

Still living a nightmare: Understanding the experiences of victims of anti-social behaviour

September 2024



Sasha Murray

Dr Sarah Welland

Dr Madeleine Storry

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the people who volunteered to participate in our survey, to help us understand more about victims' experiences of anti-social behaviour in England and Wales, including their experiences of reporting anti-social behaviour and experiences of support provision.

We would like to thank Dr Tara Young (Honorary Senior Lecturer in Criminology and Criminal Justice at the University of Kent) for reviewing an earlier version of this report. We would also like to thank the Home Office, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), the Local Government Association, the National Police Chiefs' Council, The Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, ASB Help, Resolve, Victim Support and Surrey Police for their input and feedback on the findings and recommendations in this report.

Most of all, we would like to thank all the victims who gave their time to participate in interviews, for their bravery and willingness to share their experiences of anti-social behaviour and their journey to resolution.

Glossary

Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC) – an informal, voluntary agreement between an individual who has committed anti-social behaviour and a local agency whose role includes protecting victims and communities from such behaviour.

Anti-social behaviour Case Review¹ – a multi-agency case review with a statutory basis, undertaken by relevant agencies (such as the local authority and police) to share information, review what action has previously been taken and decide if additional action can be taken.

‘By and for’ services – services designed and delivered by and for the users and communities they aim to serve.

Closure powers – powers which allow the local authority or police to quickly close premises which are being used, or likely to be used, to commit nuisance or disorder.

Community Protection Notice (CPN) – deterrent designed to stop a person aged 16 or over, business or organisation committing anti-social behaviour which spoils the community’s quality of life.

Housing Association – not-for-profit organisations set up to provide affordable homes.

Local Authority – the organisation responsible for governing an area of the country, which includes councils.

Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) – a role that works alongside police officers and shares some, but not all their powers.

Statutory agencies – a government body that has powers defined in law, such as the police and local authorities.

¹ Formerly known as the Anti-social behaviour Community Trigger.

Foreword by Victims' Commissioner

In 2019, my report "Living a Nightmare" laid bare the devastating reality of anti-social behaviour. Victims confided in me, telling me they felt like "second-class" victims, struggling to navigate a bureaucratic maze. The report's title neatly captured their plight. Victims felt ignored, unheard and alone, passed from pillar to post with no resolution in sight.

The report's findings clearly resonated with victims of anti-social behaviour; after its publication, my inbox swelled with accounts of persistent anti-social behaviour. That steady stream of messages has continued ever since.

Five years on, the pressing question remains: has there been any change?

For a start, many victims are still living that same nightmare. For a staggering 40% of the victims we spoke to for this report, who reported the anti-social behaviour, their ordeal pre-dates my previous report and is still ongoing today. That is a damning indictment of our approach to tackling anti-social behaviour.

My 2019 report set out a number of recommendations. To date, nearly all these recommendations have yet to be fully implemented.

That reality is reflected in my new report, and it paints a stark picture. Victims told us of anti-social behaviour that festers for years, severely impacting victims' daily lives and mental health. Some victims tell me that they are being driven to the brink of suicide.

Despite reporting the anti-social behaviour, nearly two-thirds who experienced anti-social behaviour say it is still ongoing. Victims struggle with burdensome evidence collection and often feel ignored by authorities. Less than a third receive any help or support.

Anti-social behaviour is often minimised. But the truth is anti-social behaviour can and does make victims' lives a living nightmare, causing stress, misery, and despair. It can have a devastating effect on victims, affecting their sleep, their relationships, and their ability to work effectively. It can also often be the precursor to serious crimes, including knife crime and gang activity. It's so important that it is taken seriously by the agencies responding to it.

But tackling anti-social behaviour is rarely the responsibility of a single agency. The burden falls on victims to navigate a fragmented system, bouncing between police, council, and housing agencies. Meanwhile, the behaviour continues unabated.

Reporting anti-social behaviour is also not straightforward. As it escalates, victims often face a frustrating experience in trying to engage with the agencies responsible for helping them. Too often, the authorities regard the behaviour as 'low level' and an irritant as opposed to a cause for concern. This shows a complete lack of understanding of the impact of persistent anti-social behaviour on its victims.

The Case Review (formerly the Community Trigger) holds potential. It empowers victims and gives them a voice in any resolution. However, its effectiveness is hampered by low awareness, inconsistent application, and poor victim engagement.

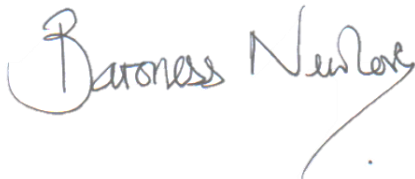
This report proposes 11 concrete recommendations for police, government departments, and local authorities to empower victims and improve the response to anti-social behaviour.

For me, anti-social behaviour is not a statistic. It's a lived experience, one I share with countless victims across the country. In 2007, a campaign of violence tore apart my family's ordinary life and led to the senseless murder of my husband, Garry.

My story is unique only in its tragic outcome. The relentless harassment, the ignored pleas for help, the sense of powerlessness – these are the grim realities countless ordinary families face every day.

Garry's death should have been a turning point. Yet, 17 years later, I fear too little has changed.

Victims need more than just "warm words". The time has come to change the narrative and turn these recommendations into action. This means government, police, local authorities and housing providers working together to create a response system that protects victims and fosters safe communities.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Baroness Newlove". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The word "Baroness" is written in a larger, more prominent script, while "Newlove" is written in a slightly smaller, more compact script. The signature is positioned in the lower left area of the page.

Baroness Newlove of Warrington

Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales

Executive summary

This report comes five years after the Victims' Commissioner published her previous report on anti-social behaviour in 2019 in which she highlighted the difficult reality for anti-social behaviour victims, while making multiple recommendations to improve their experiences in England and Wales.² However, since this report, little appears to have changed. As a result, the Victims' Commissioner looked to further understand the impact of persistent anti-social behaviour on victims' lives and explore their experiences of the current reporting, resolution, and support landscape. Based on these findings, the Victims' Commissioner makes key, actionable recommendations for justice agencies and policy makers to consider.

Anti-social behaviour in England and Wales

Anti-social behaviour is defined as conduct that has caused, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm, or distress to any person.³ The behaviour includes a range of behaviours such as vandalism, noise nuisance, threatening behaviour, drug use and harassment.

Anti-social behaviour is a prevalent issue in England and Wales. There were 1 million incidents of anti-social behaviour recorded by police in the year ending March 2024⁴ and this does not include those incidents reported directly to local authorities, housing associations, and other relevant agencies.

About the research

This report aims to:

- Understand the experiences of victims of persistent anti-social behaviour and the impact this has on their health, wellbeing, and day to day life.
- Identify the barriers victims encounter when reporting and engaging with agencies in attempt to resolve anti-social behaviour and identify the impact these barriers have on victims.
- Understand the provision of support for victims of anti-social behaviour in England and Wales.
- Identify examples of good practice from agencies and organisations in supporting victims and helping them to resolve anti-social behaviour.

Findings from the research

Anti-social behaviour has a detrimental impact on victims.

- Our research highlighted how each victim can experience many different types of anti-social behaviour, with 60% of our survey respondents experiencing at least three types of anti-social behaviour. The behaviour often occurred throughout the day and night and continued for years.
- This persistent anti-social behaviour detrimentally impacted victims' daily lives and mental health, with some victims reporting feeling suicidal as a result.

² [Anti-social behaviour: Living a nightmare - Victims Commissioner](#)

³ The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014

⁴ [Crime in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

Victims seeking resolution for anti-social behaviour encounter numerous obstacles when reporting to key agencies⁵.

- Our findings identified a lack of effective action being taken by key agencies following reports of anti-social behaviour and a lack of knowledge of anti-social behaviour among staff. For 63% of our survey respondents who had reported the anti-social behaviour to the police, the local authority, or the housing association, the anti-social behaviour was still ongoing. For 50% of these victims, the behaviour began in 2019 or before.
- Our findings also suggested there was a lack of communication and collaboration between key agencies who had a responsibility to resolve anti-social behaviour. We found victims had more positive experiences when they had someone from a key agency who took the time to understand the nature and impact of the anti-social behaviour and was proactive and focused on getting the behaviour resolved.

