of Results*

All participants were made aware of the intention to publish this study and were given the opportunity to receive a copy of the findings if they so wished.

### **2.11 Conclusion**

This Chapter has described in detail how the research processes were systematically undertaken, justifying the selection of the methods employed and highlighting the advantages and disadvantages of these approaches. Chapters Three, Four and Five present the research findings from the data generated through the applications of the methods outlined above. Overall, certain aspects of the research process proved more difficult to achieve than anticipated. These difficulties, alongside a reflection upon some of the methodological limitations, are explained in Chapter Seven.

## Chapter Three: Phase One Results

### Quantifying Public Perceptions of ASB in Four Areas

#### 3.1 Introduction

The literature review indicated that the main body of research relating to public perceptions of ASB was undertaken in relation to the British Crime Survey (BCS). This research is limited due to the nature and number of questions posed by the BCS, resulting in many findings reflecting relationships between perceived high levels of ASB and socio-demographic characteristics. Consequently, the factors influencing perceptions of ASB (high or otherwise) is under-researched, particularly in relation to attitudinal factors.

Chapter Four seeks to address this issue by presenting the findings from the public questionnaire conducted during phase one of this mixed methods study. The research conducted in phase one served a dual purpose. The first intention was to quantify public perceptions of ASB in hard-pressed dominant ACORN Wards in four areas. This was to provide new community-based data on perception levels, as well as to facilitate the topics covered in the qualitative focus group discussions conducted in phase two. Secondly, the questionnaire provided an opportunity to explore whether attitudinal factors were significantly related to perceptions of ASB using logistic regression, broadening the work already conducted by the BCS. The findings presented here in Chapter Three were presented at the British Society of Criminology Conference (2009) and published in the accompanying peer-reviewed 'Papers from British Criminology Conference' journal (Heap, 2009)<sup>17</sup>.

Before presenting the findings, additional methodological considerations will be provided alongside a number of fieldwork details, which will facilitate the understanding of this Chapter. The results from the public questionnaire will then be presented in two sections to reflect the systematic progression of the data analysis conducted:

- Section A provides a detailed account of public perceptions in the four areas using descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages). The results will be categorised, providing details in relation to the full sample, Respect and Non-Respect sub-samples, and the four individual area sub-samples.

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<sup>17</sup> In accordance with the University of Huddersfield's 'Regulations for Awards' (Section F2.10.1) a copy of the published material is bound into this thesis and can be seen in Appendix 3.

- Section B elaborates these findings by providing details of the statistical tests used to determine whether there was a relationship between any of questions posed (independent variables) and perceived high levels of ASB (the dependent variable). This will include details of the Chi-square ( $X^2$ ) testing and logistic regression analysis, which were conducted using SPSS.

### 3.2 Methodological Considerations and Fieldwork Details

In order to produce results comparable to the BCS, as well as to generate new data, the self-completion questionnaire contained several themed sections. These included the: understanding of ASB, experience of ASB, thoughts about ASB, crime and ASB, and tackling local ASB. Twenty-five closed questions were asked in order to elicit measurable responses that could be statistically analysed. One open-ended question was posed relating to the definition of ASB, which was thematically coded. A copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1c.

The public questionnaire was posted to the selected random probability sample of 4000 residents in November 2008. The response rate was 10.6% (422) and is elaborated in table 3.1, which details the number of completed questionnaires received for each sub-sample. The public questionnaire achieved a low response rate, as fully discussed in Chapter Two (section 2.6) and expanded further in Chapter Seven.

Table 3.1 Public Questionnaire Sample/Sub-Sample Response Rates

| Sample/Sub-Sample  | Response Rate       |                |
|--------------------|---------------------|----------------|
|                    | Number of Responses | Percentage (%) |
| Full Sample        | 422                 | 10.6           |
| Respect            | 228                 | 11.4           |
| Non-Respect        | 194                 | 9.7            |
| Respect Area 1     | 94                  | 9.4            |
| Respect Area 2     | 134                 | 13.4           |
| Non-Respect Area 1 | 99                  | 9.9            |
| Non-Respect Area 2 | 95                  | 9.5            |

Socio-demographic data were also collected in order to assess whether the respondents accurately reflected the areas being surveyed. This included characteristics such as: gender, age, length of residence at the current address, housing tenure and ethnicity. These data were compared against data from the 2001 Census (Office for National Statistics, 2004) to

monitor levels of representativeness, although making comparisons was not straightforward due to the sampling of hard-pressed dominant ACORN Wards. To make the Census data comparable, the frequency data for every relevant socio-demographic category had to be obtained for each of the eight Wards (two per area). Calculations were then carried out to generate the proportion of the population in each socio-demographic category for the full sample and the component sub-samples. When comparing the socio-demographic characteristics from the full sample to the Census, a number of differences were apparent. A higher proportion of females responded to the questionnaire than males, (62.8% compared to 35.3%). Despite a higher proportion of females being evident in the Census data (52.1%) in comparison to males (47.8%), females were considerably over-represented within the questionnaire respondents. With reference to age, the 45-64 age group were the most represented by the questionnaire (40.5%). This is also an over-representation in relation to the census figures (21%). The greatest proportion of respondents belonged to the White/White British ethnic group (92.1%). This was only marginally over-representative when compared to the Census figures (88.7%). Asians were under-represented in the full sample and Respect sub-sample of questionnaire respondents, which stems from a higher population of Asians in Respect area 1 than the other areas (21.1%). In relation to housing tenure, the greatest response was from owner occupiers (65.6%). According to the Census figures, this group signified the highest proportion (58.1%), although the responses to the questionnaire were over-representative of this group. Finally, most of the questionnaire respondents had lived at their current address for ten years or more, for which there was no comparable data.

These trends in under/over-representation listed above were also evident in all the sub-samples, although the extent of the under/over-representation varied. Full details of the socio-demographic composition of respondents for the full sample and each sub-sample can be found in Appendix 2a.

Throughout this Chapter the areas studied will be referred to as follows: Respect Area 1 will be referred to as R1, Respect Area 2 as R2, Non-Respect Area 1 as NR1 and Non-Respect Area 2 as NR2.

## Phase One Results - Section A

### 3.3 Descriptive Statistics

Quantifying public perceptions in the four areas was an important part of determining whether perception levels varied between different hard-pressed settings. This section of the Chapter will briefly outline the key results from the full sample. Major differences observed between the full sample and the component Respect, Non-Respect and individual area sub-samples will be highlighted where applicable.

### 3.4 The Understanding of ASB

Section one of the questionnaire explored the public's understanding of what ASB entails. It was considered important to assess what acts were considered anti-social in order to determine whether the public's definition of ASB was similar to the CDA (1998) and Home Office typology of ASB (Harradine, 2004). Ideally an 'open' question would have served this purpose, however this type of question as an opening question was unsuitable due to the effort required from the respondent to provide an answer, which could have affected the response rate. Posing this question too far into the questionnaire would have also been inappropriate, as the previous questions may have biased the responses given. Instead, the 7SI behaviour types (Seven Strand Index as outlined in Chapter One), alongside a number of behaviours investigated by Millie *et al.* (2005) were presented (as a closed question) alongside criminal and non-criminal acts for the respondents to select the behaviours they considered to represent ASB. This was followed by an open question where respondents could add any of their additional thoughts about ASB.

The majority of respondents identified six out of the seven, 7SI behaviours as types of ASB. The behaviour not identified by the majority was abandoned or burnt out cars. However, the majority also indicated mugging, burglary and knife crime as being types of ASB. For more information see Appendix 2b. This suggests that even after a decade of ASB legislation, the public are unable to distinguish between acts of crime and ASB. This is a key point to consider when attempting to assess perception levels and their drivers because perceptions of ASB may be fused with perceptions of crime.

The open-ended question received 106 responses out of a possible 422. Thematic coding was used to assess their content, which generated five main categories of response:

### 1. A Definition or Explanation of ASB

Some responses gave definitions of ASB:

*“Behaviour that is not socially acceptable but does not refer to serious crime.” (Respondent 250)*

*“Anything which upsets or worries another person.” (Respondent 8)*

### 2. Specific Behaviour Types

Others added additional types of ASB:

*“People passing racist remarks. People urinating in your garden at night” (Respondent 234)*

*“Dog fouling. Fireworks late at night, except Nov 5<sup>th</sup> and New Year.” (Respondent 184)*

### 3. Instances of ASB Being Experienced

Some explained the ASB problems they were faced with:

*“Boy racers – these are a particular problem where we live. The noise they make with loud exhausts and heavy bass music booming out is a nightmare.” (Respondent 107)*

*“People parking their cars on the pavement forcing pedestrians to walk around them on the road, which happens twice a day when the schools start and finish. HGV’s driving up and down a 7.5t weight limited road outside our house even when the school’s coming out.” (Respondent 324)*

### 4. Highlighting Differences Between Crime and ASB

Whereas the majority could not distinguish between crime and ASB, some were quick to highlight the differences when given the opportunity:

*“Please note, that while I think most listed above are anti-social, items marked with an ‘x’ I consider specific crimes committed against the individual.” (Respondent 356)*

*“There seems to be a fine line between anti-social behaviour and crime. Being anti-social may not necessarily be also crime, e.g. noisy neighbours.” (Respondent 212)*

### 5. Causes and Reasons Why People Commit ASB

Some respondents preferred to outline the reasons why they believed ASB occurred:

*“I think the parents have to take some of the blame for what their kids are doing, they need to be in more control.” (Respondent 375)*

*“Caused by boredom and irresponsibility, poor education and parenting.” (Respondent 421)*

Most respondents provided details of specific behaviour types. Table 3.2 provides details of the frequency and proportion of responses in each category.

Table 3.2 Frequency and Proportion of Question 2 ‘Open’ Response Categories

| Category                                       | Frequency  | Percentage (%) |
|--|------------|----------------|
| Specific behaviour types                       | 37         | 29.4           |
| Definition or explanation of ASB               | 28         | 22.2           |
| Instances of ASB being experienced             | 23         | 18.3           |
| Highlighting differences between crime and ASB | 17         | 13.5           |
| Causes and reasons why people commit ASB       | 21         | 16.6           |
| <b>Total</b>                                   | <b>126</b> | <b>100</b>     |

When examining these findings at area level it was apparent that the majority of respondents in R2, NR1 and NR2 provided examples of specific types of ASB, in line with the full sample findings. Conversely, most respondents in R1 supplied a definition of ASB. These results demonstrate that the meaning of ASB triggers a variety of different responses from the public and shows that the context within which perceptions of ASB are based varies between individuals and locations.

### 3.5 Experiences of ASB

#### 3.5.1 The Combined Perceptions Measure

Once the meaning of ASB had been established, the publics’ experiences of ASB were sought. The most straightforward comparison to previous research was to examine the proportion of respondents who perceive high levels of ASB<sup>18</sup> in their area using the combined perceptions measure. Table 3.3 outlines the percentages for the main sample/sub-samples used in this study. When examining the full sample, 28 percent perceived high levels of ASB. This is comparable to the BCS figure for hard-pressed ACORN areas of 30 percent (Flatley *et al.*, 2008). The proportions perceiving high levels of ASB in hard-pressed areas are markedly higher than the general population proportions

<sup>18</sup> Those considered to perceive high levels of ASB generate of a score of 11 or more on the combined perceptions measure, which is explained in detail in Chapter One.

reported by both the Place Survey, 20 percent (DCLG, 2009) and the BCS, 17 percent (Walker *et al.*, 2009).

In line with the emphasis on locality, it was important to look at the proportions of respondents perceiving high levels of ASB at the Respect and Non-Respect sub-sample level, to see if there were any differences. Twenty-one percent in the Respect sub-sample and 37 percent in the Non-Respect sub-sample perceived high levels of ASB which, in the first results of this type, demonstrates a great deal of variance. This variance is replicated in the results when each individual area is considered. The results for each area are not consistent, as they range from 13 percent to 45 percent. This affects and distorts the mean average values reported for the Respect and Non-Respect sub-samples. Variance is also apparent if you break down the figures to Ward level, as shown in Table 3.4. This shows that perceptions of ASB differ vastly between neighbourhoods, with the highest proportion of residents perceiving ASB to be a problem at 50 percent in Ward A (Non-Respect Area 2) compared to just 12 percent in Ward B (Respect Area 2).

Table 3.3 Proportion of Respondents Who Perceive High Levels of ASB by Sample

| <b>Sample</b>          | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Full Sample            | 28%                   |
| Respect Sub-Sample     | 21%                   |
| Non-Respect Sub-Sample | 37%                   |
| Respect Area 1         | 33%                   |
| Respect Area 2         | 13%                   |
| Non-Respect Area 1     | 28%                   |
| Non-Respect Area 2     | 45%                   |

Table 3.4 Proportion of Respondents Who Perceive High Levels of ASB by Ward

| <b>Area and Ward</b>      | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| <u>Respect Area 1</u>     |                       |
| Ward A                    | 40%                   |
| Ward B                    | 26%                   |
| <u>Respect Area 2</u>     |                       |
| Ward A                    | 14%                   |
| Ward B                    | 12%                   |
| <u>Non-Respect Area 1</u> |                       |
| Ward A                    | 36%                   |
| Ward B                    | 23%                   |
| <u>Non-Respect Area 2</u> |                       |
| Ward A                    | 50%                   |
| Ward B                    | 40%                   |

These results demonstrate that the proportion of respondents perceiving high levels of ASB varied immensely, particularly when assessing the figures at Ward level.

### *3.5.2 Types of ASB Experienced*

When examining the responses to the 7SI based questions in greater detail, it was apparent that the proportion of respondents who considered each of the individual 7SI behaviours to be a problem in their area<sup>19</sup> was higher than the figures reported by the BCS (Flatley *et al.*, 2008). This may be a reflection of the hard-pressed dominant setting. When taking into account Respect status, a larger proportion of respondents from Non-Respect areas indicated each of the 7SI behaviours to be a problem. See Appendix 2c for detailed figures. This suggests that problems with the 7SI behaviours are worse in Non-Respect areas, although this does not take into account behaviours not featured in the 7SI, an issue that is addressed in Chapter Five.

Teenagers hanging around on the streets was deemed the most common 7SI behaviour experienced (42.1%) and it was also considered to have the most impact on respondents' lives (28%). This was true for all samples/sub-samples except for area R1, where rubbish and litter were more common and had the greatest impact. These results demonstrate that the types of ASB experienced varied slightly depending upon location.

### *3.5.3 Reporting ASB*

Despite teenagers hanging around on the streets being the most common problem, most ASB reports to the authorities were made concerning vandalism (15.2%). When examining reports made about ASB at area level some differences were observed, with R1 and NR2 instead reporting most about rubbish and litter (17% and 18.9% respectively). When questioned about whom they reported ASB to, the majority of respondents contacted the police (55.8%).

It was clear that some people did not report ASB, with most (21.8%) citing a fear of reprisals/making matters worse as the reason why they failed to report. When exploring reasons for not reporting ASB, differences were apparent at Respect status level and between the four areas. While the Non-Respect areas reflected the full sample results with fear being the greater barrier to reporting, the reason for non-reporting given by respondents in the Respect areas was that reporting ASB was a waste of time (22.9%). This was

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<sup>19</sup> Those who indicated the behaviour type was either a 'fairly big problem' or 'very big problem'.

replicated in the area results for R1 and R2, although the main reason given for not reporting ASB in NR1 was because the matter was already being dealt with (21.2%). The results for NR2 were the same as the full sample.

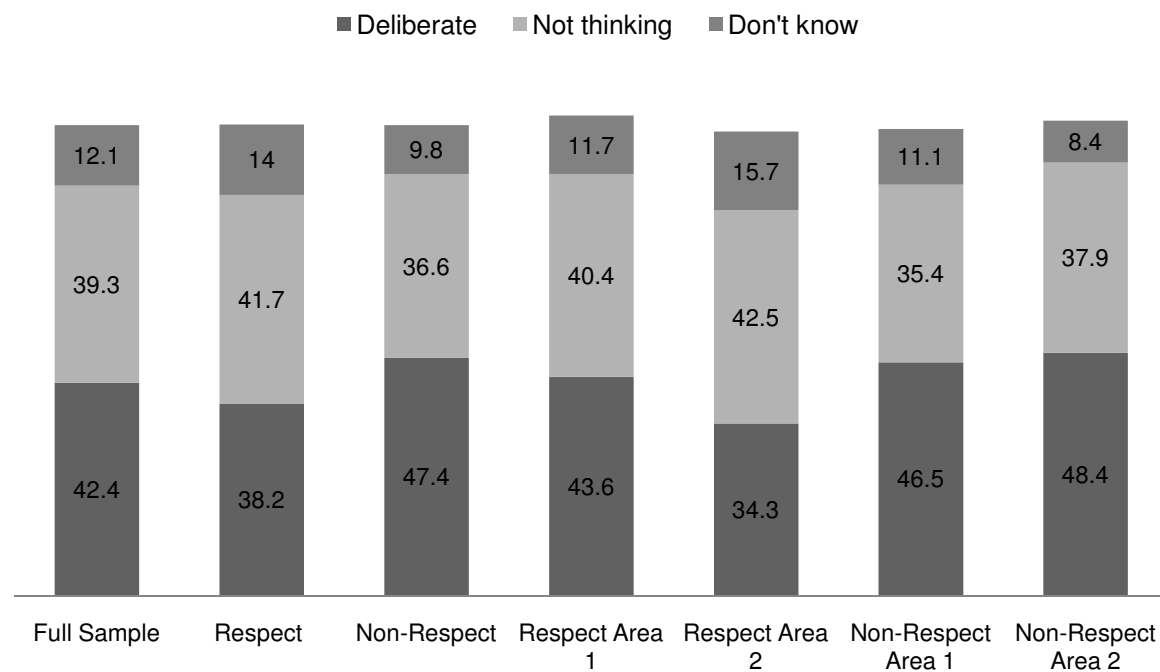
Reporting ASB appears to be a complex issue that does not necessarily reflect the type or frequency of the ASB experienced. It is clear that barriers to reporting incidents exist, but appear to differ between areas. These variations warranted further enquiry and were subsequently discussed in phase two of this study and reported in Chapter Four.

### **3.6 General Perceptions of ASB**

#### *3.6.1 Perceived Motivation for Committing ASB*

Respondents were asked whether they thought ASB was something committed deliberately or without thinking. The rationale for this question was to explore whether respondents thought that ASB was a premeditated act conducted to inflict suffering upon others, or whether it was seen as behaviour committed by perpetrators with little thought of the consequences. Most respondents believed ASB was conducted deliberately (42.4%), compared to those who thought it was carried out without thinking (39.3%) and did not know (12.1%). When examined at Respect status sub-sample level, the results were very different. The Non-Respect areas replicated the trend of the full sample (47.4% thought it was deliberate) but in the Respect areas, most respondents believed ASB was committed without thinking (41.7%). When exploring this further it was apparent the two individual Respect areas also differed. R1 conformed to the full sample results but most respondents in R2 thought ASB was committed without thinking (42.5%). Figure 3.1 details the proportions for all sub-samples, with additional details available in Appendix 2d. Why did this area differ to the other three? This was another topic that justified further exploration in phase two.

Figure 3.1 Graph to Show Perceived Motivation for Committing ASB



### 3.6.2 Perceived Changes in ASB Prevalence

Respondents were asked whether ASB had got better, worse<sup>20</sup> or stayed the same in England and Wales and their local area<sup>21</sup>, in order to gauge their overall perception of ASB levels. The majority of respondents felt ASB was getting worse in England and Wales (76.6%), compared to those who thought it had stayed the same (15.9%) and those who thought it had got better (4.9%). This trend was replicated for the respondents' local area, although the proportion of those thinking it had got worse was markedly lower (50.3%), with more thinking it had stayed the same (34.6%) and got better (11.9%). It was clear that respondents felt more pessimistic about the national picture. To understand more about the perceptions of local ASB, respondents were asked whether each of the 7SI behaviours had got better, worse or stayed the same. Overall, most respondents judged four of the 7SI behaviours to be getting worse (teenagers hanging around on the streets, rubbish and litter,

<sup>20</sup> Those indicating ASB had got 'a lot worse' or 'a little worse' were considered to believe it had simply got worse. The same collapsing of categories was employed for all responses to questions in this sub-section.

<sup>21</sup> Local area represented the area within 15 minutes walk of the respondents' home, as per the BCS standard.

vandalism and graffiti and people using or dealing drugs), with people being drunk or rowdy thought to have stayed the same. Noisy neighbours and abandoned or burnt out cars were not considered a problem. Slight differences were found when examining the Respect and Non-Respect sub-samples, with most respondents only indicating three behaviours had gotten worse in Respect areas (teenagers hanging around, rubbish and litter and vandalism and graffiti). This compares to the Non-Respect areas where most people thought five behaviour types had become worse (as Respect with the addition of: people using or dealing drugs and drunk or rowdy behaviour). At area level, further differences were apparent. In NR2, most people thought five behaviours had become worse, this was followed by four in R1, three in R2 and two in NR1. Full details of these figures can be found in Appendix 2e, with Figures 3.2 and 3.3 demonstrating the variation between the Respect and Non-Respect findings. Overall, these findings show that general perceptions of ASB vary, particularly at area level, in a similar way to experiences of ASB.

Figure 3.2 Graph to show perceived changes in 7SI behaviours (Respect Sub-Samples)

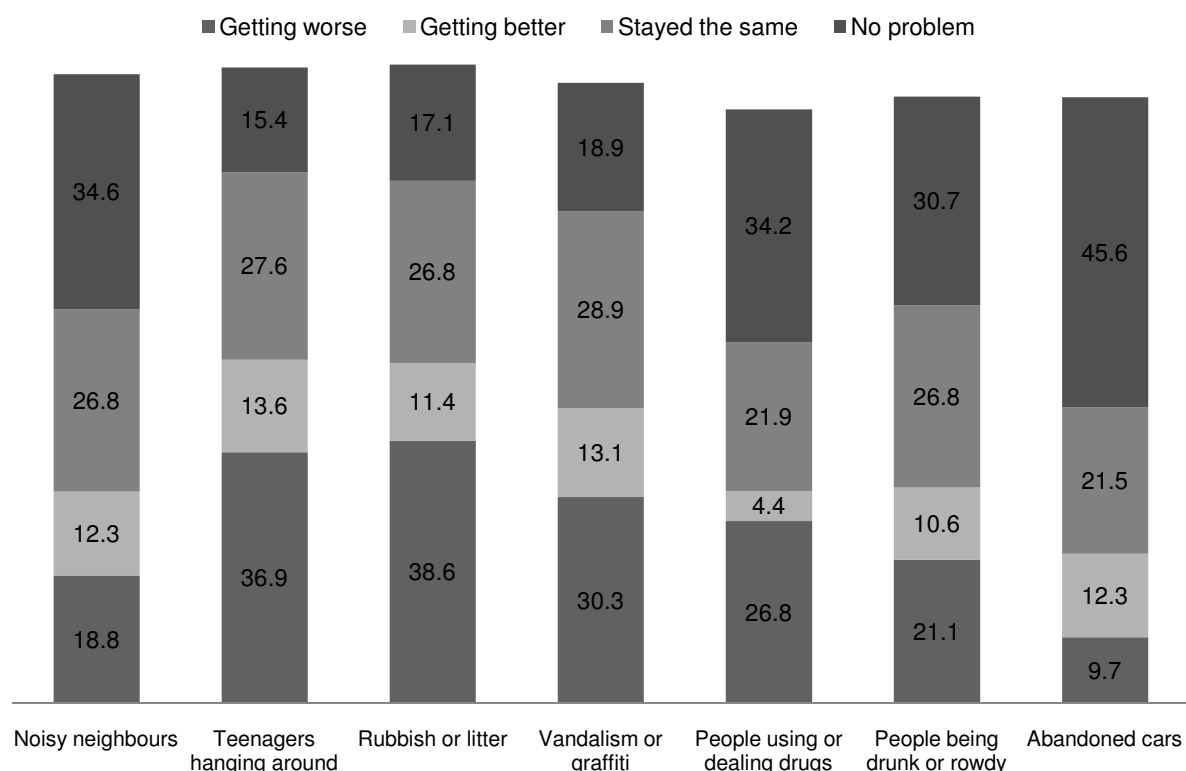
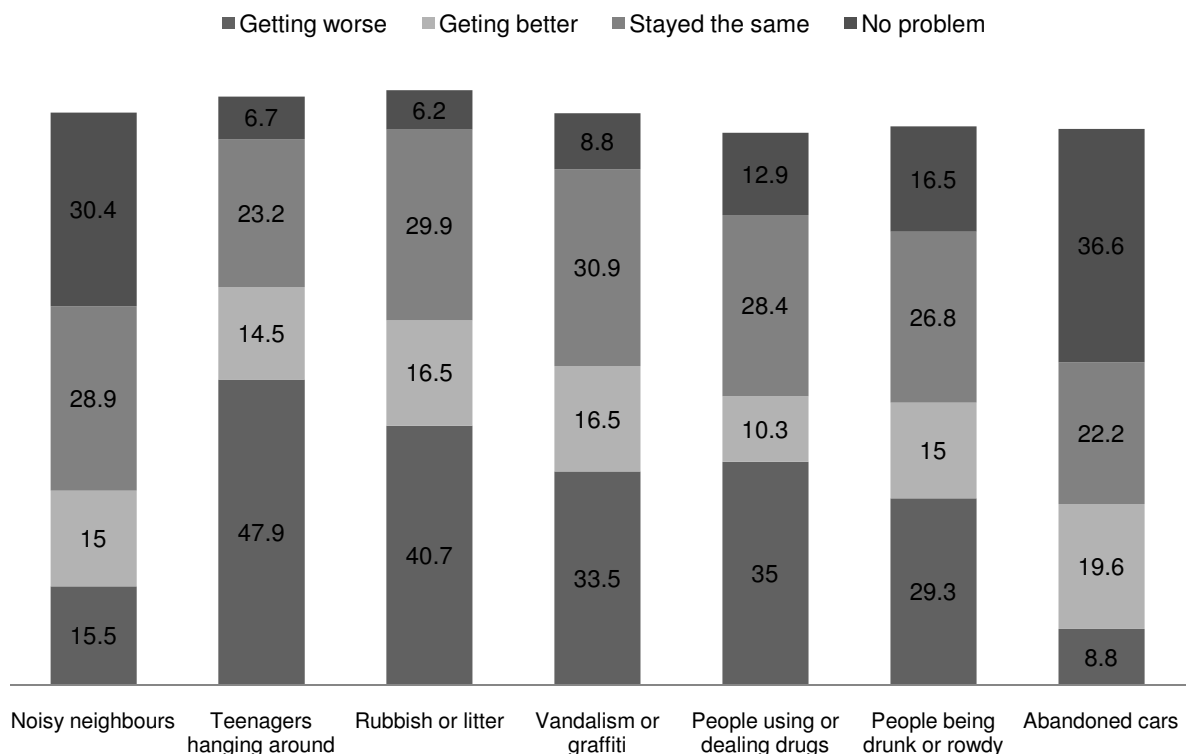


Figure 3.3 Graph to show perceived changes in 7SI behaviours (Non-Respect Sub-Samples)



### 3.6.3 Factors Influencing Perceptions

As one of the main aims of this study was to understand what shapes peoples' perceptions of ASB, respondents were asked what factors informed their opinion about local ASB. What was seen to be going on in the area was considered the most influential (49.5%), followed by personal experience of ASB (33.4%) and the experience of friends/neighbours (30.9%). This contradicts previous BCS findings which show personal experience to be the factor most likely to influence perceptions (Upson, 2006). There was a possibility these findings could be a result of the hard-pressed setting, which was explored further during phase two, see Chapter Four.

### 3.7 Situating ASB within the Context of Crime

As Chapter One explains, ASB does not exist in isolation to crime. It was therefore important to assess levels of criminal victimisation, as well as feelings about ASB in relation to crime. Overall, a quarter of respondents were victims of crime in the twelve months preceding the questionnaire completion (25.1%). A higher proportion of Respect respondents were victims

of crime (28.1%) compared to those living in Non-Respect areas (21.6%). R1 was the area with the highest levels of victimisation (29.8%) in comparison to NR1 which displayed the lowest levels (18.2%). Despite the differences in victimisation levels, most people perceived that their local area had an average crime rate in comparison to the rest of the local authority area (48.3%).

Contextualising ASB in relation to crime found that the majority worried about both crime and ASB in equal measure (50.9%), with 25.1 percent were more worried about crime and 18.5 percent more worried about ASB. Although it is important to be mindful of some of the discrepancies in ASB definition mentioned earlier. While most people could identify different types of ASB there was also some evidence of confusion between ASB and crime, therefore these particular results should be viewed with caution.

### **3.8 Tackling ASB**

The majority of respondents did not feel they were kept informed about what was being done to tackle ASB in their local area (54.7%). Although this trend was replicated in the Respect and Non-Respect sub-samples, a higher percentage of respondents felt they were kept informed in the Non-Respect areas (40.2%), compared to those living in Respect areas (29.8%). In addition, the majority of respondents did not know if any money was being spent to tackle ASB in their local area (66.1%). This was also reflected by most respondents being unaware of any local (82.8%) or national (84.8%) projects being undertaken that tackled ASB, while most people did not know if these projects were effective (79.9% locally, 53.4% nationally).

Despite feeling that information was lacking, the main way respondents obtained information about what was being done to tackle ASB, was through council newsletters/leaflets (49.8%) and local newspapers (48.6%).

### **3.9 Reflections on Descriptive Statistics**

The first point to consider relates to the proportions of respondents perceiving high levels of ASB. The full sample findings are similar to those reported for hard-pressed areas by the BCS (Wood, 2004; Upson, 2006; Flatley *et al.*, 2008). However, when examining the proportions at Respect/Non-Respect level, a real variation becomes apparent. This trend of variation is repeated when the samples are broken down to both area and Ward level,

demonstrating that the proportion of people perceiving high levels of ASB is neighbourhood specific. This reinforces the notion that perceptions of ASB are dependent upon location (Nixon *et al.*, 2003). However, if this variance is apparent at a neighbourhood level, how appropriate are national and local authority surveys in measuring perceptions of ASB, and consequently the extent of problems with ASB? Based on these findings, local authorities would be better served by examining perceptions of ASB at a community level in order to implement appropriate, tailored interventions to reduce perceived high levels of ASB. In addition, it would be useful to understand how local authorities responsible for the reduction of ASB address those who perceive levels of ASB to be high.

Aside from the combined perceptions measure, the descriptive statistics produced a number of findings that highlighted additional topics worthy of further exploration in phases two and three. It was clear that the definition of ASB is a contentious issue, with some discrepancies between definitions found to exist between areas. Is location a factor? This also links to the issues of subjectivity and tolerance that were outlined in Chapter One, which clearly warrant further qualitative enquiry.

A number of complexities also arose in relation to the reporting of ASB. Why are people fearful of reporting and what would the consequences of reporting entail? Do the reasons for not reporting really differ according to location? Additionally, what role do practitioners play here? More saliently, do concerns about reporting affect public perceptions of ASB? If incidents go unreported and unsanctioned, do perceptions of ASB problems increase?

A final topic that was highlighted was the perception of behaviours getting worse. Why do people think ASB is getting worse? The qualitative paradigm will allow the experiences of residents to be explored and factors fuelling perceptions to be identified.

The descriptive statistics provided interesting details about a number of topics that can be researched further. However, the main method used to determine the topics for discussion in phases two and three was the logistic regression analysis, detailed in Section B.

## Phase One Results - Section B

### 3.10 Logistic Regression Analysis

Section B contains full details of the processes undertaken to create the logistic regression findings. This includes: tests to determine significant Pearson Chi-square ( $X^2$ ) relationships, tests to determine the minimum number of cases required to perform a valid logistic regression analysis and collinearity diagnostic tests. The findings from the backwards stepwise logistic regression analyses will then be presented by sample/sub-sample.

Logistic regression is a means of modelling the probability of an event occurring, such as whether or not the questionnaire respondents are more likely to perceive high levels of ASB. A detailed explanation of logistic regression analysis including: the selection of the backwards stepwise method and the selection criteria for predictor variables can be found in Chapter Two (section 2.6).

### 3.11 Tests to Determine Significant $X^2$ Associations

This part of the analysis was crucial in establishing whether there were any significant associations between the independent variables and the dependent variable, for further use in the logistic regression analysis. Crosstabulations were generated in SPSS with significant  $X^2$  testing. The Pearson  $X^2$  value was used to measure the significance of the association at the  $p < 0.05$  level.

The following twenty-four variables were crosstabulated against a specifically created dichotomous combined perceptions measure variable (perceived high levels of ASB/not perceived high levels of ASB):

- Respect / Non-Respect Area (full sample only)
- Area
- Ward (Respect / Non-Respect sub-samples only)
- Gender
- Age
- Ethnicity
- Housing tenure
- Length of residence

- Crime victim
- Local newspaper readership
- National tabloid readership
- National broadsheet readership
- Viewer of local TV news
- Viewer of national TV news
- Access local news online
- Access national news online
- Whether ASB is committed deliberately or without thinking
- ASB better or worse in last two years in England and Wales?
- ASB better or worse in last two years in local area?
- Does ASB or crime causes most worry?
- Respondents kept informed about tackling ASB in local area?
- Any money spent to tackle ASB in local area?
- Awareness of local projects
- Awareness of national projects

In order to obtain statistical validity when running the  $X^2$  tests, the questionnaire response categories had to be modified to ensure a frequency count of at least five in each crosstabulation cell. In most cases respondents had to select their answer on a five-point Likert scale, for example: 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'neither agree nor disagree', 'disagree', 'strongly disagree'. To secure the required frequencies these five categories were 'collapsed' into three categories by combining those, for example, who strongly agreed and agreed to create a single 'agree' category and those who strongly disagreed and disagreed to create a single 'disagree' category.

Eight variables were found to demonstrate significant  $X^2$  associations with the combined perceptions measure, in the full sample, Respect and Non-Respect sub-samples or a combination of them all. Table 3.5 contains the statistical data demonstrating these relationships. Full statistical data for the variables that were not significantly associated with the combined perceptions measure can be found in Appendix 2f.

Table 3.5 Variables with Significant  $\chi^2$  Associations to the Combined Perceptions Measure

| Variable  | Sample      | Statistics                                     |
|---|-------------|--|
| Respect/Non-Respect Area                                  | Full        | $\chi^2 = 12.510$ , df = 1, p = 0.001, n = 422 |
| Area (R1, R2, NR1, NR2)                                   | Full        | $\chi^2 = 30.649$ , df = 3, p = 0.001, n = 422 |
| Whether ASB is committed deliberately or without thinking | Full        | $\chi^2 = 39.202$ , df = 2, p = 0.001, n = 396 |
|   | Respect     | $\chi^2 = 19.415$ , df = 2, p = 0.001, n = 214 |
|   | Non-Respect | $\chi^2 = 17.969$ , df = 2, p = 0.001, n = 182 |
| Does ASB or crime cause most worry?                       | Full        | $\chi^2 = 27.647$ , df = 3, p = 0.001, n = 416 |
|   | Respect     | $\chi^2 = 11.381$ , df = 3, p = 0.10, n = 224  |
|   | Non-Respect | $\chi^2 = 16.430$ , df = 3, p = 0.001, n = 192 |
| ASB: better or worse in local area in last two years?     | Full        | $\chi^2 = 41.492$ , df = 2, p = 0.001, n = 408 |
|   | Respect     | $\chi^2 = 26.583$ , df = 2, p = 0.001, n = 218 |
|   | Non-Respect | $\chi^2 = 14.293$ , df = 2, p = 0.001, n = 190 |
| Any money spent to tackle ASB in local area?              | Full        | $\chi^2 = 10.848$ , df = 2, p = 0.004, n = 413 |
|   | Respect     | $\chi^2 = 11.188$ , df = 2, p = 0.004, n = 221 |
| Housing tenure  | Full        | $\chi^2 = 22.175$ , df = 2, p = 0.001, n = 412 |
|   | Respect     | $\chi^2 = 14.726$ , df = 2, p = 0.001, n = 221 |
|   | Non-Respect | $\chi^2 = 8.894$ , df = 2, p = 0.01, n = 191   |
| Ethnicity   | Respect     | $\chi^2 = 4.361$ , df = 1, p = 0.05, n = 223   |

Crucially, having eight variables demonstrating significant  $\chi^2$  relationships with the combined perceptions measure allowed the process of building the logistic regression models to progress.

### 3.12 Selection of Predictor Variables

In addition to the significant  $\chi^2$  variables, other variables were selected for inclusion based on the criteria set out in Chapter Two. Figures 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6 detail the predictors selected for the full sample and the Respect and Non-Respect sub-samples.

Figure 3.4 Breakdown of Independent Variables Included in the Full Sample Model by Selection Criteria

|  |
|--|
| <p><b><u>Significant <math>X^2</math> Associations*</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whether ASB is committed deliberately or without thinking</li> <li>• Respect / Non-Respect Area</li> <li>• Does ASB or crime cause most worry?</li> <li>• ASB better or worse in last two years in local area</li> <li>• Any money spent to tackle ASB in local area?</li> <li>• Tenancy</li> </ul> |
| <p><b><u><math>X^2</math> variables with a significant value of <math>p &lt; 0.25</math></u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respondents kept informed about tackling ASB in local area?</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b><u>Strong Predictors: British Crime Survey Results</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crime Victim</li> <li>• Age</li> <li>• Length of residence at current address</li> </ul>   |
| <p>* The 'Area' variable produced a significant <math>X^2</math> association with the combined perception measure, but could not be included in the same model as Respect/Non Respect due to them not being independent of one another and creating a constant. The Respect predictor was selected for inclusion in the full sample model as it has greater value in the full sample context.</p>            |

Figure 3.5 Breakdown of Independent Variables Included in the Respect Sub-Sample Model by Selection Criteria

|  |
|--|
| <p><b><u>Significant <math>X^2</math> Associations</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whether ASB is committed deliberately or without thinking</li> <li>• Does ASB or crime cause most worry?</li> <li>• ASB better or worse in last two years in local area</li> <li>• Any money spent to tackle ASB in local area?</li> <li>• Tenancy</li> <li>• Ethnicity</li> <li>• Whether respondents live in Respect area 1 or Respect area 2</li> </ul> |
| <p><b><u><math>X^2</math> variables with a significant value of <math>p &lt; 0.25</math></u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respondents kept informed about tackling ASB in local area?</li> <li>• Respondents aware of local projects to tackle ASB?</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b><u>Strong Predictors: British Crime Survey Results (Flatley <i>et al.</i>, 2008)</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crime Victim</li> <li>• Age</li> <li>• Length of residence at current address</li> </ul>   |

Figure 3.6 Breakdown of Independent Variables Included in the Non-Respect Sub-Sample Model by Selection Criteria

|   |
|---|
| <p><b><u>Significant <math>\chi^2</math> Associations</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whether ASB is committed deliberately or without thinking</li> <li>• Does ASB or crime cause most worry?</li> <li>• ASB: better or worse in last two years in local area</li> <li>• Tenancy</li> <li>• Whether respondents live in Non-Respect area 1 or Non-Respect area 2</li> </ul> |
| <p><b><u><math>\chi^2</math> variables with a significant value of <math>p &lt; 0.25</math></u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respondents kept informed about tackling ASB in local area?</li> <li>• Any money spent to tackle ASB in local area?</li> <li>• Length of residence at current address</li> <li>• Crime Victim</li> <li>• Local newspaper readership</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b><u>Strong Predictors: British Crime Survey Results (Flatley <i>et al.</i>, 2008)</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age</li> </ul>  |

### 3.13 Sample Size Testing

Once the number of predictor variables to be included in the models had been identified, it was possible to calculate whether the number of cases in the sample and sub-samples were sufficient to conduct a logistic regression analysis.

The total number of cases required to perform a valid logistic regression analysis is a contested terrain. According to Field (2005) a general, but over-simplified rule requires 15 cases per predictor variable. Green (1991) provides two further methods for calculating the required sample size. The first, which is for the overall fit of the regression model, requires a minimum number of cases to equal  $50 + 8k$ , where  $k$  is the number of predictors. The second method is recommended when testing individual predictors within the model and requires the minimum number of cases to equal  $104 + k$ . If testing the model for both the overall fit and individual predictors, as per this study, it is suggested that both calculations be conducted and the largest value used.

Calculations were conducted for the full sample, Respect and Non-Respect sub-samples based on the formulae outlined above. A detailed account of the calculations can be accessed in Appendix 2g. In summary, the calculations proved that valid logistic regression

analyses could be conducted on the aforementioned samples. However, conducting logistic regression on any of the smaller sub-samples, such as area, was found to be inappropriate.

### **3.14 Collinearity Diagnostic Testing**

Collinearity diagnostic tests were conducted to determine whether any multicollinearity existed between the predictor variables used in the logistic regression models. Tests were conducted on the full sample, Respect and Non-Respect sub-samples, due to the variation in predictor variables selected for each model, which produced tolerance and variance VIF results.

For the full sample and Respect sub-sample the collinearity diagnostic tests were completed without any instances of multicollinearity. In contrast, the Non-Respect model contained one predictor variable with a tolerance level and VIF value that suggested multicollinearity. The predictor in question was tenancy: owner occupier. One solution to this problem would be to omit that predictor variable. However, there was no way of knowing which variable ‘owner occupier’ was interacting with. Field (2005) concludes that in such situations “there are no statistical grounds for omitting one variable over another” (p. 263) and the most appropriate solution is to acknowledge the unreliability of the model. Therefore the results produced by the Non-Respect sub-sample is slightly less reliable than the other models, due to a minor incidence of multicollinearity. Full tables detailing the results of the collinearity diagnostic tests can be found in Appendix 2h.

### **3.15 Full Sample Findings**

A total of 422 cases were analysed using the backwards stepwise method of regression as outlined in Chapter Two. The full model was significantly reliable ( $X^2 = 100.31$ ,  $df = 6$ ,  $p < 0.0005$ ). The model explains 34% of the variance in ASB perceptions status, based on the Nagelkerke  $R^2$  value, which measures the strength of the association. In addition, 85.3% of those who do not perceive high levels of ASB and 57.5% of those who perceive high levels of ASB were successfully predicted. Overall 77.4% of the predictions were accurate. Overall, six predictor variables were found to have a significant relationship to perceived high levels of ASB, of which four were attitudinal factors. Table 3.6 displays a summary the significant findings. A detailed copy of the significant findings (including  $\beta$  (odds ratios) and the Wald statistic), as well as a table containing the non-significant predictor variables can be found in Appendix 2i.

