

Children in Scotland's Response to the Scottish Executive Anti- Social Behaviour Strategy

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Who are we?

- A national organisation for voluntary, statutory and professional organisations working with and for children and their families across Scotland.
- The organisation identifies and promotes the interest of children, young people and their families through our members.

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Consultation Period

- Putting Communities First: a strategy for tackling anti-social behaviour (June - September 2003)
- Policy briefing & consultation event
- Meetings with key stakeholders
- Consultation response

Response - Key points

- Causes of anti-social behaviour outlined in the strategy are symptoms of deeper lying problems associated with low income, poor housing, lack of opportunity & poverty.
- The strategy will be imposed on top of a system which is currently both under resourced and subject to a pending (now present) review.

- Mechanisms to engage communities and foster understanding, such as mediation, were not been considered.
- The Children's Hearing System already has powers to use restorative and contractual methods to address anti-social behaviour BUT it currently lacks resources & supporting services to effectively implement these.

- If ASBO's are to be extended to under 16's, they must be accompanied by strict guidelines concerning rights of appeal and a regular review period.
- Electronic tagging may result in more young children being sent to secure accommodation.
- More support is required for vulnerable families earlier.

- Parenting orders may be useful in some circumstances, as long as they are accompanied by clear support for the parent, the child and the family as a whole.
- ASBO's should **not** be linked to tenancy. It will result in increased pressure on already vulnerable families.

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- Giving increased powers to police to disperse groups will not address the problems of anti-social behaviour. More investment is needed in youth work services.
- The strategy made no mention of young people with mental health problems or other disabilities. Clear guidance on this is needed.

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- The strategy appears to run counter to the Scottish Executive's drive towards integration of services, particularly those aimed at vulnerable groups.
- Sure Start Scotland, Changing Children's Services Fund, Action Plan on Youth Crime, Youth Courts & Fast-Track Children's Hearings - what about these?

Comments...

- Anti-social behaviour strategies
- Community Reparation Orders
- Protection for victims & witnesses of anti-social behaviour
- Greater use of reparation in the Children's Hearing System
- Electronic monitoring
- ASBO's for under 16 year olds
- Parenting Orders
- Local authority accountability
- Housing benefit issues
- Dispersal of groups
- Children with additional support needs

Young People's rights

- Proposals fail to recognise young people's rights
- Lack of recognition of the importance of early intervention and prevention
- Proposals took no account of individual circumstances
- Proposals are punitive in nature & may criminalize youth unnecessarily
- Proposals are departure away from the ideas on social inclusion promoted by other areas of the executive

In conclusion....