Victims also encounter many barriers to utilising the anti-social behaviour Case Review to get anti-social behaviour resolved.

- Our findings highlighted a lack of awareness of the anti-social behaviour Case Review among staff at key agencies and many victims had to do their own research to learn what it is. Only 20% of our survey respondents who had reported the anti-social behaviour had applied for an anti-social behaviour Case Review.
- Whilst the application process for the case review was straightforward, the communication that followed was often inadequate.
- We found many victims were not invited to attend their case review meetings and were not informed of the outcome of the review. Where they were informed of the action plan following the review, many victims found the agreed actions to be ineffective.
- Our research highlighted that one of the main limitations of the anti-social behaviour Case Review was its lack of independence from the agencies already involved with victims.
- We heard from one victim whose Case Review resulted in the anti-social behaviour being resolved. However, they reflected that it took too long to get to that point.

The current reporting and resolution landscape for anti-social behaviour has a negative impact on victims.

- Our research identified how anti-social behaviour victims were overburdened with requirements to collect evidence of the behaviour they were experiencing and were often ignored and dismissed by staff from key agencies with the powers to help them.
- For some victims, reporting the anti-social behaviour to key agencies did not bring about resolution but instead devalued their homes and made it more difficult to escape the behaviour.

Support for anti-social behaviour victims needs to be improved.

⁵ Key agencies include the police, the local authority, and the relevant housing association.

- Only a small proportion of the anti-social behaviour victims we spoke to had received help or support⁶. In our survey, only 29% had received any help or support from an organisation in relation to their experiences of anti-social behaviour.
- Where victims had a single point of contact from a statutory agency or support organisation that listened to them and was proactive in helping them resolve the anti-social behaviour, their experience was much improved.
- Our research highlighted several limitations with the current support provision for anti-social behaviour victims. These included a high turnover of support staff, additional conditions placed on victims' ability to access support, a lack of independence of the support services from the police and the support provision being too generic.

Key recommendations

This report contains 11 recommendations that are grouped into four overarching aims. These are designed to improve victims' engagement with statutory agencies after they have reported anti-social behaviour. These recommendations seek to:

Improve identification of persistent anti-social behaviour and support for victims.

- By ensuring that police have appropriate training and processes in place to identify victim risk and vulnerabilities.
- By clarifying the rights and entitlements of victims of persistent anti-social behaviour.

Improve collaboration and communication between statutory agencies.

- By strengthening the duty on Community Safety Partnerships to tackle anti-social behaviour and introducing minimum standards.
- By providing victims with a single point of contact throughout their case.

Improve awareness and utilisation of the anti-social behaviour Case Review.

- By strengthening victim awareness of and participation in the Case Review process.
- By ensuring the independence of Case Reviews.

Improve the reporting and resolution landscape for anti-social behaviour.

- By ensuring consistent access to anti-social behaviour Case Reviews through standardised thresholds.
- By improved data sharing between agencies with responsibility for tackling anti-social behaviour.

⁶ Support in this context includes support from staff at statutory agencies, for example, the police, support from staff at non-statutory agencies, for example, the housing association, and formalised support from victim support services.

Contents

Foreword by Victims' Commissioner.....	4
Executive summary	4
1. Introduction.....	10
2. The nature and impact of anti-social behaviour	13
3. Barriers to resolution for anti-social behaviour victims.....	17
4. The role of the anti-social behaviour Case Review in resolving anti-social behaviour	24
5. The impact of the current anti-social behaviour reporting and resolution landscape on victims.....	31
6. Support for anti-social behaviour victims	38
8. Key research findings	45
9. Conclusion and recommendations.....	47
Appendix.....	50
Appendix A - Methodology.....	50
Appendix B – Limitations	52
Appendix C - Demographic breakdown of the survey respondents	53

1. Introduction

In 2019, the Victims' Commissioner published her report entitled 'Anti-social behaviour: Living a nightmare'⁷ which made recommendations to improve the experiences of anti-social behaviour victims in England and Wales. Since then, little has changed, and the Victims' Commissioner conducted this research to explore anti-social behaviour victims' current experiences of reporting, resolution, and support in England and Wales.

Anti-social behaviour

Anti-social behaviour is defined as conduct that has caused, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm, or distress to any person.⁸

Anti-social behaviour can include,⁹ but is not limited to:

- Criminal damage/vandalism
- Noise nuisance
- Threatening behaviour
- Verbal abuse
- Animal nuisance
- Drug dealing or using
- Street drinking
- Harassment and intimidation

Estimates from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) for the year ending March 2024 showed that 35% of people had experienced or witnessed some type of anti-social behaviour. The police recorded 1 million incidents of anti-social behaviour in the year ending March 2024.¹⁰ While the number of police recorded incidents has reduced in recent years,¹¹ this report found victims continue to face difficulties when trying to get anti-social behaviour effectively resolved.

The current policy and legislative context

There is no specific criminal offence of 'anti-social behaviour'; it is an umbrella term used to cover a wide range of behaviours, some of which are criminal (such as criminal damage) and some of which are not (such as a one-off noisy party). A further complication is that some anti-social behaviours are not criminal in isolation but, when considered as a wider 'course of conduct', they become criminal acts. For example, some anti-social behaviour can be classed as harassment, a clear criminal offence. This distinction, coupled with the tendency of law enforcement to address incidents in isolation, can lead to missed opportunities to identify and address ongoing criminal activity.

Inadequate police recording practices in this context were highlighted as an area for improvement by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) in their 2023 peel spotlight report 'Police performance: Getting a grip'.¹² They

⁷ [Anti-social behaviour: Living a nightmare - Victims Commissioner](#)

⁸ The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014

⁹ [What is antisocial behaviour? | Metropolitan Police](#)

¹⁰ [Crime in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

¹¹ It is important to note that this refers to police recorded incidents only. Victims may also report anti-social behaviour to other agencies such as local authorities and housing associations.

¹² [Police performance: Getting a grip - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](#)

observed that criminal offences which are reported in the context of personal anti-social behaviour are, over half of the time, not recorded as such.

It is important that where a crime is committed as part of anti-social behaviour it is recorded correctly because it enables police forces to better understand and address patterns of offending. It also confirms the victim's eligibility to the rights and entitlements of the Victims Code.¹³

Anti-social behaviour has rightly received attention from successive governments over many decades, but efforts to address the issue have often been piecemeal. As a result, the legislative and policy landscape is highly complex and across statute and guidance. This, coupled with the fact that several statutory and non-statutory agencies have responsibility for tackling anti-social behaviour, results in the behaviour being difficult to record, monitor and resolve. All too often this leaves victims to fall between the cracks.

Previous research

In 2019, the Victims' Commissioner published her landmark report on anti-social behaviour.¹⁴ This report examined who experienced anti-social behaviour, the availability and use of the anti-social behaviour Case Review (formerly known as the Community Trigger) and how victims of anti-social behaviour were supported. The report made recommendations that victims should be empowered by increasing awareness about their entitlement to activate the anti-social behaviour Case Review, that victims should be involved in attending case review meetings and that these review meetings should be chaired by an individual independent to the agencies originally involved.

However, little progress appears to have been made since the Victims' Commissioner's last report. The victims' organisation ASB Help recently published their own report on the anti-social behaviour Case Review¹⁵. They found that many victims were not aware of the case review, victims were often not invited to attend the case review meeting and have their voice heard, and that there was a lack of independence within the case review process.

In this report, we build on this work, by the Victims' Commissioner and others, with primary, mixed method research, including a survey and interviews with victims of anti-social behaviour. This research seeks to further understand the impact that persistent anti-social behaviour has on victims' lives. It explores their experiences with existing support systems and the effectiveness of those systems in resolving anti-social behaviour. Our methodology is detailed in Appendix A.

Report aims

This report aims to:

- Understand the experiences of victims of persistent anti-social behaviour and the impact this has on their health, wellbeing, and day-to-day life.
- Identify the barriers victims encounter when reporting and engaging with agencies in attempt to resolve anti-social behaviour and identify the impact these barriers have.