Table 3.6 Significant Logistic Regression Results for the Full Sample

| <b>Full Sample: Backward: LR Method</b><br><b>Significant predictors associated with perceived high levels of ASB</b> |                   |             |
|---|-------------------|-------------|
| <b>Predictor Variable</b>   | <b>Odds Ratio</b> | <b>Sig.</b> |
| Those who think ASB is committed deliberately   | 3.137             | 0.0005      |
| Those who think ASB has become worse in their local area  | 3.129             | 0.0005      |
| Those who said that no money is being spent in their area to tackle ASB   | 2.226             | 0.031       |
| Living in a Respect area  | 0.453             | 0.004       |
| Being more worried about crime than ASB   | 0.375             | 0.007       |
| Being an owner occupier   | 0.336             | 0.0005      |

Half of the significant predictors generated by the full sample model are factors that are more likely to predict perceptions of high levels of ASB (odds ratios >1). The strongest relationship uncovered by the model relates to the perceived motivation of ASB. Those who perceive that ASB is committed deliberately were three times more likely to perceive high levels of ASB in their local area, in comparison to those who think it is committed without thinking or don't know (this topic was also highlighted for further enquiry by the descriptive statistics outlined in Section A above). Also three times more likely to perceive high levels of ASB were those who believed that ASB has become worse in their local area, compared to those who think it had stayed the same or improved. Those who said that no money was being spent in their local area to tackle ASB, were also more likely to perceive high levels of ASB, with them being twice as likely to do so in comparison to those who thought that money was being spent.

The remaining significant predictors are associated with being less likely to perceive high levels of ASB (odds ratios <1). Respondents living in a Respect area, being an owner occupier and being more worried about crime than ASB were all less likely to perceive high levels of ASB.

In addition, the significant predictive demographic factors uncovered by the 2008 BCS were re-examined in this model, but failed to demonstrate any significant predictive relationships.

### 3.16 Respect Sub-Sample Findings

A slightly different set of independent variables were included in the Respect model based upon the selection criteria outlined above. For the Respect sub-sample a total of 228 cases were analysed, with the full model found to be significantly reliable ( $X^2 = 65.025$ ,  $df = 7$ ,  $p < 0.0005$ ). 45% percent of the variance in ASB perception status is explained by the model,

based on the Nagelkerke  $R^2$  value. Furthermore, 96.1% of those who do not perceive high levels of ASB and 40% of those who do perceive high levels of ASB were successfully predicted. Overall, 84.5% of the predictions were accurate. Table 3.7 contains the odds ratios and significance levels for the significant predictors associated with perceived high levels of ASB. As above, a detailed copy of the significant findings (including  $\beta$  and the Wald statistic), as well as a table containing the non-significant predictor variables can be found in Appendix 2j.

Table 3.7 Significant Logistic Regression Results for the Respect Sub-Sample

| <b>Respect Sub-Sample: Backward: LR Method</b>                             |                   |             |
|--|-------------------|-------------|
| <b>Significant predictors associated with perceived high levels of ASB</b> |                   |             |
| <b>Predictor Variable</b>  | <b>Odds Ratio</b> | <b>Sig.</b> |
| Those who think ASB has become worse in their local area                   | 5.294             | 0.001       |
| Being a council tenant   | 4.493             | 0.016       |
| Ethnicity – non-white  | 4.335             | 0.037       |
| Those who think ASB is committed deliberately                              | 4.221             | 0.002       |
| Those who agreed they are kept informed about ASB in their local area      | 3.879             | 0.007       |
| Living in Respect area 1   | 3.579             | 0.007       |
| Those who said that no money is being spent in their area to tackle ASB    | 3.291             | 0.035       |

All of the significant predictors in the Respect model were associated with those more likely to perceive high levels of ASB. Three of the predictors were demographic and four were attitudinal. A number of significant predictors from the full sample model were replicated, namely: those who think ASB has become worse in their local area, respondents who think ASB is committed deliberately and people who said that no money is being spent. The Respect sub-sample generated four sub-sample specific significant predictors (see shaded cells in Table 3.7). The strongest of these unique predictors was being a council tenant - these respondents were nearly four and a half times more likely to perceive high levels of ASB, compared to those occupying other tenures. A similarly strong significant predictor was ethnicity, specifically being non-white. In addition, those who agreed they were kept informed about ASB in their local area were three times more likely to perceive high levels of ASB compared to those who felt they were not kept informed. Finally, those who lived in R1 were three and a half times more likely to perceive high levels of ASB opposed to those living in R2. This represents the vast difference in the proportion of respondents perceiving high levels of ASB presented earlier.

### 3.17 Non-Respect Sub-Sample Findings

The number of independent variables selected for inclusion in the Non-Respect model also varied in comparison to the previous two models, as demonstrated above. A total of 194 cases were analysed and the full model was found to be significantly reliable ( $\chi^2 = 41.987$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p < 0.005$ ). The model accounts for 31% of the variance in ASB perception status, based on the Nagelkerke  $R^2$  value. In addition, 88.1% of those who do not perceive high levels of ASB and 45.9% of those who do perceive high levels of ASB were successfully predicted. Overall, 72.2% of the predictions were accurate. Table 3.8 contains the significant predictors and corresponding odds ratios for the Non-Respect model. Again, a detailed copy of the significant findings (including  $\beta$  and the Wald statistic), as well as a table containing the non-significant predictor variables can be found in Appendix 2k.

Table 3.8 Significant Logistic Regression Results for the Non-Respect Sub-Sample

| <b>Non-Respect Sub-Sample: Backward: LR Method</b>                         |                   |             |
|--|-------------------|-------------|
| <b>Significant predictors associated with perceived high levels of ASB</b> |                   |             |
| <b>Predictor Variable</b>  | <b>Odds Ratio</b> | <b>Sig.</b> |
| Those who think ASB is committed deliberately                              | 4.990             | 0.0005      |
| Living in Non-Respect area 2   | 3.099             | 0.004       |
| Being more worried about crime than ASB                                    | 0.187             | 0.001       |
| Those who read the local newspaper   | 0.159             | 0.023       |

The number of significant predictors generated by the non-Respect sub-sample model was less than the Respect sub-sample model, with only two predictors being unique (see shaded cells in Table 3.8). Of the unique predictors, one was a demographic factor and one was attitudinal. Respondents living in NR2 were found to be three times more likely than respondents living in NR1 to perceive high levels of ASB. This highlights the difference between the proportions perceiving high levels of ASB in each area and demonstrates a similar result to the Respect sub-sample model. Finally, those who read the local newspaper were significantly less likely to perceive high levels of ASB opposed to those who did not read the local newspaper.

### 3.18 Summary of Logistic Regression Findings

Overall, a range of attitudinal predictors have been found to have a significant association with perceiving high levels of ASB. The analysis has also shown that different predictors are significant for different sub-samples based on location and Respect status. A summary of the key findings is as follows:

- New demographic and attitudinal factors have been found to be significantly and independently associated with being more likely to perceive high levels of ASB, namely:
  - Those who think ASB is committed deliberately
  - Those who think ASB has become worse in their local area
  - Those who said that no money is being spent to tackle ASB locally
  - Those who feel they are kept informed about local ASB
  - Being a council tenant (Respect sub-sample only)
  - Being non-white (Respect sub-sample only)
  - Living in Respect area 1 (Respect sub-sample only)
  - Living in Non-Respect area 2 (Non-Respect sub-sample only)
  
- New demographic and attitudinal factors have been found to be significantly and independently associated with being less likely to perceive high levels of ASB, namely:
  - Living in a Respect area
  - Being more worried about crime than ASB
  - Being an owner occupier
  - Those who read the local newspaper (Non-Respect sub-sample only)

### **3.19 Reflections on Logistic Regression Findings**

The logistic regression findings have produced a set of factors that are significantly and independently associated with perceptions of ASB. This has added a new attitudinal dimension to the existing research on perceptions of ASB. Some of the significant factors highlighted by this study are complex in nature - for example, the perceived motivation of ASB. However, like the research that precedes it, this only reveals a limited amount of information because there is no understanding of why these factors are important. Such factors will only begin to be unravelled through an inductive approach. For example, in relation to the perceived motivation of ASB a number of additional questions need to be discussed, namely: if people perceive themselves to be the deliberate target of anti-social acts, do they perceive higher volumes of ASB? Why do they feel they are deliberately targeted, and how does this affect their perception of ASB as a whole? It is only through discussing these intricate topics at greater depth that future policy implications and ways to reduce perceived high levels of ASB can be considered. The issue of locality would also have to be filtered into this debate as the factors driving perceptions may vary between the areas, in a similar fashion to the proportion of people perceiving ASB to be a problem as

reported above. All of these issues warranted further enquiry and were pursued during phase two of this study.

### 3.20 Conclusions

The overall remit of this research phase was to quantify public perceptions of ASB and gain a better understanding of what factors affect public perceptions of ASB. The rationale for the questionnaire was to produce a set of statistically significant factors associated with perceiving high levels of ASB that would inform the qualitative aspect of this study, as well as produce a set of stand-alone results.

Both the descriptive statistics and logistic regression analysis have produced new insight into the topic and identified themes worthy of further enquiry, which are outlined in Table 3.9.

Table 3.9 Themes for Further Enquiry Generated by Research Phase One

| Type of Analysis             | Themes Identified For Further Enquiry   |
|------------------------------|---|
| Descriptive Statistics       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The combined perceptions measure</li><li>• Definition of ASB</li><li>• Reporting ASB</li><li>• Factors influencing perceptions - ASB getting worse?</li></ul>   |
| Logistic Regression Analysis | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Perceived motivation of ASB – deliberate?</li><li>• Factors influencing perceptions - ASB getting worse?</li><li>• Money spent</li><li>• Being kept informed</li><li>• Fear of crime and ASB</li><li>• Local newspaper readership</li></ul> |

Phases two and three of this study fully explored the above themes with the results presented in Chapters Four and Five respectively.

# Chapter Four: Phase Two Results

## Factors that Influence Public Perceptions of ASB

### 4.1 Introduction

Chapter Three provided the results of research phase one, which sought to quantify public perception levels in four areas. Perception levels were produced alongside a number of new attitudinal factors found to be significantly associated with perceiving high levels of ASB. The results presented thus far have built upon the existing quantitative literature produced by the BCS detailed in Chapter One. The aim of phase two (this phase) of this study was to qualitatively explore what factors influence public perceptions of ASB, adding additional insight into the quantitative results presented in Chapter Three and creating a new dimension in perceptions of ASB research. The emphasis was to build upon the results of the public questionnaire, focusing on the reasons behind the findings to generate new in-depth information.

Focus groups were conducted within the hard-pressed dominant ACORN Wards from the areas used in phase one, to maintain a consistent location and hard-pressed ACORN demographic. A thorough discussion of the methodological approach can be found in Chapter Two, but the key details regarding the composition of the focus groups are as follows: ten focus groups were conducted which involved a total of sixty-eight members of the public. Table 4.1 details the number of focus groups held in each area and the number of public participants per group.

Table 4.1 Number of Focus Groups and Participants in Each Area

| Area               | Number of Focus Groups | Number of Participants |
|--------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Respect Area 1     | 3                      | 3                      |
|                    |                        | 8                      |
|                    |                        | 2                      |
| Respect Area 2     | 3                      | 7                      |
|                    |                        | 8                      |
|                    |                        | 10                     |
| Non-Respect Area 1 | 3                      | 8                      |
|                    |                        | 8                      |
|                    |                        | 9                      |
| Non-Respect Area 2 | 1                      | 5                      |
| Total              | 10                     | 68                     |

Various groups operating within the community, such as Residents Associations and other informal social groups were approached to take part in this study, in order to accurately represent the demographics of the hard-pressed Wards. This proved extremely difficult as a number of groups who were approached felt unable to participate, due to a fear of reprisals from the local community and having to leave the house to attend the group. Full details concerning the difficulties faced during focus group recruitment can be found in Chapter Seven. Despite the problems with recruitment, the focus group participants reflected a range of ages<sup>22</sup>, with both genders represented. As Respect Area 1 had a higher proportion of BME residents than the other areas, one solely BME focus group was held in this area. Demographic details about the focus group attendees and the type of community group they were from are detailed in table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Focus Group Demographics and Type of Group

| Respect Status     | Group         | Frequency |        | Ethnicity           | Type of Group   |
|--------------------|---------------|-----------|--------|---------------------|-----------------|
|                    |               | Male      | Female |                     |                 |
| Respect Area 1     | Focus Group 1 | 1         | 2      | White British       | Social          |
|                    | Focus Group 2 | 8         | 0      | Asian/Asian British | BME             |
|                    | Focus Group 3 | 0         | 2      | White/White British | Support         |
| Respect Area 2     | Focus Group 1 | 1         | 6      | White British       | Residents       |
|                    | Focus Group 2 | 0         | 8      | White British       | Social          |
|                    | Focus Group 3 | 2         | 8      | White British       | Social          |
| Non-Respect Area 1 | Focus Group 1 | 1         | 7      | White British       | Educational     |
|                    | Focus Group 2 | 2         | 6      | White British       | Crime Reduction |
|                    | Focus Group 3 | 0         | 9      | White British       | Educational     |
| Non-Respect Area 2 | Focus Group 1 | 3         | 2      | White British       | Social          |
|                    |               |           |        |                     |                 |
|                    |               |           |        |                     |                 |
| Total              |               | 18        | 50     |                     |                 |

<sup>22</sup> Age details were not collected for each focus group, a decision made for two reasons. Firstly, the difficulties experienced when recruiting focus group participants meant the priority was obtaining any willing participants. Secondly, once a group had been arranged, the short amount of time available to conduct the discussion limited the opportunities to collect this data.

The main focus of this phase of the study was to explore what factors affected public perceptions of ASB in the four areas. This involved developing an overall understanding of what the public perceived ASB to entail, not simply probing their perceptions of the extent of local incidents. This was reflected by the focus group script, which sought to gradually build the discussion by establishing the groups' understanding of ASB through to more complex issues which included: concerns about ASB, the perceived motivation for committing ASB, perceptions of local authorities, and the media. A copy of the focus group script can be found in Appendix 1i.

In addition, the concept of variation was important. Views expressed in the focus groups were compared to the other focus groups conducted in the same area. This was to explore whether the drivers of perceptions or perceptions in general varied between neighbourhoods. Differences between the areas were also explored, to determine whether a wider location and/or levels of service provision influenced perceptions.

Thematic analysis was conducted on the focus group transcripts, creating findings based upon a number of key themes. Each theme will be presented in turn, detailing the main findings across the four areas, with findings specific to certain areas highlighted where appropriate. Quotations from the focus group participants will be used to evidence the findings. A final section providing information about the differences observed between the designated Respect and Non-Respect areas is included after the main themes have been reported. This observes whether perceptions were influenced by living in a designated Respect area, thus linking this phase of the study to phases one and three.

As in Chapter Three, Respect Area 1 will be referred to as R1, Respect Area 2 as R2, Non-Respect Area 1 as NR1 and Non-Respect Area 2 as NR2. The 'authorities' are referred to on a number of occasions. This represents the authorities referred to in Chapter One as being responsible for reducing ASB, namely: the local authority, police and housing ALMO. In addition, where quotations are provided, details of the area and focus group number (e.g. R1/FG1) are given.

## 4.2 The Definition of ASB

Participants were first asked what they understood anti-social behaviour<sup>23</sup> to mean. It was crucial to ascertain what they considered ASB to represent as this set the context for the rest of the discussion. It was also important to explore the participants' understanding of what constituted ASB, as this was unable to be determined from the phase one questionnaire, as detailed in Chapters Two and Three.

What the participants thought ASB meant varied greatly. No two participants offered identical definitions and no one recalled the legal definition set out by the Crime and Disorder Act (1998). Broadly speaking, most of the definitions followed one of two main themes. The first considered ASB to be something committed by exclusively by young people, as highlighted by the following quotations:

*"Basically kids being a nuisance." (R1/FG1)*

*"Anti-social behaviour means to me now, the disruption children have probably from an early age up to their middle twenties where they're seeking approval and they're using vandalism and smashing cars, burning cars you know excessive drinking and that sort of thing to get attention." (R1/FG3)*

The second theme is best described as general nuisance behaviour, with participants using words such as: uncomfortable, disruption and disturbance to describe how it affected them. Despite two over-arching themes being apparent, it was clear the basis upon which perceptions of ASB were formed was different for every individual.

There were no major differences when comparing the definitions given by groups from the same area, although a few distinctions were apparent between areas. Participants from both areas R2 and NR1 confused ASB with crime. In both Non-Respect areas there was the understanding that ASB occurred when individuals did not conform to the behavioural expectations of 'normal' people. A clear distinction was made between their 'normal' behaviour and that of ASB perpetrators. These differences in relation to what ASB means demonstrates that what the public understands ASB to constitute, varies to some extent depending on location. It also shows the basis of the discussion was different in different areas and although the same questions were posed in all focus groups, the meaning of the responses varied due to the concept of ASB being different for each participant.

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<sup>23</sup> The acronym 'ASB' was not used during the focus groups to prevent any confusion.

### 4.3 The Combined Perceptions Measure

Before commencing the focus group discussion, each participant was asked to complete the combined perceptions measure grid. This was used in the phase one questionnaire and is used by the BCS and Place Survey to quantify perception levels. The purpose of obtaining these levels was to explore whether the scores varied between participants in each group and whether it reflected how they articulated the perceived problems in their local area during the discussion. It also allowed for comparisons to be made within and between areas and to the figures reported in phase one.

Tables containing the scores for each focus group participant, as well as the percentage of those perceiving high levels of ASB per focus group, area and the area percentages from phase one can be found in Appendix 2I. Table 4.3 provides a summary of these findings. In short, when a score of 11 or more is reported, the respondent is deemed to perceive high levels of ASB. Therefore the percentage represents the proportion of those in the group considered to perceive high levels of ASB.

Table 4.3 Summary of Focus Group Combined Perceptions Measure Scores

| Area | Highest Score | Lowest Score | Average Score | % Perceiving High Levels of ASB (Focus Groups) | % Perceiving High Levels of ASB (Phase 1) |
|------|---------------|--------------|---------------|--|---|
| R1   | 17            | 0            | 6.5           | 23   | 33  |
| R2   | 18            | 0            | 8.3           | 50   | 13  |
| NR1  | 18            | 0            | 8             | 28   | 28  |
| NR2  | 7             | 4            | 5             | 0  | 45  |

The percentages given for the focus groups are merely indicative, as the number of participants in the focus groups was too few to provide a statistically valid comparison. In addition, FG3 in R2 did not complete the combined perceptions grid due to time constraints and the figures reported for NR2 reflect that only one focus group took place in this area.

Table 4.3 shows that some very high scores were reported by participants in areas R1, R2 and NR1 which were starkly contrasted by scores of zero. This demonstrates that the participants' perception of ASB varied greatly, despite many of the participants living within a few streets of each other. The results produced for NR2 are unreliable in this instance, as only one focus group took place. The focus group that did take place, albeit in one of the

selected hard-pressed Wards, was in a privately owned neighbourhood. This contrasted the focus groups that took place in the other areas and occurred due to the difficulties in recruiting focus group participants.

The average scores for each area were fairly similar, with R2 and NR1 being almost identical and R1 and NR2 being slightly lower. The percentage of respondents perceiving high levels of ASB provides a better indication of the extent of ASB. The scores varied greatly between the areas and also in relation to the scores produced in phase one. This is a further demonstration of the complexity of measuring perceptions, as the scores appear to vary greatly regardless of location. NR1 is unique in this regard, as the percentage of those perceiving high levels of ASB in the focus groups was identical to that produced by the phase one questionnaire. Further exploration would be required to determine whether this was a spurious result.

Focus group 3 conducted in R1 produced much higher combined perceptions measure scores than the other two groups, see Appendix 2I. This demonstrates that although the Wards were selected for their shared demographic characteristics, there were very different experiences of ASB. The aforementioned group was also the only one throughout the four areas where all participants perceived high levels of ASB. Therefore the context of the discussion was not only shaped by the different definitions of ASB outlined above, but also the different levels of ASB experienced in each of the areas where the focus groups took place. This combination may result in people seeing and interpreting the same type of ASB very differently. This highlights one of the biggest problems with attempting to quantify public perceptions of ASB, the subjectivity of respondents, which fuels the needs for a qualitative insight in addition to statistical quantification.

## **4.4 The Perceived Extent of Local ASB Problems**

### ***4.4.1 Personal Experience of ASB***

In order to reconcile the combined perceptions measure scores with personal experiences, participants were asked whether ASB was a problem in their local area. This provoked a mixed response, with some participants perceiving there to be major problems with ASB locally:

*“You just need to Google anti-social behaviour [Ward] / [area] ok and you will see the gangs that are at fights with each other and they will video the fights.” (R1/FG3)*

*“There’s a lot of anti-social behaviour in [Ward] especially down [X] Road.” (R2/FG1)*

*“Anti-social behaviour has sky-rocketed in the last 5 years.” (NR1/FG1)*

Conversely, others did not perceive there to be a problem:

*“I personally haven’t come across it to that extent.” (R2/FG3)*

*“I wouldn’t say it was a big problem really.” (NR1/FG3)*

This demonstrates that perceived levels of ASB varied greatly. The perceived levels of ASB articulated by the participants were not consistent within the focus groups, replicating the diverse range of combined perceptions measure scores illustrated in table 4.3. There was also little consistency between focus groups from the same area and between the different areas. This reinforces the subjective and individual nature of perceptions, particularly as some of the participants were experiencing the same problems in the same neighbourhood.

However, there was not a distinct dichotomy between an area having problems and not having problems. Some participants perceived there to be problems, but on a less regular basis:

*“You’ll have little outbursts once in a while but it quietens down again. It’s not a continuous thing that you know, you eventually get fed up with.” (NR2/FG1)*

These particular findings indicate that perceiving problems with ASB appears to be a dynamic process that changes to reflect the ASB being experienced, with perceptions being continuously formed and re-formed according to the current local context.

When considering personal experience overall, the participants’ contrasting accounts of the levels of ASB they were experiencing in their area reflected: the varied combined perceptions measure scores detailed in section 4.3, reinforced the subjective nature of perceptions of ASB and demonstrated that perceptions are very individualistic.

#### *4.4.2 Interventions and Perception Change*

In addition to perceptions dynamically altering over time as a result of personal experience, an example of perceptions changing as a result of an intervention was uncovered in NR1. In one of the hard-pressed Wards (referred to hereafter as NR1(a)) it was clear that perceived levels of ASB were reducing:

*"It was [bad] at one time. It's improved round here hasn't it, getting the wardens."*  
(NR1/FG3)

*"My house is a lot better now compared to what it used to be when I first moved in."*  
(NR1/FG3)

It appeared that the introduction of Street Wardens impacted positively upon the perceptions of ASB participants in NR1(a), although other areas that had Street Wardens operating in their areas did not report any improvement in perceived levels of ASB. In fact, it was clear that any optimism about levels of ASB reducing was restricted to NR1 as the following quotation from R2 demonstrates:

*"At the beginning it were lovely and now I'd be glad to get away, me."* (R2/FG1)

This further reinforces the difference in perceptions held by the participants from different focus groups and areas, and demonstrates how the dynamic formulation of public perceptions can result in both positive and negative outcomes. It also shows that perceptions can be influenced by actual changes, such as the introduction of Street Wardens, as well as by perceived changes in local levels of ASB. The Street Wardens in NR1(a) were the only intervention mentioned that appeared to positively impact upon perceptions of ASB. Public perceptions of other interventions used by the authorities and more details about the Street Wardens will be provided later.

#### 4.4.3 Displacement

Another aspect associated with the perceived level of problems relates to the movement of problems between neighbourhoods. Participants in areas R1, NR1 and NR2 all claimed that the displacement of problems from other areas was causing problems for them locally, for example:

*"I was talking to our Councillor who said that [another Ward] now is in such a bad way that they've put cameras up to prevent, cos they've had shootings and goodness knows what over there. They've put a lot of cameras up so it's moved from one side of our park to the other side of the park. So we're getting all the problems that they had beforehand."* (R1/FG1)

*"Apparently a lot of these kids don't live on our estate. . . They had a curfew and that automatically sent them on to our estate. And we had some real problems then."*  
(NR1/FG3)

The perception that problem behaviours from 'worse' areas were being displaced, fuelled the perception that local ASB was increasing. In addition to the perceived displacement of

problems, participants in R2 and NR1 also perceived that some of the ASB they were experiencing was the result of non-residents deliberately coming to their neighbourhood to cause trouble, as the following quotation explains:

*“See a lot of the problem is, sometimes it’s not always the people that live in the area that come from outside knowing that they can do this.” (R2/FG1)*

#### *4.4.4 Location of ASB Experienced*

A further dimension to consider when exploring the perceived extent of local problems relates to where the incidents of ASB were experienced. A participant in R1 stated:

*“Well where I live, I don’t experience any type of anti-social behaviour, that is a relatively new area. Where I usually spend my day around, I find a lot of anti-social behaviour.” (R1/FG2)*

The participant continued to say that by spending the day in an area which they perceived to have high levels of ASB, their overall impression of ASB was influenced. They therefore perceived high levels of ASB overall, as a result of what they had seen outside of their local area. This demonstrates that experiencing ASB in any location could impact on the public’s perception of ASB, even when questioned specifically about their local area (within a fifteen minute walk, as per the BCS guidelines). It may not be possible for some participants to distinguish between general and localised experiences, which could impact on attempts to quantify perception levels using the combined perceptions measure.

#### *4.4.5 Situating ASB in a Wider Context*

Finally, in addition to conveying the extent of problems with ASB, a number of participants were keen to place their experiences within the context of other communities, for example:

*“I think all those problems are in every area, wherever you live now.” (R1/FG1)*

*“I don’t think it’s any worse here than anywhere else.” (NR1/FG1)*

*“We seem to be doing ok at the moment compared with other places.” (NR2/FG1)*

These comments may have been the result of participants not wanting to portray their area as a bad place to live in the presence of the researcher. It might also be part of a broader perception of ASB regionally or nationally, which was not explored further due to the local context of this research.

#### **4.5 The Nature of ASB Experienced**

To compliment the previous sub-section detailing the extent of perceived problems, participants were prompted about the nature of the problems being experienced locally. This was in order to see whether the ASB experienced/perceived was common within and between areas, as this may have affected public perceptions.

Tables 4.4, 4.5, 4.6 and 4.7 (on the pages that follow) detail the types of ASB mentioned in each area. Some of the behaviours in the tables have been shaded. These behaviours are not contained in the 7SI<sup>24</sup>, which is the list of seven behaviours used to generate the combined perceptions measure for the BCS and Place Survey.

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<sup>24</sup> The seven behaviours which constitute the 7SI are: noisy neighbours or loud parties; teenagers hanging around on the streets; rubbish or litter lying around; vandalism, graffiti or other deliberate damage to property or vehicles; people using or dealing drugs; people being drunk or rowdy in public places; abandoned or burnt out cars.

Table 4.4 Types of ASB Experienced in R1<sup>25</sup>

| Area R1                   | Problems Experienced   |
|---------------------------|--|
| Focus Group 1<br>(Ward A) | Damage to cars<br>Drug dealing<br>Drunkenness<br>Eastern Europeans: lack of respect/culture clash<br>Intimidating others with dogs<br>Kids out during the early hours making noise and playing football<br>Motorbikes ridden in the early hours<br>Stealing plants from gardens<br>Young people around the streets<br>Young people smashing up cars  |
| Focus Group 2<br>(Ward A) | Drugs and drug dealing<br>Eastern Europeans: lack of respect/culture clash<br>Inconsiderate parking/blocking roads<br>Racist remarks<br>Young people playing in the road   |
| Focus Group 3<br>(Ward B) | Aggressive loan sharks<br>Banging on windows<br>Drugs<br>Excessive drinking<br>Fireworks through the letterbox<br>Fly-tipping<br>Gangs of young people<br>Horses in gardens<br>Intimidating others with dogs<br>Jumping on/running over cars<br>Noisy neighbours<br>Racist remarks<br>Smashing windows<br>Smashing/burning out cars<br>Swearing<br>Vandalism<br>Verbal abuse<br>Young people carrying weapons (pipes/bricks)<br>Young people on the streets in the early hours |

It is noticeable from table 4.4 that participants in focus group three were experiencing the greatest range of problems. The only common problem experienced by all focus group participants in R1 was drugs/drug dealing.

<sup>25</sup> Behaviours experienced are presented in alphabetical order, solely to facilitate comparisons between the areas.

Table 4.5 Types of ASB Experienced in R2

| Area R2                   | Problems Experienced  |
|---------------------------|---|
| Focus Group 1<br>(Ward A) | Damage to cars<br>Drugs<br>Jumping over hedges/running through gardens<br>Smoking cannabis<br>Young people giving abuse/taking the 'mickey'<br>Young people hanging around (disused garages)<br>Young people hanging around (public spaces)                       |
| Focus Group 2<br>(Ward A) | Cars broken into<br>Dog fouling<br>Intimidation<br>Night time noise<br>Noisy neighbours<br>Noisy visitors<br>Parking on grassed areas<br>Setting fire to wheelie bins/rubbish<br>Stealing plants from gardens<br>Underage drinking<br>Young people hanging around |
| Focus Group 3<br>(Ward B) | Damage to cars<br>Damage to property<br>Intimidating others with dogs<br>Throwing eggs<br>Young people being a nuisance/cheeky<br>Young people hanging around and dropping litter<br>Young people jumping into gardens<br>Young people playing football           |

Common problems in R2 included: young people hanging around/causing nuisance and damage to cars.

Table 4.6 Types of ASB Experienced in NR1

| Area NR1                  | Problems Experienced   |
|---------------------------|--|
| Focus Group 1<br>(Ward A) | Litter<br>Nuisance motorbikes<br>Underage drinking<br>Young people shouting abuse/swearing   |
| Focus Group 2<br>(Ward B) | Drugs<br>Gangs of young people<br>Loud music/noisy neighbours<br>Nuisance motorbikes<br>Tipping out bins<br>Underage drinking<br>Young people shouting and swearing<br>Young people walking out in front of cars   |
| Focus Group 3<br>(Ward A) | Cars going around/speeding during the night<br>Dog fouling<br>Drug dealing<br>Fires on the street<br>Gangs of young people<br>Noisy neighbours<br>Nuisance motorbikes<br>Stealing washing from the line<br>Stolen cars<br>Throwing bottles<br>Urinating through windows<br>Vandalism |

The only common behaviour experienced across both Wards in NR1 was nuisance motorbikes.

Table 4.7 Types of ASB Experienced in NR2

| Area NR2                  | Problems Experienced   |
|---------------------------|--|
| Focus Group 1<br>(Ward A) | Damage<br>Fly-tipping<br>Litter<br>Nuisance motorbikes<br>Shouting<br>Underage drinking<br>Young people hanging around the shops/park in early hours |

Motorbikes were also a problem in NR2, but no inter-area comparisons can be made due to only one focus group taking place.

A total of 52 different types of ASB were mentioned during the focus groups across the four areas. It is clear that different types of ASB were experienced within Wards, between Wards and between areas. The varying types of ASB suggest that the perceived extent of ASB reported in section 4.4 is based upon markedly different experiences.

The range of problems experienced in the areas extends far beyond the types of behaviours included in the 7SI. Behaviour relating to young people was shaded, where it extends from them just 'hanging around on the streets'. This expands the findings from the phase one questionnaire, which only reported on the behaviours included in the 7SI. The findings from the focus groups indicate that ASB has evolved from the basic behaviours probed by the combined perceptions measure. Behaviours such as intimidating others with dogs, nuisance motorbikes, clashes between cultures and verbal abuse were commonly mentioned in the focus groups, but do not feature in the 7SI. Whilst it is acknowledged that the 7SI was developed through principal component analysis making it a statistically valid representation of ASB as a whole, it may be appropriate for this to be re-examined to embrace any changes in ASB that have occurred over time. If the aforementioned types of ASB were mentioned in the 7SI, the combined perceptions measure scores for the focus groups would have been markedly different.

#### **4.6 Factors that Informed Public Perceptions of ASB**

Participants were directly questioned about the factors that informed their perceptions of ASB in their local area. According to the phase one questionnaire 49.5% of respondents' perceptions of ASB were informed by what they saw. Seeing ASB was also evident in the focus groups, with most participants stating that they witnessed ASB firsthand:

*"Some of it you see it yourself on the streets. I live in a first floor flat so it's easier for me to see out my kitchen window." (R1/FG1)*

*"You see it more here because you're living on it." (NR1/FG1)*

*"It's visible all the time." (NR1/FG2)*

Some participants saw ASB occurring in the street, such as teenagers causing nuisance, while others saw it happening to other people. In addition to seeing it, some participants had direct experience of ASB, which fuelled their perceptions:

*"I've had my car smashed in several times." (R1/FG1)*

Hearing about local ASB through word of mouth was also common, as the following quotations show:

*“You might see somebody when you go shopping, did you hear such and such?” (NR1/FG1)*

*“On small estates, anything that happens on it, you hear about it.” (NR1/FG1)*

Some participants heard about ASB problems they had not experienced personally through word of mouth. Hearing about problems in this way was shown to have a powerful influence on perceptions. In one example a participant’s decision making was affected by their perceptions of ASB heard through word of mouth:

*“I heard when I was looking for a house, don’t look for one on [X] Road because it’s a bad area.” (NR1/FG1)*

Although not everybody was as convinced by what they heard from others:

*“By the time you get it tenth hand it could be well out of proportion. Because nobody ever tells the same tale twice do they?” (R1/FG1)*

This suggests that although the participants did hear about ASB through word of mouth, it did not necessarily affect their perceptions signifying that the effect of hearing about ASB through word of mouth is not universal. However, the aforementioned factors were not exclusive. Some people saw ASB, heard stories about ASB and went to public meetings about ASB, which demonstrates that it is impossible to assess the impact each factor has on the formulation of perceptions as they do not occur in isolation.

In NR1 and NR2 some of the participants were key figures in the local community, such as community group leaders. They often received calls from other members of the public complaining about problems, which they then reported to the relevant authority. As well as being an issue related to reporting incidents that will be expanded upon later, this process also informed the perception levels of those being reported to within the community.

From these findings it seems clear that perceptions of ASB in the areas studied were primarily driven by experiential factors, namely: personal experience of ASB, seeing ASB and hearing about the experiences of others.

#### 4.7 Concern about ASB

The level of concern generated as a result of perceiving high levels of ASB was a key area for investigation. How an individual interprets their own level of risk based upon their perception of local ASB may impact on the types of behaviour they engage in, such as when they leave the house and what areas they feel comfortable visiting. Exploring this dimension of perceptions reflects the anticipated practical application of this study, as gathering information about the characteristics of this fear could impact on ASB policy.

In order to explore different avenues related to fear, it was essential to put the participants' experiences into context by asking about their levels of concern about ASB. It was clear from the public questionnaire conducted in phase one that there was an association between perceiving high levels of ASB and worry, as the majority of respondents worried about crime and ASB in equal measure. There was no statistically significant relationship between being more worried about ASB and perceiving high levels of ASB. However, those being more worried about crime were statistically less likely to perceive high levels of ASB. But how was this reflected in the focus groups?

When asked if they were worried about ASB in their local area, most participants agreed that they were. This response was uniform across all focus groups, in all areas and often generated a very emotive discussion. The following quotations highlight different types of concern about ASB. For example, fear of ASB made some participants not like going out because they felt intimidated:

*"I'd say it's a big problem for me. It does stop me doing a lot of the things that I want to do because when it's dark that's when I do not like going out. When I go to the shop it is a big problem." (R1/FG3)*

Some people stopped going out completely at certain times:

*"I don't go out at night." (R2/FG3)*

Conversely, others were more worried while at home:

*"I am [worried], cos I just want to get away from where I am. I go out every day to get away from it. . . It's just affecting me. I can't go in me back garden you know, I love gardening and you know, I can't do it. It's really getting me down. If I had the money, I'd go somewhere else." (R2/FG1)*

Other people expressed concerns for their neighbours, but not themselves:

*"I don't worry for myself, but I do worry for some of the elderly residents around me."*  
(R1/FG1)

The same participant found ASB to be more annoying than worrying on a personal level. The above quotations demonstrate that worrying about ASB and consequently the impact this has on daily activities was very subjective and often linked to the perceived ASB they were experiencing.

More pertinent to the policy arena was the discussions about whether the participants' level of worry was subject to change and what factors provoked these changes. Although there was a consistent feeling towards worrying about ASB, there was a mixed response to whether the level of worry caused by ASB changed. Some participants considered their level of concern to be constantly rising:

*"It goes up and up I think. It just goes up and up, day by day."* (R1/FG2)

Others considered it to be at a steady, continuous level:

*"Constant with me!"* (NR2/FG1)

*"Well it's always on your mind, you know."* (R2/FG2)

The process was more dynamic for some, with their levels of concern changing to reflect how much ASB they had been experiencing:

*"Mine has been an emotional rollercoaster. I can have good periods and then when I'm targeted again I'm down into a very low period and I build myself up again."*  
(R1/FG3)

*"You have a problem, you worry for a while then you just start relaxing a bit then something else happens."* (NR1/FG2)

Others' level of worry was triggered by specific things happening in their neighbourhood:

*"We're alright until we hear about somebody moving out and who's moved in and then you think oh now then, what are they going to be like?"* (R2/FG2)

This again reflects how perceptions are subjectively formed according to the local context. Although this was not always the case, as some people could not identify why they were worried:

*“I’ve felt, of lately, really apprehensive when I take the dog out and I don’t know why.” (NR1/FG2)*

However, in the midst of all the concern highlighted, one participant was keen to point out that they were only worried for the distinct period of time the ASB problems were occurring:

*“So for me that problem is only for that particular period, that time it happens. It’s gone because something else takes its place, because it’s more important than that.” (NR1/FG2)*

This particular quotation highlights that the level of worry is not only subjective to context, but also to the individual perceiving the problem, as the individual in question felt they had more important things to think about than ASB. Overall, the level of concern felt by the participants appeared to be very subjective according to the individual’s experience of ASB, where they lived and to a certain extent their individual personality.

It is important at this juncture to recognise that the participants’ articulation of worry also represented a blurring of boundaries between crime and ASB, in a similar fashion to section 4.2 about the definition of ASB. A number of participants confused crime with ASB by stating they were worried about things such as: shootings, knifings, thieves, rapists and murderers when questioned about ASB. This suggests that although academics and practitioners attempt to categorise ASB distinctly from crime, this is not reflected in reality, which in relation to this study, ultimately impacted upon perceptions of ASB.

#### **4.8 Public Perceptions of the Authorities Tackling ASB**

This section and the two sections that follow, focus on whether public perceptions of ASB are affected by the actions of the authorities responsible for tackling ASB. Focus group participants were asked if the authorities (local authority, police, ALMO) did enough to tackle ASB in their local area, to which the most common response was no. Probing this response resulted in a number of factors that were considered to affect the participants’ perceptions of ASB.

A response common to all areas was the perception that the authorities' actions were restricted, as the following quotations demonstrate:

*"Well they have no authority have they, so they can't do owt." (R1/FG1)*

*"But a lot of time that is because they've got a lot of red tape, they've got a lot of paperwork to do haven't they, with everything that they answer to. See even police have got their hands tied haven't they." (R2/FG1)*

*"They've got to prove a lot more police before they can make an arrest or do anything." (NR2/FG1)*

Some felt the restrictions meant ASB perpetrators were protected by the law, opposed to the law protecting the victim:

*"The kids have got more law on their side, in the law in respect to police than the community itself. So we don't have anywhere where we can actually do anything." (NR1/FG2/P4)*

The perceived consequences of committing ASB, including the punishments handed down and the impact this has on perceived levels of ASB will be explored in section 4.12. The reasons given for these perceived restrictions varied, as shown above. Various authorities were mentioned but most of the restrictions related to the police. Some felt this resulted in all the authorities not even trying to tackle ASB and/or not taking any notice of it. This view was not universal though, as a number of participants felt the authorities tried hard despite the restrictions they faced:

*"They certainly care about us, yeah. And they'd like to do more but they just can't." (R2/FG2)*

Some felt that the authorities tried to deal with the problems, but could not deliver due to volume of problems being faced:

*"I think it's because it's on such an increase. I think, I mean they can't deal with every person that's, every teenager that's being anti-social. Else they'd be chasing them round 24/7. It's getting out of hand." (R2/FG2)*

Although a number of participants felt the response of the authorities was dependent upon which individual was dealing with the incident:

*"I mean you'll get some that can't be bothered with kids and some that can. Some that want to go by the book as far as being a policeman is concerned and some that are quite happy to go outside it." (R1/FG1)*

*"Yes, it depends who you drop on." (NR1/FG2)*

There was also a view that some individual officers did not take on cases, as they did not want to bother with the paperwork. Approaching the subject from a slightly different angle, there was a feeling in R1 and NR1 that unless someone lived in the area, they would not be able to grasp the extent of the problems:

*"Unless you live in an area like this and you look at what's going off you have no idea. You can listen to people like me and [X] and [X] saying we think it's this and we think it's that and we think it's something else. You need to be in the area, watching what's going on and living in that area to know." (R1/FG1)*

There was a similar feeling towards central government:

*"Technically, who's letting us down really do you think? Do you think it's the government? Cos they sit in their suits making all these big wig ideas. They read a piece of paper that somebody's filled in, knowing full well half of that's not even true cos them people who are filling these forms in aren't living in these streets." (R2/FG1)*

It was apparent the participants felt detached from the authorities and did not believe they understood their situation. The participants also perceived a number of additional problems with the authorities in their local areas. There was the view that certain authorities did not enforce policies or utilise the full extent of their powers, this was particularly aimed at ALMOs and local authorities. Communication between the authorities was considered lacking as was a police presence, particularly in areas R1 and NR1.

When asked whether the authorities met their expectations, the majority of participants in R1, R2 and NR1 felt they did not. This was on both a personal scale:

*"Well they say they're going out to do something and it doesn't happen." (R2/FG3)*

And a neighbourhood scale:

*"Because a lot of people will say we're doing ten of this, six of this and five of those in the next two years. And two years later you come back and they've only done one of that and they haven't quite got round to that yet. And as for that one, we haven't started, you know. So telling people that you're going to do something is ok, if you're going to do it. But nine out of ten times it doesn't happen that way." (R1/FG1)*

This suggests that some participants had a negative impression of the authorities and did not trust them to deliver the services they expected.

Overall, there were a large number of factors mentioned in relation to whether the authorities did enough to tackle ASB, which were mainly negative. It is likely that more than one of the aforementioned factors contributed to the overall views participants' held, but it is impossible to determine which ones had the greatest impact on shaping perceptions. The crucial factor is that the alleged faults of the authorities in tackling ASB appeared to impact on the perceived levels of ASB. Subsequently, inaction (perceived or real) by the authorities fuelled the perception that ASB was being left unsanctioned and ever-present in the communities studied. The following quotation highlights this suggestion:

*"It's caused me a lot of problems and I get so frustrated with what's happening and no one can help me, you know. How am I supposed to get to sleep? What am I supposed to do?" (R1/FG3)*

If perceived problems are not considered to be resolved, they will remain an issue and fuel perception levels, with a salient example provided in NR1. Ward NR1(a) was discussed earlier in relation to the dynamic process of perception formulation and how perceptions had begun to positively change in the area. This positive shift was also evident in relation to the actions of the authorities, in particular the changes brought about by two Street Wardens, for example:

*"Since the wardens took off this estate has improved hell of a lot. . . You see, [the warden] she lives on this estate anyway. She knows most of it and she don't mess about with it. She tells them straight." (NR1/FG3)*

This view was shared by both the focus groups conducted in this Ward. The Wardens were credited with establishing a youth club, fishing club, gardening club and a Junior Wardens scheme, with one participant stating:

*"I think it'd be bedlam without them." (NR1/FG3)*

Two points raised earlier are also pertinent here. Firstly, the Wardens mentioned in the above quotations lived in the Ward, which some of the participants claimed was necessary to understand the problems faced by the community. Secondly, this may serve to reinforce the notion that the service you receive is dependent upon the individual officer dealing with

the problems. This is particularly relevant when considering the experiences of the second Ward studied in NR1, NR1(b).

The participants in the focus group conducted in NR1(b) had a vastly different experience of the local authorities in comparison to NR1(a), despite living in the same area and receiving the same local authority provision. The criticisms were mainly aimed at the local authority and it was suggested it was difficult to get them engaged with local problems:

*“One of the things that I find frustrating is the fact that the council will not get involved until you actually do start spitting your dummy out.” (NR1/FG2)*

There was a feeling they were being overlooked:

*“But the thing is, when you’ve got paid officers from the local authority that know this is going on and they just ignore your pleas for help, it’s diabolical.” (NR1/FG2)*

*“They just drag their heels don’t they and think it’ll go away but it don’t go away. It gets worse.” (NR1/FG2)*

There was also a frustration that they were unable to prompt any action, despite being members of a recognised local group:

*“Being a volunteer it’s hard. It’s hard to challenge a paid worker.” (NR1/FG2)*

This appeared to create resentment, as the volunteer was spending money on phone calls and connecting to the internet to report ASB, only to be ignored by somebody that was being paid to respond. This could be an example of an individual not being very good at their job, as mentioned above. Nevertheless, this impacted on the perception of local ASB problems for this group. In addition, this group were sceptical of the police, believing that they were manipulating the crime rate in order to portray a reduction in crime. Additionally, in contrast to NR1(a), NR1(b) did not have Street Wardens operating in their Ward.

The above example from NR1 reinforces the notion that perceptions of the authorities may impact on the perceptions of ASB problems. It also reaffirms earlier findings that suggest that perception levels vary greatly according to the individual and the community they live in. Furthermore it demonstrates that local service provision can vary when living in different communities in the same local authority area.

#### **4.9 Being Kept Informed about ASB**

Participants were also asked if they were kept informed by the authorities about what was being done to tackle ASB locally. Across all areas, most participants felt they were not kept informed, which reflected the public questionnaire results from phase one. Although some participants in NR1 and NR2 thought they were informed through receiving local authority newsletters and leaflets. Most participants felt being kept informed would help to rationalise their perceptions of ASB.

Some perceptions of ASB were informed in an official way, with participants from R1 and NR2 attending neighbourhood meetings facilitated by the local authority. Participants from NR1 and NR2 were engaged with Neighbourhood Watch. This shows that some participants' perceptions were influenced by information from the authorities, which is likely to be more accurate than that provided through the word of mouth mentioned in section 4.6. This contradicts the general consensus about not being kept informed stated above, which may be resolved by the notion that the participants who claimed to be informed were looking for means of obtaining information themselves. This suggests that information about local ASB was provided by the authorities to some extent, but it was only received by those who actively tried to find it. One participant suggested:

*"I'm seeking the information. . . I'm seeking it because I'm wanting to know how to deal with situations. But a lot of people are being bombarded with paper through the door and they'll just pick it up and put it straight in the bin without even reading it. So a lot of information is out there, but it's not reaching the target that it should be reaching. " (R1/FG3)*

Although participants suggested they were kept informed in areas R1 and NR2, this did not appear to have a fundamental impact upon perceptions of ASB, based on the combined perceptions level scores and the extent of ASB problems articulated (sections 4.3 and 4.4 respectively). This contradicts the suggestion of some focus group participants above that being more informed about ASB would improve the perceptions of ASB locally. Therefore does knowing more about what is being done to tackle ASB, fuel perceptions of high levels of ASB? The approach the authorities took towards communicating with the public is outlined in Chapter Five.

#### **4.10 Reporting Incidents of ASB to the Authorities**

This section considers whether the experience of reporting ASB has any impact on perceived levels of ASB. It attempts to explore the opinions of those dealing first-hand with

the authorities by reporting ASB. The public questionnaire in phase one provided limited data on this topic, but found that most people reported incidents of ASB to the police.

In all areas apart from NR2, the main response was that participants had reported ASB but received no response from the authorities. The police and the local authority were most frequently mentioned. The following quotations typify the responses:

*"I phoned them [neighbourhood policing teams] about seven times on different things, like them smashing bus stop or owt like that, never come out and they never got back to you." (NR1/FG3)*

*"How many times did we go down the council? I mean I went every day for a week. . . Well eventually they wouldn't let me speak to anybody because they got sick of me face!" (NR1/FG2)*

Participants said this resulted in feelings of frustration, anger and even despair:

*"Eventually I just went to pieces. I cried, basically." (NR1/FG2)*

In addition to the emotions it provoked, the lack of response was also deemed accountable for ASB problems continuing, for example:

*"They know after a certain time that nobody's gonna come out and make them stop the music so they play it all night long because there's nothing you can do about it." (R1/FG3)*

This demonstrates how the failure of the authorities to respond to ASB may impact on perceived levels of ASB, as the ASB in question was not being tackled.

However, not all experiences of reporting ASB were inadequate. Although most participants' experiences were substandard, there was one example given in each of the areas R1, R2 and NR1, where respondents had received a good service from the police. Although the aforementioned example from R2 also stressed that despite responding to the incident, the authorities had not followed up the complaint and provided feedback as promised. One participant from NR2 reported a good experience with the local authority removing fly-tipping. Although there was the acknowledgement in both R1 and R2 that when the authorities did respond, it often took a long time:

*"7 or 8 days later, a week later - oh I remember that now I'll just pop in there and see. That's the response. Not very good." (R1/FG1)*

The other major issue highlighted in every area was non-reporting. A lot of participants who experienced ASB did not report it to the authorities for various reasons. The most commonly mentioned reason was that it was a waste of time because of a lack of response from the authorities, as highlighted by the following quotations:

*"It's a waste of time complaining so I just don't do it." (NR1/FG2)*

*"I don't because they don't respond to you. They don't come out mostly. Just a waste of time." (R2/FG1)*

Furthermore in R1, R2 and NR2, reports were not made because the participants felt it was too late by the time they had made the call, as the incident was over and the perpetrator had dispersed:

*"But the problem is we see the things happening, but by the time you ring nothing's going to be done about it. It's all gone and done." (R1/FG2)*

Participants in R2 did not report ASB on occasions as they were unable to identify the perpetrators and felt the authorities would not take any action as a result:

*"Because the law won't go and grab 'em. It won't will it, cos we can't identify them cos we don't know who they are cos they don't live in the area." (R2/FG1)*

The fear of repercussions was also a factor that contributed to non-reporting in R2, NR1 and NR2:

*"If you say something like, you might get a brick through your window." (NR1/FG1)*

Some participants claimed this was the result of a lack of anonymity:

*"It's like you saying that this group meeting that we're having is protected, it won't go anywhere, you use pseudonyms when you write and that. That doesn't happen out there when you report to officials." (NR1/FG2)*

Fear of reprisals was the main reason given for not reporting in the phase one questionnaire, although this was not mentioned as prominently in the focus groups. What was apparent from the focus groups however, was that the fear of reprisals resulted in neighbourhood complaints being reported by one or two individuals, for example:

*"It's always the same people that does the complaining. Everybody complains behind closed doors, that's another thing that you find. So there's only certain people that complain whereas if everybody complained it carries more weight doesn't it. They always think, well you know if I say anything you know, they might come and do this to me. They might break in." (NR1/FG2)*

In other circumstances members of the public reported ASB to other members of the public who were not afraid to report incidents and would contact the authorities on their behalf:

*"Because they're frightened of the consequences. They'll ring me and I will report it for them." (NG2/FG1)*

This suggests that although respondents of the phase one questionnaire said they did not report incidents of ASB due to fear of reprisals, their ASB problem may have been reported to the authorities via someone else that was willing to report it. The reason for non-reporting may link to an issue raised earlier, about the authorities not understanding problems because they do not live in the area. It appears that some people would rather tell somebody local who will report on their behalf, than go directly to the authorities.

A number of additional issues related to reporting ASB, which reflected local experiences were found in areas R1, R2 and NR1. In R1, the participants suggested that their reports received an inconsistent response, for example:

*"If there's a fight outside this club and the police are called, I don't know where they all come from. Because we seem to get loads of police to come and quell a fight but yet when the kids are misbehaving and the adults are carrying-on you don't see a single one." (R1/FG1)*

There was also the view that when attempting to report ASB, no one was able to help, as the following quotation explains:

*"I rung police up about anti-social behaviour and got told to ring somebody else. I rung somebody else, they couldn't help and told me to ring the police back. They just says, it's not my problem, they couldn't deal with it." (R1/FG3)*

There was also the feeling that people who owned their own property received a contrasting response to those who did not. It was also suggested that the police were more interested in property than people. Some participants were also aggrieved that decisions regarding a response to ASB were made outside the area, when reporting ASB via the police single non-emergency number. This is another example of the desire for greater local understanding and involvement.

A different set of issues were apparent in R2. In one instance, a participant had to involve the local councillor in order to illicit any action from the ALMO. There were similar criticisms of the police being detached from the local area, as on one occasion officers from a nearby town responded to a local neighbourhood problem. It was also intimated that the quality of response by the authorities to ASB reports had deteriorated over time.

In NR1 the main issues with reporting ASB came from Ward NR1(b), where participants felt the authorities were not doing enough to tackle ASB, as outlined in section 4.8. Participants from this Ward also encountered difficulties when reporting ASB, particularly in relation to one multi-agency frontline officer responsible for their neighbourhood. A number of participants reported that their phone calls went unanswered, for example:

*"I made sixteen phone calls regarding a neighbour problem, noisy neighbours and he never answered one call. And I've said loads of times, I think when you're in distress and all this is happening, if you think somebody's on your side, you feel as if something's getting done. But if nobody answers your phone calls you're just, you're just left." (NR1/FG2)*

As a consequence of their lack of response, this officer was referred to by participants from the Ward as the 'cardboard cut out' because they felt this represented the officer's impact. This problem echoes an issue highlighted in section 4.8, which suggested that the level of service received depended on the individual officer involved.

One issue raised by both Wards from NR1 related to the multi-agency reporting mechanism unique to NR1. In brief, a local telephone number was assigned to each locality area (two or three Wards) where all ASB should be reported. It operated on an automated basis, with members of the public required to state their problem and leave their contact details, for someone from the authorities to get back to them with a response. A commonly raised problem was that some participants did not receive a response after leaving a message. There was also dissatisfaction with the cost of the calls from mobile phones, as pensioners could not afford to make repeated calls. The other main criticism was in relation to the automated nature of the service. For example:

*"I hate ringing it because you've got a minute/minute and half of a recorded message before you can actually put your message on." (NR1/FG2)*

There were also concerns that the elderly could not cope with leaving a message and that when you have a problem you want to speak to somebody in person. Despite the criticisms, the public did know where to direct their ASB reports.

Overall, the difficulties reported between the areas varied greatly and appeared to reflect the individual circumstances of the area and the problems being experienced. It would be spurious to suggest the amount of impact the experiences of reporting has on perceptions of ASB, but it contributes towards a growing picture of what it is like to experience ASB. It may be the case that negative experiences of reporting ASB do not necessarily fuel perceptions, but the inaction of the authorities does not reduce perception levels. Therefore perceived levels of ASB may simply be maintained.

#### **4.11 The Impact of the Media**

The results from the phase one questionnaire did not provide any details about the media's impact on perceived levels of ASB, as the complexities of this relationship were more suitable to the qualitative paradigm. It was common across all areas that media reports of crime and/or ASB generated an element of fear amongst the participants. For example:

*"The levels of violence that you read in the paper don't end in the paper, people keep them in their mind. And I think it's always there should you go out. You know, it's there at the back of your mind, that you're conscious of you mustn't do anything to encourage someone to attack you." (R1/FG1)*

When discussing how they felt the media generated fear, the participants often merged ASB and crime incidents, as the above quotation's reference to violent crime demonstrates. This is a further example of the blurring of boundaries between crime and ASB when considering the formulation of perceptions of ASB.

Groups in R1, R2 and NR1 all spoke in detail about specific high-profile cases of ASB recently reported in the media and the affect this had on them personally. In R1, the case of Simon Ash being beaten to death in Hull in April 2009 was recalled. Ash was chased by two teenagers and beaten to death in an unprovoked attack. The impact this had upon the participants of the group in R1 is highlighted by the following quotation:

*"You see it on the news and that, that these gangs of kids. There was not so long ago was it in Hull they chased that guy and beat him to death. You see that on the news and you don't want to go out when you know there's kids hanging around."*

*You're just terrified. Some of them might be nice kids but you don't know that and you're just too scared to go out and leave your house." (R1/FG3)*

When probed further about the impact of this case and whether it affected their feelings of safety in their own neighbourhood, despite the incident taking place hundreds of miles away, the same participant responded:

*"It does because they're bawling, you can hear them, they shout, they give you abuse. You just don't want to risk going out." (R1/FG3)*

Similar feelings were also reported in R2 and NR1, with specific reference to what has come to be referred to as the Pilkington Case. This case was reported by the media in September 2009 as a result of the inquest into the death of Fiona Pilkington in Leicestershire. She took her own life and that of her disabled daughter's as a result of the ASB she had suffered over a number of years. Groups in both of the aforementioned areas spoke in great detail about the case after reading details in the press and seeing the story broadcast on the television news. Participants recalled facts about the incident as well as saying how 'terrible' and 'disgraceful' it was. When asked if this event affected how they felt in their neighbourhood (also hundreds of miles away from the incident), all participants were united in their opinion that it did. The following quotations highlight their feelings:

*"I think what you've got to realise is when you hear about these things you think, oh that could happen here. . . So you accept that as being something what could happen to you." (R2/FG3)*

*"Well you see, you do see cases like that on estate where people get picked on." (NR1/FG3)*

The responses from these areas suggest that media reports of high profile ASB incidents, coupled with the perception that ASB is occurring locally can influence perceptions of ASB and feelings of safety.

In addition to high profile stories having an impact on perceptions, there was also a mixed response to the occurrence of good news stories in the media. Some participants were reassured by the presence of good news stories because they reflected the authorities were doing something to tackle ASB and acted as a deterrent. Others felt unmoved by such stories stating:

*“Do you feel better because somebody’s been caught [for murder] and he’s going to go to jail for ten years and if he’s really good he’ll do five and come home again, you know? Is that good news? . . . The man’s still dead isn’t he.” (R1/FG1)*

This quotation demonstrates that good news stories do not have a universal impact on perceptions and also further illustrates the blurring of boundaries between ASB and crime.

The two Non-Respect areas demonstrated a more sceptical approach to the media than the Respect areas. In NR1, some participants felt that the media was to blame for heightening the public’s perception of ASB. One participant suggested:

*“Turn your television off for a week, turn your television off and your radio, don’t buy a newspaper for a full week and have a walk round where you live and then come back to me and say that you’ve got a problem in your area.” (NR1/FG1)*

The individual received agreement from many of the other focus group participants. A similar approach was evident in NR2, although their comments were directed more towards their personal experiences of the local newspaper. Despite being part of a community group working to improve an area of one of the hard-pressed Wards, their efforts had recently received criticism from the local newspaper through a misrepresentative story. The group felt this was unfair and contributed towards un-doing some of their work and negatively influenced other members of the public’s perceptions about that area. In addition, they had the impression that the local newspaper was biased against the local council and the police. When probed about this further, they felt the public believed what was written by the newspaper.

#### **4.12 The Perception of ASB Sanctions**

An additional theme, not covered by the phase one public questionnaire, emerged during the focus group discussions. It appeared that perceptions of ASB were influenced by the manner in which ASB perpetrators were reprimanded. There was a strong perception across all four areas that ASBOs did not work. Participants felt they were regarded as a medal by young people, a waste of time and a way of dodging the underlying causes of bad behaviour. However, the biggest impact of the perceived failure of ASBOs related to them being breached, as the following quotation highlights:

*“We got the first anti-social behaviour orders up there and they didn’t work at all. . . Once one of them broke their order and realised that nothing happened they all started misbehaving and I’ve got to say it’s escalated until some of those young*

*people have been involved in somebody losing their life and they're still back out again and still beating people up . . . They've almost become untouchables have these young people.” (R2/FG1)*

It was apparent that after the ASBO had been breached there was no follow-up from the authorities to sanction the behaviour. In turn, this impacted upon the perceived level of ASB in the area, as the number of incidents of ASB was not curtailed. Therefore a perceived lack of consequences or punishment for committing ASB appeared to affect the level of ASB incidents and consequently affected the public's perception of high levels of ASB.

This phenomenon was not restricted to ASBOs alone. In the four areas, participants recalled how ASB had not been constrained, due to a perceived lack of continuous sanctions by the authorities. For example:

*“The restrictions or the time restrictions or the place restrictions, you can't have every child under a strict restriction with it's own policeman to look after him you can't. The manpower's just not there. The intentions are good but the follow up, I kind of think it's short on the follow up.” (R1/FG3)*

There was also the impression that the sanctions worked for a short period of time before the behaviour started again, without any reinforcement or continuation of the punishment originally handed down. This opinion was accompanied by the view across all the areas that in many cases, perpetrators of ASB were 'let-off' or received sanctions that were too lenient. For example:

*“They get told ‘don't do it again’ and they're off!” (NR1/FG3)*

When probed further about the relationship between their perceptions of the consequences of ASB and the ASB they perceived to be occurring locally, there was a general consensus among all participants that in most cases the sanctions enacted did not curtail incidents of ASB. In turn, this affected the amount of ASB they perceived to be occurring in their local area. There was also the tendency for participants to refer to incidents of both ASB and crime when articulating their feelings. This reflects other themes including the definition of ASB, concern about ASB and the impact of the media, discussed in sections 4.2, 4.7 and 4.11 respectively.

Some additional factors were mentioned that related to this issue. In both Non-Respect areas, there was the feeling that young people who perpetrated ASB were dealt with differently in comparison to adults, as the following quotations explains:

*“If I break the law, it comes on me. If I slap a kid in the street for doing something wrong, the law comes on my back, the full force of the law, I’m wrong. It’s an assault charge. But a kid . . . they just put it down as a misdemeanour, it’s a behaviour problem or they’ve got family problems and all this kind of thing. And it’s swept under the carpet, they don’t want to do anything about it. But it doesn’t stop that kid from doing it again.” (NR1/FG2)*

It was considered that a lack of punishment contributed to the amount of ASB committed by young people, which affected the perceived levels of ASB of the focus group participants.

#### **4.13 Designated Respect Status**

Participants in the two designated Respect areas were asked about their local area’s Respect status. The vast majority of participants were not aware they lived in a designated Respect area. When informed that they did live in a Respect area, some participants reacted with disbelief. Only one focus group participant out of the two Respect areas was aware that they lived in a Respect area, but responded with an element of distain as the following quotation shows:

*“Well they say that, yeah [laughs]. I’ve heard it said before but I don’t know what it, where it works.” (R1/FG1)*

The same participant felt it made no difference at all to their local area.

Throughout the analysis of the focus group transcripts, attention was paid to any emerging differences in perceptions between the Respect and Non-Respect areas. Differences in the factors that affected perceptions of ASB were not apparent in all themes and in the themes where there were variations these were too inconsequential to report here.

Respect and Non-Respect areas were initially selected as a means of differentiating findings between areas. However unlike phase one, this classification was particularly irrelevant in phase two of the study as there were so few differences between the areas examined.

#### **4.14 Conclusions**

A number of themes emerged from the focus groups that provided new insight into the factors that influence public perceptions of ASB. Some of these factors expanded the initial

findings from the phase one questionnaire and some new factors emerged through the process of the focus group discussions.

Overall these findings were characterised by variation and subjectivity. This variation occurred in relation to perception levels and the formulation of perceptions. Differences were apparent within focus groups, between focus groups in the same area and between the different areas. This diversity emerged despite attempting to control the range of participants involved by targeting hard-pressed ACORN dominant Wards as well as designated Respect and Non-Respect areas. A full summary of the findings can be seen in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8 Summary of Phase Two Key Findings

| <b>FACTORS INFLUENCING PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR</b> |  |
|--|--|
| <b>THEME</b>   | <b>MAIN FINDINGS</b>   |
| <b>The Definition of ASB</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No single definition of ASB given.</li> <li>• Most definitions focused on two general themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Young people causing problems</li> <li>◦ General nuisance behaviour</li> </ul> </li> <li>• ASB confused with crime.</li> <li>• Distinction made between 'normal' people and the perpetrators of ASB.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>The Combined Perceptions Measure</b>                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quantifiable perception levels varied greatly within focus groups.</li> <li>• The average perceptions score per group was similar for all areas.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>The Perception of Local ASB Problems</b>                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceived levels of ASB varied greatly between participants.</li> <li>• Perceived levels of ASB varied within focus groups, between focus groups and between areas.</li> <li>• The formulation of perceptions appeared a dynamic process, subject to changing levels of local ASB.</li> <li>• Perceptions were positively affected by the introduction of Street Wardens in one Ward, although most held negative views about the level of ASB locally.</li> <li>• Displacement of behaviour from 'worse' areas affected the level of ASB experienced.</li> <li>• Perceived levels of local ASB were put into the context of what other areas are perceived to experience.</li> </ul> |
| <b>The Nature of ASB Experienced</b>                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 52 different types of ASB were experienced by focus group participants.</li> <li>• Different types of ASB were experienced in each Ward, between Wards and between areas.</li> <li>• Common types of ASB experienced were not the same for each area.</li> <li>• The types of ASB experienced were markedly different to the 7SI behaviours.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Factors that Informed Perceptions of ASB</b>                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeing ASB taking place was the most frequently cited factor that informed perceptions.</li> <li>• Hearing about ASB through word of mouth and through personal experience was also common.</li> <li>• Most participants' perceptions were informed by a combination of factors.</li> <li>• Some key community figure's perceptions influenced by receiving the reports of others.</li> </ul>   |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Concern About ASB</b>                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus group participants were universally concerned about ASB in their local area, but this was often subjective.</li> <li>• Different types of concern were evident, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Fear restricted some participants leaving the house</li> <li>○ Some participants stopped leaving the house at certain times e.g. at night</li> <li>○ Others participants were more afraid while in their homes</li> <li>○ Some expressed their concern for other members of the community</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The level of concern experienced varied between individuals and was represented by levels of concern: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ constantly rising</li> <li>○ staying constantly high</li> <li>○ changing dependent upon the ASB being experienced</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Concern was provoked by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Local incidents of ASB</li> <li>○ Unknown reasons</li> </ul> </li> <li>• A minority of participants were not concerned about ASB</li> </ul> |
| <b>Public Perceptions of the Authorities Tackling ASB</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work of the authorities perceived to be restricted by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Red tape</li> <li>○ Paperwork</li> <li>○ The volume of problems faced</li> <li>○ The quality of individual officers</li> </ul> </li> <li>• There was a feeling of being detached from the authorities and that they did not understand their situation.</li> <li>• Some participants felt the authorities did not enforce their own policies to tackle ASB.</li> <li>• The authorities did not meet the expectations of the public (R1, R2 and NR1).</li> <li>• Perceived inaction of the authorities fuelled and/or maintained local perceptions of ASB.</li> <li>• Participants felt only people who lived in the area could really understand the extent of local problems.</li> <li>• Perceived poor communication between the authorities.</li> <li>• Vastly different experience of the authorities between Wards (NR1).</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Being Kept Informed About ASB</b>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most participants did not feel they were kept informed about what was being done to tackle ASB, although they would like to be.</li> <li>• Although, those who were kept informed still perceived there to be a large extent of ASB problems locally.</li> <li>• Some participants attended meetings to find out about local ASB.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Reporting Incidents of ASB to the Authorities</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ASB reported but no response received from the authorities (R1, R2 and NR1).</li> <li>• A minority of participants felt they received a good service from the authorities.</li> <li>• Many of those who experienced ASB did not report it for the following reasons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Most commonly, it was considered a waste of time</li> <li>○ Fear of reprisals</li> <li>○ The time taken to get a response</li> <li>○ Incident over so quickly, too late to call</li> <li>○ Unable to identify perpetrators</li> <li>○ Concerns about anonymity</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Fearful residents reported ASB incidents to key community figures to report on their behalf.</li> <li>• It took a long time for the authorities to respond.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>The Impact of the Media</b>                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media reports of ASB incidents generated concern about local ASB.</li> <li>• When referring to the media, participants often merged ASB with crime.</li> <li>• Specific non-local high profile cases of ASB recalled (R1, R2, NR1), which</li> </ul>   |

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>impacted on how participants felt about their local area.</li> <li>Good news stories about successful cases did not have a universally positive impact.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>The Perception of ASB Sanctions</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There was a perceived lack of sanctions given to ASB perpetrators that fuelled perceptions of local ASB. It was considered that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ASBOs did not work</li> <li>Punishment for ASB not followed-up, reinforced or continued</li> <li>Perpetrators often escaped sanction or were 'let-off'</li> <li>Young people were perceived to be dealt with differently by the authorities in comparison to adults</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| <b>Designated Respect Status</b>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The vast majority of participants in Respect areas did not know about their area's designated Respect status.</li> <li>No major differences between the participants of Respect and Non-Respects areas were uncovered through this analysis.</li> </ul>  |

Public perceptions of ASB appeared to be influenced by the public's own definition of ASB and perceived levels of local ASB problems appeared subjective and susceptible to change. This dynamic process of perception formulation and the ability of perceptions to fluctuate were influenced by the nature of ASB incidents being experienced locally. Seeing ASB taking place was a key factor influencing perceptions, but hearing stories about ASB through word of mouth and from the authorities also made an impact. Taken together, these experiential factors can be considered as the primary drivers of public perceptions of ASB, particularly as their influence was articulated by the participants.

In addition to these articulated primary drivers of perceptions, the qualitative enquiry facilitated the understanding of a number of additional drivers of perceptions, which can be considered secondary drivers of perceptions. These secondary drivers represented additional contributory factors that appeared to influence perceptions of ASB, but in a more indirect manner. For example, perceived levels of ASB were closely linked to levels concern about ASB, which in turn was influenced by the action taken by the authorities. Perceived inaction by the authorities served to fuel and/or maintain perceptions of ASB, as the incidents of ASB were not being dealt with. The influence of the media also contributed to perceptions of ASB, with high profile reports often influencing local feelings about ASB. The perceived consequences for ASB perpetrators contributed to the formulation of perceptions as many felt ASB remained unpunished, leaving them free to commit more ASB. Table 4.9 categorises the primary and secondary factors considered to drive public perceptions of ASB.

Table 4.9 Primary and Secondary Drivers of Public Perceptions of ASB

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Primary Drivers of Perceptions</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experiences of others</li> <li>• Personal experience</li> <li>• Seeing ASB</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Secondary Drivers of Perceptions</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing levels of ASB experienced</li> <li>• Changing levels of concern about ASB</li> <li>• Concern about ASB</li> <li>• High profile media cases</li> <li>• Impact of 'others' from outside neighbourhood</li> <li>• Interventions</li> <li>• Location of ASB</li> <li>• Nature of ASB</li> <li>• Perceived displacement of ASB</li> <li>• Perceived lack of protection from authorities</li> <li>• Perception that authorities' 'hands are tied'</li> <li>• Response of authorities</li> <li>• Unsanctioned ASB</li> <li>• Whether ASB reported</li> </ul> |

All of the drivers mentioned above took place within the contexts of: location, the definition of ASB, individual subjectivity and tolerance. The findings suggest that many factors appear to be inter-linked making it impossible to determine which of the primary or secondary factors had the most influence on perceptions as a result of individual circumstances. Table 4.10 (see next page) demonstrates the interconnectivity of secondary drivers of perceptions. The shaded cells represent a relationship between the two factors.

The findings presented in Chapters Three and Four reflected public perceptions of ASB and explored some of the factors that influence these perceptions. Chapter Five provides a practitioners perspective and investigates how public perceptions of ASB are addressed by the authorities.

Table 4.10 Interconnectedness of Factors Affecting Public Perceptions of ASB

|  | ASB in the media | ASB interventions | ASB left unsanctioned | Authorities' hands are tied | Changing levels of ASB | Changing levels of worry | Impact of 'others' | Location ASB observed | Nature of ASB experienced | Perceived ASB displacement | Perceived lack of authority protection | Response of authorities to ASB | Whether ASB reported | Worrying about ASB |
|--|------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|--|--------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| ASB in the media                       |                  |                   |                       |                             |                        |                          |                    |                       |                           |                            |  |                                |                      |                    |
| ASB interventions                      |                  |                   |                       |                             |                        |                          |                    |                       |                           |                            |  |                                |                      |                    |
| ASB left unsanctioned                  |                  |                   |                       |                             |                        |                          |                    |                       |                           |                            |  |                                |                      |                    |
| Authorities' hands are tied            |                  |                   |                       |                             |                        |                          |                    |                       |                           |                            |  |                                |                      |                    |
| Changing levels of ASB                 |                  |                   |                       |                             |                        |                          |                    |                       |                           |                            |  |                                |                      |                    |
| Changing levels of worry               |                  |                   |                       |                             |                        |                          |                    |                       |                           |                            |  |                                |                      |                    |
| Impact of 'others'                     |                  |                   |                       |                             |                        |                          |                    |                       |                           |                            |  |                                |                      |                    |
| Location ASB observed                  |                  |                   |                       |                             |                        |                          |                    |                       |                           |                            |  |                                |                      |                    |
| Nature of ASB experienced              |                  |                   |                       |                             |                        |                          |                    |                       |                           |                            |  |                                |                      |                    |
| Perceived ASB displacement             |                  |                   |                       |                             |                        |                          |                    |                       |                           |                            |  |                                |                      |                    |
| Perceived lack of authority protection |                  |                   |                       |                             |                        |                          |                    |                       |                           |                            |  |                                |                      |                    |
| Response of authorities to ASB         |                  |                   |                       |                             |                        |                          |                    |                       |                           |                            |  |                                |                      |                    |
| Whether ASB reported                   |                  |                   |                       |                             |                        |                          |                    |                       |                           |                            |  |                                |                      |                    |
| Worrying about ASB                     |                  |                   |                       |                             |                        |                          |                    |                       |                           |                            |  |                                |                      |                    |

## **Chapter Five: Phase Three Results**

### **How Practitioners Address Public Perceptions of ASB**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter reports the findings from the third phase of this study. The findings presented here fulfil research question three, the aim of which was to investigate how ASB practitioners address public perceptions of ASB in a local context. The emphasis was on seeking out what campaigns and/or interventions were used to reduce perceived high levels of ASB. It was also relevant to uncover any difficulties the practitioners faced when delivering these campaigns and how this could potentially impact on public perceptions of ASB.

In total, fifteen semi-structured face to face interviews were conducted with sixteen ASB practitioners. A copy of the interview schedule can be found in Appendix 1m. Interviews were conducted in the same four areas selected in phases one and two of this study. In contrast to the earlier phases, where the research concentrated on hard-pressed dominant ACORN Wards, this part of the research focused on practitioners who were responsible for reducing ASB across a larger geographical area. Some practitioners were accountable for the entire area, whereas others were responsible for the locality (two or three Wards) containing the hard-pressed dominant Ward(s) researched in phases one and two. Of the sixteen interviewees, five were responsible for the whole local authority area, with the remaining eleven responsible for individual localities.

In addition to looking at the four areas individually, similarities and differences in their practice were compared. Links were also made between Respect and Non-Respect areas, where applicable, in order to provide results consistent with those reported in Chapters Three and Four. The topic of Respect was particularly important to this phase of research because Respect status was originally designated to those areas deemed to have a strong track-record in dealing with ASB, providing them with additional resources. It was anticipated that comparing the practices of Respect and Non-Respect areas would provide an interesting insight into the different levels of resources available to tackle the reduction of public perceptions and ASB overall. It should be noted that although this Chapter presents some analysis of Respect versus Non-Respect, this exploration was not an evaluation of Respect status, but merely a basis for comparison within a policy-relevant context.

A further dimension considered in the analysis was the agency for which the practitioners worked, with those participating in this study being employed by the local authority, police and housing ALMO. As ASB reduction is an example of multi-agency working, it was important to discover whether the priorities of each agency aligned or competed with one another and whether this had an impact on the way public perceptions of ASB were addressed. Table 5.1 provides details of the different practitioners interviewed in each area and their organisation.

Table 5.1 Types of ASB Practitioner Interviewed in Each Area

| <b>Area</b>        | <b>Practitioner Type</b>           | <b>Organisation</b> |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Respect Area 1     | Frontline ASB Officer              | Local Authority     |
|                    | Frontline ASB Officer              | Police              |
|                    | Police Inspector                   | Police              |
| Respect Area 2     | Strategic ASB Practitioner         | Local Authority     |
|                    | Frontline ASB Officer              | Local Authority     |
|                    | Police Inspector                   | Police              |
|                    | Housing Enforcement Officer        | ALMO                |
| Non-Respect Area 1 | Strategic ASB Practitioner         | Local Authority     |
|                    | Frontline ASB Officer              | Local Authority     |
|                    | Police Inspector                   | Police              |
|                    | Housing Enforcement Officer        | ALMO                |
| Non-Respect Area 2 | Strategic ASB Practitioner         | Local Authority     |
|                    | 2 x Frontline ASB Officers Housing | Local Authority     |
|                    | Police Inspector                   | Police              |
|                    | Housing Enforcement Officer        | ALMO                |

A thematic analysis was conducted on the interview transcripts, which produced findings that could be grouped into three different categories. Consequently, this chapter is split into three sections which are as follows:

- Section A details factors that directly impact on the reduction of public perceptions of ASB including: the combined perceptions measure, measuring perceptions locally, tackling public perceptions, communicating with the public, issues with communicating with the public, the priority of reducing public perceptions and the combination of reported ASB incidents with perception levels.

- Section B summarises a number of indirect factors which influence the way public perceptions of ASB are addressed. These factors include: problems experienced by practitioners, the definition of ASB, subjectivity and tolerance, reporting incidents of ASB, Respect status, and the Home Office.
- Section C examines factors that practitioners considered to affect public perceptions of ASB that are beyond their control, such as: the courts system, public expectations of the authorities, and the media.

Within each section a number of emergent themes are discussed. Under each theme a number of key findings are presented. When considering the impact designated Respect status had on addressing public perceptions of ASB, few differences between the two categories were uncovered. Variation in practices and/or opinions was evident in relation to: how public perceptions were tackled, the use of actual ASB incident data alongside perception data and in relation to the courts system. These findings are presented within the theme they relate to and will be highlighted accordingly.

Throughout the rest of this chapter the four areas will be referred to as: R1 R2, NR1 and NR2 as was conducted throughout Chapters Three and Four.

## Phase Three Results - Section A

### Factors Directly Associated with Addressing Public Perceptions of ASB

#### 5.2 Section A Introduction

Some of the work conducted by ASB practitioners was directly related to reducing perceived high levels of ASB. Section A examines these practices in relation to: the combined perceptions measure, measuring perceptions locally, tackling public perceptions, communicating with the public, issues with communicating with the public, the priority of reducing public perceptions and the combination of reported incidents of ASB with perception levels.

#### 5.3 The Combined Perceptions Measure

The combined perceptions measure is the statutory measurement generated by the Place Survey that determines the level of ASB in local authority areas. It is represented as the proportion of residents perceiving high levels of ASB. When questioned about its use, all practitioners were dissatisfied with its application. A commonly cited reason for this dissatisfaction was the difference in tolerance levels demonstrated between neighbourhoods. For this reason it was felt that perceptions could not be effectively quantified. Issues of tolerance and subjectivity will be expanded upon in Section B.

In addition, further problems with the measure were highlighted in the four areas. In R1 there were concerns about the perceptions of residents who do not speak English and how their perceptions and experiences of ASB could go unmeasured. In R2, criticism of the combined perception measure was harsher. For example:

*“I’m not 100% convinced that questionnaires are an accurate perception of what the public think about anti-social behaviour.” (R2 Strategic ASB Practitioner)*

In this area, the extent of ASB was determined by the number of reported incidents in a particular area. This demonstrates that alternatives to the combined perceptions measure were used to quantify local ASB problems. Police and ALMO practitioners were also keen to stress how the combined perceptions measure does not provide the most accurate representation of ASB:

*“They should be asking us and people that we’ve dealt with or people on particular estates that we identify. I think you’re going to get a better gauge than personally, on the perception of anti-social behaviour.” (R2 Housing Enforcement Officer)*

This sentiment was echoed in NR1:

*“I would much rather rely on demand stats and the things that are telling us well, where are the trends, where are the problems and how we’re addressing those problems.” (NR1 Strategic ASB Practitioner)*

Some participants were in favour of using the combined perceptions measure as a starting point that could be used in conjunction with ASB reports. Concerns were also raised about the types of people that complete the statutory surveys, suggesting that the combined perceptions measure may not be representative of the whole community:

*“I get home, I’ve got three kids to see to, you know, teas everything else. You know, unless it was something really really important to me or I thought it was something that was gonna make a difference somewhere or it was going to count for something, you know, I don’t really know who the people are that do complete some of the surveys.” (NR1 Housing Enforcement Officer)*

A further crucial issue raised in NR1, highlighted instances where the public were found to perceive high levels of ASB when the number of actual incidents was low, suggesting that the combined perceptions measure may not accurately reflect the problems facing a community. From hereon this phenomenon will be referred to as the ‘Perception Paradox’. This divided practitioners’ opinions, as some felt this represented how perception levels do not represent the truth, whereas others felt this made perceptions of ASB more important as it impacted upon the public’s quality of life. Some practitioners thought that it mattered that perceptions did not reflect the actual levels of ASB. Others felt that a perception was a perception, whether it reflected reality or not, with that individual still perceiving ASB to be a problem, which needed to be addressed.

In NR2 practitioners highlighted how the Place Survey does not implement a repeated measures design, thus failing to reliably track perceptions over time:

*“You’ll only get, or get a better indicator if you went back to the same people who were living in the same area wouldn’t you. Well the Place Survey doesn’t do that. It could have hit a particular area at one time when two years from now the people could be completely different. It’s like you always start from scratch again.” (NR2 Strategic ASB Practitioner)*

*“It’s always like a random, a random cycle of people so you’re never gonna get a conclusive answer to it and everyone’s perception’s gonna be different.” (NR2 Frontline ASB Officer)*

It was also advocated that unless those who perceive high levels of ASB could be identified, targeted and their perceptions re-evaluated, progress in reducing perceived high levels of ASB would be almost impossible to ascertain. Overall, it was clear that practitioners did not value the combined perceptions measure as a tool for determining levels of ASB in their areas and had begun using alternative measures to assess their local problems.

#### **5.4 Measuring Perceptions Locally**

Practitioners were asked if they regularly measured public perceptions in addition to the Place Survey statistics received biennially. This generated very different results for each area and demonstrated that no uniform, targeted method of collecting public perception data was evident at area or neighbourhood level. Although, it was common for both formal and informal methods of gathering perceptions data to be employed in all areas.

In R1, most perceptions information was gathered informally through conducting enquiries, speaking to local councillors and operating a police contact point where the public could meet with police. A more formal reassurance mapping exercise had also been conducted in one Ward area, which was specifically targeted because it had low levels of police reassurance and satisfaction.

A more extensive programme of perception measurement was evident in R2, where each of the local authority localities was surveyed on a rolling basis. The streets selected to participate within the localities was determined by local intelligence<sup>26</sup>. The importance of informal, local intelligence was keenly stressed:

*“We have briefings and debriefings every day so as a group we’re aware of what’s happening.” (R2 Police Inspector)*

Furthermore, the Police Authority sent out questionnaires that included questions about ASB. This was to collate performance figures relating to confidence and satisfaction levels

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<sup>26</sup> Local intelligence refers to local information obtained by practitioners working in specific localities. It is built up over time by becoming embedded in communities, speaking to the public, receiving incident reports and by multi-agency information sharing about problem areas and/or people.

for the local policing teams. NR1 also obtained public perception data through a Police Authority survey and adopted a more impromptu complaint-based survey strategy, whenever a complaint about anti-social behaviour was received, for example:

*"I can't wait to get up there now. I've had this call from this lady this morning but I will literally go door-knocking and I've asked for them to do a PCSO survey. . . if I want to gauge the fear in the community about a particular address or a particular problem, I'd ask for a PCSO survey to be done and then an update on it say after 8 weeks or after all the enforcement action's been done. . . And literally do the same survey again, revisiting the same people or as many people as you can after your piece of action." (NR1 Housing Enforcement Officer)*

The value of collecting local neighbourhood data was highlighted:

*"It's useful to get some of the data broken down into a bit more detail because it may be that the majority of people are saying that their perception of x y and z in a particular area, are saying: I'm really frightened about this or I'm frightened about that – it's two streets." (NR1 Police Inspector)*

This allowed enforcement action and interventions to be tailored according to an evidence base more locally specific than that provided by the Place Survey. Similar to the police in R2, the police in NR1 were keen to highlight that a lot of their information about public perceptions was obtained on an informal basis through police surgeries and calls from the public.

NR2 also used the formal Police Authority survey, although in the locations where this survey was undertaken it was unclear to what extent these results were used and communicated between the different agencies.

The differences in approach taken by each area demonstrate that perceptions of local ASB remain largely un-quantified, aside from the Place Survey. It was clear that local intelligence was highly valued by all practitioners but sporadic events of detailed data collection appeared to undermine their purported commitment to tackling perceptions. Were there competing priorities in terms of time and financial resources? The priority of public perceptions to ASB practitioners is examined in section 5.8.