¹³ [The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales and supporting public information materials - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-code-of-practice-for-victims-of-crime-in-england-and-wales)

¹⁴ [Anti-social behaviour: Living a nightmare – Victims' Commissioner](#)

¹⁵ [ASB Case Review - the victims' voice or a box-ticking exercise?](#)

- Understand the provision of support for victims of anti-social behaviour in England and Wales.
- Identify examples of good practice from agencies and organisations in supporting victims and helping them to resolve anti-social behaviour.

Research questions

This report seeks to present and discuss the relevant findings from this research to answer each of the following three research questions:

1. What is the impact of anti-social behaviour on victims?
2. What are victims' experiences of reporting and resolving anti-social behaviour in England and Wales?
3. What are anti-social behaviour victims' experiences of support in England and Wales?

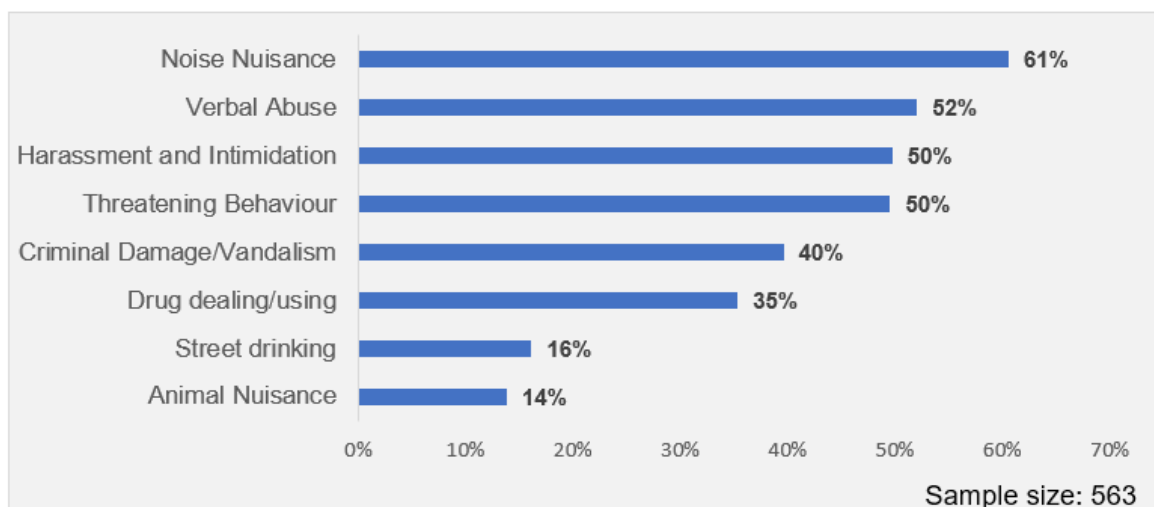
2. The nature and impact of anti-social behaviour

There are many different types of anti-social behaviour and often victims experience several forms of anti-social behaviour simultaneously and persistently. This can have a detrimental impact on victims' mental health, wellbeing and daily lives.

The multifaceted and persistent nature of anti-social behaviour

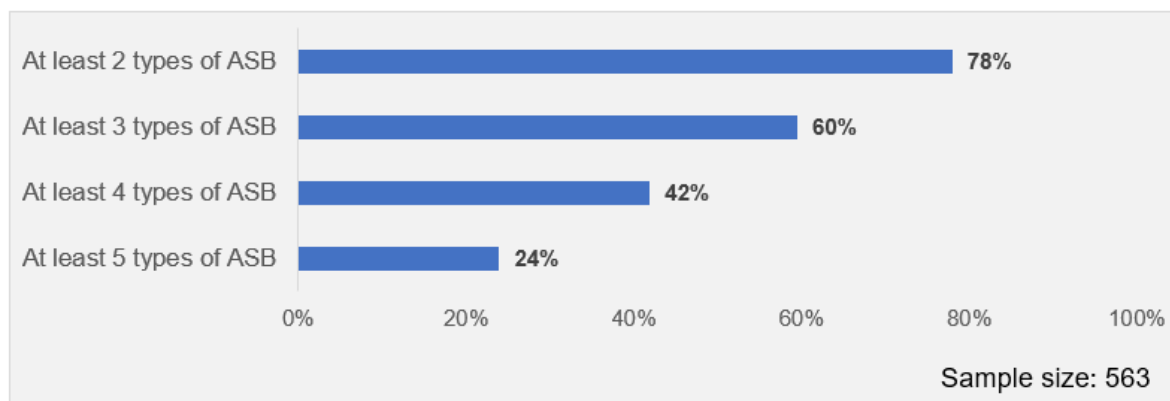
We surveyed anti-social behaviour victims and found the most frequently experienced types of anti-social behaviour in England and Wales were noise nuisance, verbal abuse, harassment and intimidation and threatening behaviour (figure 1). Over half of victims had experienced noise nuisance (61%, n = 341) or verbal abuse (52%, n = 293).

Figure 1. Proportion of respondents experiencing each type of anti-social behaviour.



Our survey findings also highlighted how multiple different types of anti-social behaviour are often perpetrated against the same victim. We found 78% (n = 439) of victims experienced at least two types of anti-social behaviour, 60% (n = 335) experienced at least three types and 42% (n = 236) experienced at least four types of anti-social behaviour (figure 2).

Figure 2. Proportion of respondents experiencing multiple different types of anti-social behaviour.



Some victims described in more detail the various types of anti-social behaviour they experienced.

They threatened to burn our house down, they keyed two of our cars and [were] hammering a cricket bat on the wall every night at 3 o'clock in the morning. (Male, 55-64, Wales)

Verbal abuse from them. Damage to property. Friends and families of the tenant would also abuse and verbally abuse us. They found access to my social media accounts...I had an online business at the time, and family and friends would go on there and do false reports. I'd get pizzas and food deliveries arriving at 2:00 o'clock in the morning, anonymously sent to me to pay. (Female, 35-44, South East)

Anti-social behaviour is often persistent, both throughout the day and night as well as over months and years. Many of the victims we spoke to detailed how they experienced anti-social behaviour at all times of day over extensive periods of time.

We experience noise and loud music being played all hours of the morning, all hours of the day... I had diary entries every single day for a good two years. Maybe three or four different incidents because they'd be during the morning, during the afternoon, then during the evening. (Female, 35-44, South East)

I've experienced anti-social behaviour where I live for over nearly 30 years actually...But then literally in the last 10 years really, it's been horrendous with the block that I live in... there was drug dealing, drug taking, violence, being woken up. Oh, all times of the day and night. (Female, 55-64, South East)

For over half of our survey respondents (63%, n = 353), the anti-social behaviour they reported experiencing was still ongoing. For 40% (n = 140) of these victims, the behaviour began before 2019, which is when the Victims' Commissioner published her last report on anti-social behaviour.¹⁶ This means that many victims who were experiencing anti-social behaviour at the time of our previous report are still suffering.

The multifaceted and persistent nature of anti-social behaviour can have a detrimental impact on victims and their quality of life.

The impact of anti-social behaviour on the mental health of victims

Many victims have reported that one of the primary impacts of anti-social behaviour is its detrimental effect on their mental health.

Many victims of anti-social behaviour experienced depression and anxiety, which was either brought on or exacerbated by the anti-social behaviour.

¹⁶ [Anti-social behaviour: Living a nightmare – Victims' Commissioner](#)

I've suffered with depression. Also, post-traumatic stress disorder...Every day I'm crying.... It makes me anxious... and it actually makes me physically sick. (Female, 45-54, London)

I'd been down to the doctors myself anyway because I was obviously really concerned about what was going on and how things were escalating, and he diagnosed me with depression and put me on anti-depressants. (Male, 45-54, Yorkshire and the Humber)

Several victims emphasised how the impact of the anti-social behaviour on their own and their family's mental health was long-lasting and persisted beyond when the behaviour had been resolved or they had moved away.

Mental health issues. What about ours? We didn't have any before this but we're all now shadows of ourselves. He's robbed us of oh, so much. So it's not over for us. (Female, 55-64, South West)

It was horrific. Well, it still is. Her mental health now, [the impact] is for the rest of her life. (Male, 55-64, Wales)

Some of the victims we spoke to told us how their mental health had been so badly impacted by their experiences of anti-social behaviour that it had resulted in them feeling suicidal.