## **5.5 Tackling Public Perceptions of ASB**

There was a general acceptance that tackling public perceptions of ASB was difficult, for a number of reasons. Firstly, it relied upon the understanding of the public:

*“Perception can’t be managed effectively. You have to explain to people what the situation is and hope that they’re reasonable. But he wasn’t satisfied. . . it’s a case of there’s only so much in those circumstances that you can do and those circumstances are outside your control. So, you can only explain to people what we can do in what circumstance.” (R2 Frontline ASB Officer)*

Secondly, it was felt that public perception figures were contributed to by members of the public who had never accessed ASB services, therefore service providers had limited opportunities to influence public perceptions through their day to day practice:

*“We probably touch about 15% maybe 20% at most, of our population will actually access one of the services that we’re collectively responsible for, to address issues of anti-social behaviour. . . But they will still have a perception around anti-social behaviour or they will still give an opinion if asked.” (NR1 Strategic ASB Practitioner)*

Finally, it was considered problematical to target the right people:

*“If we invest huge amounts in changing the opinion of that person that gives you high levels of anti-social behaviour because it’s an irritant to them, we may well end up neglecting the people that are genuinely suffering, just to influence this proportion of people that it doesn’t really affect them, but they’ve got an opinion about it.” (NR1 Strategic ASB Practitioner)*

This also poses the question: who are the right people to target? Is it those who display the characteristics of the ‘Perception Paradox’ or is it those who come into contact with frontline services that are experiencing ASB? Should both groups be targeted? These issues will be explored in Chapter Six. Despite these common barriers, all areas made some attempt to address public perceptions of ASB, albeit by different means.

As was outlined at the start of this Chapter, designated Respect status appeared to have little impact on the way public perceptions of ASB were addressed. However, some evidence of a difference in practice was evident in relation to this theme. It was clear that the Respect areas took a different approach to tackling public perceptions of ASB compared to the Non-Respect areas. Targeted perception reduction operations were conducted in R2 locality areas, where agencies such as the police, local authority, DVLA, fire service, environmental services, housing, rangers and drugs interventions workers come together to ‘blitz’ an area. Warrants were executed, streets tidied and known offenders visited. For example:

*“So by just having a five day purge on an area, the public see what’s happening, they see the resources going into their area so hopefully the perceptions of anti-social behaviour are reduced.” (R2 Police Inspector)*

The practitioners were largely in favour of this operation and the benefits it produced:

*“For a few weeks afterwards I’m sure because you’ve removed certain people from that link, things will calm down.” (R2 Housing Enforcement Officer)*

*“I think the feedback that we’ve had from the public has been largely positive. . . . They like to see people on the streets wearing a police jacket and walking about, that’s what they want. And that makes them feel a lot safer, even if they’re safe already. It makes them feel safe and I think that’s one of the key ways you can address perceptions. Just make people visible.” (R2 Frontline ASB Officer)*

However, the limitations of running the multi-agency operations were also acknowledged, particularly in relation to heightening perceptions of ASB. For example:

*“It’s a bit of a double edged sword because if you see people blitzing an area, they tend to think, why? So you do run the risk of making people think that it’s a really bad area.” (R2 Frontline ASB Officer)*

A similar multi-agency campaign, run on a one-day basis, was conducted in R1, where partner agencies went into communities and asked questions about ASB alongside carrying out services for the community, such as fire safety checks.

The Non-Respect areas took a markedly different approach, by opting to tackle perceptions of ASB through publicity, although the means in which the two areas did so varied greatly. In NR1, reducing perceptions and improving confidence levels involved a large-scale publicity campaign. Billboards, newspaper advertisements and posters on the sides of buses were used throughout the local authority to convey messages. A targeted communications strategy was employed to reduce the perceptions of specific members of the community. Community events were also undertaken to engage with local neighbourhoods and improve perceptions. For example:

*“Last Saturday we had an emergency day. Like a fun day where we got the use of a park or green space nearby. We got the fire service to attend with one of their vehicles and crew, we got a police vehicle there.” (NR1 Frontline ASB Officer)*

In addition, high visibility patrols by the police were employed, although the awareness of its potential to heighten concerns about crime and ASB was similar to that of the multi-agency ‘blitz’ operations, as the following quotation explains:

*“When we flooded the streets when we were doing a lot of reassurance work, a lot of visibility work, are you actually making the problem worse in certain locations? And I*

*think you quite probably are, in terms of the perception problem, cos if you're not used to seeing a couple of bobbies walking down your street every day, the automatic feeling is, well there's something wrong here, else I wouldn't be seeing them." (NR1 Strategic ASB Practitioner)*

High visibility policing was also a tactic favoured in NR2:

*"It's high visibility policing and response in areas where the public want to see them at any given time." (NR2 Strategic ASB Practitioner)*

However, their stance on using publicity to reduce perceptions differed vastly to the approach of NR1. Instead, practitioners from NR2 preferred to continually give messages out on a 'little and often' basis, for example:

*"I think the mistake we made quite early on was thinking that the way you reduce perceptions is that you bombard them, you just keep putting out the good news stories in the press." (NR2 Strategic ASB Practitioner)*

Although the commitment to this policy was slightly unclear, because when asked about their strategy to reduce perceived high levels of ASB one Frontline ASB Officer was not aware that any specific strategy was employed:

*"Reducing perceptions? Not reducing perceptions, no. We don't." (NR2 Frontline ASB Officer)*

Aside from Respect status, the recent introduction of the Policing Pledge and the forthcoming PACT<sup>27</sup> meetings were also highlighted as ways of reducing public perceptions in the future, providing the opportunity to directly feedback information into the community about the problems they had reported. Unfortunately, the timing of this study did not allow the true extent of these factors to be explored further.

It was clear that each area had its own methods of reducing perceived high levels of ASB. Without conducting thorough investigations of public perceptions before and after these interventions it is unfeasible to suggest whether one method was superior at reducing perceptions. It should be acknowledged that the different approaches taken by the Respect and Non-Respect areas could be due to coincidence, however it does show that public perceptions of ASB are not addressed in a universal manner.

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<sup>27</sup> Police (or Partners) and Communities Together meetings, explained in Chapter One, section 1.9.

## 5.6 Communicating with the Public

Communicating information to the public about reducing ASB was closely aligned to tackling perceptions of ASB, as demonstrated above. All practitioners believed that communicating to the public was important, but despite sharing a similar philosophy, each area had their own procedures for communication. The biggest distinctions were observed between the different agencies rather than between the areas. For practitioners, communicating with the public served a number of functions including: the naming and shaming of offenders, reporting successful operations or good news stories and demonstrating that agencies were 'doing something':

*"What we need to do is tell the public what a good job we've done. Because otherwise if you don't tell them they can be excused for thinking we're doing nothing."*  
(R1 Police Inspector)

A range of methods were used for this purpose including: door knocking, police surgeries, roadshows, newspaper articles and adverts, posters, signs on interchanges and roundabouts, advertising at the local football ground, calling cards, neighbourhood policing websites, providing information for key local individuals to disseminate, talking to councillors and partners, public forums, newsletters produced by the local authority, police and ALMO, radio interviews and the use of Bluetooth<sup>28</sup>. The majority of police communication was conducted by a dedicated member of police staff and most police practitioners reported good relations with the local press and trusted them to report stories in the true context:

*"We're forever feeding in, we're in the paper most weeks. So I can trust them to put the stuff out that I want, they won't misquote me."* (R2 Police Inspector)

Some differences in communication policy between the different agencies were evident. In R1 the local authority Frontline ASB Officer did not have the opportunity to communicate very often:

*"Very occasionally we publicise the work we do. Very occasionally. The only other publicity we get, when there are unusual cases."* (R1 Local Authority Frontline ASB Officer)

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<sup>28</sup> Bluetooth is an open wireless protocol for exchanging data over short distances from both fixed and mobile devices. Bluetooth in this instance was used by the police to send crime/ASB information to all Bluetooth enabled devices (typically mobile phones) within a defined area (e.g. 100metres).

Whereas the police Frontline ASB Officer suggested that communicating with the public was commonplace:

*“The media department here and at the council are always asking about good news stories. So they’re always pushing us, you know, about things like that. So as much as we can do, we do do.” (R1 Police Frontline ASB Officer)*

Therefore practitioners disagreed on the extent of coverage achievable. In a different manner, variations in approach were also evident in R2, with the ALMO officer stating that:

*“We will always publicise any enforcement route that we’ve gone down or any big problems that we’ve solved.” (R2 Housing Enforcement Officer)*

This was in contrast to the Strategic ASB Practitioner who was more selective about which enforcement action was publicised, due to concerns about the impact the publicity may have upon the perpetrator. This is expanded upon in section 5.7, which discusses issues with communication.

Most areas were keen to improve their existing communication strategy, in R2 this was done through the development of an A-Z directory of activities available to young people:

*“So, communication you know, definitely needs to improve on how we get existing information out to the public so they can’t come back at us and say there’s nothing to do.” (R2 Strategic ASB Practitioner)*

NR1 used the largest range of methods to communicate with the public, although they still felt it was an area that needed to be improved upon by becoming more proactive. The influence of the Policing Pledge and PACT meetings had also started to emerge:

*“I think it has to be a two way thing. Two-way communication that the public tell us where the problems are and what the problems are. We then take that information away, try and do something about it, but then we report back to them.” (NR1 Frontline ASB Officer)*

In NR2 it also appeared that communication was not always undertaken regularly. For example, when asked about communication with the public, one Frontline ASB Officer admitted that not enough publicity was undertaken:

*“We don’t at the moment really I suppose, but we should do. We don’t publicise that many results that we have.” (NR2 Frontline ASB Officer)*

However a slightly different approach was taken in this area, as a more personal method of communication was adopted:

*“What we’re working on now is with staff, is to try to get staff whether they be police, local authority, [ALMO] plumbers etc etc to actually portray a positive image of what’s happening. . . But to support any media projects that we might be doing and we do lots. But, adopt an informal approach to it as well. . . seize the opportunity to say, has things improved the last couple of weeks?” (NR2 Strategic ASB Practitioner)*

In short, despite the importance of communication being acknowledged, some areas communicated more than others with some inconsistency apparent between the different agencies.

### **5.7 Issues with Communicating with the Public**

Practitioners were wary of a number of limitations associated with communicating with the public. In some circumstances not all enforcement action was publicised by the local authority for the sake of those involved. For example:

*“Are we actually helping the person subject to the order by publicising these things when it’s an issue of a noise complaint between two neighbours. The answer is it’s not in the public’s interest to actually read something about that.” (R2 Strategic ASB Practitioner)*

This view was not held by all practitioners and serves to reiterate the different perspectives of different agencies, as the following quotation from a Housing Enforcement Officer demonstrates:

*“If we’ve proved he’s caused anti-social behaviour, why not let everybody know? It’s a public document at the end of the day. They could have all gone to court if the court’s big enough, they’ll have all sat there and watched it. So why not publicise it?” (R2 Housing Enforcement Officer)*

Practitioners were also cautious about the content of the messages provided to the public, because they were concerned about any potentially negative repercussions:

*“You have to be very careful that press releases don’t come back and bite you in the backside. Because in actual fact, what you’re saying is wonderful is not actually happening, isn’t realistic, isn’t what the person on the street actually wants. I think you have to try and temper the message you’re putting out.” (R2 Strategic ASB Practitioner)*

There were also barriers to what information could be distributed, with some practitioners not having the time to write articles and issues of confidentiality preventing the publication of some good news stories. Indeed, actually getting the message out on occasions was considered difficult as good news stories were not perceived newsworthy:

*“Because police do great job, is not a story is it, you know? Local youths getting drunk in the park and setting fire to the bowling green is a story. So, there’s only going to be a certain extent which we can manage that.” (R2 Frontline ASB Officer)*

Even when cases were publicised, there were concerns that the public would not necessarily remember the details, of particular ASBO conditions for example. There was also the suggestion that the public only accessed information via websites and meetings if it was related to a particular problem they were personally affected by, otherwise it was ignored.

Different barriers were evident in different areas. In NR1, getting the right message out was compounded by poor relations with the local newspaper:

*“We’ve got a particularly difficult relationship with our local newspaper in [NR1] and it’s got a huge circulation. . . The [paper] are very negative around community safety, particularly around community safety issues.” (NR1 Strategic ASB Practitioner)*

This consequently led to uncertainty about how local authority generated publications were received:

*“It’s very difficult then to convince people when you send your own publications out, that it’s not just propaganda.” (NR1 Strategic ASB Practitioner)*

Producing messages was also hampered in some circumstances by the volume of cases being dealt with, leaving little time to generate any publicity. A crucial issue that was mentioned in all areas was the prospect of unintentionally raising perception levels, by providing details about incidents that the majority of the public were unaware of. This relates to the point made earlier about high visibility policing potentially increasing perceptions. Practitioners were aware that a fine balance had to be achieved when publicising enforcement activity, recognising the need to pitch messages differently. In addition, it was felt that disseminating good news stories could raise the level of public expectations, a topic that will be discussed in Section C.

One further issue relating to the reputation of agencies was also raised, suggesting that the potential for negative publicity about an organisation could restrict which messages were communicated to the public:

*“I think the one that faces eviction soon, that should go in the paper. But because it’s been an issue for so long it won’t go in the paper because it makes the council look poor.” (NR2 Police Inspector)*

It was clear that practitioners were often cautious in their approach to communication, with the levels of caution exercised varying between the agencies. In most cases the merits of publicising information was carefully considered on a case by case basis.

### **5.8 Priority of Reducing Public Perceptions**

It was important to situate the reduction of perceived high levels of ASB within the context of overall ASB reduction. The majority of practitioners did not consider reducing perceptions to be a priority, as resolving ASB cases took precedence. However, differences in priority levels afforded to reducing perceptions were evident between different practitioners from the local authorities, depending upon whether they held frontline or strategic posts. The priority of reducing public perceptions also differed between the agencies.

It was clear that Frontline ASB Officers worked on a reactive basis, dealing with cases as they were reported. There was no active focus on reducing public perceptions, as the following quotations highlight:

*“It isn’t the perception we go by. It’s not how people perceive it, it’s how people are affected by it.” (R1 Police Frontline ASB Officer)*

*“For me, in my service, when we’re getting jobs in on a daily basis and this is what is happening, I think I’ve got a duty more to protect those who have already been victims and that are suffering, rather than trying, you know, to mollycoddle those ones that just think it’s happening.” (NR1 Frontline ASB Officer)*

In contrast, most Strategic ASB Practitioners within the local authority were very clear that reducing public perceptions of ASB was the top priority, referring to the national performance indicator, NI17<sup>29</sup>:

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<sup>29</sup> NI17 is the national performance indicator that requires a reduction in the proportion of people perceiving high levels of ASB in their local area.

*“Certainly from my perspective our key strategic priority is perceptions of anti-social behaviour. Reduction of perceptions of anti-social behaviour, NI17.” (NR1 Strategic ASB Practitioner)*

*“It’s a stand-alone priority for this year. Perceptions of anti-social behaviour, crime and anti-social behaviour. It’s the main priority.” (NR2 Strategic ASB Practitioner)*

This disparity between the views of frontline and strategic local authority practitioners demonstrates that the priority of reducing public perceptions can vary within an agency and highlights that the approach to reducing perceptions of ASB may not always be consistent. The police’s perspective largely mirrored that of the Strategic ASB Practitioners, for example:

*“It’s huge, perception. Because if it’s driving our activity then we have to alter the perception to release our resources to do something else.” (R1 Police Inspector)*

*“It’s got to be the number one priority, the perception.” (R2 Police Inspector)*

This view may have been different if frontline police officers were interviewed, as Inspectors play a strategic role in local Neighbourhood Policing. The position of the ALMOs was somewhat different. Although reducing perceptions was a fairly big priority in R2, the majority of ALMOs did not deal directly with public perceptions and did not have specific targets relating to their reduction. The outlook was much more customer service focused, with targets based around customer satisfaction.

Overall, there appeared to be little consensus about the priority that should be afforded to reducing public perceptions of ASB, which may have impacted on the methods used to tackle ASB outlined in section 5.5.

## **5.9 Reported Incidents of ASB and Perceptions of ASB**

Practitioners were asked questions to determine whether any links were made between perceptions levels and reported incidents of ASB. This was to see whether any neighbourhoods had been identified that demonstrated the ‘Perception Paradox’, which could be targeted with perception reduction interventions.

This theme produced results distinguishable by Respect status. Reports and perceptions of ASB were not combined in the Respect areas, however in the Non-Respect areas this was

conducted as a means of assessing the link between service demand and perceptions. In NR1 this was done strategically, to look for any relationships between incidents and perceptions of ASB at neighbourhood level:

*“What we’re trying to do is align that [perceptions] up to demand and see if there’s a correlation or not . . . the early indications are that some areas where there is a higher perception there are higher levels of demand and other areas they just don’t seem to marry-up at all.” (NR1 Strategic ASB Practitioner)*

This strategy was also applied to ASB incidents on a case by case basis, where resources would allow:

*“I will be doing, like with this one job and with certain jobs, we couldn’t possibly do it with every job.” (NR1 Housing Enforcement Officer)*

In NR2, combining incident and perception data was also considered important. This analysis was conducted to give practitioners an overall perspective of their performance and the issues they faced:

*“Yeah, we do. It’s one thing that feeds into the overall position of where we’ll be at any given time . . . it is an indicator, high levels of reported incidents is an indicator of what possibly people’s perceptions are. . . The chances are that the two are going to go together. . . But you still have the problem of low level numbers of reported incidents or virtually none, but yet people still feel that it’s a problem.” (NR2 Strategic ASB Practitioner)*

These approaches resulted in more detailed information about public perceptions, in particular the ‘Perception Paradox’ being held in the Non-Respect areas. It also added an additional dimension to the investigation of perceptions in comparison to the Respect areas, which demonstrated a more holistic approach towards ASB.

## **5.10 Section A Summary**

Analysing the factors directly associated with addressing public perceptions of ASB provided an insight into how the different areas operated in practice. Many similarities between the areas were uncovered such as: negative feelings towards the combined perceptions measure, recognising that reducing public perceptions was challenging and believing that communicating with the general public was important. As well as the similarities, two differences in approach relating to Respect status were found in relation to: how public perceptions were tackled and the use of actual incident levels alongside perceived levels of

ASB. Differences in perception strategies were also evident between the agencies, with the police and local authorities differing in their approaches towards perceptions as a priority. Table 5.2 (on the next page) provides a summary of the main findings for section A grouped by theme. The themes presented include: the combined perceptions measure, measuring perceptions locally, tackling public perceptions, communicating with the public, issues with communicating with the public, the priority of reducing public perceptions and the combination of reported ASB incidents with perception levels.

Table 5.2 Summary of Section A Findings

| <b>SECTION A SUMMARY: FACTORS DIRECTLY ASSOCIATED WITH ADDRESSING PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF ASB</b> |  |
|---|--|
| <b>THEME</b>  | <b>MAIN FINDINGS</b>   |
| <b>The Combined Perceptions Measure</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The combined perceptions measure was considered an unsatisfactory method of measuring the extent of ASB due to issues of tolerance and subjectivity.</li> <li>It was felt that perceptions could not be quantified effectively.</li> <li>The lack of repeated measures design made practitioners feel the scores produced were unreliable.</li> <li>Practitioners would prefer to rely upon the number of reports made / number of incidents or a combination of perceptions and reports.</li> <li>The measure was vulnerable to producing findings subject to the 'Perception Paradox'.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Measuring Perceptions Locally</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formal (Place Survey) and informal (local intelligence) methods were used in each area.</li> <li>Police Authority Survey conducted in R2, NR1 and NR2.</li> <li>Different methods of measuring perceptions were used in the different areas (E.g. perception mapping/public surveys/ASB complaints)</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Tackling Public Perceptions of ASB</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It was acknowledged that tackling public perceptions was challenging: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only a small percentage of people access ASB services but general public surveyed</li> <li>Difficult to target the people with a genuine problem opposed to those who have an opinion about it (the 'Perception Paradox').</li> </ul> </li> <li>Differences between Respect and Non-Respect approaches, with the former mainly conducting multi-agency 'blitz' operations and the latter utilising publicity.</li> <li>Practitioners unsure about the effectiveness of campaigns, acknowledging they could raise as well as lower public perceptions.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Communicating with the Public</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All practitioners believed communicating with the public was important in reducing perceived high levels of ASB.</li> <li>Naming and shaming, good news stories and stories showing the authorities were 'doing something' were the reasons for communicating with the public.</li> <li>All areas were broadly similar in their approach to communication but each had their own procedures.</li> <li>Trust and ensuring stories were given in the right context were important when dealing with the written press.</li> <li>The greatest differences in practice were evident between the different agencies.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Issues with Communicating with the Public</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Practitioners were aware that communicating with the public could have limitations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good news stories could raise public expectations</li> </ul> </li> <li>Difficult to get the right message out to the general public: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physically</li> <li>Lack of time to generate material for the press/other publications</li> <li>If it is not considered a 'story', it will not be published by the written press</li> <li>General public only access websites/public meetings when they have a specific problem</li> </ul> </li> </ul>   |
| <b>Priority of Reducing Public Perceptions</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most practitioners did not see reducing public perceptions of ASB as a priority.</li> <li>The top priority was dealing with cases/incidents of ASB.</li> <li>The level of priority afforded to perceptions was different between strategic and frontline practitioners from the local authority.</li> <li>Reducing public perceptions of ASB was a high priority for the police.</li> <li>The ALMOs' strategy was more based around customer satisfaction than reducing public perceptions of ASB.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Actual Levels of ASB and Perceptions of ASB</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Links were made between actual levels and perceptions of ASB in the Non-Respect areas.</li> <li>No such links were made in the Respect areas.</li> </ul>  |

## Phase Three Results - Section B

### Factors Indirectly Associated with Addressing Public Perceptions of ASB

#### 5.11 Section B Introduction

A number of indirect factors were found to impact upon how practitioners addressed public perceptions of ASB. Indirect factors are those which do not influence the reduction of perceptions outright, but could impact on how the direct measures such as campaigns are delivered. Indirect factors encompass issues such as: the definition of ASB, issues of subjectivity and tolerance, and reporting incidents of ASB. This section addresses some of the complexities surrounding public perception reduction practice and goes beyond that of section A which served to provide a basic outline of day-to-day procedures.

#### 5.12 Problems Experienced by Practitioners

Practitioners from all areas encountered some difficulties when delivering their services, which may have indirectly impacted upon public perceptions of ASB. The extent and type of problems encountered varied between the areas. The most common issue raised was a lack of time and resources, although the context in which these comments were made were different for each area as outlined below.

In R1 the local authority was in the process of re-structuring. This caused disruption to the ASB team:

*“There’s no structure and it’s not really being led by anybody and that’s the difficulty. And there’s nobody pulling the whole thing together just at the moment because of all the changes that are occurring which you know, makes it difficult for people.” (R1 Local Authority Frontline ASB Officer)*

It was suggested that the local authority team were isolated. The same practitioner also felt their own team was under-staffed, particularly in relation to the number of dispersal orders being pursued:

*“Dispersal orders – really good tool but when you ask about dispersal orders, we can only do one at once because we haven’t got enough police to be able to police a number of dispersal orders in one division.” (R1 Police Frontline ASB Officer)*

In addition, interventions such as the Family Intervention Project and a local parenting project were at full capacity, meaning that new cases were unable to be referred. One reason cited for the lack of time available was the amount of paperwork and bureaucracy the local Neighbourhood Policing teams had to deal with. An overall lack of investment in ASB was suggested:

*“There’s not enough time, there’s not enough resources, there’s not enough manpower you know, and it’s a cruel reality of it. If they want to drive down crime and anti-social behaviour then they’re gonna have to employ more officers to do it. It’s as simple as that really.” (R1 Police Frontline ASB Officer)*

In R2 different issues were evident. The ALMO team had four ASB enforcement officers, responsible for all the social housing stock in the area, which was deemed responsible for a large proportion of ASB. In contrast, the local authority ASB team which was responsible for private households had far greater resources in terms of personnel and the information available to them. The following quotation highlights how this was considered to be an imbalance:

*“I think there’s what 20 in [the ASB team], something like that. They’ve got four or five police officers, various PCSOs, they’ve got direct access obviously to the police national computer and all the rest of it, whereas we don’t.” (R2 Housing Enforcement Officer)*

Information sharing between the different agencies was also considered difficult, which was believed to be a consequence of services being based in different localities. There was also a suggestion that not all practitioners were in receipt of the same police intelligence data, depending on their geographical location and relationship with the local police Inspector.

The ALMO’s housing allocation policy was also perceived to cause problems because different age groups with different lifestyles were being housed together. For example:

*“The new allocations policy by the council hasn’t helped. We used to have age designation. So we’d have over-forties in that particular block or over fifties, now it’s been completely swept aside. You’ve got over sixties and anybody below that. So we are getting a lot of young and old mixing together in blocks of four.” (R2 Housing Enforcement Officer)*

It was felt this was something that fuelled perceptions of ASB, particularly of the older people who had lived in their accommodation for a number of years. A further issue relating to public perceptions potentially being heightened related to the incident log sheets provided to

members of the public. It was suggested that people receiving these forms were unsure how to complete them correctly in relation to the principles of harassment, alarm and distress. Consequently, reports of ASB may not have been dealt with in the manner expected by the public because the true extent of their experiences had not been communicated effectively to the person dealing with it.

*“So that made him feel really fearful, but he hadn’t put that on his record sheet because there wasn’t an action directed against him. He didn’t actually understand that it was partly about how it made him feel.” (R2 Frontline ASB Officer)*

The literacy of the complainant was also an obstacle that was mentioned. Some practitioners found that some of the legal documents were particularly challenging to understand and had often asked if people could read.

There were few problems mentioned in NR1, but those raised echoed other areas and included factors such as wanting more staff and not having enough time:

*“In all honesty I don’t even have time to sort of re-visit cases, unless somebody reports it to me.” (NR1 Housing Enforcement Officer)*

Time and resources were again features in NR2, but for slightly different reasons:

*“I don’t think we’re able to be as proactive as we’d like to be . . . because we’re too busy being reactive. . . You’re never going to get proactive unless you get more staff.” (NR2 Frontline ASB Officer)*

In addition to the quantity of staff, the quality of ALMO staff in particular was also raised:

*“You get some people quite good and some people pitiful. So people get a poor service and some people get a better service, just depending on who they get.” (NR2 Frontline ASB Officer)*

Staff subjectivity was also highlighted in relation to police call handlers, who were expected to make a decision regarding the classification of ASB incidents before frontline officers became involved. For example:

*“Call handler straight away really, despite all the technology has got to make a professional judgement.” (NR2 Strategic ASB Practitioner)*

This related to the way incidents were reported and links to subjectivity and tolerance, which will be addressed in section 5.14. One final issue raised in NR2 was how the police have to deal with the majority of ASB complaints, instead of (what the participants felt was) a more relevant agency such as the ALMO:

*“The neighbour issues will probably occur outside of their 8-4 type of world. You know, the world that they work. And so anything after that, they’re saying ring the police, ring the police. My comment to them is, why contact us? There’s other ways of dealing with anti-social behaviour, your nuisance neighbours, other than ringing the police. Monitoring forms, just keeping a record. But, back-heeling, we call it back-heeling. [laughs]. They back-heel it to the police.” (NR2 Police Inspector)*

In all areas there appeared to be a number of tensions between agencies, within agencies and a general perception of a lack of resources, although the manner in which this manifested itself varied between the areas.

### **5.13 The Definition of ASB**

At least one practitioner from each area felt the public confused crime and ASB. A number of practitioners also found the distinction confusing:

*“People do get confused and it’s confusing for us as well.” (R2 Housing Enforcement Officer)*

However other practitioners, while acknowledging that it was difficult to distinguish between the two, felt that separating crime and ASB was not an issue:

*“I think it matters not really, whether people confuse crime and anti-social behaviour. As long as they’re identifying issues and that we’re getting to know those issues and we’re able to prioritise and target them.” (R1 Police Inspector)*

*“I don’t think it’s necessarily important to distinguish what’s criminality from what’s anti-social behaviour. Certainly as service providers it’s not, at that end of the scale.” (NR1 Strategic ASB Practitioner)*

Although, another practitioner felt that the distinction between crime and ASB was important:

*“From a delivery point of view, it probably doesn’t make sense to bundle them together you know, because crime is quite specific.” (R2 Housing Enforcement Officer)*

When asked whether the public understands what anti-social behaviour is, the majority felt the public did not understand the CDA definition. In some cases the problem was not identifying anti-social acts, but incorrectly associating ASB solely with young people:

*“And the problem is, when the vast majority of the public start talking about anti-social behaviour, they’re always talking about one thing – they’re talking about young people.” (NR2 Strategic ASB Practitioner)*

In other circumstances the public perceived behaviour to be anti-social when in reality it could not be classed as such, due to the incident being the result of contrasting lifestyles:

*“Sometimes people are complaining of anti-social behaviour, the actual complaint’s not legitimate. It’s not fair to complain that somebody else has just happens to have a different lifestyle to them. And that’s where the confusion lies.” (NR1 Strategic ASB Practitioner)*

There was some variation between the emphases of local definitions employed by the different areas. R2 adopted the CDA definition with the addition of whether the ASB was of a serious and/or persistent nature. The emphasis in NR1 was on the impact of the behaviour rather than the definition. Whereas in NR2, it appeared the definition was slightly different between the different agencies. The above issues highlight how the definition of ASB can impact upon working practices, which may subsequently affect public perceptions of ASB.

#### **5.14 Subjectivity and Tolerance**

The issues of subjectivity affecting perceived levels of ASB and levels of tolerance were highlighted by all practitioners. In this study subjectivity and tolerance are considered as indirect factors influencing perceptions, because despite being acknowledged as an issue, frontline policies to reduce perceptions were not subjectivity and/or tolerance specific, with individual incidents of ASB dealt with on a case by case basis.

The following quotation best summarises the practitioners’ perspective of subjectivity:

*“It very much depends on who you are, where you are and what you do. . . Because if you’re in an area where you’re constantly having people getting shot, the last thing on your mind really is whether there’s a kid kicking a football against your wall.” (R1 Police Inspector)*

Some additional issues were raised in the different areas. In R1 it was suggested that the movement of people between different areas created some of the problems with ASB, specifically linked to varying tolerance levels, for example:

*“On an estate certain types of behaviour would never get complained about because it’s kind of like accepted that’s what goes on. But take them away from those environments and put them somewhere else where people think [gasp] I’m not having this!” (R1 Police Frontline ASB Officer)*

A clashing of cultures was a unique factor identified in this area, which resulted in different lifestyles causing ASB incidents:

*“You’ve got eastern Europeans now in the equation who live very very differently to how anybody else lives. . . It’s a whole cultural thing that in itself is causing massive difficulties and when you’re trying to speak to people about their behaviour, it’s hard because they don’t understand English.” (R1 Police Frontline ASB Officer)*

In R2 tolerance was deemed important, as it was considered to make the difference between those who reported incidents and those who did not:

*“Because a lot of people just close their curtains, close their windows it’s double glazed and just ignore whatever it is that in theory is upsetting somebody else big style.” (R2 Strategic ASB Practitioner)*

In NR1 the public’s tolerance of ASB was considered by the practitioners to be low. In addition, the subjective nature of ASB made it difficult for practitioners to assess when ‘true’ ASB occurred. In NR2 tolerance was considered to have reduced over time. There was also the assumption that varying levels of tolerance existed between neighbourhoods, which could impact on the number of problems reported. For example:

*“Tolerance varies between neighbourhoods. And those neighbourhoods that tend to have, to be less problematic have a lower tolerance and those that are more problematic have a higher tolerance.” (NR2 Housing Enforcement Officer)*

Therefore the issues of subjectivity and tolerance had a different impact on the practitioners in different areas in relation to: the movement of people, a clashing of cultures and varying levels of tolerance.

### 5.15 Reporting Incidents of ASB

When asked whether the public knew who to report ASB incidents to, the majority of practitioners felt they did not. One consistent finding across the police practitioners was that they felt the public always called the police. For example:

*“You would expect a lot of nuisance neighbours are within council dwellings on council estates. You would expect them to deal with, primarily to call their housing provider in the first instance. No, they ring the cops.” (NR2 Police Inspector)*

This sentiment highlights the tensions described above in relation to ‘back-heeling’. A number of other issues were raised in each area.

In R1 there was a definite feeling that the public did not know who to call in what circumstance and the following quotation also highlights the confusion between ASB and crime mentioned earlier:

*“I had a call about ten to eight yesterday morning here. A chap was just ringing up saying somebody’s just smashed me windows. Well I would never in a million years think of ringing the council to say someone’s smashed me windows. My first thought would be: someone’s just put a brick through my windows, 999. . . And people I think are confused in some respects.” (R1 Local Authority Frontline ASB Officer)*

It was suggested that the public were not aware of the police single non-emergency number, so resorted to ringing 999 or the council. There was concern that people did not know who they were ringing when they rang the council, as calls were often received asking for immediate assistance, as if an emergency response was provided. Additionally, some sections of the community were considered reluctant to make reports because they believed the authorities knew who was causing the problems:

*“A lot of Asian communities see it as grassing and they say, you know who’s doing it! You know which ones are doing the drug dealing because they’ve got all the fancy vehicles, but knowing and having evidence to do things and trying to get that across to people is very very difficult.” (R1 Police Frontline ASB Officer)*

The perception that the authorities know who is causing trouble was also highlighted in NR1. It was felt there was a lack of confidence in the authorities to deal with problems, with the public thinking that the authorities know what is going on without having to report it:

*““You know everything about it and yet you don’t do anything”. But in reality we didn’t do anything because we didn’t even know that this was going on!” (NR1 Housing Enforcement Officer)*

Concern was also raised in NR1 about the public's general failure to report ASB, for example:

*"Sent all these out, and I've had one reply out of about 70 odd letters. Everyone's up in arms about it, absolutely everybody, everybody knows they're druggies and oh it's terrible living round here you wouldn't believe what it's like - I've had one call." (NR1 Housing Enforcement Officer)*

NR1 had a completely different system for reporting ASB in comparison to the other areas. As explained in Chapter Four, each locality area (two or three Wards) had a dedicated multi-agency ASB reporting line:

*"It's just a [NR1] number so it'll be a local rate call. It's an automated service. They leave their name if they want to, their details, if they want a call back. . . They're picked up when we come on duty and a sheet's written up and it's passed to the relevant PCSO or PC that covers that area and they'll make contact with that person." (NR1 Frontline ASB Officer)*

Different issues were evident in R2. Some teams were shielded from public calls, for example the ALMO enforcement team only became involved after referrals from the local housing office. The ALMO had also just created a new contact phone line:

*"We've now got a little phone where anyone that we're dealing with, all the witnesses, we can pass them on this number and they can ring directly no matter what, 24/7." (R2 Housing Enforcement Officer)*

Having acknowledged that the public do not necessarily know who to report ASB to, a 'report it' card was produced by the local authority providing contact details of all the relevant agencies.

Noticeably different issues were apparent in NR2, as problems with the incident recording system itself were raised:

*"Everybody's recording different things as anti-social behaviour and I don't think anybody's got a true figure or a true picture of what anti-social behaviour's like in their area" (NR2 Strategic ASB Practitioner)*

The above findings demonstrate that no universal method for receiving ASB reports existed. Different areas highlighted different issues with the reporting of ASB incidents.

### 5.16 Respect Status

The impact of receiving and not receiving designated Respect status was discussed in all areas. As expected, different responses were obtained from the areas with Respect status compared to those without. However, there were differences in opinion about the impact Respect status had made in the two Respect areas.

Practitioners in R1 felt having Respect status had not influenced their day-to-day work:

*"I don't think it has altered the way that we actually work, the practicalities of our working." (R1 Local Authority Frontline ASB Officer)*

They also felt the public were unlikely to be aware of their status:

*"If we were dealing with somebody and you mentioned we were working in a Respect area, say to little Johnny who's a tearaway. He'd look at you nonplussed wouldn't he." (R1 Police Inspector)*

The biggest concern related to the funding, which despite being recognised as a catalyst for starting projects, was not considered enough to impact on the scale of the problems being faced:

*"I don't think it's made any impact. They have had funding, Family Intervention Project was set up and I think [a parenting programme] was funded, but I don't think it's made an absolute massive difference because the problems are so bad. These things are not big enough to deal with it." (R1 Police Frontline ASB Officer)*

The impact of gaining Respect status was viewed more positively in R2, particularly in relation to the extra resources obtained:

*"Respect from our point of view was a significant move forward that allowed a lot of additional resources to come into play to help the work the partnership were doing." (R2 Strategic ASB Practitioner)*

Although concerns were also raised about the public's knowledge and understanding of the Respect branding and policies. It was not considered to have a high enough profile:

*"I mean, Joe Public's not heard of Louise Casey. To be fair, I've seen a picture of her but if she walked through this building now I wouldn't know who she was." (R2 Housing Enforcement Officer)*

One practitioner pointed out that although the funding was available, it was not always easy to refer onto the Respect led programmes:

*“Personally we’ve referred various people for Challenge and Support, but have all been knocked back. . . To me, if I go see somebody and I think there’s a need for them to be challenged and supported that’s my opinion in my role, as I’m dealing with them and what have you, so I think mine’s an informed idea that this person might need some. . . they always want some kind of mindless evidence to back it up.” (R2 Housing Enforcement Officer)*

This demonstrates how the impact of Respect status was not the same for the two Respect areas studied and serves to reiterate the differences in practice and issues faced by the different areas.

In the Non-Respect areas the principles of Respect, especially in relation to the Respect Standard for Housing Management<sup>30</sup> were adopted. The issue of not receiving the additional funding was raised although this was not seen as a major problem, only something that could have provided additional services.

### **5.17 The Home Office**

Practitioners suggested little information was provided by the Home Office about dealing with public perceptions of ASB. The general consensus was that the flow of information in general had ceased:

*“The information coming from government dried up totally. They used to send, every month you used to get new information coming through from the Respect team about the changes in legislation and good stuff that was going on in other areas.” (R1 Frontline ASB Officer)*

*“So we do try and manage perception and try and limit risk. But, in terms of guidance and policy I don’t think it’s particularly strong.” (R2 Frontline ASB Officer)*

*“I don’t feel there has been anything done yet, or any advice that we’ve received yet that puts it in one place and says actually if you’re wanting to impact against x, y and z, this is what you need to do, this is what you need to change.” (NR1 Strategic ASB Practitioner)*

*“There’s not sort of, there’s no sort of regular thrust coming through from the Home Office.” (NR2 Strategic ASB Practitioner)*

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<sup>30</sup> See Chapter One section 1.4 for further details.

In addition, some practitioners felt a state of 'campaign overload' had been created, which failed to take into account a longer-term vision. It was suggested that too many high-profile campaigns could negatively impact upon public perceptions, as they were not given a chance to make an impact before the next campaign was launched:

*"All with big launches, big media attention etc, then sort of died a death as something else comes round the corner the next day. That confuses the hell out of people."*  
(NR1 Strategic ASB Practitioner)

It was proposed that this also confused practitioners and ignored the specific needs of the local area:

*"The goalposts seem to be changing on a daily basis and it's not being left to local practitioners to say what's right locally."* (NR1 Strategic ASB Practitioner)

A final point relevant to R1, was that some of the initiatives promoted by the Home Office were not always applicable to the local area and were attributed to heightening perceptions. The example given related to knife crime and the knife arches received to deploy in the area, when the police did not consider there to be a problem. This resulted in the authorities having to address a perception about a problem that did not exist, as demonstrated by the following quotation:

*"We now spend a lot of time trying to change public perception about something that was never a problem in the first place, that the government by the nature of the way they've intervened has created a perception of it being a problem."* (R1 Police Inspector)

It was clear that all areas felt little information was provided by the Home Office about how to address public perceptions of ASB, while some of the campaigns they did promote appeared to fuel perceptions.

## **5.18 Section B Summary**

Overall, a number of factors indirectly associated with addressing public perceptions of ASB were found across a range of themes. A number of similarities were evident between the practitioners including: a perceived lack of time and a general concern about the lack of ASB incident reporting. Some differences were also apparent, particularly in relation to the problems faced by practitioners and issues surrounding the reporting of incidents of ASB. In terms of the impact of Respect status, there were no differences between the Respect and

Non-Respect areas in any of the themes, apart from the one directly asking about Respect status itself. Within this theme there were key differences in opinion between the Respect areas, with the Non-Respect areas providing similar responses. A detailed summary of findings for section B can be found in table 5.3

Table 5.3 Summary of Section B Findings

| <b>SECTION B SUMMARY: FACTORS INDIRECTLY ASSOCIATED WITH ADDRESSING PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF ASB</b> |  |
|---|--|
| <b>THEME</b>  | <b>MAIN FINDINGS</b>   |
| <b>Problems Experienced by Practitioners</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Practitioners were concerned by the lack of time available to complete tasks.</li> <li>More staff were considered necessary to deal with the volume of ASB.</li> <li>Practitioners in different areas faced different problems relating to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>capacity of interventions</li> <li>information sharing</li> <li>the roles undertaken by each agency</li> </ul> </li> </ul>   |
| <b>The Definition of ASB</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whether the public understands the distinction between ASB and crime divided opinion.</li> <li>Most practitioners thought the public did not understand or know the CDA definition of ASB.</li> <li>Practitioners felt ASB was often incorrectly associated with young people.</li> <li>Some public confusion existed between what constitutes ASB, lifestyle differences and when enforcement action could be taken.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Subjectivity and Tolerance</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Considered to affect public perceptions of ASB by all practitioners.</li> <li>Subjectivity and tolerance considered to vary between neighbourhoods.</li> <li>Practitioners felt tolerance had decreased over time and was the defining factor in whether ASB was reported.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Reporting Incidents of ASB</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Practitioners expressed that the public did not know who to report ASB incidents to.</li> <li>The police received the majority of calls, even when other agencies should have been contacted.</li> <li>Reports were considered not to be made because the public felt the authorities knew about the actions of perpetrators.</li> <li>Practitioners were concerned by the lack of reporting.</li> <li>Different mechanisms for reporting ASB operated in each area.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Respect Status</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Practitioner opinions differed about the impact of Respect status.</li> <li>One Respect area felt it was a significant move forward, while the other felt it made no impact.</li> <li>The Non-Respect areas adopted the Respect Standard for Housing Management but did not consider the lack of additional support/funding to be a problem.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>The Home Office</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Little information was provided by the Home Office about how to deal with public perceptions of ASB.</li> <li>It was suggested the flow of information about ASB in general had stopped.</li> <li>Campaigns were too short-term focused causing campaign overload.</li> <li>Some campaigns were not considered relevant to the local area, with little discretion for practitioners to decide what was appropriate locally.</li> </ul>  |

## Phase Three Results - Section C

### Additional Factors Considered to Impact upon Public Perceptions of ASB Outside the Control of Practitioners

#### 5.19 Section C Introduction

Section C details a number of additional factors considered to impact upon public perceptions of ASB that were mentioned independently by practitioners. In many cases these factors were not a consequence of their own practice but that of other agencies and external influences, such as the media and public expectations. Therefore these factors were deemed to be outside practitioners' control.

#### 5.20 The Courts System

This section represents the final theme where the areas with designated Respect status produced different findings to the Non-Respect areas. Practitioners from both Respect areas spoke about how they felt the actions of the courts could affect the public perceptions of ASB that they were trying to manage. There was a feeling that sentences handed down for ASB were too lenient:

*"I tend to think that a lot of people have lost faith in the justice system in this country. . . . When you see some of the derisory sentences that are handed out, it's just appalling. Is there any deterrent?" (R1 Local Authority Frontline ASB Officer)*

This also raised the issue about deterrence. In addition to the length of the sentences handed down initially, there was also particular concern about the courts' reaction to those who had breached ASBOs:

*"They're getting conditional discharges and things. So, whilst it was a good concept at the time, it is like a lot of other things, it's been totally undermined by magistrates. Oh, it's only a little breach. Well a breach is a breach. And possibly they don't appreciate that umpteen other options have already been tried with this person." (R1 Local Authority Frontline ASB Officer)*

*"Because it's oh well it's just a breach, he was just in his exclusion area, you know, it's not actually a crime. Well actually yes it is because it's a breach of a court order and the reason we've got the exclusion is to protect the people in that area for whatever reason. And they don't seem to get it." (R1 Police Frontline ASB Officer)*

There was also disappointment about the number of chances given to perpetrators of ASB before any sanctions and/or punishments were handed down, for example:

*“They don’t necessarily live in the same world that we deal with. So, although we may want a particular outcome of a case, they always do like to give second/third chances to people.” (R2 Housing Enforcement Officer)*

*“That robust tenancy enforcement don’t happen. It’s warning, warning, warning, warning, warning.” (NR2 Police Inspector)*

*“We’ve got kids that we’re going to put ASBOs on because the judicial system is letting everybody down. You know, they’ll have four final warnings, well isn’t a final warning a final warning? How comes they’ve got four!” (R1 Police Frontline ASB Officer)*

In some cases it was felt that sentences had been applied without any common sense:

*“They’ll get absolute discharges and they’ll get a fine. Well she’s a prostitute so she’s going to have to go out and work to pay off the fine so what’s that about, you know?” (R1 Police Frontline ASB Officer)*

All of the above examples frustrated practitioners, as it was evident a lot of work took place prior to taking a case to court, both in terms of paperwork as well as convincing those experiencing the ASB to act as witnesses. It was implied the failure of the courts to hand down an appropriate punishment would impact upon the public experiencing the ASB:

*“And then when it starts again . . . we’re going to be asking the same people or the same people are going to be ringing us back up saying, you know, John Smith’s started again and we can say oh he’s got this SPO<sup>31</sup> that he must adhere to the anti-social behaviour clauses in his tenancy. Yeah, but he’s started again. They say, what’s the point?” (R2 Housing Enforcement Officer)*

This highlighted that although some form of punishment was handed out, if it was not at the level anticipated by the practitioner, it could negatively affect public perceptions about how ASB is dealt with:

*“It might not be the result that that little old lady wants, but it’s a result. But she’s disaffected then, because she hasn’t, he still lives next door to her or he still lives down the street.” (R2 Housing Enforcement Officer)*

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<sup>31</sup> An SPO is a ‘Suspended Possession Order’, where the court suspends the possession order (eviction) on the condition that the tenant observes a number of conditions in relation to their ASB.

*“If the powers that be don’t take their house off them, then it does make a mockery of the scheme. Because again, people’s perceptions are: what’s the point in having it, if you’re not going to enforce it” (R2 Housing Enforcement Officer)*

Overall it was clear that practitioners and the courts were not working towards the same objectives, which resulted in portraying an inconsistent image to the public. Concerns about the courts system were mainly mentioned by practitioners in the Respect areas. This does not mean the same frustrations were not apparent in Non-Respect areas, as the topic of the courts system was mentioned independently during the interview process.

### **5.21 Public Expectations of the Authorities**

Some practitioners felt that public expectations about what they could do to tackle ASB were too high, fuelling negative perceptions about ASB if those expectations were not met. A number of issues were raised including the public’s unrealistic expectation of what practitioners could do:

*“They want things sorting out overnight.” (R2 Housing Enforcement Officer)*

*“They expect us to wave a magic wand and they don’t understand the legal processes behind us having to evidence what we do. They think we can just march in there like some storm trooper waving ASBOs with a troop of police behind us and just sort it out. And it doesn’t work like that.” (R2 Frontline ASB Officer)*

Such high expectations meant that the public were not considered to be sympathetic towards the need for prioritisation:

*“And people’s perceptions of what they want us to do, it’s all equally important to them. If it’s their concern, it’s all that absorbs them.” (R2 Frontline ASB Officer)*

*“Because we get the calls about everything, the expectation is that the police have unlimited resources.” (R1 Police Inspector)*

Consequently, residents in areas where there was generally a lower demand for resources felt that their expectations were not being met when an incident did occur:

*“They often feel themselves to be the poor relation in the grand scheme of things.” (R2 Police Inspector)*

In other instances, reports of ASB, in spite of public expectations, could not be resolved by practitioners because the incidents in question were not serious enough to warrant authority intervention:

*“It’s about people’s expectations. They expect a lot of the police and yes they do expect us to deal with things and quite often, particularly with anti-social behaviour it’s not something necessarily we can deal with. It might be just that the parent needs to talk to their own child and keep them in check.” (R1 Local Authority Frontline ASB Officer)*

Although some practitioners admitted that public expectations may have been elevated by the authorities themselves over time, by exaggerating the levels of service that could be realistically provided:

*“I mean the expectations have just been raised too high in some cases. And I think that the authorities are to blame for that, the police being the biggest culprit . . . It’s because they tend to be a can-do organisation, sometimes very slowly admittedly but they will come and do things to get a satisfactory result. To try to keep everybody happy.” (NR2 Strategic ASB Practitioner)*

On other occasions the expectations of the public may have been raised inadvertently by the authorities, in relation to a single case:

*“Sometimes their expectation has been mismanaged. . . Because once you’ve got the expectation raised, perceptions become harder to manage and that’s the problem that we find.” (R2 Frontline ASB Officer)*

It was evident that ASB practitioners were managing the expectations of the public alongside dealing with the ASB that had been reported, which did not always facilitate the resolution of an ASB case and could impact upon public perceptions.

## **5.22 The Media**

Practitioners considered that the media had a negative impact on public perceptions of ASB. It was suggested the public made connections between what they saw on television and what was happening in their own community:

*“You can put the telly on at any time of night and find a programme that’s showing you know, police fighting in the streets with yobs getting drunk on a night or whatever. It’s not something that happens every day to everybody, but if you’re watching it on the telly everyday you start to assume that perhaps it is.” (NR1 Strategic ASB Practitioner)*

*“We watched programmes last night you know, you just think it’s horrendous, it’s horrendous what’s going on you know. . . . And that’s what people look at and I’m sure their perceptions are affected by what they see on the television because they don’t go anywhere, they don’t go out.” (R1 Police Frontline ASB Officer)*

It was felt this created an unrealistic perception of the problems facing smaller local communities, as their perceptions were shaped by the televised crime problems being experienced in major cities, such as knife and gun crime. There was also a frustration that high profile stories could undo up to a year’s worth of work trying reduce perceptions:

*“All you need is one of the national press, the national news to run a story of a family man being kicked to death by a group of feral youths outside his own house in whatever part of the country, bang it’s gone. You know, you’ve lost a big chunk of what you’ve done because people will read that and think: god it’s getting terrible isn’t it?” (NR2 Strategic ASB Practitioner)*

In a more local context there was the feeling that local newspaper stories about ASB in a particular location could prompt avoidance behaviour:

*“Although you don’t know the ins and outs of it, your perception is that it’s a trouble spot and you’ve got to avoid it.” (R1 Local Authority Frontline ASB Officer)*

### **5.23 Section C Summary**

A number of additional issues were judged to impact upon public perceptions of ASB including: the courts system, public expectations of ASB practitioners and the media. These factors were deemed out of the control of practitioners to a large extent. For example, the practitioners interviewed had no control over the decisions made by the courts.

Not all of the aforementioned factors affected all areas, highlighting again the different issues being experienced in the different areas. Could some of these issues be addressed if a more holistic approach to reducing public perceptions of ASB was taken? These issues will be discussed in Chapter Six. A full summary of the findings from section C can be seen in table 5.4.

Table 5.4 Summary of Section C Findings

| <b>SECTION C SUMMARY: ADDITIONAL FACTORS CONSIDERED TO IMPACT UPON PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF ASB OUTSIDE THE CONTROL OF PRACTITIONERS</b> |  |
|---|--|
| <b>THEME</b>  | <b>MAIN FINDINGS</b>   |
| <b>The Courts System</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sentences considered too lenient.</li> <li>• Courts not tough enough on ASBO breaches.</li> <li>• Perpetrators given too many chances.</li> <li>• Sentences deemed to affect public perceptions of ASB.</li> <li>• Practitioners frustrated by the (in)action of the courts.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Public Expectations of the Authorities</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practitioners worked against unrealistic public expectations regarding the speed of enforcement action.</li> <li>• It was a belief that the public felt the authorities had unlimited resources.</li> <li>• Public expectations heightened by the agencies themselves over time.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>The Media</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practitioners felt that the media had a negative impact on public perceptions of ASB.</li> <li>• It was believed that the public make links between what they see on TV and their local community.</li> <li>• TV highlighted major city's problems, which were then believed to be occurring in small local communities by the public.</li> <li>• It was thought that local newspaper stories about ASB could provoke public avoidance of that area.</li> </ul> |

## 5.24 Conclusions

The findings presented in this Chapter provided an insight into how ASB practitioners addressed public perceptions of ASB, creating a new topic of research. The results indicated that addressing public perceptions of ASB is a complex process, with a number of factors combining to impact both directly and indirectly upon public perceptions.

It was clear the four areas approached the direct reduction of public perceptions in different ways. Some areas favoured multi-agency 'blitz' methods whereas others preferred to use publicity. Practitioners afforded different priority levels to perception reduction and had a generally negative opinion about the way perceptions were measured.

As well as the direct factors, a number of indirect factors were found likely to affect public perceptions of ASB. These factors represented actions that were not directly aimed at reducing perceptions, but may affect the delivery of perception reducing interventions. Practitioners faced different issues in the different areas. They felt their practice was influenced by the definition of ASB, issues of subjectivity and tolerance, reporting mechanisms and the information they received from the Home Office, all of which influenced their work in different ways. This highlighted a number of inconsistencies in service delivery by practitioners trying to reduce public perceptions of ASB and tackle ASB as a whole.

A further set of influencing factors were identified, which were deemed outside of the control of practitioners, such as the courts system, public expectations and the media. Practitioners believed these factors hampered their attempts to reduce perceived high levels of ASB.

All of these aforementioned factors are likely to work in combination to impact upon public perceptions of ASB. The influence each factor has is likely to depend upon the public's individual circumstances, as highlighted by the results presented in Chapter Four. Some of these influencing factors could be controlled by practitioners, whereas others could not.

It was important to understand how practitioners addressed public perceptions in order to assess the effort being exerted to address a performance indicator that is growing in profile. It is important to note that measuring the success of the work being undertaken was beyond the remit of this study.

The next Chapter will examine how these findings synthesise with the other phases of research to generate an understanding of the problems and policy implications associated with public perceptions of ASB. It will explore the meaning of these findings and situate them within the broader social and political context as well as within the current ASB literature.

## Chapter Six: Discussion of Findings

### 6.1 Introduction

Chapter Six brings together policy and theory alongside the results of this study, to present a coherent, contextualised discussion of the potential policy implications. This synthesis is achieved by generating inferences from the three phases of research, to provide a holistic insight into public perceptions of ASB through the principles of complementarity and initiation. The inferences generated by the combination of results from phase two (public focus groups) and phase three (practitioner interviews) have demonstrated a symbiotic relationship exists between the public and ASB practitioners, and this relationship will be explored throughout the Chapter.

The main findings discussed here include: the impact of the definition of ASB upon perceptions of ASB, measuring perceptions of ASB, exploring public perceptions of ASB, public and practitioner relations, the role of the media, and Respect status. The Chapter will conclude with a summary of the potential policy implications. It is crucial to note that all the public perceptions findings discussed here are based upon responses from the hard-pressed dominant ACORN Wards, from the two Respect and two Non-Respect areas studied.

### 6.2 The Impact of the Definition of ASB upon Perceptions

Understanding and identifying the factors that drive public perceptions of ASB is problematical, primarily as a consequence of the subjective legal definition of ASB. This was reflected in the phase one public questionnaire and the phase two public focus groups. Public participants in this study could generally identify types of ASB, but also regularly incorrectly categorised criminal acts as ASB. Many also equated ASB with young people, which reiterates the findings from Millie *et al.* (2005). Therefore, can we be sure that when investigating public perceptions of ASB, we are investigating the perceptions of ASB alone and not the fear of crime, and/or the marginalisation of young people as well? Based on the findings from this study, the answer is likely to be no, particularly in a qualitative enquiry. Arguably the employment of the 7SI eliminates some of this confusion in a quantitative situation, which along with the combined perceptions measure will be discussed in section 6.3.

To some extent, the definition and meaning of ASB varied between the four areas studied. This resulted in a different context of acceptable behaviour evident within each focus group.

However, this was perhaps to be expected after the Home Office encouraged locally agreed definitions of ASB to be employed from 2004 (Harradine *et al.*, 2004). This created problems when trying to ascertain perception levels, as there was no common foundation for public perceptions. In some circumstances, different authorities within the same area had a different definition of ASB. Therefore attempts to elicit a consistent level of context between all focus groups, across the four areas studied were greatly inhibited.

Practitioners felt the majority of the public did not understand what ASB constituted. Some did not consider this a problem, suggesting that dealing with incidents and improving the quality of life took precedence over semantics. Although if perceptions are to be accurately measured for the purpose of NI17 (reducing perceptions of ASB) and form part of a commitment to reduce ASB through the introduction of Minimum Standards, issues arising from inconsistent definitions must be addressed. Unfortunately these issues reignite the long-standing debate about the merits of the legal definition of ASB set out in the CDA (1998). Despite problems with the definition being well-documented (Card and Ward, 1998; Budd and Sims, 2001; Fletcher, 2005), these issues were again found to persist in a practical environment, in relation to both public perceptions and incidents of ASB. This situation was confounded in some areas as a result of varying locally-formed agency definitions.

The lack of prescriptive definition impacted profoundly on this study, as public perceptions of ASB were found to be heavily subjective. Responses concerning both the perceived extent and personal experience of ASB varied greatly between areas, between Wards and even between neighbours. Therefore assessing perceptions of ASB in general was difficult and made comparing the perceptions in four areas challenging. The struggles encountered lend support to the call by Mackenzie *et al.* (2010) for a more prescriptive definition of ASB.

Finding perceptions to be subjective was not unique (Flint *et al.*, 2007a; 2007b), but these results do reinforce the difficulties faced when attempting to obtain a greater understanding of perceptions. In addition, it is likely that many aspects of the participants' subjectivity were influenced by their life experiences such as: deprivation, poor housing, unemployment and immigration, which are factors beyond the remit of this study.

The reality of the subjective definition was faced by ASB practitioners on a daily basis. Some practitioners felt it was hard to know when 'real' ASB was being reported, making it difficult to determine the appropriate action to take. Matters of subjectivity also have broader

implications linked to tolerance. Practitioners reported dealing with incidents relating to a clash of cultural backgrounds and the movement of people between areas. These factors constitute part of the broader policy issue of social inclusion, an aspect of 'Third Way' politics associated with ASB policy (Mooney and Young, 2003). Further investigation would be required to determine whether this was genuine ASB or a form of prejudice and/or racism occurring. As tolerance and subjectivity levels appeared to vary between neighbourhoods it may be appropriate to consider introducing interventions to reduce perceived high levels of ASB based on these different levels. For example reassurance messages could be tailored by Neighbourhood Policing Teams according to the needs of the community they serve. This subject will be re-visited in section 6.5. Overall, if the public do not really understand what represents ASB, are public perceptions reliably informed and can they constitute a trusted measure of ASB?

### **6.3 Measuring Perceptions of ASB**

By utilising the combined perceptions measure, public perceptions of ASB could be quantified in the selected hard-pressed areas. The results from the phase one questionnaire showed 28% of respondents perceived high levels of ASB, a figure comparable to the 30% BCS equivalent for hard-pressed areas (Flatley *et al.*, 2008). Through employing a multi-stage cluster sample, additional results could be obtained in relation to Respect status, individual areas and Ward areas. These results showed the proportion of respondents perceiving high levels of ASB varied between Respect and Non-Respect status, between areas and between Wards, even though the Wards shared the same local service provision from the authorities. This reinforces the findings of Flint *et al.* (2007a) and (2007b), and represents the first time these findings have been produced using the combined perceptions measure. The use of the combined perceptions measure was important because this is how perceptions are obtained for the NI17 performance measure, which added an element of practical applicability to this study. These findings show that although deprivation is considered an indicator of perceived high levels of ASB, perceiving high levels of ASB varied greatly between different deprived locations. This highlights the importance of place, in a similar way to Ames *et al.* (2007). By employing focus groups in phase two, this relationship was explored further: would a shared neighbourhood, background and social group demonstrate any variance in perceived high levels of ASB? The answer was unequivocally yes. Within focus groups there were very high perception scores contrasted by very low perception scores, even though in many cases the participants lived within streets of each other and some even closer than that. This reiterates the truly subjective nature of

perceptions of ASB and raises some of the practical problems associated with trying to improve these perceptions. At what level can perceptions be targeted if perceptions vary so distinctly between a few streets or within one estate? In this respect, is it even feasible to address perceptions of ASB at such a micro level in terms of resources? But equally, does a blanket approach really elicit perception change? These factors are important and will be returned to later, but just as important is the reliability of perceptions measures to chart these changes.

Considering the practical application of perceptions measures is crucial, particular in light of NI17. Practitioners displayed very little confidence in the combined perceptions measure being used to determine the extent of ASB, with many preferring to judge their level of performance against demand statistics. To some extent, this controls the effect of the 'Perception Paradox' impacting upon the perceptions measure, but also brings with it some of the difficulties associated with counting incidents of ASB, highlighted in Chapter One. Some practitioners called for a repeated measures design to be employed when measuring perceptions, as this would provide a more accurate reflection of perception change by establishing comparisons to a stable baseline. However, this focuses on perception change rather than measuring the extent of ASB, which poses the question: what are perceptions measures employed for? Measuring the extent of ASB? Or, understanding how many people are affected by ASB with a view to reducing it? Currently, the policy context suggests it is about both. The combined perceptions measure is used by the BCS as a proxy to gauge the extent of ASB, but reducing perceptions of ASB year on year forms part of the new Minimum Standards. Although this could mean reducing the extent of ASB by reducing the proxy measure, the Minimum Standards are intended for public consumption and if the public are still unclear about the definition of ASB, their understanding of the use of perceptions as a proxy measure for the extent of ASB is highly unlikely. Therefore, greater clarity is required in regard to the practical application of perceptions measures.

Semantics and policy aside, employing a repeated measures design would help to improve perception measurement, but a synthesis of different measures would be more likely to achieve an accurate picture of perceptions and facilitate practitioner confidence in the figures generated. The synthesised measure could include the combined perceptions measure, demand statistics and police recorded incidents. This would, of course, provoke some of the concerns associated with counting incidents. However, after over a decade of ASB legislation, baseline levels of demand statistics and recorded incidents will have been established, allowing for a composite of perceptions and 'real life' figures to be produced. It

would also represent a multi-agency figure, which based on some of the comments made by practitioners, would help to raise the profile of perceptions of ASB in some agencies and give all parties a degree of investment in the measure.

Generally, very little perception measurement was conducted locally by practitioners. No combined perception measures were taken, making any data that was collected incompatible with performance management measures. In all four areas a Police Authority survey was undertaken, but the dissemination of these findings was unclear. Given there was no formal data collection and the body of research evidence that suggests high levels of variance, ASB practitioners do not have an accurate, quantified measure of perceptions of ASB at anything below local authority level. They do however, have a wealth of knowledge about local perceptions through engaging with communities on a daily basis. One area did collect informal perceptions data from residents directly affected by ASB, the results of which were used to inform enforcement action. Nevertheless, these local measures and the informal knowledge base are not considered when assessing performance through NI17 and Place Survey statistics. The current situation is likely to have to change in the near future, as a direct consequence of the introduction of the Minimum Standards for ASB. A year on year reduction cannot be reported if only a biennial survey takes place! It therefore appears some strategic decision making is necessary in order to ensure high quality data is collected and more accurate performance measures are obtained, particularly if practitioner support and confidence in these measures is to be fostered. However, the researcher is not advocating an over-commitment to measurement at the expense of frontline services.

These issues raise questions about the level of priority afforded to reducing perceptions of ASB locally. From the practitioner perspective, there was little consistency in the amount of priority placed upon measuring and reducing public perceptions. In general, most practitioners did not consider reducing perceptions of ASB to be a priority. However, distinctions were apparent between agencies, with the police giving perceptions a high priority, compared to ALMOs who were more concerned about ASB cases and customer satisfaction. Discrepancies were also apparent within areas and between different areas. This demonstrates how there is very little consistency in the way practitioners address perceptions of ASB. The greatest priority for all was tackling incidents of ASB, which is understandable. However, clearer guidelines on the priority that should be afforded to the perceptions agenda, with an emphasis on joint-working practices would be beneficial.

## **6.4 Exploring Public Perceptions of ASB**

Despite the complexities associated with the definition of ASB, new insight into a variety of perception-based aspects were gained from this study. Generating an overall understanding of public perceptions was important in order to relate the findings to policy implications.

### *6.4.1 The Perceived Extent of Local ASB*

The phase one questionnaire indicated that most respondents felt ASB was getting worse on a local and national scale. However, the proportion of those who thought it was getting worse locally was 26.3% lower than those who thought it was getting worse nationally. Was this dimension of local positivity visible in the qualitative research? Generally, the focus group participants perceived quite a high volume of ASB in their local neighbourhood. Previous research from the BCS (Wood, 2004; Upson, 2006; Flatley *et al.*, 2008) has focused solely on whether respondents perceive high levels of ASB, but the findings from phase two indicated that in reality, it is not as simple as perceiving high or low levels of ASB. Participants suggested their perceptions of ASB increased if and when an incident, or a series of ASB incidents occurred, only for these levels to reduce when the incidents ceased to occur. This dynamic process of perception heightening and reduction brings into question the appropriateness of surveys to determine the extent of perceived high levels of ASB. For example, a period of ASB activity in a neighbourhood before a survey sweep may provide a false indication of overall perception levels. This circumstance is mitigated by the introduction of the Policing Pledge, as the monthly public meetings should enable perception levels to be better understood by the police over a longer period of time. However, this does little to assist the local authority, whose ASB performance is measured in relation to the survey figures. Theoretically, a local authority could have performed well for the majority of the year, but the performance measure may not reflect that. If the misleading data is then publicised to the community, it could have a damaging effect on public confidence in the authorities and equally perceptions of ASB. This is particularly pertinent considering additional Home Office funding has been recently targeted towards areas where the proportion of residents perceiving high levels of ASB is greater than 25% (DCSF Website, 2010). The findings from this study suggest that the accuracy of perceptions data may be impaired as a consequence of dynamic perceptions change.

Investigating the perceived extent of local ASB also demonstrated that positive perception change is possible, as this was evident in one Ward. The methods used to tackle perceived high levels of ASB will be detailed later.

#### *6.4.2 Displacement*

In three of the four areas studied, participants considered the displacement of ASB from outside their neighbourhood to increase the extent of local ASB. Displacement is a risk associated with ASB interventions (Crawford and Lister, 2007), but the impact of displacement upon communities and/or public perceptions has not been explored. In addition, some participants perceived that people from less desirable areas deliberately visited their neighbourhood to commit ASB. The social construction of 'others' being responsible for ASB is well documented (Millie, 2006; Nixon and Parr, 2006), but the deliberate movement of others to inflict ASB has not been considered. This elaborates the findings from the phase one questionnaire, which showed most respondents thought ASB was committed deliberately. Subsequently, this provokes questions about the characteristics of ASB perpetrators, who commits ASB and why? With specific reference to public perceptions, are certain types of perpetrators more likely to fuel perceived high levels of ASB? Further research would be required.

#### *6.4.3 The Nature of Local ASB Experienced*

Assessing the nature of ASB experienced by participants in a hard-pressed setting provided some comprehension of the behaviours they encountered. It also presented the opportunity to compare the behaviours they experienced to those of the 7SI and broader BCS questions. The phase one questionnaire utilising the 7SI, showed that teenagers hanging around was the most common type of ASB experienced and also had the greatest impact on respondents' lives. However, the focus groups in phase two provided participants the opportunity to state *any* types of ASB they were experiencing. The quantity and variety of different types of ASB being experienced was vast (as shown in Chapter Four), with differences in behaviour types apparent within and between Wards, as well as between the different areas. The findings from this study reiterated the different experiences people have of ASB according to location, even when studying hard-pressed areas alone. Although the range of behaviours experienced may simply reflect the hard-pressed setting, as the association between ASB and this context is widely acknowledged (Nixon *et al.*, 2003; Ames *et al.*, 2007; Flatley *et al.*, 2008). However, the differences between the behaviour types mentioned and the 7SI were vast. Therefore, how appropriate is the combined perceptions measure? Does it really reflect the ASB that is being experienced on a daily basis or has the nature of ASB changed over the past decade? Whether it does or not has serious implications for the reliability of the combined perceptions measure. Based on the behaviour types stated, the 7SI is not very reflective. As acknowledged in Chapter Four, the principal component analysis used to create the 7SI was statistically rigorous, but the types of

behaviour used to create the amalgamated measure may now be out of date. According to the findings from phase two, intimidating others with dogs and nuisance motorbikes appeared common, but these have previously not been included in any ASB measurement. The combined perceptions measure scores conducted at the beginning of the focus groups are therefore likely to have been very different if these behaviour types had been considered. Accordingly, it is important to understand the types of behaviours being experienced in order to accurately contextualise public perceptions. Unfortunately this is another example of the consequences of having a subjective legal definition of ASB, because if a prescriptive set of behaviours were in place, a more accurate measure of the nature of ASB could be obtained.

#### *6.4.4 Factors Informing Perceptions*

It was established that the hard-pressed participants perceived a fairly high volume of ASB and experienced a variety of ASB types, but what factors informed their perceptions? It was clear from the phase one questionnaire and the phase two focus groups that seeing ASB occurring, be it against neighbours, environmental damage or through personal experience was the key driver of perceptions in these hard-pressed areas. In many cases it was a combination of the above factors, alongside word of mouth and the experiences of others. These experiential factors can therefore be considered the primary drivers of perceptions in the hard-pressed environments studied. Although this does little to uncover new drivers of perceptions, it does suggest that perceptions of those not living in hard-pressed areas, where incidents of ASB are less common, may be influenced by other factors, such as the media. Therefore the needs of these groups may need to be addressed separately in order to obtain an overall reduction in perceived high levels of ASB. For example, the perceptions of those living in hard-pressed areas may be addressed by tackling incidents of ASB, whereas those not living in hard-pressed areas, who perceive high levels of ASB, may need to be targeted with reassurance messages. This expands the short-term neighbourhood level interventions proposed by Mackenzie *et al.* (2010), who suggested broad-based reassurance initiatives, public information strategies and environmental interventions. Some specific perception reduction interventions were already taking place in the four areas and will be discussed in section 6.5.

#### *6.4.5 Concern about ASB*

Examining these findings from a different perspective, it is clear that public perceptions of ASB are very complex. Those who stated seeing/experiencing ASB fuelled their perception of ASB commented on the levels of ASB they perceive, not the fear it generates. It is easy to

assume those perceiving high levels of ASB are fearful of ASB, but as Upson (2006) points out, not everyone experiencing ASB considers it a problem. This links to the work of Carvalho and Lewis (2003) who found that fear is not always generated by neighbourhood disorder. Therefore, is there another division in the way perceptions should be addressed: those who perceive high levels and are fearful, and those who perceive high levels and remain unaffected? To complicate matters further, are those who display high levels of ASB from areas with few ASB incidents, the 'Perceptions Paradox', influenced by a broader type of fear? For example, the fear of crime. Further research into drivers of perceptions in those areas where perceptions of ASB are high and incidents of ASB are low is required.

In the four areas, concern about ASB was just as intricate. Crucially, most focus group participants said they were worried about ASB in their neighbourhood, regardless of their combined perceptions measure score. This shows how some participants did not perceive high levels of ASB statistically, but when questioned said they were worried about ASB. The manifestations of their fears were wide-ranging, from personally experiencing ASB to not even knowing why they had become more fearful! In many cases there was also a blurring of boundaries between ASB and crime, making the distinction of perceived ASB even more difficult. From these findings there appears to be eight general categories of people relating to perceived high levels of ASB, levels of worry and the number of neighbourhood ASB incidents. Those who:

- Perceive high levels of ASB & high number of incidents & worried about ASB
- Perceive high levels of ASB & low number of incidents & worried about ASB
- Perceive high levels of ASB & high number of incidents & not worried about ASB
- Perceive high levels of ASB & low number of incidents & not worried about ASB
- Do not perceive high levels of ASB & high number of incidents & worried about ASB
- Do not perceive high levels of ASB & low number of incidents & worried about ASB
- Do not perceive high levels of ASB & high number of incidents & not worried about ASB
- Do not perceive high levels of ASB & low number of incidents & not worried about ASB

These dispositions are highly individualised and exist alongside the subjective legal definition of ASB. Consequently, is addressing perceived high levels of ASB through interventions correct? Should resources instead be focused on addressing the fear associated with ASB in a similar fashion to the fear of crime? This depends upon the strategic priorities associated with perceptions of ASB that were mentioned earlier. If the perceptions agenda is about reducing levels of concern, the categories outlined above

demonstrate how complex the relationship is between perceiving high levels of ASB, the number of local ASB incidents and levels of concern. Each of these categories would need to be addressed to elicit a widespread reduction in perceived high levels of ASB.

Overall, a broader appreciation of public perceptions of ASB has been obtained from this study. The complexities uncovered have related to the extent and nature of ASB, displacement, concern about ASB, and factors informing perceptions of ASB. These invaluable insights have been transferred to a policy context, with suggestions for tangible progress provided.

## **6.5 Public and Practitioner Relations**

In addition to the primary drivers of perceptions outlined above, this study has uncovered a number of secondary factors that influenced public perceptions, as a result of the mixed methods approach of questioning practitioners alongside the public. Many of these factors focus around the reciprocal relationship between the public and practitioners and the levels of service provided.

### *6.5.1 Great Expectations*

After the results from the phase one questionnaire suggested that over 80% of respondents were unaware of local or national projects to tackle ASB, it seemed appropriate to question participants in phase two, about their expectations of the authorities. In the vast majority of instances the participants felt their expectations were not met, on both a personal and neighbourhood level. This acted as a catalyst for increasing perceptions of ASB, as perceived high levels of ASB were reinforced when the expectations of ASB services were not met. The public participants provided many examples of how expectations had not been met: phone calls not answered, feedback not given on cases, practitioners' lack of authority, the law protecting perpetrators, not enough officers, the quality of some officers, and a lack of local understanding. This reinforces the findings from Innes and Jones (2006) who found levels of public perceived risk were heightened by a poor response by practitioners.

Although practitioners were aware of the high expectations placed upon them. They felt the public believed they had unlimited resources and had the capacity to deal with any arising issues. The lack of understanding between these two parties appears, from the findings, to have negatively influenced public perceptions of ASB. Such high expectations may be a result of the political rhetoric surrounding ASB policy since the late 1990's. Many papers

have suggested how New Labour created ASB as a vehicle to help fulfil their political aspirations (Tonry, 2004; Mooney and Young, 2006). But how can this be challenged in practice?

Like most aspects of ASB, this issue is multifaceted. Some practitioners faced problems when trying to deliver their services. A lack of time and staff were common, and in some cases there was no capacity to refer perpetrators onto intervention programmes. What are practitioners supposed to do if they cannot refer? This demonstrates how some circumstances are outside of the control of frontline ASB practitioners, but what consolation is this to the expectant public and/or victim(s)? This study uncovered further examples of practitioners completing the groundwork on cases, only for them to fail in the courts system. Practitioners expressed their frustrations at the number of final warnings given by the courts, as well as inadequate punishments and lenient sentences handed down for ASBO breaches. From a human rights perspective, a lot has been written about the disproportionate nature of prison sentences for non-criminal behaviours sanctioned through ASBO breach (Ashworth, *et al.*, 1998; Pearson, 2006). However, from a public perceptions perspective, if a perpetrator breaches an ASBO and is not sanctioned in the manner the public expects, or has been told to expect by politicians or practitioners acting on Home Office guidance, public perceptions of ASB will be affected. This was found in all four areas studied, with the public perceiving that a lack of consequences associated with committing ASB, fuelled levels of actual ASB in their neighbourhoods because perpetrators were not deterred. However, there are also broader criminal justice issues at work here, such as prison overcrowding, which could affect Magistrates' decisions to hand down custodial sentences. This is not an attempt to endorse the use of custodial sentences for ASBO breaches, but an example of how public perceptions of ASB can be influenced by the authorities not delivering: a) what they wanted to achieve, b) what they said they would achieve, and c) what the public expected them to achieve.

Based on the findings from this study, providing the public with more realistic expectations of ASB practitioners would contribute to a reduction in the proportion of people perceiving high levels of ASB. Perceptions in this respect could be difficult to change, with perceptions likely to have developed over a long period of time. Indeed some practitioners expressed how they thought their own organisations were guilty of raising expectations. Realistic expectations could be promoted through a combination of formal and informal measures including: a specific communications strategy, the use of monthly Policing Pledge PACT meetings to

convey realistic messages, and even through frontline officers providing messages to the public on a daily basis.

From the experiences above, it seems that some frontline ASB practitioners are caught in middle, between public expectations and the constraints placed upon them by strategic decision-making authorities, such as the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and the Home Office. A more joined-up approach towards ASB reduction, particularly in relation to the CPS, would be likely to promote more realistic expectations.

#### *6.5.2 Reporting ASB*

Findings from phase two provided a further example of the intricacies associated with perceptions of ASB. It seemed that as a consequence of public expectations not being met by the authorities, many participants became resigned to suffering from ASB. In turn, when new ASB incidents occurred, they were not reported to the authorities. This is a further example of the reciprocal relationship that exists between the public and practitioners. The practitioners in phase three conveyed their frustrations at the lack of reporting, as enforcement action could not be taken without sufficient evidence. So a stalemate was reached: the public were unwilling to report, but the practitioners could not act without the reports! Meanwhile, the ASB incidents persisted in the neighbourhoods and at the very least, maintained perceptions of ASB. In addition to practitioners communicating their services more effectively and providing realistic expectations, the public also have to give practitioners the opportunity to act by reporting ASB incidents, otherwise the cycle of ASB perception maintenance will not be broken. So the solution is simple, encourage the reporting of ASB incidents, or is it?

Unfortunately, encouraging reporting alone is unlikely to provide the answer based on the findings from this study. Encouraging those who feel they have been let-down by the authorities to begin reporting again would, of course, be beneficial. It appears that trust needs to be re-gained by effective action being visible. However, a consistent finding across the practitioners was that the public did not know who to contact to report incidents of ASB. Some public participants freely admitted this, but others found when they did try to report, they were passed between different agencies and told that nobody could help. On most occasions participants called the police, a fact also highlighted by the public questionnaire and practitioners themselves. This appeared to cause tension in one area, as the police were receiving complaints that should have been directed to other authorities, which stretched their resources. There was also a lack of consistency in the reporting mechanisms

available in the four different areas. Some had multi-agency reporting lines, whereas other areas had different contact lines for the different agencies. Despite the struggles involved in mechanics of reporting ASB, an over-arching factor remains. The public are unsure who to report to as a result of the subjective nature of the legal definition of ASB. A lack of public understanding has been mentioned previously in this Chapter, alongside the blurring of boundaries between crime and ASB. If the public do not really understand what ASB is, how can they effectively report it? This could be improved by clearer reporting mechanisms being in place, such as the multi-agency reporting line utilised in area NR1. More pertinently this demonstrates how interconnected the issues are surrounding perceptions of ASB.

### *6.5.3 Tackling ASB*

In one area, participants explained how their neighbourhood had improved dramatically after the introduction of Street Wardens. This perception aligns with previous research (Atkinson and Flint, 2003; Flint and Kearns, 2005; Casey, 2008). Although in addition, the participants were keen to stress the success of the scheme was as a result of the Wardens living in that neighbourhood because they had a greater appreciation of local issues. Participants were able to highlight this improvement in a qualitative situation, but it is unlikely the views from their small estate would have been visible or attributable to the Wardens through large-scale data collection such as the Place Survey. Consequently, local authority success may not be recognised and celebrated, which could lead to opportunities for further improvements in public confidence and perception reduction being missed. Having spoken to practitioners from this area, the employment of the Wardens was not a direct attempt to reduce perceived high levels of ASB as their remit was incident related, but a reduction in perceptions was apparent. The additional factor generated from this study relates to the characteristics of the Wardens themselves, mentioned above. Further research would be required to determine the efficacy of these findings. Should such findings be positive, locally residing officers may also help to build community trust in the authorities and create more realistic public expectations.

The findings from phase three suggested some consistent practices surrounding the interventions put in place to reduce perceptions of ASB. The areas were divided, with the two Respect areas favouring multi-agency blitz operations, while the two Non-Respect areas preferred a targeted communications strategy. Practitioners were sympathetic to the fact that the blitz operations may increase public perceptions of ASB through an increased level of authority activity, which acknowledges the findings of Hinkle and Weisburd (2008). The interventions, regardless of strategy, were generally considered to be successful, although

no formal evaluations were undertaken. Practitioners found it difficult to target perception-based interventions. This is unsurprising given the lack of Home Office guidance available for practitioners on this subject, despite the centrality of perception measures to performance management and the introduction of the perceptions-based Minimum Standard.

The interventions that did take place were not informed by the Place Survey findings and in general, few links were made between actual incidents of ASB and perceptions of ASB, despite findings from Innes and Jones (2006) confirming there to be a relationship. Based on the findings from this study, a progressive step forward would involve targeting ASB reduction interventions into neighbourhoods experiencing a high volume of incidents, while simultaneously concentrating reassurance messages into areas demonstrating the 'Perceptions Paradox'. In some cases a combination of these approaches may be necessary. This would target the approaches already utilised by practitioners more effectively, making more efficient use of the resources available. The main barrier to this approach would be feasibility, in terms of resources. The success of such an approach is untested, but the current interventions are equally as unproven.

#### *6.5.4 Priority of Reducing Public Perceptions*

The commitment to reducing perceived high levels of ASB appeared closely aligned to the over-arching priorities within ASB policy and the lack of Home Office guidance. It was clear the main priority for practitioners in all areas was dealing with cases of ASB. The actual Government priority of public perceptions is relatively unknown, despite it being prominent in policy documents. Of the four areas studied, different areas placed a different priority upon reducing perceptions. Different agencies also afforded perceptions a different priority level. There was even one instance where the priority of perceptions differed between frontline and strategic practitioners from the same organisation, making it clear there was no consistent practice applied. This links back to questions raised earlier in this Chapter. What is the function of public perceptions of ASB? Is it chiefly about measuring the extent of problems and reducing incidents, or is it concerned with reducing the fear of ASB and improving the quality of life? This requires clarification.

#### *6.5.5 Communicating with the Public*

As mentioned previously, communicating with the public was the main approach used by some areas to reduce perceived high levels of ASB. However, communicating with the public constituted an important part of general ASB policy for all areas. It provided the opportunity to convey reassurance messages, which is important considering the links made

earlier between perceptions levels and having confidence in local services. Some areas communicated to the public more than others, with little consistency between agencies in terms of the messages they sent out. It was apparent that many small messages were being publicised by the different agencies, instead of a co-ordinated multi-agency approach. Such an approach may add consistency to the types of messages conveyed as well as facilitate an improved public awareness of the agencies that ASB can be reported to. In order to achieve a co-ordinated message, one agency or officer would be required to take responsibility for all communications. Although taking into consideration the concerns highlighted by practitioners about time and resources, this may be an unrealistic aspiration, despite the potential benefits it could bring.

Whilst it had been acknowledged how important communication was, many practitioners were also wary of its limitations. Principally these concerns were situated around the prospect of raising the fear of crime and/or increasing perceptions of ASB. Different agencies approached these barriers in different ways, although there was little consistency in approach by the same type of agency across the different areas. Therefore the approach taken appeared reliant upon the individual officers involved. This created further inconsistencies and represented an area where opportunities to reduce perceived high levels may have been missed. The recent publication of Home Office guidance on the topic of confidence building through communication signifies a positive progression in this area.

Improving the quality of communication with the public was a factor highlighted by all phases of data collection, both public and practitioner. Findings from phases one and two demonstrated how the public felt they were not adequately kept informed about what practitioners were doing to tackle ASB. The use of focus groups allowed their feelings to be explored, with many participants suggesting their own perceptions of ASB would be rationalised if they received a higher volume of quality information. Local practitioners may benefit from engaging with local communities to determine how reassurance messages should be communicated, as the preferred methods of communication varied between areas. This emphasises the importance of communication when considering public perceptions of ASB and suggests the priority of providing reassurance messages should be greater than it currently stands for practitioners.

In short, a notable additional dimension was brought to the public perceptions debate through the inclusion of ASB practitioners. It is clear that a complicated, symbiotic relationship exists between the public and ASB practitioners that has the power to influence

public perceptions of ASB. Some of the issues raised above demonstrate how public-practitioner relationships could be improved with regard to public perceptions of ASB.

## **6.6 Additional Factors**

Two further topics were considered important to this study that sit outside public and practitioner realms, namely the role of the media and Respect status.

### *6.6.1 The Role of the Media*

Probing public views about the influence of the media upon their perceptions was justified, after the public questionnaire produced an association between being less likely to perceive high levels of ASB and reading the local newspaper. No evidence of this association was apparent during the focus groups, but insight was gained into the impact the media can have upon perceptions. It was clear that participants' judged their levels of fear to be heightened after consuming media reports about crime and ASB. In three of the four areas, high profile, well-publicised ASB cases had negatively influenced participants' perceptions of ASB in their own neighbourhood. No links have previously been explicitly made between media reports and perceptions of ASB. Why did the participants believe ASB in their neighbourhood was worse because of an incident hundreds of miles away? Greater enquiry into this topic is essential. Practitioners were confident these types of links were being made by the public in their area, but felt powerless to stop it. As the way the media reports ASB cannot be controlled, further research is also required to determine whether local reassurance messages given by practitioners could have any impact on heightened levels of fear. A full range of suggestions for further research is provided in Chapter Eight.