It's totally isolating and nobody can understand the pressure it puts on you. I was depressed. I was anxious...think I was at the point of feeling quite suicidal. I wouldn't say that I would do it, but I did feel suicidal. (Female, 65-74, East of England)

This had an impact on our mental health. I suffered with really bad anxiety through it. It got to the point where I felt my mental health got that low, that I felt the only way out was the inevitable, you know. I didn't want to be here anymore. That's how bad it got. (Male, 55-64, East Midlands)

The impact of anti-social behaviour on victims' daily lives

Many victims of anti-social behaviour reported how their day-to-day lives and routines were disrupted as they tried to avoid spending time at their homes to get away from the constant anti-social behaviour.

I hate my house.... I hate coming here so I just stay at friend's houses or whatever...Sometimes I'll be sitting in McDonald's or somewhere else, so that I can avoid coming to my property. (Female, 45-54, London)

We were literally driving to my mum's house who lives half an hour away and spending all day at hers because we just didn't want to be at home. (Female, 35-44, South East)

Other victims reported how the anti-social behaviour made them feel trapped inside their own home and described how their home had begun to feel like a prison.

We felt trapped in our own home. We didn't feel safe to be here. We didn't feel safe to go out and leave the house unattended. We became virtual prisoners in our own home. (Female, 55-64, South West)

My house used to be, a place of solace and comfort, really. And then it became, I think, like a prison. (Female, 65-74, East of England)

For some victims, they felt they had no choice but to move house entirely to escape the anti-social behaviour they had been experiencing.

I've lived here 23 years. I would not have moved if it wasn't for her...I'm actually waiting to move. We're just waiting on an exchange date. That's the only way I'm able to get out of it. (Female, 35-44, South East)

We've completely moved away from the area... Luckily, we've been able to do that. We had to. (Male, 55-64, East Midlands)

Whilst there is no specific criminal offence of anti-social behaviour, much of the behaviour experienced by victims of persistent anti-social behaviour is criminal, for example criminal damage or fear of violence. Additionally, some anti-social behaviours are not criminal in isolation but taken together as a 'course of conduct' are criminal, for example harassment. As represented in the testimonies above and throughout this report, persistent anti-social behaviour has a profound and detrimental impact on victims. It is therefore incredibly important that there are appropriate and effective reporting and resolution mechanisms in place to identify and stop the anti-social behaviour, as well as support so victims can recover from the impacts of it.

3. Barriers to resolution for anti-social behaviour victims

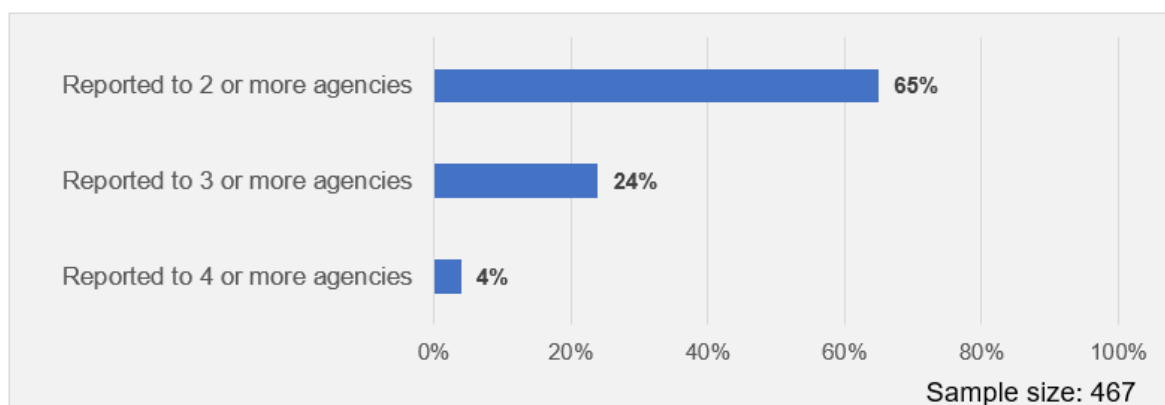
Our research identified several barriers victims of anti-social behaviour faced when reporting the behaviour and attempting to get the behaviour addressed. Respondents described how they encountered a lack of action from agencies following their reports, a lack of agency understanding of anti-social behaviour and a lack of inter-agency collaboration and accountability.

Lack of effective action following reports of anti-social behaviour to key agencies¹⁷

Our survey findings highlighted that despite the majority of victims (83%, n = 467) having reported the anti-social behaviour, this often had limited impact in providing any resolution to the behaviour. Of the 458 victims who stated they had reported the anti-social behaviour to the police, the local authority, or the housing association, 63% (n = 290) reported that the anti-social behaviour was still ongoing.

Our research showed victims contacted multiple agencies to try and get the anti-social behaviour stopped. From our survey, we found that more than half (65%, n = 305) of anti-social behaviour victims who reported the behaviour, had reported it to two or more agencies and over a fifth (24%, n = 110) of respondents had reported to three or more agencies (figure 3).¹⁸ Victims detailed multiple other agencies they reported the anti-social behaviour to. These included private solicitors, local councillors, MPs, the housing ombudsman, Social Services and Police and Crime Commissioners.

Figure 3. Proportion of anti-social behaviour victims reporting to more than one agency.



In our interviews with victims of anti-social behaviour, several described how the reports they made to key agencies were unsuccessful, and that agencies failed to take effective action to resolve the anti-social behaviour. Several respondents described being ignored or dismissed when they attempted to report to these agencies.

We were contacting the anti-social behaviour unit and after the first two or three emails, they actually started ignoring us...The police started ignoring us as well...it got to the point where they just ignored us

¹⁷ When reporting anti-social behaviour, key agencies include police, local authorities, and housing associations.

¹⁸ This was from a pre-defined list of the police, local authority, Housing Association, private landlord and Crimestoppers.

completely...even when they did answer, they were very dismissive. They were really unhelpful. (Female, 55-64, Yorkshire and the Humber)

All the reporting I did was ignored even when I gave [the housing association] evidence [of the anti-social behaviour], it was ignored. (Female, 35-44, South East)

The police, one of them laughed at me on the phone, he said "there's only two police here for [the policing area] so what do you expect us to do?" (Female, 45-54, London)

Anti-social behaviour victims consistently reported agencies failing to take action to resolve the issues, even after years of complaints.

For three years at least, police didn't do nothing. Nothing at all. They just told us not to react and just to report. (Male, 55-64, Wales)

And they were like, "oh, we're gonna take care of this, we're gonna take care of this." First [housing officer] did not. That's where a year goes past when it's going on. Second one did not. That was another year. And then I get a third one. (Female, 35-44, South East)

When agencies did act in response to reports of anti-social behaviour, victims told us this was often ineffective and did not address the problem. We heard from victims who were told by agencies to ignore the anti-social behaviour and were discouraged from reporting further.

[The housing officer] will phone somebody up who's reported anti-social behaviour and say "please just ignore it and it'll stop", which of course it doesn't... [they have] said to various people who file complaints, "please don't use the official reporting tool because then there's an official record of it" ...there seems to be sort of a massive issue in terms of, you know, all the authorities basically failing to deal with it. (Female, 55-64, South East)

Other victims shared examples of how instead of effectively addressing and resolving the anti-social behaviour early on, housing associations just moved perpetrators to another property.

The fact that she was moved here from the start, from another antisocial behaviour issue, they're just moving the problem, and that's all they're doing. They're not actually actioning any problems whatsoever. (Female, 35-44, South East)

This woman that became the tenant next door to me...she'd already cuckooed a flat across the road and [the housing association] knew full well what was going on in there...They knew she was involved...And [the housing association] say that they did proper checks on her application, which I don't think they did. (Female, 45-54, West Midlands)

Some respondents described how they felt that because the anti-social behaviour had been allowed to continue with little action from agencies, this enabled the perpetrators to continue or worsen their behaviour.

They've allowed it to continue, so the problem is now bigger. (Female, 45-54, London)

It's entrenched because they've allowed it to go on for so many years. (Female, 55-64, South East)

Victims suggested that had agencies addressed the anti-social behaviour earlier, through their existing policies and processes, they would not have needed to endure it for as long as they had.

The council have sufficient legal tools to deal with antisocial behaviour at a very early stage. And studies show that if you do, it's more than likely going to stop...if you get in there right on the first time it's reported to you, and deal with it properly. (Female, 55-64, South East)

I feel that the policy that they have in place, they should have adhered to straight away. I mean, it took them at least a year to actually start taking my complaints seriously, despite me reporting them and another neighbour doing the same. If they had actioned their own policy from the start, I felt it wouldn't have gone on for as long as it did. (Female, 35-44, South East)

We heard from some victims who highlighted the importance of having someone involved in their case who was proactive and focused on acting to resolve the anti-social behaviour. Victims described how these individuals transformed their experience and enabled them to reach a resolution.

[The] antisocial behaviour coordinator...said to me, "I have no idea why this hasn't been sorted out much earlier than this." She said, "this is ridiculous." So, she got on board. She called a meeting. She activated something or other. She had to go through their solicitors, obviously, and they actually activated the closure power. (Female, 65-74, East of England)

One of [the police inspectors] was fantastic because he was all action. He sat in on one of the multi-agency meetings...he just started dishing out orders. One of them was, "is there a note on the address that says there's a long-standing issue and are the [neighbourhood police team] aware?" [They said], "Oh, we don't know." And he goes, "well, check it and do it."...he was really good. (Female, 55-64, South West)

Lack of agency knowledge and understanding of anti-social behaviour

Respondents felt that the agencies lacked knowledge and understanding about the nature of anti-social behaviour and the impact it had on victims. This resulted in them not taking

effective action to deal with the behaviour. Respondents also told us that the agencies did not follow through with any actions that they had told them they would undertake.

The police need to be a little bit more understanding as to how traumatic and debilitating this actually is to people's lives instead of thinking it's easy to play it off as a 50/50 situation, to then justify the lack of action that they take, which I think is abhorrent. (Female, 55-65, South West)

I see that she [housing officer] just doesn't care how much this is impacting me... she does nothing. Everything she says she's going to do; she doesn't do. (Female, 45-54, London)

Respondents also reported how agencies' lack of understanding of the impact of anti-social behaviour meant that they downplayed incidents and classified them as 'low-level'.

It's just the attitude that it's low-level crime...I just don't think there's enough understanding from the police side, of the effect it has on somebody. (Male, 45-54, Yorkshire and the Humber)

If you live with me, you would actually see the day-to-day. What I have to go through, as you're out there in your home and you're getting on with your life, you can't actually see, so therefore you can't actually say "it's just kids playing", you're not actually living it. (Female, 45-54, London)

This lack of understanding and de-prioritisation of anti-social behaviour had further negative impacts on victims.

The police just couldn't care less when I phoned up...I'd already had a harassment case that was being investigated. And excuse me, I just couldn't believe the apathy of the officer at the time. And that set me back weeks. (Male, 45-54, Yorkshire and the Humber)

As a result, respondents highlighted the need for agencies to attend victims' homes in person to see both the behaviour and the impact on the victim themselves. This would enable agencies to understand the extent of the situation and encourage them to take appropriate action.

I think having the behaviour monitored, not just by online and emails, actually having someone come round. (Female, 35-44, South East)

I'm not saying we need a police officer there within an hour. But we need somebody to turn up. Yeah, I think it's important to have a police officer there that can see the effects that it's having on the victim. (Male, 45-54, Yorkshire and the Humber)

However, even when police did attend victims' homes, they failed to consider the victim's unique situation and the specific nature or occurrence of the anti-social behaviour. One respondent expressed frustration that the police took no action having attended the property at a time of day which was usually free of incidents.

The police officer did call me, and he said, "well, we were at your property." "OK, that's nice." What do you want me to say?" So he said "we're trying to help you." So, I said, "well, by helping me, be at my property after 3:30 today, that's how you can help me." And he said to me, he can't. He can't do anything. (Female, 45-54, London)

Additionally, agencies' lack of understanding of the nature of anti-social behaviour meant that they treated occurrences as one-off incidents rather than an ongoing pattern of behaviour that had the potential to escalate and needed addressing.

Every single complaint I made, and my neighbour as well...every complaint she made, we would immediately get letters saying, "this would be a one off, we're closing it down" ...that would be more frustrating, because it was like, this is the 75th report I've sent you. It's not a one off. It's clearly not a one off. (Female, 35-44, South East)

Each incident by itself could be seen as trivial, but not when you put 146 of them together...It may seem like a rather minor thing to them. It's not the crime of the century, but when that little thing, it's been added on the top of 50 other things that month. It's a big thing. (Female, 55-64, South West)

The police simply do not join the dots. They treat every report as a single incident rather than a course of conduct. (Female, 55-64, South East)

However, it was clear from our research that where police staff took the time to understand the nature of the anti-social behaviour and the impact that it was having on the victim and escalated it accordingly, victims felt empowered and reassured that action was being taken to resolve the issue.

I was very thankful to him [police officer] because I told him some of the background of what had been happening to us and on the back of that, he came back to me, said I've actually referred this to somebody above me to have a look at. He seemed to be almost the first police officer that was actually taking us seriously and on the back of that, we got assigned a specialist problem solver...I did not even know that such a provision existed. But oh my God, that was our one glimmer of light in a sea of darkness...she was able to come in, I think as a fresh head and just look at the facts of what had gone on. And she collated the most wonderful working document and in it she had the dates that things had happened...I don't know what we would have done without her. (Female, 55-64, South West)

Lack of inter-agency collaboration and accountability

In addition to the lack of action taken by agencies following victim reports, respondents highlighted a lack of accountability among the agencies they were dealing with. This often resulted in the victim being passed from one agency to the other, with each agency absolving themselves from any responsibility.

The council kept telling me to ring the police. The police kept telling me to get in touch with the council. (Female, 55-64, Yorkshire and the Humber)

All the organisations involved, point fingers at each other. "No, they'll do it", "They'll do it"...Nobody takes any accountability. Nobody gets around the table, says "Right, who's going to do this?" (Female, 35-44, South East)

Basically, [the council] would say "that's nothing to do with us, that's up to the police, you need to contact the police and get an incident number" and the police would say, "it's nothing to do with us, it's the council." (Female, 65-74, East of England)

This lack of accountability appeared to have an adverse impact on the most vulnerable people we spoke to, who felt the agencies they were dealing with needed to do more to take their vulnerabilities into account.

I need somebody to obviously take my background seriously, that, I am a vulnerable adult and I've also got mental health issues...I've got about 20 plus medical conditions. So I really could go on about that, but I'm getting no support whatsoever. (Female, 45-54, London)

My daughter has a lot more medical issues and her bedroom is adjacent to the neighbour's house and she would be banging on the walls, waking her up, scaring her. She wouldn't be able to sleep. (Female, 35-44, South East)

Respondents also highlighted a lack of communication between agencies and in some cases, unwillingness to cooperate with each other to take action to stop the anti-social behaviour.

The police and the council were being pulled along by two separate horses. They weren't in the same carriage, and they weren't working together. (Female, 65-74, East of England)

The housing office refuses to cooperate with the police. I and other residents have had numerous officers say that they talk to the housing office to ask them for assistance [and] it just gets stonewalled, so you get pushed back and forth and nothing ever gets done. (Female, 55-64, South East)

Where victims were dealing with multiple staff or multiple agencies, they often cited a disconnect in what they were being advised. This led to confusion around what agencies had the authority to do and also whether the outcome they had been provided with was correct.

I had CCTV evidence and other police officers had told us, "You've got her". That's what they said to us... And then two weeks later the

Sergeant phoned me and said he had the outcome. No further action. I couldn't believe it. (Male, 55-64, Wales)

The inconsistency in what one police officer tells me they can do and what [the] gentleman from the Community Trigger [case review] said... there's a lack of confidence in the police, in what they know they can and can't do. (Male, 45-54, Yorkshire and the Humber)

However, several respondents highlighted positive interactions with staff from relevant agencies when they reported the anti-social behaviour and praised the support they attempted to provide. Nonetheless, there was ultimately still a lack of action due to another agency being responsible for addressing the situation.