### *6.6.2 Respect Status*

The selection of Respect and Non-Respect status areas proved a useful tool when building the multi-stage cluster sample. The findings from the public questionnaire demonstrated that respondents were less likely to perceive high levels of ASB if they lived in a Respect area, but this is where the relevance of the Respect sampling ended. It was very evident in the public focus groups that the Respect Agenda had made very little impression. Most public participants were not aware of its existence and those that were, were not particularly complimentary. Therefore it was impossible to conduct any further enquiry into whether Respect status was associated with public perceptions using the selected methodology. When exploring practitioners' views on Respect, many were equally as unimpressed as the public, with the recurring theme of additional funding being seen as the only benefit. One

area did champion the Respect policies, but due to the small number of Respect and Non-Respect areas studied, more data would be required to generalise these findings. Partly as a consequence of the surge of Respect, a number of practitioners suggested there was an element of campaign overload. They considered this made their work very short-term oriented and lacking a long-term vision that could be effectively communicated to the public. A longer term vision for perception reduction and ASB in general may be beneficial. In many cases practitioners felt that Home Office guidance relating to ASB in general had recently decreased, with very little information available on perceptions at all. Although the ability of the Home Office to produce sound guidance on a subject where little is known about effective practice is limited. This re-emphasises the importance of signifying the strategic direction of public perceptions of ASB, as once this has been clarified, an effective approach for reducing perceptions of ASB can be developed.

## **6.7 Conclusions**

This Chapter presented a comprehensive examination of the inferences generated from the three research phases of this mixed methods study. The inferences were applied to a policy context to provide an indication of how public perceptions of ASB could be further understood and subsequently reduced.

The public findings from a hard-pressed context, were characterised by variation within and between the areas studied, in terms of the combined perception measure scores and articulated opinions. The subjective legal definition of ASB was considered to have made a decisive impact upon these outcomes. The definition was also deemed to have influenced the quantification of perception measures. All these factors demonstrated how difficult perceptions are to understand, measure and ultimately tackle.

The practitioner element provided an extra dimension to the public findings. A key inference made between the research phases highlighted the importance of the relationship between the public and practitioners. This provided an insight into how this relationship may be improved, in order to contribute towards perception reduction. Furthermore, stand alone practitioner findings demonstrated how practitioners address perceptions of ASB very differently. Practice varied greatly, with little consistency between different agencies and the areas studied.

The fundamental role of this Chapter was to situate the inferences generated within a practical context. A summary of the key policy relevant findings from this study are as follows:

- The purpose of public perceptions of ASB requires clarification: is it simply a proxy measure for the extent of ASB, are there broader quality of life applications, or is it a mixture of both?
- The priority of public perceptions of ASB needs to be clarified, facilitating clear guidance on how perceptions of ASB should be addressed.
- A prescriptive definition of ASB would facilitate perception measurement, as perceptions of ASB could be put into context and measured more objectively.
- If a year on year reduction in perceptions of ASB forms part of the Minimum Standards for ASB, an accurate yearly measure needs to be in place, which should ideally comprise a repeated measures design.
- A review of the behaviours used in the 7SI should be considered, as the current behaviour types may no longer be relevant.
- A more joined-up approach to ASB is required between frontline authorities and agencies such as the CPS and Home Office, to ensure the same objectives are pursued and to restore public confidence.
- Realistic expectations of ASB services should be communicated to the public through a co-ordinated multi-agency approach.
- Measures should be in place to encourage members of the public who no longer report ASB to begin reporting again, with clear details of the reporting systems available.
- The implementation of perception/area based interventions should be explored (reduction of ASB in hard-pressed areas, reassurance message in 'Perceptions Paradox' areas).

## **Chapter Seven: Reflections**

### **7.1 Introduction**

Having discussed the policy implications of the findings in Chapter Six, it seems appropriate at this stage to consider the context within which this study was conducted. This brief Chapter will note the societal changes that have occurred between 2007 and 2010, as well as the experience of the Home Office collaboration. The Chapter concludes with a critical appraisal of the research methodology.

### **7.2 ASB Policy and Societal Changes 2007-2010**

When this study commenced in April 2007, the pace of ASB policy had slowed dramatically. Over the past three years, New Labour's ASB policy momentum had begun to increase again with: the disbanding of the Respect Taskforce, the creation of the Youth Taskforce situated within the DCSF, the introduction of Neighbourhood Policing and the Policing Pledge, a new Home Secretary being appointed and Minimum Standards for ASB being introduced. Therefore the ASB policy context has changed markedly.

In addition to these policy changes, the last three years has been frenetic in terms of public-political relations. A global economic crisis tipped the UK into recession, the Government 'bailed out' a number of banking institutions to prevent them from losing public savings, which in turn created a multi-billion pound deficit in the UK's economy. These unprecedented events were supplemented by an MPs expenses scandal, where a number of MPs from all political parties were found to be profiting at the taxpayers' expense. Although not directly related to ASB policy, having conducted the public focus groups after these events had occurred, it was apparent the publics' opinion of those in authority was tarnished. It is important to acknowledge the unprecedented context within which the publics' comments were provided.

A general election was also held in May 2010, which saw the return of ASB to the headlines during the election campaign. The election resulted in a hung parliament, which is being governed by a Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition. These parties were not involved in the development of ASB legislation, hence the future of ASB policy and the continued relevance of public perceptions remain unclear.

### **7.3 Experience of the Home Office Collaboration**

Unlike a 'normal' PhD, which is the product of the researcher's creative consideration, the basic remit of this study was already established. The research process has therefore been slightly different, having worked from and refined an existing proposal, employing the most appropriate methods to answer the questions posed. The original proposal evolved quite considerably into what is presented today.

Securing an ESRC funded CASE studentship with the Home Office provided an opportunity with great potential, although this potential was never quite fulfilled for a number of reasons. In the early months of the studentship the contact points at the Home Office changed due to the machinery of Government change. This resulted in a period of time without any Home Office input and the development of new relationships with the collaborating organisation had to be forged.

In some respects the collaboration was difficult. The Home Office initially had some pre-defined criteria that could not be met by a single researcher during one PhD alone, for example, conducting a media discourse analysis in addition to the data collection undertaken. In some circumstances, particularly in relation to the public questionnaire development, joint-decision making took a long period of time, due to differing opinions about what should be included. This delayed the circulation of the questionnaire.

The qualitative aspects of the PhD received little input from the Home Office, although this has provided the researcher with more freedom to organically pursue the arising issues from a more neutral perspective.

Overall, the collaboration with the Home Office has been a valuable experience that provided insight into conducting research with a central government department.

### **7.4 Methodological Limitations**

Inevitably, as with most academic research, some methodological limitations are evident in this study. With the benefit of hindsight, there are parts of the research that could have been improved, although the overall mixed methods strategy and data collection tools are believed to be strong. In addition, organising certain aspects of the data collection was particularly testing. Therefore this section will highlight some of the difficulties faced, reflecting on any

improvements that could have been made. These issues have been highlighted throughout the thesis, but are summarised below.

Most of the methodological limitations related to the phase one questionnaire. As reported in Chapters Two and Three, the questionnaire received a low response rate of 10.6%. This was not wholly unanticipated, as previous questionnaires in hard-pressed areas also reported low response rates (Atkinson and Flint, 2003). If similar research is conducted in the future, a means of readily obtaining a booster sample would be recommended. Such a solution was not feasible in this study due to cost restraints. The number of returned questionnaires was enough to conduct a statistically valid data analysis, however analysis of the demographics of respondents showed a slight over-representation of the older age groups and women.

Most of the difficulties faced (apart from learning how to conduct backwards stepwise logistic regression), related to obtaining participants for the qualitative research phases. In general, most practitioners were more than willing to help, but others were very wary of the research and were unwilling to sign a consent form, or be tape recorded. In some circumstances, it was felt that being a 'student' researcher discouraged practitioners from participating. This was frustrating, particularly as the researcher had previously worked in a practical environment and fully appreciated the issues being faced. Unfortunately a representative from the ALMO in R1 was unable to be obtained.

Recruiting members of the public to participate in the focus groups was probably the single most challenging aspect of this study, a factor exacerbated by studying hard-pressed areas. The rationale was to approach established community groups that met regularly, so the focus group could be conducted instead of, or after one of their meetings. This immediately added an element of bias to the groups, as the participants involved were already engaged with the local community and may have had greater knowledge about local ASB. But based on the experiences of trying to obtain community groups to participate, the likelihood of establishing one-off focus groups would have been very small.

Some areas had more community groups operating than others, but in general the hard-pressed areas had very few community groups at all. Even when groups were running in the areas, some were not willing to take part. Some groups just did not want to and others did not see any point to the research as 'nothing would ever come from it' (they could have at least humoured me!). Although in many cases, people were not willing to participate

because they were afraid. They were fearful of the recriminations for talking about ASB, despite reassurances about the ethical integrity of the research and that it was separate to the work of the council or the police. When visiting some of the areas to actually conduct the focus groups, their fear was understandable. Some of the areas, not all, were very intimidating: large numbers of young people hanging around outside the venue, accompanied by the 'intimidating dogs' mentioned in Chapter Four. In many cases there were visible signs of disorder such as litter and graffiti. Actually visiting these areas provoked the thought that researching hard-pressed areas was possibly the wrong route to have pursued, despite these areas being a Home Office priority and the established links to previous research. It seemed obvious when stood in those neighbourhoods, that experiential factors would primarily drive perceptions of ASB. On reflection, it may have been more beneficial to have researched those areas where people perceive high levels of ASB even though the number of incidents of ASB was low (the 'Perception Paradox'), or a combination of Wards, instead of focusing solely on those with hard-pressed characteristics. Although this view emerged during the research, taking this approach would have facilitated more robust conclusions by adding a further contextual dimension.

## Chapter Eight: Conclusions

### 8.1 Introduction

This exploratory study sought to provide a greater understanding of public perceptions of ASB through a mixed methods research strategy. Three phases of research were conducted, investigating the views of both the public and ASB practitioners. The public element focused on the opinions of residents in hard-pressed dominant ACORN Wards and involved quantifying perception levels, before exploring some of the main trends qualitatively. The practitioner aspect was designed to complement the public findings, by examining how practitioners addressed public perceptions of ASB locally. Each research phase produced stand-alone results, but the added value obtained from this study was created by the inferences generated from the combination of the three research phases. The end product is a holistic insight into public perceptions that is situated in a highly-relevant policy context, which provides an original insight into the issue of micro-geographies of ASB.

### 8.2 Summary of Key Findings

This study generated a number of key findings that spanned a range of issues associated with public perceptions of ASB in hard-pressed areas.

#### *8.2.1 Phase One - Quantifying Public Perceptions of ASB in Four Areas*

The intention of phase one was to conduct a public questionnaire in four hard-pressed areas, to quantify perception levels and uncover topics of interest to pursue in phase two. Phase one also produced a set of valid results that can be viewed independently, which are reported in full in Chapter Three. In summary, the proportion of respondents perceiving high levels of ASB was determined at full sample, Respect sub-sample, area and Wards levels. This produced high levels of variation between the sub-samples, despite their shared hard-pressed status. To enable basic comparisons to be made with BCS data, logistic regression analysis was conducted with the results displayed in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1 Phase 1 Significant Logistic Regression Findings (p<0.05)

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Demographic and attitudinal factors significantly and independently associated with being more likely to perceive high levels of ASB</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Those who think ASB is committed deliberately</li> <li>• Those who think ASB has become worse in their local area</li> <li>• Those who said that no money is being spent to tackle ASB locally</li> <li>• Those who feel they are kept informed about local ASB</li> <li>• Being a council tenant (Respect sub-sample only)</li> <li>• Being non-white (Respect sub-sample only)</li> <li>• Living in Respect area 1 (Respect sub-sample only)</li> <li>• Living in Non-Respect area 2 (Non-Respect sub-sample only)</li> </ul> |
| <b>Demographic and attitudinal factors significantly and independently associated with being less likely to perceive high levels of ASB</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Living in a Respect area</li> <li>• Being more worried about crime than ASB</li> <li>• Being an owner occupier</li> <li>• Those who read the local newspaper (Non-Respect sub-sample only)</li> </ul>   |

The logistic regression analysis produced a number of demographic and attitudinal factors associated with perceiving high levels of ASB. This added a new attitudinal dimension to perceptions of ASB research.

### *8.2.2 Phase Two - Factors that Influence Public Perceptions of ASB*

As Chapter Four reports, the opinions obtained from the public focus groups conducted in phase two were also characterised by variation, with an additional element of subjectivity. Public perceptions and experiences of ASB were found to be very personal, with instances of varying perceptions between neighbours. The types of ASB experienced were also found to vary according to location, which re-emphasises the importance of place. One of the study's main aims was to uncover what factors shape public perceptions of ASB. In the hard-pressed dominant settings studied, perceptions of ASB were considered to be primarily influenced by experiential factors, with a number of additional factors deemed as secondary drivers of perceptions. These are summarised in Table 8.2. All of the factors were considered to operate within the contexts of location, the definition of ASB and the individuals' subjectivity and tolerance levels.

Table 8.2 Primary and Secondary Drivers of Public Perceptions of ASB

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Primary Drivers of Perceptions</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experiences of others</li> <li>• Personal Experience</li> <li>• Witnessing ASB</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Secondary Drivers of Perceptions</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing levels of ASB experienced</li> <li>• Changing levels of concern about ASB</li> <li>• Concern about ASB</li> <li>• High profile media cases</li> <li>• Impact of 'others' from outside neighbourhood</li> <li>• Interventions</li> <li>• Location of ASB</li> <li>• Nature of ASB</li> <li>• Perceived displacement of ASB</li> <li>• Perceived lack of protection from authorities</li> <li>• Perception that authorities' 'hands are tied'</li> <li>• Response of authorities</li> <li>• Unsanctioned ASB</li> <li>• Whether ASB reported</li> </ul> |

The relationship between the drivers of perceptions was found to be intricate and often interconnected. By virtue of this, it was unfeasible to determine the outright drivers of perceptions and the level of influence these factors had upon perceptions in this study. Due to levels of subjectivity and tolerance, the importance of place and the definition of ASB, the factors that drive perceptions are most likely to be dynamic.

### *8.2.3 Phase Three - How Practitioners Address Public Perceptions of ASB*

The findings generated from the practitioner interviews in phase three further demonstrated the complexities associated with perceptions of ASB, as fully explained in Chapter Five. A number of direct, indirect and additional factors outside practitioners' control were found to be associated with the way practitioners addressed public perceptions of ASB, as summarised in Table 8.3.

Table 8.3 Direct and Indirect Factors Associated with Addressing Public Perceptions of ASB

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Direct Factors</b>                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actual Levels of ASB and Perceptions of ASB</li> <li>• Communicating with the Public</li> <li>• Issues with Communicating with the Public</li> <li>• Measuring Perceptions Locally</li> <li>• Priority of Reducing Public Perceptions</li> <li>• Tackling Public Perceptions of ASB</li> <li>• The Combined Perceptions Measure</li> </ul> |
| <b>Indirect Factors</b>                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problems Experienced by Practitioners</li> <li>• Reporting Incidents of ASB</li> <li>• Respect Status</li> <li>• Subjectivity and Tolerance</li> <li>• The Definition of ASB</li> <li>• The Home Office</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Additional Factors Outside Practitioners' Control</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Expectations of the Authorities</li> <li>• The Courts System</li> <li>• The Media</li> </ul>  |

#### 8.2.4 Overall Inferences

The inferences generated from the three research phases contextualised the findings within current ASB policy. Collecting data from both the public and practitioners provided a holistic view of the topic and provided new detail into the type of symbiotic relationship that exists between these two parties. As such, a number of policy relevant findings were produced, which are fully reported in Chapter Six and summarised in Figure 8.1.

#### Figure 8.1 Summary of Policy Relevant Inferences Generated

- The purpose of perceptions of ASB requires clarification
- The priority of public perceptions of ASB needs to be determined
- A prescriptive definition of ASB would facilitate perceptions measurement
- An accurate yearly measure of ASB is necessary to comply to the new Minimum Standards of ASB, ideally of repeated measures design
- Consideration should be given to a review of the 7SI behaviour types
- Greater joined-up practice between frontline authorities and national agencies is necessary
- Realistic expectations of ASB service provided should be promoted
- The general public should be encouraged to report ASB
- Targeted perceptions based interventions should be explored

While the inferences in Figure 8.1 relate directly to the practical policy implications of this study, it is also important to consider the wider sociological and psychological context of the findings. The issues identified above cannot be resolved by narrowly focusing on public perceptions themselves. As highlighted in Chapter One, the theoretical understandings of ASB contain many elements such as: environmental causation (Broken Windows Theory), individual explanations (Developmental Criminology) and cultural dynamics. It is only through the successful integration of theory and practice that meaningful, evidence-based policy interventions can be applied. For example, when considering the results from this study, which showed that perceived high levels of ASB were primarily driven by experiential factors in the hard-pressed areas, attention should also be paid to the ASB incidents and perpetrators involved. Do the perpetrators display any of the deviancy-predicting risk factors suggested by Farrington (1997), such as poor housing, which could be addressed? If young people are the perpetrators are they exposed to poor social models within the family that could be remedied by parenting classes? Essentially, reducing public perceptions of ASB and the results from this study should not be enacted in isolation as they form part of a broad remit of overall ASB reduction.

### **8.3 Contributions to Knowledge**

This study constituted the first in-depth research into public perceptions of ASB that employed the combined perceptions measure. This made the study applicable to reducing perceptions of ASB in practice and framed it within the national performance indicator for reducing perceptions of ASB, NI17. The use of a mixed methods strategy and the employment of qualitative methods have made this study unique. The findings have made multi-faceted contributions to the field, which reflects the selected research strategy and the desire to produce policy relevant findings throughout each phase of research.

The phase one public questionnaire generated a set of stand-alone results which replicated and extended findings from the BCS. The use of attitudinal based perception questions also provided insight into a previously un-researched domain. These findings are detailed in Chapter Three of this thesis and were also published in the peer-reviewed 'Papers from the British Criminology Conference' journal (Heap, 2009) (see Appendix Three). The proportion of respondents identified as perceiving high levels of ASB has also complimented the body of research that has used the combined perception measure to quantify perceptions, namely the BCS and the Place Survey. The established concept of perception levels varying between locations was replicated and extended by conducting comparisons at various

spatial levels including: Respect status, local authorities, electoral Wards (phase one) and individual neighbourhoods (phase two).

The real added-value from the mixed methods approach was the qualitative aspect, which elaborated the findings of the public questionnaire conducted in phase one. The focus groups conducted in phase two provided the first in-depth analysis of hard-pressed residents' perceptions of ASB, providing the opportunity to confirm existing drivers of perceptions of ASB, as well as uncover new factors. The additional qualitative data collection undertaken in phase three filled in the gaps, providing the overall study with an inclusive view of perceptions of ASB from both the public and practitioners. This process uncovered barriers to effective practice (for example, relations with the CPS) and evidence of good practice (for example, multi-agency reporting mechanisms). Such findings unpinned the rationale for conducting exploratory research of this nature and situating it within a policy-relevant context. Phase three also represented the first time specific enquires had been made into the way public perceptions were addressed by practitioners, extending the existing body of knowledge, which focuses solely on the application of generic practitioner tools and powers.

Overall this study produced a number of specific contributions to knowledge. Some of these contributions involved new findings, while others challenged existing research. The key contributions are as follows:

#### Key Contributions Generated by Public Participants

- Unconventional forms of ASB were taking place, such as: parking and traffic issues with HGV lorries. More personal forms of ASB were also being experienced including aggressive loan sharks, culture clashes between neighbours and intimidating others with dogs. These findings challenge the traditional types of ASB reported by previous studies and suggest that ASB itself has evolved.
- In relation to the motivation for not reporting ASB incidents, differences were uncovered between Respect and Non-Respect areas, with the motivation for not reporting varying between fear and considering it a waste of time respectively. This suggests that perceptions of ASB and the motivation for not reporting differ between geographical areas.

- New insight was gained into the impact of the displacement of ASB from one area to another and how this negatively influences public perceptions of ASB. Furthermore, perceptions of ASB themselves were found to suffer from displacement, as ASB that was experienced or witnessed in non-local areas influenced public perceptions of ASB in the participants' local area.
- High profile national media reports of ASB cases were found to influence public perceptions of ASB, even when the incident did not take place in the local area. This general finding was coupled with Respect status variations regarding scepticism of the media, further highlighting the variation of public perceptions between areas.
- The public focus groups emphasised how the responses the public received from the authorities could vary, even when the same local authorities were responsible. This highlights the necessity to examine public perceptions of ASB at a micro-geographical level, as these variations in service response would not be uncovered by large-scale surveys such as the BCS.
- Despite some participants believing they were kept informed by the authorities about local ASB, this was not reflected in the combined perceptions measure scores provided or articulated in the focus group discussion in the Respect areas. This contradicted the suggestion of these participants that being informed about ASB would improve public perceptions.
- Some of the public findings challenge existing research. In this study noisy neighbours were not considered to be a problem, despite their inclusion in the combined perceptions measure. Furthermore, there was some evidence in NR1 that due to the implementation of a multi-agency contact line, residents knew who to contact to report ASB incidents. This contests the findings of Casey and Flint (2007).

#### Key Contributions Generated by Practitioner Participants

- Public perceptions of ASB were not addressed by the authorities in a universal manner, nor did they receive the same level of priority in all agencies. This suggests a lack of strategic guidance on public perceptions of ASB.

- The practitioner analysis expanded the number of actors involved in the control of ASB, as new evidence of local authority staff being briefed to enquire about ASB was uncovered.
- Community ASB tolerance was considered important by practitioners, who in most cases perceived it to be low. In many cases, due to the cultural dynamics of the micro-geographies of ASB being studied, tolerance had a different impact on the work of ASB practitioners in different areas.
- There was evidence of a mis-match between public perceptions of ASB and the public's response to ASB practitioners' requests for help/evidence. This suggests that practitioners face barriers when trying to gather evidence for a case.
- Some practitioners reported that the public suffered from 'a loss of faith in the system'. This reflects a different spatial dimension to public perceptions of ASB (a national level), that could be influencing local perceptions of ASB.

#### **8.4 Emerging Issues**

Based on the findings produced by this study, it is clear that perceptions of ASB are multi-faceted, difficult to ascertain and influenced by more than just the incidents of ASB that occur within a neighbourhood setting. It seemed apparent from this study that in the hard-pressed dominant areas, experiential factors were primarily responsible for driving perceptions, which were also influenced by a number of secondary factors. Furthermore, the dynamic nature of perceptions rendered it impossible to determine which factors were impacting on perceptions at any given time.

Therefore can we really rely upon public perceptions as a proxy measure of the extent of ASB? Probably not, although it could provide a useful indication of ASB if used in conjunction with other measures, such as demand statistics and police recorded incidents. Chapter Six proposed further ways in which the value of perceptions of ASB could be improved and are summarised in Figure 8.1. One of, if not the most, crucial determinants of this research domain moving forward depends upon the clarification of the remit of public perceptions of ASB by the Home Office. Once this is better defined, more informed action could be taken regarding measurement issues and the type of interventions required to reduce public perceptions of ASB. Further aspects to consider are the wider issues of governance, authority and social conduct associated with ASB in hard-pressed areas. The

intricacies of informal social control and governance are well-established in hard-pressed areas, which may represent barriers to ASB policy and/or specific interventions targeted at reducing perceived high levels of ASB. The authorities should consider means of utilising aspects of informal governance in partnership with more traditional interventions to see whether perceived high levels of ASB can be significantly altered in a hard-pressed setting.

### **8.5 Suggestions for Further Research**

Perceptions of ASB still remain a highly under-researched discipline within ASB. As eluded to in Chapter Six, further research specifically around perceptions could focus upon:

- whether perceptions of ASB are influenced by prejudice and/or racism
- the appropriateness of the 7SI behaviours as an overall reflection of ASB
- the factors that influence the perceived high levels of ASB of residents who live in areas with a relatively low number of ASB incidents - the 'Perception Paradox'
- whether Street Wardens who live in the neighbourhood they serve command higher levels of public confidence and are more likely to reduce perceived high levels of ASB
- the extent of the link between public expectations and public perceptions of ASB
- the impact of the Minimum Standards of ASB upon public perceptions and how perception reduction is measured
- an evaluation of the interventions used to reduce perceptions
- an in-depth investigation into the effect the media has upon public perceptions of ASB

In the more general context, further ASB research could consider:

- the displacement effect of ASB interventions, with the prospect of investigating whether this has an impact upon public perceptions of ASB
- a detailed investigation into the characteristics of perpetrators of ASB

### **8.6 And Finally . . .**

This research could only ever scratch the surface of public perceptions of ASB. The findings from this study have served to invigorate an under-researched topic, producing potential avenues for further enquiry. Having studied perceptions of ASB in depth for three years, it will be interesting to see how this evolving policy area continues to develop into the future.

Having visited a number of hard-pressed areas, meeting some great people along the way who are suffering daily from the effects of ASB, it is hoped that the findings from this study can contribute in some way (however minor) to improving their quality of life.

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## Abbreviations

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| 7SI      | Seven Strand Index                                      |
| ABA      | Acceptable Behaviour Agreement                          |
| ABC      | Acceptable Behaviour Contract                           |
| ACPO     | Association of Chief Police Officers                    |
| APA      | Association of Police Authorities                       |
| APACS    | Assessment of Policing and Community Safety             |
| ASB      | Anti-Social Behaviour                                   |
| ASBA     | Anti-Social Behaviour Act                               |
| ASBO     | Anti-Social Behaviour Order                             |
| BCS      | British Crime Survey                                    |
| BIBIC    | British Institute for Brain Injured Children            |
| BVPI     | Best Value Performance Indicator                        |
| CASE     | Collaborative Award in Science and Engineering          |
| CDA      | Crime and Disorder Act                                  |
| CDRP     | Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership                |
| CPS      | Crown Prosecution Service                               |
| CrASBO   | Post-Conviction Anti-Social Behaviour Order             |
| CVS      | Council for Voluntary Service                           |
| DCSF     | Department for Children, Schools and Families           |
| ECHR     | European Convention of Human Rights                     |
| ESRC     | Economic and Social Research Council                    |
| GIS      | Geographic Information System                           |
| HHS-SREP | Human and Health Science – School Research Ethics Panel |
| LGUSS    | Local Government User Satisfaction Survey               |
| NI17     | National Indicator 17                                   |
| NR1      | Non-Respect Area 1                                      |
| NR2      | Non-Respect Area 2                                      |
| PCSO     | Police Community Support Officer                        |
| PNC      | Police National Computer                                |
| PND      | Penalty Notice for Disorder                             |
| PSA      | Public Service Agreement                                |

|      |   |
|------|---|
| R1   | Respect Area 1                              |
| R2   | Respect Area 2                              |
| REA  | Rapid Evidence Assessment                   |
| RSL  | Registered Social Landlord                  |
| S1   | Section One                                 |
| SPSS | Statistical Package for the Social Sciences |
| TARA | Tenants and Residents Association           |
| VIF  | Variance Inflation Field                    |
| YOT  | Youth Offending Team                        |

# Appendix One:

## Research Correspondence and Data Collection Tools

### Appendix 1a

Initial Correspondence to Strategic ASB Practitioners

[University of Huddersfield Headed Paper]

Dear

#### **Home Office Research – Understanding Perceptions of Anti-Social Behaviour**

My name is Vicky Heap and I am conducting a PhD at the Applied Criminology Centre, University of Huddersfield. I'm investigating factors that influence public perceptions of anti-social behaviour, for which I am being part funded by and collaborating with the Home Office.

More specifically, my research will explore the public's level of perceptions of ASB and consider whether perceptions vary according to the extent of different variables such as; personal experience, levels of crime, social demographics, exposure to local/national media, confidence in the criminal justice system/police/courts/local authority and the awareness of local/national interventions.

Your CDRP has been selected as a case study area of interest to the Home Office. In this regard I am writing to ask for your agreement to take part in this research. Please see the attached business case document where I hope to justify the purpose of my research, as well as outlining some of the potential benefits to be gained by your CDRP through taking part.

I would very much appreciate if you could seriously consider my request. I will be in touch with you by telephone next week (week beginning 30 June) to discuss this prospect further. In the meantime, if you require any further information or wish to discuss this research further, please do not hesitate to contact me using the details at the top of this letter. Many thanks in anticipation of your co-operation.

Yours sincerely

**Vicky Heap**  
**PhD Research Student**

## Appendix 1b

Business Case Document Enclosed with Initial Correspondence to Strategic ASB Practitioners

[University of Huddersfield Headed Paper]

### **BUSINESS CASE FOR PARTICIPATING IN: HOME OFFICE RESEARCH - PERCEPTIONS OF ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR (PHD)**

This document is designed to help you decide whether you are willing to take part in this research. Your CDRP has been selected as a case study area for this research and I would like to ensure that I have your commitment to the research, in order to maximise its benefits to both your partnership and the Home Office.

#### Why Research Perceptions of ASB?

Perceptions of ASB are used to measure local authority and government performance against PSA Delivery Agreement 23/3/4, formally PSA 2. The British Crime Survey (BCS) has provided information on perceptions of ASB for a number of years. We know that perceived high levels of ASB are currently stable, having peaked in 2002/2003. Home Office research has also provided an insight into some of the attributes associated with perceived high levels of ASB. Upson (2006) and Lovbakke (2007) suggest the characteristics most strongly associated with perceived high levels are; living in a hard-pressed or moderate means ACORN area, age (particularly those aged 16-24), the presence of physical disorder in the local area, victimisation in the previous twelve months, and length of residence in the area.

Despite the current stability of the perception measure and the information we have relating to characteristics, we have little in-depth knowledge about how and why perceptions of ASB are generated. Therefore, further research into the area of perceptions is necessary in order to uncover and understand additional factors that influence perceptions, as well as the potential impact these could have upon policy development.

#### Fieldwork

Four CDRP areas have been selected in agreement with the Home Office, to be approached as case study areas. Of the four, two CDRPs will be 'Respect Action Areas', the two remaining will not be 'Respect' areas. In each case study area, two 'hard-pressed' ACORN wards will be studied, giving a total of eight areas to be studied in-depth. This will provide the opportunity to compare within and between CDRPs. 'Hard-pressed' wards have been selected as the target areas due to the perceived high levels of ASB identified in these neighbourhoods by previous research.

There are two aspects to the fieldwork. Firstly, a self-completion questionnaire will be sent to residents in the selected wards. Focus groups will then take place after some initial data analysis has been conducted on the questionnaire responses. The second will involve interviewing practitioners in each area to understand their work.

#### CDRP Input and Time Commitment

I understand how valuable time is within CDRPs and I would do my utmost to be as flexible, brief, and to cause as little disruption as possible. Any necessary meetings/interviews would,

of course, be arranged at times convenient to you. At this stage it is anticipated that I will require the following information:

- An indication of which 'hard-pressed' wards you consider appropriate to be studied in your CDRP, based on your local intelligence and knowledge about the area. (I already have a list of potential wards.) By being involved at this stage it will make this research more meaningful to your local priority areas and make the results applicable in practice.
- the ASB Co-ordinator (approx. 1 hour)
- A list of contacts for the process evaluation e.g. NPT Inspector, Housing Officer, Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator and any other key individuals who you feel would benefit the research

### The Outcomes

As well as the academic outcomes of this research, such as the completion of a PhD thesis, it is also anticipated that there will be a high level of practical relevance. Recommendations for policy development that may reduce perceived high levels of ASB will be made directly to the Home Office.

In addition, I envisage that the research will be valuable to you and your team, particularly in relation to the current policy direction which emphasises prevention. In return for a small amount of your time you will receive a detailed copy of the results for your CDRP, of which you will have had some input into. Furthermore, you will be allowed to have access to preliminary analysis/comments and will not have to wait until the submission of the PhD thesis before receiving any information.

### Assurances

Please be assured that the research will be conducted in the following ways;

- Ethical good practice will be followed throughout
- Area names and wards will be anonymised in all publications, but information specific to each participating CDRP will be released to them for their individual use

## Appendix 1c

### Public Questionnaire (Phase One)

#### What do you think about anti-social behaviour?

##### **Section 1: Your understanding of anti-social behaviour**

1. Anti-social behaviour is a common phrase. Which of these problems do you think are examples of anti-social behaviour? (Please ✓ all that apply)

|   | Please ✓ |  | Please ✓ |  | Please ✓ |
|---|----------|--|----------|--|----------|
| Noisy neighbours or loud parties        |          | Vandalism, graffiti or other deliberate damage to property or vehicles |          | Knife crime                                  |          |
| Mugging                                 |          | Teenage gangs  |          | People being drunk or rowdy in public places |          |
| Teenagers hanging around on the streets |          | Speeding   |          | Abandoned or burnt out cars                  |          |
| Rubbish or litter lying around          |          | People using or dealing drugs  |          | None of these                                |          |
| Burglary                                |          | Noise and traffic pollution  |          | Don't know                                   |          |

If you would like to say anything else about what you think anti-social behaviour is, please write below:

Some questions will ask about your local area.  
Your local area means the area within a 15 minute walk from your home.

##### **Section 2: Your experience of anti-social behaviour**

2. How much are the following behaviours a problem in your local area? (Please ✓ one box for each row)

|  | Very big problem | Fairly big problem | Not very big problem | Not a problem at all |
|--|------------------|--------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Noisy neighbours or loud parties                                       |                  |                    |                      |                      |
| Teenagers hanging around on the streets                                |                  |                    |                      |                      |
| Rubbish or litter lying around   |                  |                    |                      |                      |
| Vandalism, graffiti or other deliberate damage to property or vehicles |                  |                    |                      |                      |
| People using or dealing drugs  |                  |                    |                      |                      |
| People being drunk or rowdy in public places                           |                  |                    |                      |                      |
| Abandoned or burnt out cars  |                  |                    |                      |                      |

3. This question is about the most common types of anti-social behaviour in your area and the impact these have on your life.

Which of these behaviours are most common in your area? This means the behaviour that happens most often.

Which of these behaviours has the most impact on your life? This means the behaviour that has the greatest effect on your life.

Please RANK your top three. (Please enter the number 1-3, 1 = the most common and worst)

|  | Most common | Most impact on your life |
|--|-------------|--------------------------|
| Noisy neighbours or loud parties                                       |             |                          |
| Teenagers hanging around on the streets                                |             |                          |
| Rubbish or litter lying around   |             |                          |
| Vandalism, graffiti or other deliberate damage to property or vehicles |             |                          |
| People using or dealing drugs  |             |                          |
| People being drunk or rowdy in public places                           |             |                          |
| Abandoned or burnt out cars  |             |                          |
| Other (please state)<br>_____  |             |                          |

4. Do you think the majority of anti-social behaviour in your local area is committed without thinking or deliberately?

- Without thinking ☐  
Deliberately ☐  
Don't know ☐

5. This question asks about your own personal experience of anti-social behaviour in the last 12 months.  
(Please ✓ or ✕)

|  | Have you personally experienced this behaviour in the last 12 months?<br>(please ✓ or ✕) | Did you report this to anyone?<br>(please ✓ or ✕) | Who did you report it to?<br>(please state) | Was the matter sorted out?<br>(please ✓ or ✕) |
|--|--|---|---|---|
| Noisy neighbours or loud parties                                       |  |   |   |   |
| Teenagers hanging around on the streets                                |  |   |   |   |
| Rubbish or litter lying around   |  |   |   |   |
| Vandalism, graffiti or other deliberate damage to property or vehicles |  |   |   |   |
| People using or dealing drugs  |  |   |   |   |
| People being drunk or rowdy in public places                           |  |   |   |   |
| Abandoned or burnt out cars  |  |   |   |   |
| Other (please write below)<br>_____                                    |  |   |   |   |

6. If you experienced anti-social behaviour and did not report it to anyone, why did you not report it?

Please RANK your top 3 reasons. (Please enter the number 1-3, with 1 being the most important)

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Private / personal / family matter   |  |
| Dealt with matter myself / ourselves   |  |
| Dislike / fear of police / other authorities                                     |  |
| Fear of reprisal by offenders / make matters worse                               |  |
| Police / other authorities could have done nothing                               |  |
| Police / other authorities would not have bothered / not been interested         |  |
| Inconvenient / too much trouble  |  |
| Too trivial / not worth reporting  |  |
| Previous bad experience of the police / other authorities                        |  |
| Did not know who to contact  |  |
| Just something that happens / just accept it                                     |  |
| Doesn't affect me personally / directly / don't want to get involved             |  |
| Problem is already known about / being dealt with/ been reported by other people |  |
| Waste of time / would make no difference / would be no point                     |  |
| Other; (please specify)<br>_____   |  |

### Section 3: Your thoughts about anti-social behaviour

7. Thinking about anti-social behaviour in general, would you say that it has got worse, got better or stayed the same in England and Wales over the past two years?  
(Please ✓ one box)

- A lot worse ☐  
A little worse ☐  
Stayed the same ☐  
A little better ☐  
A lot better ☐

8. Again thinking about anti-social behaviour in general, would you say that it has got worse, got better or stayed the same in your local area over the past two years?  
(Please ✓ one box)

- A lot worse ☐  
A little worse ☐  
Stayed the same ☐  
A little better ☐  
A lot better ☐

9. Now thinking about different types of anti-social behaviour, would you say that each type has got worse, got better or stayed the same in your local area over the past two years?  
(Please ✓ one box for each row)

|  | A lot worse | A little worse | Stayed the same | A little better | A lot better | Not a problem |
|--|-------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|---------------|
| Noisy neighbours or loud parties                                       |             |                |                 |                 |              |               |
| Teenagers hanging around on the streets                                |             |                |                 |                 |              |               |
| Rubbish or litter lying around   |             |                |                 |                 |              |               |
| Vandalism, graffiti or other deliberate damage to property or vehicles |             |                |                 |                 |              |               |
| People using or dealing drugs  |             |                |                 |                 |              |               |
| People being drunk or rowdy in public places                           |             |                |                 |                 |              |               |
| Abandoned or burnt out cars  |             |                |                 |                 |              |               |

10. Thinking about your answers to the questions above, what makes you form that opinion?

Please **RANK** your top 3  
(Please enter the number 1-3. With 1 being the most important)

|   |  |
|---|--|
| What you have seen going on in your area                  |  |
| Experience of family members                              |  |
| Experience of friends / neighbours                        |  |
| Own personal experience of anti-social behaviour          |  |
| National newspaper reports                                |  |
| Local newspaper reports                                   |  |
| National TV reports                                       |  |
| Local TV reports  |  |
| National radio reports                                    |  |
| Local radio reports                                       |  |
| Information given by local authorities (police / council) |  |
| Something else; please state below;<br>_____              |  |

#### Section 4: Crime and anti-social behaviour

11. Turning your attention to crime, have you been a victim of crime in the past 12 months?  
(Please ✓ one box)

Yes ☐  
No ☐

12. How do you think the crime level in your local area, compares to the rest of [REDACTED] is it?  
(Please ✓ one box)

High ☐  
Fairly high ☐  
Average ☐  
Fairly low ☐  
Low ☐

13. Now thinking about crime and anti-social behaviour, which one worries you the most?  
(Please ✓ one box)

Crime ☐  
Anti-social behaviour ☐  
Both the same ☐  
Neither ☐

### Section 5: Tackling anti-social behaviour in your local area

14. How much do you agree with the following statement:

"I am kept informed about what is being done to tackle anti-social behaviour in my local area?"

(Please ✓ one box)

- Strongly agree ☐  
Agree ☐  
Disagree ☐  
Strongly Disagree ☐  
Don't know ☐

15. How do you normally find out about what is being done to tackle anti-social behaviour in your area?

(Please ✓ all that apply)

- Council newsletter/leaflet ☐  
Police/Community Safety Partnership newsletter/leaflet ☐  
Notice boards in public areas ☐  
Posters ☐  
Resident's Association ☐  
Local anti-social behaviour meetings ☐  
Local newspaper ☐  
Local radio ☐  
Other (please write below) ☐  
\_\_\_\_\_

16. As far as you know, in the last 12 months have police / council / community safety partnership, spent any money to tackle anti-social behaviour in your area?

(Please ✓ one box)

- Yes ☐  
No ☐  
Don't know ☐

17. Are you aware of any projects in your local area that tackle anti-social behaviour?

(Please ✓ one box)

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, what is it called? \_\_\_\_\_

What type of behaviour does it tackle? \_\_\_\_\_

Where did you hear about it \_\_\_\_\_

18. If you are aware of local projects, how effective do you think they are?  
(Please ✓ one box)

- Very effective ☐  
Fairly effective ☐  
Not very effective ☐  
Not effective at all ☐  
Don't know ☐

19. Are you aware of any national projects that tackle anti-social behaviour?  
(Please ✓ one box)

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, what is it called? \_\_\_\_\_

What type of behaviour does it tackle? \_\_\_\_\_

Where did you hear about it \_\_\_\_\_

20. If you are aware of national projects, how effective do you think they are?  
(Please ✓ one box)

- Very effective ☐  
Fairly effective ☐  
Not very effective ☐  
Not effective at all ☐  
Don't know ☐

#### Section 6: About you

Please complete these questions as they will help me to see if there are differences between the views of different residents. All the information you give will be kept completely confidential.

21. Are you; (Please ✓ one box)

- Male ☐  
Female ☐

22. How old are you? (Please ✓ one box)

- 16 – 24 ☐  
25 – 44 ☐  
45 – 64 ☐  
65 – 74 ☐  
75+ ☐

23. How long have you lived at your current address?  
(Please ✓ one box)

- Less than 12 months ☐  
12 months to 5 years ☐  
5 – 10 years ☐  
10 + years ☐

24. In which of these ways does your household occupy your current accommodation?  
(Please ✓ one box)

- Owner occupier ☐  
Rent from council ☐  
Rent from Housing Association / Trust ☐  
Rent from private landlord ☐  
Other (please ✓ and write below) ☐  
\_\_\_\_\_

25. To which of these ethnic groups do you consider you belong to?  
(Please ✓ one box)

|                                      |                          |                               |                          |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <u>White</u>                         |                          | <u>Mixed</u>                  |                          |
| British                              | <input type="checkbox"/> | White and Black Caribbean     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Irish                                | <input type="checkbox"/> | White and Black African       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Any other white background           | <input type="checkbox"/> | White and Asian               | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|                                      |                          | Any other mixed background    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <u>Asian or Asian British</u>        |                          | <u>Black or Black British</u> |                          |
| Indian                               | <input type="checkbox"/> | Caribbean                     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Pakistani                            | <input type="checkbox"/> | African                       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Bangladeshi                          | <input type="checkbox"/> | Any other Black background    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Any other Asian background           | <input type="checkbox"/> |                               |                          |
| <u>Chinese or other ethnic group</u> |                          |                               |                          |
| Chinese                              | <input type="checkbox"/> |                               |                          |
| Any other ethnic background          | <input type="checkbox"/> |                               |                          |

26. Do you: (please ✓ all that apply)

|   | Regularly<br>(4+ times/week) | Occasionally<br>(less than 4 times/week) | Never |
|---|------------------------------|--|-------|
| Read local newspaper  |                              |  |       |
| Read national tabloid (Daily Mail, Daily Mirror, Daily Star, The Sun, Daily Express)                      |                              |  |       |
| Read national broadsheet (Financial Times, The Guardian, The Independent, The Daily Telegraph, The Times) |                              |  |       |
| Watch regional news on TV   |                              |  |       |
| Watch national news on TV   |                              |  |       |
| Visit local news sites on the internet  |                              |  |       |
| Visit national news sites on the internet   |                              |  |       |
| Other; please state:  |                              |  |       |

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

Don't forget to complete and return your prize draw entry.

Please ✓ the 'Yes' box on the prize draw entry form if you are willing to take part in group interviews in your area about anti-social behaviour.

## Appendix 1d

### Public Questionnaire Covering Letter (Phase One)

[University of Huddersfield Headed Paper]

#### TELL US YOUR VIEWS AND ENTER A FREE PRIZE DRAW!

Vicky Heap  
PhD Research Student  
Applied Criminology Centre  
CSB 14  
[v.heap@hud.ac.uk](mailto:v.heap@hud.ac.uk)

30 October 2008

Dear Resident,

My name is Vicky Heap and I'm a PhD research student at the University of Huddersfield. I'm based at the Applied Criminology Centre and I'm researching public perceptions of anti-social behaviour. My aim is to understand more about what informs the public's thoughts about anti-social behaviour in order to suggest appropriate projects and ideas to improve people's quality of life.

Your household has been chosen at random to take part in this survey. I would be very grateful if you could help my research by completing the enclosed questionnaire and returning it to me in the pre-paid envelope (no stamp needed!). Please return it as soon as possible or by 21 November at the latest. It should only take about 10 minutes to complete and nearly all the questions just need you to tick a box.

All the answers you give will be confidential and kept securely by me. You need only provide your name and address if you wish to be entered into the prize draw or if you are interested in helping with further research. These details will not be recorded or disclosed to any third party.

As a thank you for taking part, I am running a prize draw which you can choose to enter by sending in the entry form when you return your completed questionnaire. The prizes are as follows:

**1st Prize £75 Tesco Gift Card**  
**2nd Prize £50 Tesco Gift Card**  
**3rd Prize £25 Tesco Gift Card**

The gift cards are accepted at Tesco supermarkets, Tesco.com and Tesco Direct. Once received, the entries will be kept separately to the questionnaire replies so no link between yourself and the questionnaire can be made. The prize draw will take place on 24 November 2008 and winners will be drawn at random. Entries received after this date will not be counted. I will contact you if you win a prize!

When I have collected all the information from the questionnaire I will be doing some further research in your area. I am looking for volunteers to take part in group interviews talking about your thoughts on anti-social behaviour. If you would like to be involved in this part of my research too, please tick the box on the prize draw entry form. Thank you.

Your time completing this questionnaire will be greatly appreciated. Thank you in advance. If you have any questions about my research I would be more than happy to discuss them with you. My phone number and email address are at the top of the page.

Thank you again for your time. I look forward to finding out about your thoughts.

Yours sincerely,

**Vicky Heap**  
**PhD Research Student**

## Appendix 1e

Information Provided to Area CVS Organisation to Distribute to the Public (Phase Two)

[University of Huddersfield Headed Paper]

### **What do you think about anti-social behaviour?**

Hello,

My name is Vicky Heap and I'm a PhD research student at the University of Huddersfield. My research is on the topic of anti-social behaviour. I'm investigating what sorts of things affect how people form their views about anti-social behaviour in their local area and how it affects their lives.

People's opinions are very important to my research, so I'm hoping to hold four focus group discussion sessions in the [WARD] and [WARD] areas of [AREA].

I am looking for community/volunteer groups in these areas who would be willing to take part. In other areas I have been to luncheon clubs/social groups etc. and sat to one side with a few of their group members. I am available to come and meet you at whatever time suits you best.

The focus group itself involves about 5 or 6 people having a discussion with me for about 45 minutes/1 hour, about their thoughts on anti-social behaviour. Participants must be over 18 years of age. Some of the questions we might discuss in the focus group include; what types of behaviour do you think are anti-social? Is anti-social behaviour a problem in your area? Does anti-social behaviour worry you?

Our discussion will be recorded by a dictaphone. This is just to help me take part in the discussion instead of having to take written notes. I will be the only person with access to the recording and the content of the discussion will be kept confidential, with it only being used for research purposes. Taking part in the focus group is entirely voluntary and if on the day you decide that you no longer want to take part, or don't want to discuss some of the questions, that is absolutely fine. You won't even have to give a reason.

When I have completed my research I will have to write a report. As your opinions are so important to my research, some of what you tell me will be written in this report. I will not name you. Your identity will be protected by using a pseudonym (E.g. 'Person 1'). You will remain completely anonymous and there will be no way of tracing your responses to you.

As this research is being conducted for a PhD, a copy of the final report (thesis) will be held in the library at the University of Huddersfield. Reports will also be written for academic audiences, such as journals and conference presentations.

I'd really appreciate your help with this. If you have any questions about my research or are associated with a group in the [WARD] or [WARD], who you think would be willing to take part, please get in touch.

Thank you very much.

Vicky

Vicky Heap  
PhD Research Student  
The Applied Criminology Centre  
Human and Health Research Building  
University of Huddersfield  
Huddersfield  
HD1 3DH

Tel: [REDACTED]

Mobile: [REDACTED]

Email: [v.heap@hud.ac.uk](mailto:v.heap@hud.ac.uk)

Web: <http://www2.hud.ac.uk/hhs/staff/shumvh2.php>

## Appendix 1f

Copy of Enquiry Letter/Email Sent to Community Group Leaders (Phase Two)

[University of Huddersfield Headed Paper]

Vicky Heap  
PhD Research Student  
Applied Criminology Centre  
Human and Health Research Building 2/04  
[v.heap@hud.ac.uk](mailto:v.heap@hud.ac.uk)  
Tel: [REDACTED]  
Mobile: [REDACTED]

[Address]

21 October 2009

Dear [GROUP LEADER],

### **RESEARCH INTO PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR**

I am writing to you as I think you may be able to help me with my research.

I am based at the Applied Criminology Centre at the University of Huddersfield. My PhD is investigating public perceptions of anti-social behaviour (ASB). A lot of information is known about the levels of people's perceptions of ASB from sources such as the British Crime Survey, but not much is known about how these perceptions or thoughts are formed. I am conducting the first research of this type, with the anticipation that the results could have some implications for future ASB policy.

I have already conducted a postal survey to gauge the extent of public perceptions of ASB in [WARD], but in order to really understand what shapes people's opinions I think it's vitally important to speak to members of the public.

I thought that [GROUP] might be willing to be involved in my research and that I could perhaps come along to meet you and hold a focus group (small discussion) with about 6-8 people aged over 18. I am able to come and meet you at any time that is convenient to you. I have enclosed an information sheet, which explains what a focus group is all about as well as a bit more about my research.

People that participate in the focus group will be required to sign a consent form. This is to make sure they are giving their informed consent to take part, which is a crucial aspect of conducting ethical research. I have enclosed a copy of this form for your information. Taking part in the focus group is entirely voluntary and if on the day people turn up and decide they don't want to take part or discuss certain topics, that is absolutely fine. Participants in the research can withdraw at any time without having to give a reason.

I hope this and the information I have enclosed explains what I'm researching in a bit more detail. I usually bring some biscuits to the focus groups if that's an incentive to participate! In all seriousness, I used to work as Community Safety Officer for a local authority before

starting my PhD. I have first-hand experience of dealing with anti-social behaviour on a daily basis, giving me the background knowledge which I hope sets me apart from the average student!

If [GROUP] are willing to be involved, please contact me as soon as possible. If you have any questions or concerns, my contact details are at the top of the page.

Thank you very much for your help, it is greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

**Vicky Heap**  
**PhD Research Student**

Enc. Information sheet  
Consent form

## Appendix 1g

### Information Sheet for Public Focus Group Participants (Phase Two)

[University of Huddersfield Headed Paper]

#### Focus Group Information Sheet

Hello,

My name is Vicky Heap and I'm a PhD research student at the University of Huddersfield. My research is on the topic of anti-social behaviour. The official title of my research is 'Understanding Perceptions of Anti-Social Behaviour; Problems and Policy Responses'. Basically, I want to find out what sorts of things affect how people form their opinions about anti-social behaviour and how it affects their lives.

I am holding focus group sessions as the opinions and thoughts of the public are very important to my research.

Some of the questions we might discuss in the focus group include; what types of behaviour do you think count as anti-social? Is anti-social behaviour a problem in your area? Do you think that anti-social behaviour is something that is committed deliberately or is it a result of people not thinking about their actions?

The focus group will be recorded by a dictaphone. This is just to help me take part in the discussion instead of having to take written notes. I will be the only person with access to the recording and the content of the discussion will be kept confidential, with it only being used for research purposes. Taking part in the focus group is entirely voluntary and if on the day you decide that you no longer want to take part or don't want to discuss some of the questions, that is absolutely fine. You won't even have to give a reason.

When I have completed my research I will have to write a report. As your opinions are so important to my research, some of what you tell me will be written in this report. I will not name you. Your identity will be protected by using a pseudonym (E.g. 'Person 1'). You will remain completely anonymous and there will be no way of tracing your responses to you.

If you would like to see a copy of the findings from my research, please contact me and I will be happy to share them with you. As this research is being conducted for a PhD, a copy of the final report (thesis) will be held in the library at the University of Huddersfield. Reports will also be written for academic audiences, such as journals and conference presentations.

I really appreciate your help with this. If you have any questions about my research please let me know.

Thank you very much.

Vicky

Vicky Heap  
PhD Research Student  
The Applied Criminology Centre  
Human and Health Research Building  
University of Huddersfield  
Huddersfield  
HD1 3DH

Email: [v.heap@hud.ac.uk](mailto:v.heap@hud.ac.uk)

Tel: [REDACTED]

Victim Support Supportline 0845 30 30 900

## Appendix 1h

### Consent Form for Public Focus Group Participants (Phase Two)

[University of Huddersfield Headed Paper]

#### UNDERSTANDING PERCEPTIONS OF ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Researcher: Vicky Heap

#### Focus Group Consent Form

I have been fully informed of the nature and aims of this research and consent to taking part in it.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the interview at any time without giving any reason, and a right to withdraw my data if I wish.

I give my permission/do not give my permission for my interview to be tape recorded.

I give permission to be quoted (by use of pseudonym).

I understand that the recording will be kept in secure conditions at the University of Huddersfield.

I understand that no person other than the interviewer will have access to the recording.

I understand that my identity will be protected by the use of pseudonym in the research report and that no information that could lead to my being identified will be included in any report or publication resulting from this research.

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Name of participant

Signature

Date

Name of researcher

Signature

Date

*Two copies of this consent form should be completed: One copy to be retained by the participant and one copy to be retained by the researcher*

## Appendix 1i

### Public Focus Group Script (Phase Two)

## Focus Group Script

### Definition

What does anti-social behaviour mean to you?

### Extent of Problems

Is anti-social behaviour a problem in your local area?

What is it that informs your view about this?

### Concerns About ASB

Do you worry about anti-social behaviour?

#### YES

Why do you worry about it?

What is it that makes you worried?

Does the extent to which you're worried change very easily?

#### NO

Why don't you worry about it?

What would it take for you to worry about it?

### Motivation

Do you think that anti-social behaviour is something that is committed deliberately or is it something that's done without thinking?

Why do you think people commit anti-social behaviour?

### The Authorities

[RESPECT ONLY] Do you know if this is a Respect area?

Do you think the authorities (police/council/housing association) do enough to stop anti-social behaviour? (*Do they meet your expectations?*)

Do you think enough money is being spent to tackle anti-social behaviour in your area?

Do you think the punishment for committing anti-social behaviour is fair?

Does this affect how you view people who commit anti-social behaviour?

**Communication**

Do you feel you're kept informed about what is being done to tackle anti-social behaviour?

Does this make you more or less worried about anti-social behaviour?

**And finally . . .**

What would you like to see happen in your area in the next five years?

**Anything else?**

## Appendix 1j

### Practitioners Email Invitation to Interview (Phase Three)

Dear [NAME],

My name is Vicky Heap and I'm a PhD research student at the Applied Criminology Centre, University of Huddersfield. I have been conducting some research in your local area on perceptions of anti-social behaviour in collaboration with the Home Office. I have also been assisted by [LOCAL STRATEGIC ASB PRACTITIONER'S NAME]. Following on from the public survey I conducted in your area, I am now in the process of organising the second part of my research. The second part aims to examine perceptions of ASB in-depth, from the perspectives of both the public and practitioners.

The reason I'm contacting you today is because I'd like to invite you someone from your team (ASB Officer etc.) to take part in an interview. You have been selected because of your role within [AUTHORITY].

If possible, the interview will take place in April, at a date/time that is convenient to you. I am able to travel to meet at your offices.

Possible dates/times;

Thursday 2 April – any time

Tuesday 21 April – any time

Monday 27 April – any time

The interview will involve a discussion about your thoughts on perceptions of ASB and will explore some of the ways your Unit tackles ASB. It will last about 1 hour and will be tape recorded.

*[Only the researcher will have access to the tape and it will be securely stored at the University of Huddersfield. Any direct quotes used in research publications will be done so with the use of a pseudonym. Your participation in the research is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time without having to give a reason. More detailed information about your participation and confidentiality arrangements will be forwarded to you if/when you confirm.]*

If you are willing and able to attend an interview, please contact me to confirm your availability as soon as possible.

If you have any questions about the research I would be more than happy to discuss them with you. Should you wish to contact me by phone my number is; XXXXXXXXXX.

Thank you in advance for your time. I'm a former practitioner so I appreciate that time is scarce! I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Many thanks,

Vicky

Vicky Heap  
PhD Research Student  
The Applied Criminology Centre  
University of Huddersfield  
Human and Health Research Building (HHR2/04)  
Queensgate  
Huddersfield  
HD1 3DH  
Email: v.heap@hud.ac.uk

## Appendix 1k

### Information Sheet for Practitioner Interview Participants (Phase Three)

[University of Huddersfield Headed Paper]

#### **UNDERSTANDING PERCEPTIONS OF ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR**

##### **Practitioner Participants - Information Sheet**

This sheet will give you all the information you need about this research and it is yours to keep.

##### **Purpose of the Study**

This study is being undertaken for the purpose of completing a PhD. The research is exploring public perceptions of anti-social behaviour (ASB) in collaboration with the Home Office. The aim is to understand what shapes public perceptions of ASB. By understanding these factors more appropriate interventions, projects and policies can be suggested to improve people's quality of life and reduce perceived high levels of ASB.

##### **Your Participation**

You have been selected to take part in this research due to the employment position you hold. Your participation in the research is voluntary and you may withdraw from the research at any time; without giving a reason and without any risks. Your participation will entail an interview with the researcher. There is no anticipated risk of harm.

##### **Confidentiality / Anonymity**

All information you provide will be treated in the strictest of confidence. No information will be disclosed to any third parties. The researcher is the only person who will have access to the information you provide and it will be handled and stored in line with the Data Protection Act (1998). All the information you provide will be anonymous. There will be no way of tracing your responses to you. In any research reports your identity will be protected by the use of a pseudonym.

##### **Research Findings**

If you would like to see a copy of the research findings, please contact the researcher who will make them available to you. As this research is being undertaken for the purpose of a PhD a copy of the subsequent thesis will be held in the library and the University of Huddersfield. The findings will also be circulated to the academic field in variety of ways including; briefing papers, submissions to peer-reviewed academic journals and conference presentations.

##### **Researcher Contact Details**

Vicky Heap  
PhD Research Student  
Applied Criminology Centre  
Human and Health Research Building (HHR2/04)  
University of Huddersfield  
Queensgate  
Huddersfield  
HD1 3DH  
Tel: 01484 475000  
Email: v.heap@hud.ac.uk

## Appendix 11

### Consent Form for Practitioner Interviews (Phase Three)

[University of Huddersfield Headed Paper]

#### UNDERSTANDING PERCEPTIONS OF ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Researcher: Vicky Heap

##### Interview consent form

I have been fully informed of the nature and aims of this research and consent to taking part in it.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the interview at any time without giving any reason, and a right to withdraw my data if I wish.

I give my permission/do not give my permission for my interview to be tape recorded.

I give permission to be quoted (by use of pseudonym).

I understand that the tape will be kept in secure conditions at the University of Huddersfield.

I understand that no person other than the interviewer will have access to the recording.

I understand that my identity will be protected by the use of pseudonym in the research report and that no information that could lead to my being identified will be included in any report or publication resulting from this research.

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Name of participant

Signature

Date

Name of researcher

Signature

Date

*Two copies of this consent form should be completed: One copy to be retained by the participant and one copy to be retained by the researcher*

## **Appendix 1m**

### **Practitioner Interview Schedule (Phase Three)**

## **Interview Schedule – ASB Practitioners**

### **Section A – Organisation Structure & Strategy**

1. Can you briefly explain your role as; ASB co-ordinator/officer/seconded police officer etc.
2. What is the current main focus of your work to reduce ASB?
3. What method or methods do you use for determining where resources are targeted?
4. How do you measure the effectiveness of your strategies/interventions?
5. What types of ASB reports do you receive from the public and do they always know who to report incidents to?

### **Section B (i) – Respect Areas ONLY**

1. Your local CDRP has been designated as a Respect area, how has this impacted upon the way you deal with ASB?
2. Are there any advantages to being a Respect area?
3. Are there any disadvantages to being a Respect area?
4. Would you prefer not to be a Respect area?

### **Section B (ii) – Non-Respect Areas ONLY**

1. Your local CDRP isn't a designated Respect area, do you think this makes any difference to how you approach the reduction of ASB?
2. Are there any advantages to not being a Respect area?
3. Are there any disadvantages to not being a Respect area?
4. Would you like to be a Respect area?

### **Section C – Definitions of ASB**

1. Even though ASB legislation has been around for over 10 years, do you think the public really understand what ASB means?
2. Is there ever any confusion between the definitions of crime and ASB?

3. Do you think there is a difference between what the authorities define as ASB, and what the public think ASB is?

#### **Section D – Perceptions of ASB**

1. The Home Office place a large emphasis on public perceptions of ASB, in terms of using them to gauge the extent of problems with ASB. They are also referenced in two national PSA targets. Do you think this is the most effective way of measuring ASB?
2. Do you regularly measure public perceptions of ASB in your area?
3. Have you ever received Home Office guidance on how perceptions of ASB should be managed or reduced?
4. Are you/have you ever run any projects or campaigns that specifically aim to reduce perceived high levels of ASB?
  - a. How are these campaigns/projects targeted?
  - b. Have these campaigns/projects been successful?
  - c. How did you measure this success?
5. Do you ever make any links between actual levels of ASB and perceptions of ASB?
  - a. How?
  - b. Has this been effective?
6. In relation to all the other areas of ASB, how much of a priority are public perceptions to your organisation?

#### **Section E – Communication**

1. Do you think it's important to keep the public up to date with what's being done to tackle ASB in their area?
  - a. If yes, why and how do you do this?
  - b. Do you think these methods are effective?
  - c. Do you think this has an impact on public perceptions of ASB?
  - d. Is there anything else that you would like to do to inform the public about ASB?

## Appendix Two: Additional Statistics and Tables (Chapter Three)

### Appendix 2a

Socio-demographic composition of postal questionnaire respondents (Full Sample)

| <b>Gender</b>                      | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Full Sample %*</b> | <b>2001 Census %**</b> |
|------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Male                               | 149              | 35.3                  | 47.8                   |
| Female                             | 265              | 62.8                  | 52.1                   |
| <b>Age</b>                         | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Full Sample %*</b> | <b>2001 Census %**</b> |
| 16-24                              | 15               | 3.6                   | 11.9                   |
| 25-44                              | 136              | 32.2                  | 28.8                   |
| 45-64                              | 171              | 40.5                  | 21                     |
| 65-74                              | 58               | 13.7                  | 7.6                    |
| 75+                                | 33               | 7.8                   | 6.9                    |
| <b>Ethnicity</b>                   | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Full Sample %*</b> | <b>2001 Census %**</b> |
| Asian or Asian British             | 15               | 3.5                   | 9.4                    |
| Black or Black British             | 5                | 1.2                   | 0.6                    |
| Mixed or Mixed British             | 6                | 1.4                   | 1.1                    |
| White or White British             | 389              | 92.1                  | 88.7                   |
| Other Ethnic Background            | 2                | 0.5                   | 0.2                    |
| <b>Housing Tenure (Population)</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Full Sample %*</b> | <b>2001 Census %**</b> |
| Owner Occupier                     | 277              | 65.6                  | 58.1                   |
| Rent from Council                  | 81               | 19.2                  | 27.7                   |
| Rent from Housing Association      | 35               | 8.3                   | 4.2                    |
| Private Rent                       | 16               | 3.8                   | 6.8                    |
| Other                              | 3                | 0.7                   | 3.1                    |
| <b>Length of Residence</b>         | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Full Sample %*</b> | No Comparable Data     |
| Less than 12 months                | 20               | 4.7                   |                        |
| 12 months - 5 years                | 102              | 24.2                  |                        |
| 5 - 10 years                       | 69               | 16.4                  |                        |
| 10 + years                         | 222              | 52.6                  |                        |

\* Percentages may not add to 100% due to missing data

\*\* Calculated using Ward data as a result of sampling technique employed

Socio-demographic composition of postal questionnaire respondents (Respect Sub-Sample)

| <b>Gender</b>                      | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Respect<br/>Sub-Sample %*</b> | <b>2001 Census %**</b>        |
|------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Male                               | 87               | 38.2                             | 47.7                          |
| Female                             | 135              | 59.2                             | 52.2                          |
| <b>Age</b>                         | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Respect<br/>Sub-Sample %*</b> | <b>2001 Census %**</b>        |
| 16-24                              | 8                | 3.5                              | 11.6                          |
| 25-44                              | 78               | 34.2                             | 29.1                          |
| 45-64                              | 89               | 39                               | 20.8                          |
| 65-74                              | 26               | 11.4                             | 7.1                           |
| 75+                                | 21               | 9.2                              | 6.9                           |
| <b>Ethnicity</b>                   | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Respect<br/>Sub-Sample %*</b> | <b>2001 Census %**</b>        |
| Asian or Asian British             | 13               | 5.7                              | 14.2                          |
| Black or Black British             | 4                | 1.7                              | 0.8                           |
| Mixed or Mixed British             | 6                | 2.6                              | 1.4                           |
| White or White British             | 199              | 87.3                             | 83.2                          |
| Other Ethnic Background            | 1                | 0.4                              | 0.3                           |
| <b>Housing Tenure (Population)</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Respect<br/>Sub-Sample %*</b> | <b>2001 Census %**</b>        |
| Owner Occupier                     | 154              | 67.5                             | 64.1                          |
| Rent from Council                  | 25               | 11                               | 19.7                          |
| Rent from Housing Association      | 29               | 12.7                             | 5.2                           |
| Private Rent                       | 11               | 4.8                              | 8.4                           |
| Other                              | 2                | 0.9                              | 2.7                           |
| <b>Length of Residence</b>         | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Respect<br/>Sub-Sample %*</b> | <b>No Comparable<br/>Data</b> |
| Less than 12 months                | 16               | 7                                |                               |
| 12 months - 5 years                | 68               | 29.8                             |                               |
| 5 - 10 years                       | 36               | 15.8                             |                               |
| 10 + years                         | 101              | 44.3                             |                               |

\* Percentages may not add to 100% due to missing data

\*\* Calculated using Ward data as a result of sampling technique employed

Socio-demographic composition of postal questionnaire respondents (Non-Respect Sub-Sample)

| <b>Gender</b>                      | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Non-Respect Sub-Sample %*</b> | <b>2001 Census %**</b>    |
|------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Male                               | 62               | 32                               | 47.9                      |
| Female                             | 130              | 67                               | 52.1                      |
| <b>Age</b>                         | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Non-Respect Sub-Sample %*</b> | <b>2001 Census %**</b>    |
| 16-24                              | 7                | 3.6                              | 12.4                      |
| 25-44                              | 58               | 29.9                             | 28.3                      |
| 45-64                              | 82               | 42.3                             | 21.3                      |
| 65-74                              | 32               | 16.5                             | 8.4                       |
| 75+                                | 12               | 6.2                              | 7                         |
| <b>Ethnicity</b>                   | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Non-Respect Sub-Sample %*</b> | <b>2001 Census %**</b>    |
| Asian or Asian British             | 2                | 1                                | 0.9                       |
| Black or Black British             | 1                | 0.5                              | 0.1                       |
| Mixed or Mixed British             | 0                | 0                                | 0.5                       |
| White or White British             | 190              | 97.9                             | 98.1                      |
| Other Ethnic Background            | 1                | 0.5                              | 0.2                       |
| <b>Housing Tenure (Population)</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Non-Respect Sub-Sample %*</b> | <b>2001 Census %**</b>    |
| Owner Occupier                     | 123              | 63.4                             | 48                        |
| Rent from Council                  | 56               | 28.9                             | 41.4                      |
| Rent from Housing Association      | 6                | 3.1                              | 2.6                       |
| Private Rent                       | 5                | 2.6                              | 4.1                       |
| Other                              | 1                | 0.5                              | 3.9                       |
| <b>Length of Residence</b>         | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Non-Respect Sub-Sample %*</b> | <b>No Comparable Data</b> |
| Less than 12 months                | 4                | 2.1                              |                           |
| 12 months - 5 years                | 34               | 17.5                             |                           |
| 5 - 10 years                       | 33               | 17                               |                           |
| 10 + years                         | 121              | 62.4                             |                           |

\* Percentages may not add to 100% due to missing data

\*\* Calculated using Ward data as a result of sampling technique employed

Socio-demographic composition of postal questionnaire respondents (Respect Area 1)

| <b>Gender</b>                      | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Respect 1<br/>Sub-Sample %*</b> | <b>2001 Census %**</b>        |
|------------------------------------|------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Male                               | 35               | 37.8                               | 47.8                          |
| Female                             | 57               | 60.8                               | 52.2                          |
| <b>Age</b>                         | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Respect 1<br/>Sub-Sample %*</b> | <b>2001 Census %**</b>        |
| 16-24                              | 4                | 4.3                                | 13.1                          |
| 25-44                              | 31               | 33                                 | 28.4                          |
| 45-64                              | 40               | 42.6                               | 18.8                          |
| 65-74                              | 7                | 7.4                                | 6.9                           |
| 75+                                | 10               | 10.6                               | 6.2                           |
| <b>Ethnicity</b>                   | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Respect 1<br/>Sub-Sample %*</b> | <b>2001 Census %**</b>        |
| Asian or Asian British             | 10               | 10.6                               | 21.1                          |
| Black or Black British             | 3                | 3.2                                | 1.3                           |
| Mixed or Mixed British             | 6                | 6.4                                | 1.9                           |
| White or White British             | 74               | 78.7                               | 75.2                          |
| Other Ethnic Background            | 1                | 1.1                                | 0.4                           |
| <b>Housing Tenure (Population)</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Respect 1<br/>Sub-Sample %*</b> | <b>2001 Census %**</b>        |
| Owner Occupier                     | 51               | 54.3                               | 61.6                          |
| Rent from Council                  | 11               | 11.7                               | 18                            |
| Rent from Housing Association      | 24               | 25.5                               | 7.6                           |
| Private Rent                       | 24               | 5.3                                | 10.4                          |
| Other                              | 0                | 0                                  | 2.4                           |
| <b>Length of Residence</b>         | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Respect 1<br/>Sub-Sample %*</b> | <b>No Comparable<br/>Data</b> |
| Less than 12 months                | 8                | 8.5                                |                               |
| 12 months - 5 years                | 33               | 35.1                               |                               |
| 5 - 10 years                       | 14               | 14.9                               |                               |
| 10 + years                         | 36               | 38.3                               |                               |

\* Percentages may not add to 100% due to missing data

\*\* Calculated using Ward data as a result of sampling technique employed

Socio-demographic composition of postal questionnaire respondents (Respect Area 2)

| <b>Gender</b>                      | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Respect 2<br/>Sub-Sample %*</b> | <b>2001 Census %**</b>        |
|------------------------------------|------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Male                               | 52               | 38.8                               | 47.6                          |
| Female                             | 78               | 58.2                               | 52.1                          |
| <b>Age</b>                         | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Respect 2<br/>Sub-Sample %*</b> | <b>2001 Census %**</b>        |
| 16-24                              | 4                | 3                                  | 10.1                          |
| 25-44                              | 47               | 35.1                               | 30                            |
| 45-64                              | 49               | 36.6                               | 22.9                          |
| 65-74                              | 19               | 14.2                               | 7.3                           |
| 75+                                | 11               | 8.2                                | 7.7                           |
| <b>Ethnicity</b>                   | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Respect 2<br/>Sub-Sample %*</b> | <b>2001 Census %**</b>        |
| Asian or Asian British             | 3                | 2.2                                | 7.4                           |
| Black or Black British             | 1                | 0.7                                | 0.4                           |
| Mixed or Mixed British             | 0                | 0                                  | 0.9                           |
| White or White British             | 125              | 93.3                               | 91.1                          |
| Other Ethnic Background            | 0                | 0                                  | 0.4                           |
| <b>Housing Tenure (Population)</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Respect 2<br/>Sub-Sample %*</b> | <b>2001 Census %**</b>        |
| Owner Occupier                     | 103              | 76.9                               | 66.4                          |
| Rent from Council                  | 14               | 10.4                               | 21.3                          |
| Rent from Housing Association      | 5                | 3.7                                | 2.8                           |
| Private Rent                       | 6                | 4.5                                | 6.4                           |
| Other                              | 2                | 1.5                                | 3                             |
| <b>Length of Residence</b>         | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Respect 2<br/>Sub-Sample %*</b> | <b>No Comparable<br/>Data</b> |
| Less than 12 months                | 8                | 6                                  |                               |
| 12 months - 5 years                | 35               | 26.1                               |                               |
| 5 - 10 years                       | 22               | 16.4                               |                               |
| 10 + years                         | 65               | 48.5                               |                               |

\* Percentages may not add to 100% due to missing data

\*\* Calculated using Ward data as a result of sampling technique employed

Socio-demographic composition of postal questionnaire respondents (Non-Respect Area 1)

| <b>Gender</b>                      | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Non-Respect 1<br/>Sub-Sample %*</b> | <b>2001 Census %**</b>        |
|------------------------------------|------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| Male                               | 36               | 36.4                                   | 48.1                          |
| Female                             | 62               | 62.6                                   | 51.9                          |
| <b>Age</b>                         | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Non-Respect 1<br/>Sub-Sample %*</b> | <b>2001 Census %**</b>        |
| 16-24                              | 1                | 1                                      | 13.1                          |
| 25-44                              | 25               | 25.3                                   | 27.8                          |
| 45-64                              | 44               | 44.4                                   | 22.4                          |
| 65-74                              | 17               | 17.2                                   | 9.9                           |
| 75+                                | 10               | 10.1                                   | 7.9                           |
| <b>Ethnicity</b>                   | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Non-Respect 1<br/>Sub-Sample %*</b> | <b>2001 Census %**</b>        |
| Asian or Asian British             | 0                | 1                                      | 0.2                           |
| Black or Black British             | 1                | 0                                      | 0.1                           |
| Mixed or Mixed British             | 0                | 0                                      | 0.3                           |
| White or White British             | 98               | 99                                     | 99.3                          |
| Other Ethnic Background            | 0                | 0                                      | 0.1                           |
| <b>Housing Tenure (Population)</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Non-Respect 1<br/>Sub-Sample %*</b> | <b>2001 Census %**</b>        |
| Owner Occupier                     | 66               | 66.7                                   | 52.2                          |
| Rent from Council                  | 30               | 30.3                                   | 38.9                          |
| Rent from Housing Association      | 0                | 0                                      | 12                            |
| Private Rent                       | 0                | 0                                      | 3.5                           |
| Other                              | 1                | 1                                      | 4.2                           |
| <b>Length of Residence</b>         | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Non-Respect 1<br/>Sub-Sample %*</b> | <b>No Comparable<br/>Data</b> |
| Less than 12 months                | 2                | 2                                      |                               |
| 12 months - 5 years                | 15               | 15.2                                   |                               |
| 5 - 10 years                       | 11               | 11.1                                   |                               |
| 10 + years                         | 70               | 70.7                                   |                               |

\* Percentages may not add to 100% due to missing data

\*\* Calculated using Ward data as a result of sampling technique employed

Socio-demographic composition of postal questionnaire respondents (Non-Respect Area 2)

| <b>Gender</b>                      | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Non-Respect 2<br/>Sub-Sample %*</b> | <b>2001 Census %**</b>        |
|------------------------------------|------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| Male                               | 26               | 27.4                                   | 47.7                          |
| Female                             | 68               | 71.6                                   | 52.2                          |
| <b>Age</b>                         | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Non-Respect 2<br/>Sub-Sample %*</b> | <b>2001 Census %**</b>        |
| 16-24                              | 6                | 6.3                                    | 11.7                          |
| 25-44                              | 33               | 34.7                                   | 28.8                          |
| 45-64                              | 38               | 40                                     | 20.2                          |
| 65-74                              | 15               | 15.8                                   | 7                             |
| 75+                                | 2                | 2.1                                    | 6.1                           |
| <b>Ethnicity</b>                   | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Non-Respect 2<br/>Sub-Sample %*</b> | <b>2001 Census %**</b>        |
| Asian or Asian British             | 2                | 2.1                                    | 1.9                           |
| Black or Black British             | 0                | 0                                      | 0.1                           |
| Mixed or Mixed British             | 0                | 0                                      | 0.7                           |
| White or White British             | 92               | 96.8                                   | 96.9                          |
| Other Ethnic Background            | 1                | 1.1                                    | 0.2                           |
| <b>Housing Tenure (Population)</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Non-Respect 2<br/>Sub-Sample %*</b> | <b>2001 Census %**</b>        |
| Owner Occupier                     | 57               | 60                                     | 44                            |
| Rent from Council                  | 26               | 27.4                                   | 43.8                          |
| Rent from Housing Association      | 6                | 6.3                                    | 3.8                           |
| Private Rent                       | 5                | 5.3                                    | 4.7                           |
| Other                              | 0                | 0                                      | 3.6                           |
| <b>Length of Residence</b>         | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Non-Respect 2<br/>Sub-Sample %*</b> | <b>No Comparable<br/>Data</b> |
| Less than 12 months                | 2                | 2.1                                    |                               |
| 12 months - 5 years                | 19               | 20                                     |                               |
| 5 - 10 years                       | 22               | 23.2                                   |                               |
| 10 + years                         | 51               | 53.7                                   |                               |

\* Percentages may not add to 100% due to missing data

\*\* Calculated using Ward data as a result of sampling technique employed

## Appendix 2b

Proportion of Seven Strand Index Behaviours Identified as ASB by Sample

| 7Strand Index Behaviours                     | % of Respondents That Identified the Behaviour as ASB |                 |                 |                |                 |                |                |
|--|---|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
|  | Full Sample   | Respect         | Non-Respect     | R1             | R2              | NR1            | NR2            |
| Vandalism, graffiti, other deliberate damage | 86<br>(n=363)   | 85.5<br>(n=195) | 86.6<br>(n=168) | 79.8<br>(n=75) | 89.6<br>(n=120) | 84.8<br>(n=84) | 88.4<br>(n=84) |
| Drunk or rowdy in public places              | 83.4<br>(n=352)                                       | 82<br>(n=187)   | 85.1<br>(n=165) | 73.4<br>(n=69) | 88.1<br>(n=118) | 82.8<br>(n=82) | 87.4<br>(n=83) |
| Noisy neighbours or loud parties             | 77.7<br>(n=328)                                       | 76.8<br>(n=175) | 78.9<br>(n=153) | 77.7<br>(n=73) | 76.1<br>(n=102) | 72.7<br>(n=72) | 85.3<br>(n=81) |
| People using or dealing drugs                | 70.9<br>(n=299)                                       | 69.9<br>(n=158) | 72.7<br>(n=141) | 74.5<br>(n=70) | 65.7<br>(n=88)  | 77.8<br>(n=77) | 67.4<br>(n=64) |
| Teenagers hanging around on the streets      | 60.4<br>(n=255)                                       | 57<br>(n=130)   | 64.4<br>(n=125) | 57.4<br>(n=54) | 56.7<br>(n=76)  | 56.6<br>(n=56) | 72.6<br>(n=69) |
| Rubbish or litter lying around               | 55.5<br>(n=234)                                       | 56.6<br>(n=129) | 54.1<br>(n=105) | 61.7<br>(n=58) | 53<br>(n=71)    | 58.6<br>(n=58) | 49.5<br>(n=47) |
| Abandoned or burnt out cars                  | 49.8<br>(n=210)                                       | 49.6<br>(n=113) | 50<br>(n=97)    | 55.3<br>(n=52) | 45.5<br>(n=61)  | 56.6<br>(n=56) | 43.2<br>(n=41) |

## Appendix 2c

Proportion of Respondents Perceiving Noisy Neighbours to be a Problem in their Local Area  
(All Samples)

| <b>Noisy Neighbours or Loud Parties</b> |  |                                     |   |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Sample</b>                           | <b>Causing a problem (%)<br/>(Very big + fairly big problem)</b> | <b>Not very big<br/>problem (%)</b> | <b>Not a<br/>problem at<br/>all (%)</b> |
| Full Sample                             | 17<br>(n=72)   | 34.8<br>(n=147)                     | 48.1<br>(n=203)                         |
| Respect                                 | 15.8<br>(n=36)   | 36<br>(n=82)                        | 48.2<br>(n=110)                         |
| Non-Respect                             | 18.6<br>(n=36)   | 33.5<br>(n=65)                      | 47.9<br>(n=93)                          |
| Respect Area 1                          | 19.1<br>(n=18)   | 43.6<br>(n=41)                      | 37.2<br>(n=35)                          |
| Respect Area 2                          | 13.4<br>(n=18)   | 30.6<br>(n=41)                      | 56<br>(n=75)                            |
| Non-Respect Area 1                      | 14.2<br>(n=14)   | 31.3<br>(n=31)                      | 54.5<br>(n=54)                          |
| Non-Respect Area 2                      | 23.2<br>(n=22)   | 35.8<br>(n=34)                      | 41.1<br>(n=39)                          |

Proportion of Respondents Perceiving Teenagers Hanging Around on the Streets to be a Problem in their Local Area (All Samples)

| <b>Teenagers Hanging Around on the Streets</b> |  |                                 |                                 |
|--|--|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>Sample</b>                                  | <b>Causing a problem (%)<br/>(Very big + fairly big problem)</b> | <b>Not very big problem (%)</b> | <b>Not a problem at all (%)</b> |
| Full Sample                                    | 42.6<br>(n=180)  | 36<br>(n=152)                   | 21.3<br>(n=90)                  |
| Respect  | 34.7<br>(n=79)   | 39.9<br>(n=91)                  | 25.4<br>(n=58)                  |
| Non-Respect                                    | 52<br>(n=101)  | 31.4<br>(n=61)                  | 16.5<br>(n=32)                  |
| Respect Area 1                                 | 37.2<br>(n=35)   | 43.6<br>(n=41)                  | 19.1<br>(n=18)                  |
| Respect Area 2                                 | 32.8<br>(n=44)   | 37.3<br>(n=50)                  | 29.9<br>(n=40)                  |
| Non-Respect Area 1                             | 42.4<br>(n=42)   | 36.4<br>(n=36)                  | 21.2<br>(n=21)                  |
| Non-Respect Area 2                             | 62.1<br>(n=59)   | 26.3<br>(n=25)                  | 11.6<br>(n=11)                  |

Proportion of Respondents Perceiving Rubbish or Litter Lying Around to be a Problem in their Local Area (All Samples)

| <b>Rubbish or Litter Lying Around</b> |  |                                 |                                 |
|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>Sample</b>                         | <b>Causing a problem (%)<br/>(Very big + fairly big problem)</b> | <b>Not very big problem (%)</b> | <b>Not a problem at all (%)</b> |
| Full Sample                           | 45.5<br>(n=192)  | 38.9<br>(n=164)                 | 15.6<br>(n=66)                  |
| Respect                               | 36.8<br>(n=84)   | 42.1<br>(n=96)                  | 21.1<br>(n=48)                  |
| Non-Respect                           | 55.7<br>(n=108)  | 35.1<br>(n=68)                  | 9.3<br>(n=18)                   |
| Respect Area 1                        | 50<br>(n=47)   | 35.1<br>(n=33)                  | 14.9<br>(n=14)                  |
| Respect Area 2                        | 27.6<br>(n=37)   | 47<br>(n=63)                    | 25.4<br>(n=34)                  |
| Non-Respect Area 1                    | 47.5<br>(n=47)   | 39.4<br>(n=39)                  | 13.1<br>(n=13)                  |
| Non-Respect Area 2                    | 64.2<br>(n=61)   | 30.5<br>(n=29)                  | 5.3<br>(n=5)                    |

Proportion of Respondents Perceiving Vandalism, Graffiti or other Deliberate Damage to be a Problem in their Local Area (All Samples)

| <b>Vandalism, Graffiti or Other Deliberate Damage to Property or Vehicles</b> |  |                                 |                                 |
|---|--|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>Sample</b>   | <b>Causing a problem (%)<br/>(Very big + fairly big problem)</b> | <b>Not very big problem (%)</b> | <b>Not a problem at all (%)</b> |
| Full Sample   | 35.6<br>(n=150)  | 40.8<br>(n=172)                 | 23.7<br>(n=100)                 |
| Respect   | 29.3<br>(n=67)   | 39.9<br>(n=91)                  | 30.7<br>(n=70)                  |
| Non-Respect   | 42.8<br>(n=83)   | 41.8<br>(n=81)                  | 15.5<br>(n=30)                  |
| Respect Area 1  | 36.1<br>(n=34)   | 40.4<br>(n=38)                  | 23.4<br>(n=22)                  |
| Respect Area 2  | 24.6<br>(n=33)   | 39.6<br>(n=53)                  | 35.8<br>(n=48)                  |
| Non-Respect Area 1  | 37.3<br>(n=37)   | 40.4<br>(n=40)                  | 22.2<br>(n=22)                  |
| Non-Respect Area 2  | 48.4<br>(n=46)   | 43.2<br>(n=41)                  | 8.4<br>(n=8)                    |

Proportion of Respondents Perceiving People Using or Dealing Drugs to be a Problem in their Local Area (All Samples)

| <b>People Using or Dealing Drugs</b> |  |                                 |                                 |
|--------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>Sample</b>                        | <b>Causing a problem (%)<br/>(Very big + fairly big problem)</b> | <b>Not very big problem (%)</b> | <b>Not a problem at all (%)</b> |
| Full Sample                          | 40.5<br>(n=171)  | 28.2<br>(n=119)                 | 31.3<br>(n=132)                 |
| Respect                              | 32.4<br>(n=74)   | 28.1<br>(n=64)                  | 39.5<br>(n=90)                  |
| Non-Respect                          | 50<br>(n=97)   | 28.4<br>(n=55)                  | 21.6<br>(n=42)                  |
| Respect Area 1                       | 44.6<br>(n=42)   | 29.8<br>(n=28)                  | 25.5<br>(n=24)                  |
| Respect Area 2                       | 23.9<br>(n=36)   | 26.9<br>(n=36)                  | 49.3<br>(n=66)                  |
| Non-Respect Area 1                   | 40.4<br>(n=40)   | 32.3<br>(n=32)                  | 27.3<br>(n=27)                  |
| Non-Respect Area 2                   | 60<br>(n=57)   | 24.2<br>(n=23)                  | 15.8<br>(n=15)                  |