The only one that was willing to help and who I felt understood me was the environmental agency, but because [the perpetrator] was a housing tenant, they wouldn't do anything about it because they said it was housing's responsibility (Female, 35-44, South East)

There's this lovely lady at the housing association. She's been trying to support me the best that she can, but she said it's not in her power, you know, like to move me or whatever. (Female, 45-54, London)

When victims attempt to report and seek resolution to anti-social behaviour, they can face barriers which result in the behaviour continuing, in some cases for years, without effective action being taken by key agencies. Our research highlighted that victims can be ignored or dismissed by agencies and, where there are multiple agencies involved, there is a lack of communication and collaboration between them. In addition to this, victims reported that agencies lack sufficient knowledge about the impact and nature of anti-social behaviour, classifying the behaviour as low-level, isolated incidents as a result. This leaves victims feeling unheard and unsupported, enabling the anti-social behaviour to continue and sometimes escalate.

A lack of collaboration, knowledge and action on the part of agencies can result in victims being unable to achieve resolution to their situation. These issues are often complex and can require multiple agencies to work together. Where this happened successfully, or a single point of contact was appointed, victims identified examples of good practice. When staff from key agencies took the time to understand the impact of the anti-social behaviour and were proactive in taking effective action to address it, victims' experiences were improved, and they were more likely to reach a positive outcome. This should be the experience for all victims of anti-social behaviour and where it is not, effective independent escalation processes must be available.

4. The role of the anti-social behaviour Case Review in resolving anti-social behaviour

The anti-social behaviour Case Review (formerly known as the anti-social behaviour Community Trigger)¹⁹ was introduced in the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2014.²⁰ The anti-social behaviour Case Review gives victims of persistent anti-social behaviour, who have reported on three or more occasions within a six-month period to the council, police or housing provider, the right to request a multi-agency Case Review. The Case Review enables a problem-solving approach where agencies share information, review what action has previously been taken and decide if additional action can be taken. Each area chooses a lead agency to manage the process and they can opt to add additional caveats to the threshold that must be met for victims to successfully activate the case review process.

In our research, we found that victims of anti-social behaviour had mixed experiences of the anti-social behaviour Case Review. Some victims found that staff at key agencies had little knowledge or understanding of what the case review was, meaning they had to do their own research to find out about it. Some victims were excluded from the case review meetings and described little action taken by agencies to address the anti-social behaviour following it. However, other victims described positive experiences with the case review, having been included in the meeting and having actions implemented following the meeting which resulted in the anti-social behaviour being resolved.

Awareness of the anti-social behaviour Case Review

Victims cited several barriers to utilising the anti-social behaviour Case Review. One of the key barriers was the lack of knowledge and awareness about the case review among staff at key agencies with a responsibility to resolve anti-social behaviour.

Several described how staff from key agencies with a duty to carry out Case Reviews, such as the police, did not know what the anti-social behaviour Case Review was.

I said to him [police officer], I've just been advised that I need to request you to activate the Community Trigger [Case Review]. And he said, what's that? He had no idea what it was. I spoke to three police officers, none of whom knew what it was. (Female, 55-64, South West)

They've [the police] called me and they've asked me "what is the Community Trigger [Case Review]?" And I said, "I'm not going to go through that with you today because you should absolutely know what a Community Trigger [Case Review] is." So they don't even know. So they want me to educate them on the phone when I'm going through a crisis with these youths outside. (Female, 45-54, London)

For many victims, this lack of knowledge prevented them from being signposted promptly, if at all, to the case review mechanism. This also posed additional barriers to them being able to successfully activate the case review process and get the anti-social behaviour resolved. This ultimately prolonged victims suffering.

¹⁹ The updated term anti-social behaviour Case Review will be used in this report.

²⁰ [Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/12/section/1)

The lady I spoke to [at support agency] said to me, “we want you to activate the community trigger [Case Review]”. And I’m like, oh, what is that? I mean...this is four years in. We’ve been subjected to all of this and then all of a sudden, we’re being told about the Community Trigger [case review]. (Female, 55-64, South West)

Why didn’t I know about this community trigger [Case Review] before? They knew this has been happening since 2014? The Crime and Policing Act was 2014. Why didn’t they advise me of it then so that I could have followed it up then? (Female, 55-64, South East)

This lack of knowledge about the anti-social behaviour Case Review among staff at key agencies often left victims to find out about it themselves. We heard from many victims who, despite having reported the anti-social behaviour multiple times to statutory agencies, like the police and the council, only learnt about the case review from their own research.

I’d never heard of the community trigger [Case Review] until I actually researched it. (Male, 45-54, Yorkshire and the Humber)

I was looking up antisocial behaviour and there was a programme actually on the TV, I remember. And they spoke about the community trigger. And I said, I’ve never heard of that. So when I looked it up and then I was like, well, that’s my first step. That’s the only way I knew about a community trigger. (Female, 45-54, London)

I found out about the community trigger from the ASB Help website... I found it out through my own digging. (Female, 55-64, South East)

The organisation Resolve commissioned a YouGov survey in 2023 which showed that despite the anti-social behaviour Case Review being launched almost ten years ago, 88% of people had still not heard of it.²¹ Such low awareness of the anti-social behaviour Case Review, both amongst the general population and staff at key agencies, means victims of anti-social behaviour are missing out on utilising an important resolution mechanism.

Applying for the anti-social behaviour Case Review

In our survey with anti-social behaviour victims, only 20% (n = 93) of those surveyed who had reported the anti-social behaviour had applied for an anti-social behaviour Case Review. This low proportion is unsurprising given the lack of awareness of the Case Review and the inaccessibility of the anti-social behaviour Case Review process. Recent research conducted by ASB Help found that many areas in England and Wales required victims to have access to the internet and/or a printer to apply.²² This excludes victims who are unable to access or lack knowledge of computers, smart phones and/or printers from applying for the Case Review, limiting opportunities to have their voice heard.

However, those victims that did apply, described how easy and straightforward the application process for the Case Review was.

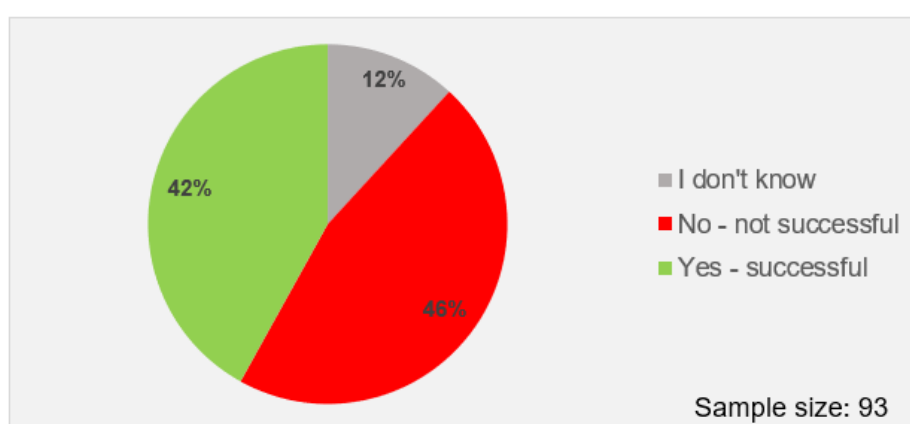
²¹ [YouGov.pdf \(resolveuk.org.uk\)](#)

²² [ASB Help ASB Case Review Report Jan 20-24](#)

I went online and filled out a form that was really easy and straightforward. (Female, 35-44, South East)

Our survey revealed a low success rate for anti-social behaviour Case Reviews. Only 46% of respondents (n = 43) reported that their application was successful²³ (figure 4), despite the process being described as easy and straightforward. Recent research conducted by ASB Help also found that less than half of all anti-social behaviour Case Reviews submitted met the local threshold for review. When they reviewed the applications, they found that the majority would have met the threshold recommended in the statutory guidance²⁴ but many local areas had added additional caveats to this threshold.²⁵ This can result in additional barriers for victims trying to activate the Case Review.

Figure 4. Proportion of successful and unsuccessful anti-social behaviour Case Review applications.



There was also an issue with communication within the Case Review process. Several victims reflected on the lack of communication they received following their anti-social behaviour Case Review application. Often victims did not receive any communication or communication they did receive regarding their unsuccessful application failed to mention their ability to appeal the decision, or in some cases denied victims' the option to appeal at all.

I raised the community trigger. I had to ring him back because nobody had been in touch with me. (Female, 55-64, Yorkshire and the Humber)

I submitted a community trigger; I got an acknowledgement via e-mail. That was it. (Female, 45-54, London)

No, I was not aware [you could appeal] ...when the trigger [Case Review] failed, I was just like, well, I don't know what else to do. (Female, 35-44, South East)

I actually did e-mail the person at the council who'd emailed me with a decision to ask if there was an appeals process, and I was told

²³ For applicants to be successful in applying for the Case Review, agencies must decide that the activation threshold has been met.

²⁴ [Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014: Anti-social behaviour powers](#)

²⁵ [ASB Help ASB Case Review Report Jan 20-24](#)

categorically, no, there wasn't... basically, you know, no, we've rejected it. Go away. There's nothing else you can do... So clearly, deliberately telling you the wrong information. Or they weren't sufficiently trained to know what the process was, which is, why are you putting somebody like that in charge of the review process if they don't know what the process is? (Female, 55-64, South East)

The anti-social behaviour Case Review meeting

In our interviews with anti-social behaviour victims, respondents highlighted examples of good practice where victims were invited to attend the Case Review meeting and given the opportunity to share their views and be heard, after years of feeling ignored and dismissed by key agencies.

They said that they would be holding a meeting that they would like me to attend online, so that I could give my views on the effect that it was having on myself and my children..., I feel that I've actually finally had a voice and I've been able to speak...I was able to share my experience and I had other people listening to it and not just the housing association ignoring me. (Female, 35-44, South East)

We had a community trigger [Case Review] ...quite a lot of the neighbours attended, and we had a lot of CCTV and audio...you could see they were appalled at what we were having to put up with, when they actually listened to us and looked at and listened to what evidence we'd got. You could see it was like, oh, God, we should have done something about this. (Female, 55-64, Yorkshire and the Humber)

Unfortunately, this was not every victim's experience. We also heard from anti-social behaviour victims who were excluded from the Case Review meeting. Research conducted by ASB Help, with information from local authorities, highlighted the large variation across England and Wales as to whether victims were given the opportunity to attend.²⁶ Being excluded from the Case Review meeting prevented victims from having their voice heard and enabling the Case Review panel to understand the impact of the anti-social behaviour on them.

I wasn't invited to a Case Review. They did that between themselves [the council] and the police. (Female, 65-74, East of England)

I believe that you should be there, even if you can't say anything...we were told we couldn't be there... We were not allowed to ask any questions and we weren't allowed to be there. (Male, 55-64, East Midlands)

They didn't involve me in the meeting. It was [the council], it was [housing association], who is my landlord and one of the housing

²⁶ [YouGov.pdf \(resolveuk.org.uk\)](https://www.resolveuk.org.uk/YouGov.pdf)

officers from [housing association] as a representative, and [local police force]. (Female, 45-54, London)

As well as being excluded from the process, many victims also highlighted how important it is that the anti-social behaviour Case Review is independent from the original agencies involved. Victims questioned the effectiveness of the Case Review when the case was being reviewed by the same agency or agencies that were involved originally and failed to address the anti-social behaviour.

There's no point in having these review processes if they're not independent and they don't have teeth, and they can't force people to actually do a proper review. (Female, 55-64, South East)

We did the community trigger because of all the incidents that occurred. But because that was directed and controlled by the council, you see, that was ignored. (Male, 55-64, East Midlands)

A waste of time because the person who's reviewing it is usually part of the organisation that's the problem. It's not sent to an independent person or organisation to review. It's basically people marking each other's homework. And even when you've got an active police investigation and a shed load of evidence, "oh, there's nothing to see here. Nobody did anything wrong." (Female, 55-64, South East)

No faith. I'm sorry, I've applied for it, but the problem is it goes straight to the same people who still think that I'm making this sort of thing up, or I'm a bother, or a nuisance. (Female, 35-44, South East)

Another respondent highlighted the need for an additional, independent organisation that was able to hold the other agencies to account when anti-social behaviour was not being addressed.

If the police don't want to know, if the Council don't want to know, if other services don't want to know, if nobody's willing to step in and say "this is not OK" to a police force, to the Council and it comes to not dealing with anti-social behaviour, victims are just left to deal with it by ourselves...[We need] some sort of independent organisation that you can go to...a central point you could go to, whose job it is to liaise with all these organisations, that has much more credibility than me. It would provide another layer, even if it's just to catch the problems, like the police not dealing with things. (Female, 35-44, South East)

The outcome of the anti-social behaviour Case Review

Following the anti-social behaviour Case Review meeting, the victim should be informed of the outcome of the review and where further actions are necessary, an action plan should be discussed with the victim.²⁷

²⁷ [Anti-social behaviour Case Review - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/topics/anti-social-behaviour)

We heard from only one victim who had a positive outcome following their second anti-social behaviour Case Review which resulted in the anti-social behaviour stopping.

At the next meeting, again we had lots of evidence and she was issued with a Community Protection Notice...we've had no problems since. (Female, 55-64, Yorkshire and the Humber)

However, this victim also expressed their frustration that their complaints were not dealt with earlier. They explained how it would have been better if the intervention could have happened sooner, emphasising how traumatised her husband was by the anti-social behaviour and the journey to resolution.

Since we were actually listened to and actually taken seriously, it's definitely worked. I just wish we'd have been listened to sooner and we didn't have to get together as a group and make massive complaints to everybody we could think of... this could have been done 2-3 years ago... if we'd have been listened to, but we weren't, and my husband was utterly traumatised by it. (Female, 55-64, Yorkshire and the Humber)

Most anti-social behaviour victims we spoke to were dissatisfied with the outcome of the Case Review. Some victims indicated that there were no actions set out following the case review to address the ongoing anti-social behaviour.

The worst thing about the anti-social behaviour Case Review is, that when I first submitted it and subsequent times since and I'm on my third time now...There's no action plan. There's never been an action plan shared. If any auditor came in from the outside now and said show me the action plan, there wouldn't be an action plan written down... they've never shown me the plan. (Female, 45-54, West Midlands)

A lot of my experience through all of this, with all of the authorities is, it's a tick box exercise...The thing is, it was all very constructive during the meeting...but nothing was ever acted upon. It was just like, are we just doing this to tick the boxes and then you don't have to do anything. So, it was all sort of empty promises. (Female, 55-64, South West)

Other victims were told that an action plan had been put in place following the anti-social behaviour Case Review meeting to address the behaviour, but this had not been communicated with the victim themselves.

To this day, I don't know what happened at that meeting...I've even phoned a lady at [the council], and her manager and they both said to me, "we've got involved with your landlord and we set out plans". And I said, "I don't know what they are, though." "Oh, you need to get back to your landlord then". (Female, 45-54, London)

Apparently, they did have an action plan, and they did have a follow up, but I was not made aware of the follow up and I wasn't included in the follow up. (Female, 35-44, South East)

Some victims did have an action plan agreed after the Case Review meeting and were informed of this. However, often they felt the action was not sufficient to resolve the anti-social behaviour. For example, some resulting actions were simply for the victims to gather more evidence of the anti-social behaviour, rather than to address the issue. Some Case Review meetings resulted in Acceptable Behaviour Contracts being issued, however these contracts are often used in the first instance, before more punitive action might be taken. Victims were frequently disappointed when they later found out that these contracts were unenforceable and had no impact. This lack of action increased the frustration felt by these victims.