Proportion of Respondents Perceiving People Being Drunk or Rowdy in Public Places to be a Problem in their Local Area (All Samples)

| <b>People Being Drunk or Rowdy in Public Places</b> |  |                                 |                                 |
|---|--|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>Sample</b>                                       | <b>Causing a problem (%)<br/>(Very big + fairly big problem)</b> | <b>Not very big problem (%)</b> | <b>Not a problem at all (%)</b> |
| Full Sample   | 26.1<br>(n=110)  | 41.9<br>(n=177)                 | 32<br>(n=135)                   |
| Respect   | 22<br>(n=43)   | 43.9<br>(n=100)                 | 37.3<br>(n=85)                  |
| Non-Respect   | 34.6<br>(n=67)   | 39.7<br>(n=77)                  | 25.8<br>(n=50)                  |
| Respect Area 1                                      | 21.3<br>(n=20)   | 52.1<br>(n=49)                  | 26.6<br>(n=25)                  |
| Respect Area 2                                      | 17.2<br>(n=23)   | 38.1<br>(n=51)                  | 44.8<br>(n=60)                  |
| Non-Respect Area 1                                  | 24.2<br>(n=24)   | 45.5<br>(n=45)                  | 30.3<br>(n=30)                  |
| Non-Respect Area 2                                  | 45.3<br>(n=43)   | 33.7<br>(n=32)                  | 21.1<br>(n=20)                  |

Proportion of Respondents Perceiving Abandoned or Burnt Out Cars to be a Problem in their Local Area (All Samples)

| <b>Abandoned or Burnt Out Cars</b> |  |                                 |                                 |
|------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>Sample</b>                      | <b>Causing a problem (%)<br/>(Very big + fairly big problem)</b> | <b>Not very big problem (%)</b> | <b>Not a problem at all (%)</b> |
| Full Sample                        | 9.2<br>(n=39)  | 35.1<br>(n=148)                 | 55.7<br>(n=235)                 |
| Respect                            | 10.1<br>(n=23)   | 29.4<br>(n=67)                  | 60.5<br>(n=138)                 |
| Non-Respect                        | 8.3<br>(n=16)  | 41.8<br>(n=81)                  | 50<br>(n=97)                    |
| Respect Area 1                     | 18.1<br>(n=17)   | 40.4<br>(n=38)                  | 41.5<br>(n=39)                  |
| Respect Area 2                     | 4.5<br>(n=6)   | 21.6<br>(n=29)                  | 73.9<br>(n=99)                  |
| Non-Respect Area 1                 | 10.2<br>(n=10)   | 47.5<br>(n=47)                  | 42.4<br>(n=42)                  |
| Non-Respect Area 2                 | 6.4<br>(n=6)   | 35.8<br>(n=34)                  | 57.9<br>(n=55)                  |

**Appendix 2d**

The Proportion of Respondents Perceiving ASB to be Committed Deliberately, Without Thinking and Don't Know

| <b>Perceived Motivation for Committing ASB</b> |                       |                             |                       |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Sample</b>                                  | <b>Deliberate (%)</b> | <b>Without Thinking (%)</b> | <b>Don't Know (%)</b> |
| Full Sample                                    | 42.4<br>(n=179)       | 39.3<br>(n=166)             | 12.1<br>(n=51)        |
| Respect  | 38.2<br>(n=87)        | 41.7<br>(n=95)              | 14<br>(n=32)          |
| Non-Respect                                    | 47.4<br>(n=92)        | 36.6<br>(n=71)              | 9.8<br>(n=19)         |
| Respect Area 1                                 | 43.6<br>(n=41)        | 40.4<br>(n=38)              | 11.7<br>(n=11)        |
| Respect Area 2                                 | 34.3<br>(n=42)        | 42.5<br>(n=57)              | 15.7<br>(n=21)        |
| Non-Respect Area 1                             | 46.5<br>(n=46)        | 35.4<br>(n=35)              | 11.1<br>(n=11)        |
| Non-Respect Area 2                             | 48.4<br>(n=46)        | 37.9<br>(n=36)              | 8.4<br>(n=8)          |

## Appendix 2e

The Proportion of Seven Strand Index Behaviours Perceived to be Getting Better, Worse and Staying the Same Locally in Past Two Years (Full Sample)

|  | <b>Worse* (%)</b> | <b>Stayed the same (%)</b> | <b>Better** (%)</b> | <b>Not a problem (%)</b> |
|--|-------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Noisy neighbours or loud parties                                       | 17.3<br>(n=73)    | 27.7<br>(n=117)            | 13.5<br>(n=57)      | 32.7<br>(n=138)          |
| Teenagers hanging around on the streets                                | 41.9<br>(n=177)   | 25.6<br>(n=108)            | 14<br>(n=59)        | 11.4<br>(n=48)           |
| Rubbish or litter lying around   | 39.6<br>(n=167)   | 28.2<br>(n=119)            | 13.8<br>(n=58)      | 12.1<br>(n=51)           |
| Vandalism, graffiti or other deliberate damage to property or vehicles | 31.8<br>(n=134)   | 29.9<br>(n=126)            | 14.7<br>(n=62)      | 14.2<br>(n=60)           |
| People using or dealing drugs  | 30.6<br>(n=129)   | 24.9<br>(n=105)            | 7.1<br>(n=30)       | 24.4<br>(n=103)          |
| People being drunk or rowdy in public places                           | 24.9<br>(n=105)   | 26.8<br>(n=113)            | 12.6<br>(n=53)      | 24.2<br>(n=102)          |
| Abandoned or burnt out cars  | 9.3<br>(n=39)     | 21.8<br>(n=92)             | 15.6<br>(n=66)      | 41.5<br>(n=175)          |

\* Combines 'a lot worse' and 'a little worse' responses

\*\* Combine 'a lot better' and 'a little better' responses

The Proportion of Seven Strand Index Behaviours Perceived to be Getting Better, Worse and Staying the Same Locally in Past Two Years (Respect Sub-Sample)

|  | <b>Worse* (%)</b> | <b>Stayed the same (%)</b> | <b>Better** (%)</b> | <b>Not a problem (%)</b> |
|--|-------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Noisy neighbours or loud parties                                       | 18.8<br>(n=43)    | 26.8<br>(n=61)             | 12.3<br>(n=28)      | 34.6<br>(n=79)           |
| Teenagers hanging around on the streets                                | 36.9<br>(n=84)    | 27.6<br>(n=63)             | 13.6<br>(n=31)      | 15.4<br>(n=35)           |
| Rubbish or litter lying around   | 38.6<br>(n=88)    | 26.8<br>(n=61)             | 11.4<br>(n=26)      | 17.1<br>(n=39)           |
| Vandalism, graffiti or other deliberate damage to property or vehicles | 30.3<br>(n=69)    | 28.9<br>(n=66)             | 13.1<br>(n=30)      | 18.9<br>(n=43)           |
| People using or dealing drugs  | 26.8<br>(n=61)    | 21.9<br>(n=50)             | 4.4<br>(n=10)       | 34.2<br>(n=78)           |
| People being drunk or rowdy in public places                           | 21.1<br>(n=48)    | 26.8<br>(n=61)             | 10.6<br>(n=24)      | 30.7<br>(n=70)           |
| Abandoned or burnt out cars  | 9.7<br>(n=22)     | 21.5<br>(n=49)             | 12.3<br>(n=28)      | 45.6<br>(n=104)          |

\* Combines 'a lot worse' and 'a little worse' responses

\*\* Combine 'a lot better' and 'a little better' responses

The Proportion of Seven Strand Index Behaviours Perceived to be Getting Better, Worse and Staying the Same Locally in Past Two Years (Non-Respect Sub-Sample)

|  | <b>Worse* (%)</b> | <b>Stayed the same (%)</b> | <b>Better** (%)</b> | <b>Not a problem (%)</b> |
|--|-------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Noisy neighbours or loud parties                                       | 15.5<br>(n=30)    | 28.9<br>(n=56)             | 15<br>(n=29)        | 30.4<br>(n=59)           |
| Teenagers hanging around on the streets                                | 47.9<br>(n=93)    | 23.2<br>(n=45)             | 14.5<br>(n=28)      | 6.7<br>(n=13)            |
| Rubbish or litter lying around   | 40.7<br>(n=79)    | 29.9<br>(n=58)             | 16.5<br>(n=32)      | 6.2<br>(n=12)            |
| Vandalism, graffiti or other deliberate damage to property or vehicles | 33.5<br>(n=65)    | 30.9<br>(n=60)             | 16.5<br>(n=32)      | 8.8<br>(n=17)            |
| People using or dealing drugs  | 35<br>(n=68)      | 28.4<br>(n=55)             | 10.3<br>(n=20)      | 12.9<br>(n=25)           |
| People being drunk or rowdy in public places                           | 29.3<br>(n=57)    | 26.8<br>(n=52)             | 15<br>(n=29)        | 16.5<br>(n=32)           |
| Abandoned or burnt out cars  | 8.8<br>(n=17)     | 22.2<br>(n=43)             | 19.6<br>(n=38)      | 36.6<br>(n=71)           |

\* Combines 'a lot worse' and 'a little worse' responses

\*\* Combine 'a lot better' and 'a little better' responses

The Proportion of Seven Strand Index Behaviours Perceived to be Getting Better, Worse and Staying the Same Locally Past Two Years (Respect Area 1 Sub-Sample)

|  | <b>Worse* (%)</b> | <b>Stayed the same (%)</b> | <b>Better** (%)</b> | <b>Not a problem (%)</b> |
|--|-------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Noisy neighbours or loud parties                                       | 25.5<br>(n=24)    | 25.5<br>(n=24)             | 11.7<br>(n=11)      | 26.6<br>(n=25)           |
| Teenagers hanging around on the streets                                | 39.4<br>(n=37)    | 30.9<br>(n=29)             | 12.8<br>(n=12)      | 6.4<br>(n=6)             |
| Rubbish or litter lying around   | 45.7<br>(n=43)    | 25.5<br>(n=24)             | 12.8<br>(n=12)      | 8.5<br>(n=8)             |
| Vandalism, graffiti or other deliberate damage to property or vehicles | 30.9<br>(n=29)    | 29.8<br>(n=28)             | 14.8<br>(n=14)      | 10.6<br>(n=10)           |
| People using or dealing drugs  | 35.1<br>(n=33)    | 22.3<br>(n=21)             | 6.4<br>(n=6)        | 19.1<br>(n=18)           |
| People being drunk or rowdy in public places                           | 21.3<br>(n=20)    | 26.6<br>(n=25)             | 15.9<br>(n=15)      | 24.5<br>(n=23)           |
| Abandoned or burnt out cars  | 17<br>(n=16)      | 23.4<br>(n=22)             | 19.2<br>(n=18)      | 28.7<br>(n=27)           |

\* Combines 'a lot worse' and 'a little worse' responses

\*\* Combine 'a lot better' and 'a little better' responses

The Proportion of Seven Strand Index Behaviours Perceived to be Getting Better, Worse and Staying the Same Locally Past Two Years (Respect Area 2 Sub-Sample)

|  | <b>Worse* (%)</b> | <b>Stayed the same (%)</b> | <b>Better** (%)</b> | <b>Not a problem (%)</b> |
|--|-------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Noisy neighbours or loud parties                                       | 14.2<br>(n=19)    | 27.6<br>(n=37)             | 12.7<br>(n=17)      | 40.3<br>(n=54)           |
| Teenagers hanging around on the streets                                | 35.1<br>(n=47)    | 25.4<br>(n=34)             | 14.1<br>(n=19)      | 21.6<br>(n=29)           |
| Rubbish or litter lying around   | 33.5<br>(n=45)    | 27.6<br>(n=37)             | 10.4<br>(n=14)      | 23.1<br>(n=31)           |
| Vandalism, graffiti or other deliberate damage to property or vehicles | 29.8<br>(n=40)    | 28.4<br>(n=38)             | 12<br>(n=16)        | 24.6<br>(n=33)           |
| People using or dealing drugs  | 20.8<br>(n=28)    | 21.6<br>(n=29)             | 3<br>(n=4)          | 44.8<br>(n=60)           |
| People being drunk or rowdy in public places                           | 20.9<br>(n=28)    | 26.9<br>(n=36)             | 6.7<br>(n=9)        | 35.1<br>(n=47)           |
| Abandoned or burnt out cars  | 4.5<br>(n=6)      | 20.1<br>(n=27)             | 7.4<br>(n=10)       | 57.5<br>(n=77)           |

\* Combines 'a lot worse' and 'a little worse' responses

\*\* Combine 'a lot better' and 'a little better' responses

The Proportion of Seven Strand Index Behaviours Perceived to be Getting Better, Worse and Staying the Same Locally Past Two Years (Non-Respect Area 1 Sub-Sample)

|  | <b>Worse* (%)</b> | <b>Stayed the same (%)</b> | <b>Better** (%)</b> | <b>Not a problem (%)</b> |
|--|-------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Noisy neighbours or loud parties                                       | 12.2<br>(n=12)    | 27.3<br>(n=27)             | 9.1<br>(n=9)        | 39.4<br>(n=39)           |
| Teenagers hanging around on the streets                                | 39.4<br>(n=39)    | 26.3<br>(n=26)             | 15.1<br>(n=15)      | 10.1<br>(n=10)           |
| Rubbish or litter lying around   | 36.4<br>(n=36)    | 33.3<br>(n=33)             | 16.2<br>(n=16)      | 7.1<br>(n=7)             |
| Vandalism, graffiti or other deliberate damage to property or vehicles | 24.2<br>(n=24)    | 35.4<br>(n=35)             | 17.2<br>(n=17)      | 8.1<br>(n=8)             |
| People using or dealing drugs  | 25.2<br>(n=25)    | 35.4<br>(n=35)             | 11.1<br>(n=11)      | 13.1<br>(n=13)           |
| People being drunk or rowdy in public places                           | 24.2<br>(n=24)    | 29.3<br>(n=29)             | 14.1<br>(n=14)      | 17.2<br>(n=17)           |
| Abandoned or burnt out cars  | 12.2<br>(n=12)    | 25.3<br>(n=25)             | 25.3<br>(n=25)      | 23.2<br>(n=23)           |

\* Combines 'a lot worse' and 'a little worse' responses

\*\* Combine 'a lot better' and 'a little better' responses

The Proportion of Seven Strand Index Behaviours Perceived to be Getting Better, Worse and Staying the Same Locally Past Two Years (Non-Respect Area 2 Sub-Sample)

|  | <b>Worse* (%)</b> | <b>Stayed the same (%)</b> | <b>Better** (%)</b> | <b>Not a problem (%)</b> |
|--|-------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Noisy neighbours or loud parties                                       | 18.9<br>(n=18)    | 30.5<br>(n=29)             | 21<br>(n=20)        | 21.1<br>(n=20)           |
| Teenagers hanging around on the streets                                | 56.8<br>(n=54)    | 20<br>(n=19)               | 13.7<br>(n=13)      | 3.2<br>(n=3)             |
| Rubbish or litter lying around   | 45.3<br>(n=43)    | 26.3<br>(n=25)             | 16.8<br>(n=16)      | 5.3<br>(n=5)             |
| Vandalism, graffiti or other deliberate damage to property or vehicles | 43.1<br>(n=41)    | 26.3<br>(n=25)             | 15.8<br>(n=15)      | 9.5<br>(n=9)             |
| People using or dealing drugs  | 45.3<br>(n=43)    | 21.1<br>(n=20)             | 9.5<br>(n=9)        | 12.6<br>(n=12)           |
| People being drunk or rowdy in public places                           | 34.7<br>(n=33)    | 24.2<br>(n=23)             | 15.8<br>(n=15)      | 15.8<br>(n=15)           |
| Abandoned or burnt out cars  | 5.3<br>(n=5)      | 18.9<br>(n=18)             | 13.7<br>(n=13)      | 50.5<br>(n=48)           |

\* Combines 'a lot worse' and 'a little worse' responses

\*\* Combine 'a lot better' and 'a little better' responses

## Appendix 2f

Variables with Non-Significant  $\chi^2$  Associations to the Combined Perceptions Measure

| Variable  | Sample      | Statistics  |
|---|-------------|---|
| Ward  | R1          | $\chi^2 = 2.358$ , df = 1, p = 0.125, n = 94      |
|   | R2          | $\chi^2 = 0.113$ , df = 1, p = 0.737, n = 134     |
|   | NR1         | $\chi^2 = 1.986$ , df = 1, p = 0.159, n = 99      |
|   | NR2         | $\chi^2 = 0.879$ , df = 1, p = 0.349, n = 95      |
| Gender  | Full        | $\chi^2 = 0.011$ , df = 1, p = 0.915, n = 414     |
|   | Respect     | $\chi^2 = 0.038$ , df = 1, p = 0.845, n = 222     |
|   | Non-Respect | $\chi^2 = 0.001$ , df = 1, p = 0.981, n = 192     |
| Age   | Full        | $\chi^2 = 3.454$ , df = 3, p = 0.330, n = 413     |
|   | Respect     | $\chi^2 = 1.537$ , df = 3, p = 0.686, n = 222     |
|   | Non-Respect | $\chi^2 = 2.604$ , df = 3, p = 0.459, n = 191     |
| Ethnicity   | Full        | $\chi^2 = 0.814$ , df = 1, p = 0.367, n = 417     |
|   | Non-Respect | $\chi^2 = 0.237$ , df = 1 p = 1, n = 194          |
| Length of Residence                                     | Full        | $\chi^2 = 3.338$ , df = 3, p = 0.342, n = 413     |
|   | Respect     | $\chi^2 = 0.610$ , df = 3, p = 0.903, n = 221     |
|   | Non-Respect | $\chi^2 = 4.350$ , df = 3, p = 0.219, n = 192     |
| Crime Victim  | Full        | $\chi^2 = 1.000$ , df = 1, p = 0.317, n = 417     |
|   | Respect     | $\chi^2 = 0.236$ , df = 1, p = 0.627, n = 225     |
|   | Non-Respect | $\chi^2 = 1.789$ , df = 1, p = 0.181, n = 192     |
| Local Newspaper Readership                              | Full        | $\chi^2 = 1.260$ , df = 1, p = 0.262, n = 392     |
|   | Respect     | $\chi^2 = 0.147$ , df = 1, p = 0.751, n = 212     |
|   | Non-Respect | $\chi^2 = 2.224$ , df = 1, p = 0.181, n = 180     |
| National Tabloid Readership                             | Full        | $\chi^2 = 0.175$ , df = 1, p = 0.675, n = 368     |
|   | Respect     | $\chi^2 = 0.363$ , df = 1, p = 0.547, n = 200     |
|   | Non-Respect | $\chi^2 = 0.632$ , df = 1, p = 0.427, n = 168     |
| National Broadsheet Readership                          | Full        | $\chi^2 = 0.287$ , df = 1, p = 0.592, n = 304     |
|   | Respect     | $\chi^2 = 0.136$ , df = 1, p = 0.712, n = 169     |
|   | Non-Respect | $\chi^2 = 0.634$ , df = 1, p = 0.426, n = 135     |
| Viewer of Local TV News                                 | Full        | $\chi^2 = 1.610$ , df = 1, p = 0.331, n = 407     |
|   | Respect     | $\chi^2 = 1.107$ , df = 1, p = 0.580, n = 220     |
|   | Non-Respect | $\chi^2$ not computed as 1 variable is a constant |
| Viewer of National TV News                              | Full        | $\chi^2 = 0.015$ , df = 1, p = 1, n = 401         |
|   | Respect     | $\chi^2 = 0.321$ , df = 1, p = 1, n = 217         |
|   | Non-Respect | $\chi^2 = 0.576$ , df = 1, p = 1, n = 184         |
| Access Local News Online                                | Full        | $\chi^2 = 1.319$ , df = 1. P = 0.251, n = 321     |
|   | Respect     | $\chi^2 = 0.570$ , df = 1, p = 0.450, n = 177     |
|   | Non-Respect | $\chi^2 = 0.854$ , df = 1 p = 0.356, n = 144      |
| Access National News Online                             | Full        | $\chi^2 = 0.030$ , df = 1, p = 0.862, n = 321     |
|   | Respect     | $\chi^2 = 0.209$ , df = 1, p = 0.647, n = 175     |
|   | Non-Respect | $\chi^2 = 0.049$ , df = 1, p = 0.824, n = 146     |
| ASB Better or Worse in Past 2 Years; England and Wales? | Full        | $\chi^2 = 2.521$ , df = 2, p = 0.283, n = 411     |
|   | Respect     | $\chi^2 = 1.571$ , df = 2, p = 0.459, n = 221     |
|   | Non-Respect | $\chi^2 = 2.262$ , df = 2, p = 0.373, n = 190     |
| Kept Informed About ASB Locally?                        | Full        | $\chi^2 = 5.202$ , df = 2, p = 0.074, n = 411     |
|   | Respect     | $\chi^2 = 5.752$ , df = 2, p = 0.057, n = 219     |
|   | Non-Respect | $\chi^2 = 5.514$ , df = 2, p = 0.063, n = 192     |
| Any Money Spent on ASB Locally?                         | Non-Respect | $\chi^2 = 5.528$ , df = 2, p = 0.063, n = 192     |

|                                |             |   |
|--------------------------------|-------------|---|
| Awareness of Local Projects    | Full        | $\chi^2 = 0.343$ , df = 1, p = 0.558, n = 410 |
|                                | Respect     | $\chi^2 = 2.598$ , df = 1, p = 0.145, n = 219 |
|                                | Non-Respect | $\chi^2 = 0.667$ , df = 1, p = 0.414, n = 191 |
| Awareness of National Projects | Full        | $\chi^2 = 0.187$ , df = 1, p = 0.665, n = 398 |
|                                | Respect     | $\chi^2 = 1.059$ , df = 1, p = 0.423, n = 210 |
|                                | Non-Respect | $\chi^2 = 0.215$ , df = 1, p = 0.643, n = 188 |

n=number of respondents

df=degrees of freedom

p=significance level

Highlighted values indicate a significance level of  $p < 0.25$ , which were included in the logistic regression models according to sample/sub-sample.

## Appendix 2g

### Calculations to Determine Sufficiency of Sample Size for Logistic Regression Analysis

#### **Full Sample Calculations**

Total number of cases = 422

Number of predictor variables selected for the logistic regression model = 10

##### Method 1 - Field (2005)

15 cases required per predictor.

10 predictor variables x 15 cases = 150 cases required



##### Method 2a - Green (1991)

The minimum number of cases should equal  $50+8k$ , where  $k$  is the number of predictors.

$50 + (8 \times 10 \text{ predictor variables}) = \underline{130 \text{ cases required}}$



##### Method 2b - Green (1991)

The minimum number of cases should equal  $104 + k$ , where  $k$  is the number of predictors.

$104 + 10 \text{ predictors} = \underline{114 \text{ cases required}}$



#### **Respect Sub-Sample Calculations**

Total number of cases = 228

Number of predictor variables selected for the logistic regression model = 11

##### Method 1 - Field (2005)

15 cases required per predictor.

11 predictor variables x 15 cases = 165 cases required



##### Method 2a - Green (1991)

The minimum number of cases should equal  $50+8k$ , where  $k$  is the number of predictors.

$50 + (8 \times 11 \text{ predictor variables}) = \underline{138 \text{ cases required}}$



##### Method 2b - Green (1991)

The minimum number of cases should equal  $104 + k$ , where  $k$  is the number of predictors.

104 + 11 predictors = 115 cases required



**Non-Respect Sub-Sample Calculations**

Total number of cases = 194

Number of predictor variables selected for the logistic regression model = 10

Method 1 - Field (2005)

15 cases required per predictor.

10 predictor variables x 15 cases = 150 cases required



Method 2a - Green (1991)

The minimum number of cases should equal  $50+8k$ , where  $k$  is the number of predictors.

$50 + (8 \times 10 \text{ predictor variables}) = \underline{130 \text{ cases required}}$



Method 2b - Green (1991)

The minimum number of cases should equal  $104 + k$ , where  $k$  is the number of predictors.

$104 + 10 \text{ predictors} = \underline{114 \text{ cases required}}$



**Appendix 2h**

## Full Sample Collinearity Diagnostic Test Results

| Predictor Variable                             | Collinearity Statistics |       |
|--|-------------------------|-------|
|  | Tolerance               | VIF   |
| Respect  | 0.848                   | 1.180 |
| Tenancy (Owner Occupier)                       | 0.171                   | 5.839 |
| Tenancy (Council tenant)                       | 0.218                   | 4.591 |
| Tenancy (Housing Association Tenant)           | 0.363                   | 2.757 |
| ASB committed deliberately                     | 0.346                   | 2.888 |
| ASB committed without thinking                 | 0.371                   | 2.693 |
| ASB getting better in local area               | 0.781                   | 1.280 |
| ASB getting worse in local area                | 0.709                   | 1.411 |
| Most worried about crime                       | 0.867                   | 1.154 |
| Most worried about ASB                         | 0.850                   | 1.176 |
| Money is spent to tackle ASB in local area     | 0.814                   | 1.229 |
| Money is not spent to tackle ASB in local area | 0.846                   | 1.182 |
| Victim of crime                                | 0.891                   | 1.123 |
| Kept informed about local ASB                  | 0.240                   | 4.173 |
| Not kept informed about local ASB              | 0.243                   | 4.122 |
| Length of residence; less than 12 months       | 0.750                   | 1.333 |
| Length of residence; 12 months – 5 years       | 0.717                   | 1.394 |
| Length of residence; 5 –10 years               | 0.807                   | 1.239 |
| Age: 16 – 24                                   | 0.715                   | 1.398 |
| Age: 25 – 44                                   | 0.449                   | 2.228 |
| Age: 45 – 64                                   | 0.511                   | 1.956 |

# Respect Sub-Sample Collinearity Diagnostic Test Results

| Predictor Variable                             | Collinearity Statistics |       |
|--|-------------------------|-------|
|  | Tolerance               | VIF   |
| Area   | 0.789                   | 1.268 |
| Ethnicity                                      | 0.782                   | 1.279 |
| Tenancy (Owner Occupier)                       | 0.205                   | 4.889 |
| Tenancy (Council tenant)                       | 0.342                   | 2.920 |
| Tenancy (Housing Association Tenant)           | 0.295                   | 3.391 |
| ASB committed deliberately                     | 0.356                   | 2.811 |
| ASB committed without thinking                 | 0.395                   | 2.533 |
| ASB getting better in local area               | 0.772                   | 1.295 |
| ASB getting worse in local area                | 0.701                   | 1.427 |
| Most worried about crime                       | 0.800                   | 1.250 |
| Most worried about ASB                         | 0.751                   | 1.332 |
| Money is spent to tackle ASB in local area     | 0.691                   | 1.446 |
| Money is not spent to tackle ASB in local area | 0.780                   | 1.281 |
| Victim of crime                                | 0.785                   | 1.273 |
| Kept informed about local ASB                  | 0.232                   | 4.302 |
| Not kept informed about local ASB              | 0.238                   | 4.210 |
| Length of residence; less than 12 months       | 0.717                   | 1.395 |
| Length of residence; 12 months – 5 years       | 0.624                   | 1.602 |
| Length of residence; 5 –10 years               | 0.728                   | 1.374 |
| Aware of local projects                        | 0.844                   | 1.185 |
| Age: 16 – 24                                   | 0.689                   | 1.450 |
| Age: 25 – 44                                   | 0.365                   | 2.742 |
| Age: 45 – 64                                   | 0.440                   | 2.271 |

# Non-Respect Sub-Sample Collinearity Diagnostic Test Results

| Predictor Variable                             | Collinearity Statistics |        |
|--|-------------------------|--------|
|  | Tolerance               | VIF    |
| Area   | 0.829                   | 1.206  |
| Tenancy (Owner Occupier)                       | 0.093                   | 10.728 |
| Tenancy (Council tenant)                       | 0.103                   | 9.739  |
| Tenancy (Housing Association Tenant)           | 0.384                   | 2.602  |
| ASB committed deliberately                     | 0.300                   | 3.337  |
| ASB committed without thinking                 | 0.302                   | 3.315  |
| ASB getting better in local area               | 0.671                   | 1.491  |
| ASB getting worse in local area                | 0.644                   | 1.554  |
| Most worried about crime                       | 0.856                   | 1.169  |
| Most worried about ASB                         | 0.799                   | 1.252  |
| Money is spent to tackle ASB in local area     | 0.772                   | 1.296  |
| Money is not spent to tackle ASB in local area | 0.835                   | 1.197  |
| Victim of crime                                | 0.889                   | 1.125  |
| Kept informed about local ASB                  | 0.199                   | 5.014  |
| Not kept informed about local ASB              | 0.206                   | 4.850  |
| Length of residence; less than 12 months       | 0.706                   | 1.417  |
| Length of residence; 12 months – 5 years       | 0.738                   | 1.355  |
| Length of residence; 5 –10 years               | 0.690                   | 1.448  |
| Reads local newspaper                          | 0.887                   | 1.127  |
| Age: 16 – 24                                   | 0.591                   | 1.692  |
| Age: 25 – 44                                   | 0.451                   | 2.218  |
| Age: 45 – 64                                   | 0.524                   | 1.907  |

Highlighted cells denote collinearity (tolerance<0.1 (Menard, 1995) / VIF>10 (Myers, 1990))

**Appendix 2i**

Detailed Significant Logistic Regression Results for the Full Sample Model (Step 16)

| <b>Predictor Variable</b>                 | <b><math>\beta</math></b> | <b>S.E.</b> | <b>Wald</b> | <b>df</b> | <b>Sig.</b> | <b>Exp(<math>\beta</math>)</b> |
|---|---------------------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|-------------|--------------------------------|
| Living in a Respect Area                  | -.793                     | .273        | 8.404       | 1         | .004        | .453                           |
| Tenancy: owner occupier                   | -1.092                    | .273        | 15.944      | 1         | .000        | .336                           |
| ASB committed deliberately                | 1.143                     | .273        | 17.504      | 1         | .000        | 3.137                          |
| ASB worse in local area in last two years | 1.141                     | .288        | 15.709      | 1         | .000        | 3.129                          |
| More worried about crime than ASB         | -.982                     | .364        | 7.293       | 1         | .007        | .375                           |
| Money spent: no                           | .800                      | .371        | 4.644       | 1         | .031        | 2.226                          |
| Constant                                  | -1.064                    | .339        | 9.831       | 1         | .002        | .345                           |

# Non-Significant Predictor Variables in the Full Sample Model (Step 16)

| <b>Predictor Variable</b>                     | <b>Score</b> | <b>df</b>          | <b>Sig.</b> |
|---|--------------|--------------------|-------------|
| ASB committed without thinking                | .002         | 1                  | .964        |
| Don't know if ASB deliberate/without thinking | 1            | Reference category |             |
| More worried about ASB than crime             | .955         | 1                  | .328        |
| Neither/don't know if more worried            | 1            | Reference category |             |
| ASB getting better last two years             | .929         | 1                  | .335        |
| ASB stayed the same                           | 1            | Reference category |             |
| Rent from council                             | .072         | 1                  | .788        |
| Rent from Housing Association/Trust           | .057         | 1                  | .812        |
| Other tenancy                                 | 1            | Reference category |             |
| Kept informed - agree                         | .677         | 1                  | .410        |
| Kept informed - disagree                      | .110         | 1                  | .740        |
| Kept informed - don't know                    | 1            | Reference category |             |
| Crime victim                                  | .010         | 1                  | .920        |
| Not crime victim                              | 1            | Reference category |             |
| Money spent: yes                              | .980         | 1                  | .322        |
| Money spent: don't know                       | 1            | Reference category |             |
| Aged 16 - 24                                  | .354         | 1                  | .552        |
| Aged 25 - 44                                  | .030         | 1                  | .862        |
| Aged 45 - 64                                  | .433         | 1                  | .511        |
| Aged 65+                                      | 1            | Reference category |             |
| Length of residence: less than 12 months      | .823         | 1                  | .364        |
| Length of residence: 12 months - 5 years      | .012         | 1                  | .911        |
| Length of residence: 5 - 10 years             | .904         | 1                  | .342        |
| Length of residence: 10+ years                | 1            | Reference category |             |
| Overall statistics                            | 7.526        | 15                 | .913        |

**Appendix 2j**

Detailed Significant Logistic Regression Results for the Respect Sub-Sample Model (Step 17)

| <b>Predictor Variable</b>                 | <b><math>\beta</math></b> | <b>S.E.</b> | <b>Wald</b> | <b>df</b> | <b>Sig.</b> | <b>Exp(<math>\beta</math>)</b> |
|---|---------------------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|-------------|--------------------------------|
| Ethnicity: non-white                      | 1.467                     | .705        | 4.334       | 1         | .037        | 4.335                          |
| Tenancy: rent from council                | 1.503                     | .622        | 5.842       | 1         | 0.16        | 4.493                          |
| ASB committed deliberately                | 1.440                     | .472        | 9.291       | 1         | .002        | 4.221                          |
| ASB worse in local area in last two years | 1.667                     | .511        | 10.641      | 1         | .001        | 5.294                          |
| Money spent: no                           | 1.191                     | .564        | 4.464       | 1         | .035        | 3.291                          |
| Kept informed: agree                      | 1.355                     | .500        | 7.351       | 1         | .007        | 3.879                          |
| Living in Respect Area 1                  | 1.275                     | .472        | 7.309       | 1         | .007        | 3.579                          |
| Constant                                  | -4.870                    | .719        | 45.890      | 1         | .000        | .008                           |

# Non-Significant Predictor Variables in the Respect Sub-Sample Model (Step 17)

| Predictor Variable                            | Score | df                 | Sig. |
|---|-------|--------------------|------|
| Tenancy: owner occupier                       | .785  | 1                  | .376 |
| Tenancy: rent from housing assoc / trust      | .374  | 1                  | .541 |
| Tenancy: other                                | 1     | Reference category |      |
| ASB committed without thinking                | .150  | 1                  | .699 |
| Don't know if ASB deliberate/without thinking | 1     | Reference category |      |
| ASB getting better last two years             | .181  | 1                  | .671 |
| ASB stayed the same                           | 1     | Reference category |      |
| More worried about crime than ASB             | .157  | 1                  | .692 |
| More worried about ASB than crime             | .236  | 1                  | .627 |
| Neither/don't know if more worried            | 1     | Reference category |      |
| Money spent: yes                              | .001  | 1                  | .977 |
| Money spent: don't know                       | 1     | Reference category |      |
| Crime victim                                  | .033  | 1                  | .856 |
| Not crime victim                              | 1     | Reference category |      |
| Kept informed: disagree                       | .261  | 1                  | .610 |
| Kept informed: don't know                     | 1     | Reference category |      |
| Length of residence: less than 12 months      | .002  | 1                  | .967 |
| Length of residence: 12 months - 5 years      | .363  | 1                  | .547 |
| Length of residence: 5 - 10 years             | .476  | 1                  | .490 |
| Length of residence: 10+ years                | 1     | Reference category |      |
| Aware local projects: yes                     | .643  | 1                  | .422 |
| Aware local projects: no                      | 1     | Reference category |      |
| Aged 16 - 24                                  | .154  | 1                  | .695 |
| Aged 25 - 44                                  | .062  | 1                  | .803 |
| Aged 45 – 64                                  | .625  | 1                  | .429 |
| Aged 65+                                      | 1     | Reference category |      |
| Overall statistics                            | 4.828 | 16                 | .997 |

**Appendix 2k**

Detailed Significant Logistic Regression Results for the Non-Respect Sub-Sample Model  
(Step 19)

| <b>Predictor Variable</b>         | <b><math>\beta</math></b> | <b>S.E.</b> | <b>Wald</b> | <b>df</b> | <b>Sig.</b> | <b>Exp(<math>\beta</math>)</b> |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|-------------|--------------------------------|
| ASB committed deliberately        | 1.607                     | .384        | 17.561      | 1         | .000        | 4.990                          |
| More worried about crime than ASB | -1.677                    | .515        | 10.601      | 1         | .001        | .187                           |
| Read local paper: agree           | -1.839                    | .808        | 5.177       | 1         | .023        | .159                           |
| Living in Non-Respect Area 2      | 1.131                     | .391        | 8.359       | 1         | .004        | 3.099                          |
| Constant                          | .096                      | .783        | .015        | 1         | .902        | 1.101                          |

# Non-Significant Predictor Variables in the Respect Sub-Sample Model (Step 17)

| Predictor Variable                            | Score  | df                 | Sig. |
|---|--------|--------------------|------|
| Tenancy: owner occupier                       | 2.902  | 1                  | .088 |
| Tenancy: rent from council                    | 1.356  | 1                  | .244 |
| Tenancy: rent from housing assoc / trust      | .014   | 1                  | .905 |
| Tenancy: other                                | 1      | Reference category |      |
| ASB committed without thinking                | .012   | 1                  | .911 |
| Don't know if ASB deliberate/without thinking | 1      | Reference category |      |
| ASB getting better last two years             | .266   | 1                  | .606 |
| ASB getting worse last two years              | 3.791  | 1                  | .052 |
| ASB stayed the same                           | 1      | Reference category |      |
| More worried about ASB than crime             | 2.427  | 1                  | .119 |
| Neither/don't know if more worried            | 1      | Reference category |      |
| Money spent: yes                              | 3.721  | 1                  | .054 |
| Money spent: no                               | 3.269  | 1                  | .071 |
| Money spent: don't know                       | 1      | Reference category |      |
| Crime victim                                  | 1.162  | 1                  | .281 |
| Not crime victim                              | 1      | Reference category |      |
| Kept informed: agree                          | .087   | 1                  | .768 |
| Kept informed: disagree                       | .764   | 1                  | .382 |
| Kept informed: don't know                     | 1      | Reference category |      |
| Length of residence: less than 12 months      | 1.597  | 1                  | .206 |
| Length of residence: 12 months - 5 years      | .537   | 1                  | .464 |
| Length of residence: 5 - 10 years             | .508   | 1                  | .476 |
| Length of residence: 10+ years                | 1      | Reference category |      |
| Aged 16 - 24                                  | .007   | 1                  | .933 |
| Aged 25 - 44                                  | .299   | 1                  | .585 |
| Aged 45 - 64                                  | .029   | 1                  | .865 |
| Aged 65+                                      | 1      | Reference category |      |
| Overall statistics                            | 22.751 | 18                 | .200 |

## Appendix 2I

### Respect Area 1 Focus Group Combined Perceptions Scores

| Respect Area 1 |             |       |               |                       |                       |
|----------------|-------------|-------|---------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Focus Group    | Participant | Score | Group Average | Phase 2<br>R1 Average | Phase 1<br>R1 Average |
| 1              | 1           | 10    | 9             | 6.5                   | 8.4                   |
|                | 2           | 8     |               |                       |                       |
|                | 3           | 9     |               |                       |                       |
| 2              | 1           | 11    | 3             |                       |                       |
|                | 2           | 0     |               |                       |                       |
|                | 3           | 0     |               |                       |                       |
|                | 4           | 8     |               |                       |                       |
|                | 5           | 5     |               |                       |                       |
|                | 6           | 1     |               |                       |                       |
|                | 7           | 0     |               |                       |                       |
|                | 8           | 0     |               |                       |                       |
| 3              | 1           | 17    | 16.5          |                       |                       |
|                | 2           | 16    |               |                       |                       |

Respect Area 2 Focus Group Combined Perceptions Scores

| Respect Area 2 |             |       |               |                    |                    |
|----------------|-------------|-------|---------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Focus Group    | Participant | Score | Group Average | Phase 2 R2 Average | Phase 1 R2 Average |
| 1              | 1           | 18    | 9             | 8.3                | 5.7                |
|                | 2           | 8     |               |                    |                    |
|                | 3           | 11    |               |                    |                    |
|                | 4           | 13    |               |                    |                    |
|                | 5           | 0     |               |                    |                    |
|                | 6           | 0     |               |                    |                    |
|                | 7           | 14    |               |                    |                    |
| 2              | 1           | 1     | 6.5           |                    |                    |
|                | 2           | 15    |               |                    |                    |
|                | 3           | 0     |               |                    |                    |
|                | 4           | 11    |               |                    |                    |
|                | 5           | 11    |               |                    |                    |
|                | 6           | 6     |               |                    |                    |
|                | 7           | 5     |               |                    |                    |
|                | 8           | 3     |               |                    |                    |
| 3              | *           | *     | *             |                    |                    |

Non-Respect Area 1 Focus Group Combined Perceptions Scores

| Non-Respect Area 1 |             |       |               |                     |                     |
|--------------------|-------------|-------|---------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Focus Group        | Participant | Score | Group Average | Phase 2 NR1 Average | Phase 1 NR1 Average |
| 1                  | 1           | 16    | 9             | 8                   | 8                   |
|                    | 2           | 15    |               |                     |                     |
|                    | 3           | 10    |               |                     |                     |
|                    | 4           | 9     |               |                     |                     |
|                    | 5           | 3     |               |                     |                     |
|                    | 6           | 1     |               |                     |                     |
|                    | 7           | 2     |               |                     |                     |
|                    | 8           | 15    |               |                     |                     |
| 2                  | 1           | 18    | 8             |                     |                     |
|                    | 2           | 4     |               |                     |                     |
|                    | 3           | 12    |               |                     |                     |
|                    | 4           | 15    |               |                     |                     |
|                    | 5           | 8     |               |                     |                     |
|                    | 6           | 8     |               |                     |                     |
|                    | 7           | 0     |               |                     |                     |
|                    | 8           | 0     |               |                     |                     |
| 3                  | 1           | 3     | 8             |                     |                     |
|                    | 2           | 4     |               |                     |                     |
|                    | 3           | 10    |               |                     |                     |
|                    | 4           | 4     |               |                     |                     |
|                    | 5           | 4     |               |                     |                     |
|                    | 6           | 15    |               |                     |                     |
|                    | 7           | 8     |               |                     |                     |
|                    | 8           | 7     |               |                     |                     |
|                    | 9           | 9     |               |                     |                     |

Non-Respect Area 2 Focus Group Combined Perceptions Scores

| Non-Respect Area 2 |             |       |               |                     |                     |
|--------------------|-------------|-------|---------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Focus Group        | Participant | Score | Group Average | Phase 2 NR2 Average | Phase 1 NR2 Average |
| 1                  | 1           | 7     | 5             | 5                   | 9.9                 |
|                    | 2           | 5     |               |                     |                     |
|                    | 3           | 5     |               |                     |                     |
|                    | 4           | 6     |               |                     |                     |
|                    | 5           | 4     |               |                     |                     |

## **Appendix Three: Associated Published Material**