The outcomes following them haven't been that great, or had any particular lasting effect really! It didn't make me feel like anything was happening meaningfully... I feel like it has a bit of a shooting star effect, right? It sort of lights up the sky for a second and then it's a bit like a firework. It just dies off, it's never sustained. (Female, 45-54, West Midlands)

The action plan was for us to go right back to the beginning and start again with making recordings of all the events. And we did not want to do that because we'd done that for months and nothing came of it. (Male, 55-64, East Midlands)

The community trigger [Case Review] itself, I wouldn't knock it...it's the lack of severity of the resulting impact that pushed me back... The action plan basically was to issue an Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC)...When I reported to 101 what had happened [neighbour's breach of the contract] I got a call through from the police officer that was on the community trigger [Case Review] and he turned around and said the ABC isn't enforceable. So basically, it's supposed to be there as a deterrent. That's no use to me because these people couldn't care less about what they're doing, so there is no deterrent unless you're actually going to do something about it. (Male, 45-54, Yorkshire and the Humber)

The anti-social behaviour Case Review is designed to be a multi-agency problem-solving mechanism for persistent anti-social behaviour. For some victims, activating the anti-social behaviour Case Review can be transformative, giving them the opportunity to have a voice, be listened to and bring about intervention that resolves the anti-social behaviour they have long been suffering. However, sadly this is not always the outcome for victims.

The lack of agency awareness of this mechanism, the exclusion of victims from Case Review meetings, the lack of effective action implemented following the Case Review and the lack of independence of the Case Review, all thwart a positive outcome for victims of anti-social behaviour and undermines the reason the Case Review was introduced. The Case Review should not be a tick-box exercise, it should be a powerful mechanism for change to help all anti-social behaviour victims achieve resolution.

5. The impact of the current anti-social behaviour reporting and resolution landscape on victims

There are several limitations to the current reporting and resolution landscape for anti-social behaviour. These include agencies' lack of effective action, lack of understanding of the nature and impact of anti-social behaviour, lack of inter-agency collaboration and an absence of effective and independent escalation processes. This had several consequences for victims of anti-social behaviour. Often victims were overburdened with requirements to gather evidence of the anti-social behaviour, treated poorly by statutory agencies, and continued to experience the anti-social behaviour, which in some cases worsened without any form of resolution. This ultimately undermined victims' trust and faith in statutory agencies.

Anti-social behaviour victims are overburdened

One of the resulting impacts on victims of the current reporting and resolution landscape was that victims were overburdened by the need to collect extensive evidence of the anti-social behaviour they were experiencing.

Victims were often advised by agencies to gather their own evidence of the anti-social behaviour. This is an incredibly time-consuming process. Additionally, the act of monitoring and recording the behaviour they experienced placed an added emotional burden on these victims and caused them further anxiety and stress. Many victims found that even after collecting the evidence they were instructed to by statutory agencies, the agencies still failed to act to address the behaviour. This added to their frustration and feelings of helplessness.

I captured everything on video. It made no difference whatsoever. The evidence that they said they needed, I provided, and it didn't make no good...I wasted all my time, my effort, my anxiety, because when I'd sit there and write all these diary reports up properly on the actual forms that they wanted, my anxiety would be through the roof reliving it all, it would take me a whole afternoon to do it, because there was so many... it literally took over my life. (Female, 35-44, South East)

Even when we provided them with the evidence that they had asked for, they still tried to make us drop it...It has broken me trying to gather this evidence to try and plead and beg for help from anybody. But that's it. We're on our own and that is what you realise. (Female, 55-64, South West)

Residents are expected to gather their own evidence even if they point the police in the direction of people who witnessed it, they generally don't go and talk to them, or they still say no, you need video recording and you need all of this sort of stuff, which is putting an awful lot of pressure on victims to then become their own detectives... The victim's got to take the action, the victim's got to do this, the victim's got to record everything... You know, you're left to deal with it all yourself. (Female, 55-64, South East)

Anti-social behaviour victims were also overburdened by the need for them to do copious amounts of their own research into anti-social behaviour and the mechanisms for resolution in their local area. This was because the statutory agencies either were unaware of these processes or unwilling to share this information with victims.

At the very beginning of all of this, you must have the information of the websites that you can access and which direction you go in, which is what I've got off of the Internet in the end...I've had two years of this...But it's knowing it's there and I think it being given to you when you're going through it...when I rang, say for example, the housing people, they didn't say "if you feel that you're in this situation, then you could go to this website and see what route you can take to get help"...That needs to come at the very beginning. And just to have to hand all the information but being given it by somebody rather than having to find it yourself online. I know a lot of younger people, probably would look it up quite quickly, but I think people my age probably wouldn't think of that as the first instance. Because you don't really know what you're looking for, do you? (Female, 65-74, East of England)

I wouldn't have known to log every incident under the same Crime reference number if I hadn't have researched that. So, I think anyone that is going through similar situation as ourselves, they have to do the research first. They can't just dive in and start reporting it through to the police. (Male, 45-54, Yorkshire and the Humber)

Anti-social behaviour victims are treated poorly by statutory agencies

Another impact of the reporting and resolution landscape was that victims were treated poorly by statutory agencies. Victims felt that agencies did not listen to or believe them, that they were discredited or blamed by agencies, and some agencies suggested to victims that they move house as a way of resolving the behaviour. These actions left victims feeling frustrated, isolated, and powerless, compounding the already detrimental impact of anti-social behaviour.

We heard from many victims who felt that agencies did not listen to them when they tried to report the anti-social behaviour they were experiencing. Some victims described how they had to jump through hoops to be listened to and others recounted how they were only listened to when a group of neighbours joined forces to report the anti-social behaviour.

It's everything against the victim... You just don't have the support there from the authorities and you have to jump through hoops to try and get somebody to not just believe you, but to listen to you. (Male, 45-54, Yorkshire and the Humber)

It took three years and us all banding together before we were listened to, and it shouldn't be like that. Not when it's impacting on people's lives. (Female, 55-64, Yorkshire and the Humber)

In more extreme circumstances, some anti-social behaviour victims felt that agencies discredited them, told them they were making things up, or blamed them for the anti-social behaviour. In some scenarios this led to support services withdrawing support.

You do get a lot of victim blaming. The police victim blame, the support service victim blames you. And that's the message that you're constantly given, it's like, you're at fault, you're to blame for the situation you're in, and that's really got to stop. (Female, 55-64, South East)

The police have contacted the clinic and told them I don't hear the noises of the cricket bat banging on the wall, that it's my partner that wakes me up at night. That's a total lie. They're trying to make out that it's my partner's mental health that was making me hear these noises and not the noises causing the mental health. (Male, 55-64, Wales)

She's saying that my case, I'm making it all up. I'm lying about this... I'm at my wits end. [Victim support agency] would have nothing to do with me after the officer went and told them that I was crazy and making it up and I was wasting everyone's time. (Female, 35-44, South East)

Other victims told us how instead of receiving help and valuable advice from statutory agencies, agency staff instead suggested victims should move house. This is incredibly unhelpful to victims as it is not an appropriate solution to the anti-social behaviour and for many, moving is not an option. Receiving this advice from agencies who were responsible for helping victims to resolve the anti-social behaviour caused further distress.

A housing officer came round to visit me and what she said to me is that I need to go and move to the country if I want peace and quiet. (Female, 45-54, London)

We were also told [by the PCSOs and Council] the only way that it would stop and get resolved is to move. (Male, 55-64, East Midlands)

Even victims who had got to the point of successfully activating the anti-social behaviour Case Review, were being encouraged to move house to resolve the problem. Victims reported this happening on the day of and during their Case Review meetings.

I had a phone call on the morning [that] the meeting was taking place...and [the chair of the Case Review meeting] phoned me and she just asked me, "have you considered moving?" (Male, 55-64, Wales)

I didn't get a meeting until January with the police and the Housing Association and the Council and that was when I got victim shamed and told that I should move. (Female, 45-54, West Midlands)

The insufficient reporting and resolution processes available to victims of anti-social behaviour resulted in victims being treated in a way that left them feeling isolated and powerless. They often felt like they had nowhere left to turn and were completely at a loss as to what to do next. This exacerbated the negative impact of the anti-social behaviour.

We heard from many victims who felt isolated and like no one cared about them, or about resolving the anti-social behaviour they were experiencing.

We were completely on our own. Nobody cared about us whatsoever. We were living in a nightmare and there was nothing we could do. (Female, 35-44, South East)

I have been to every single authority that I can and have tried everything within my power to try and get some sort of help... It really is a very isolating experience. (Female, 55-64, South West)

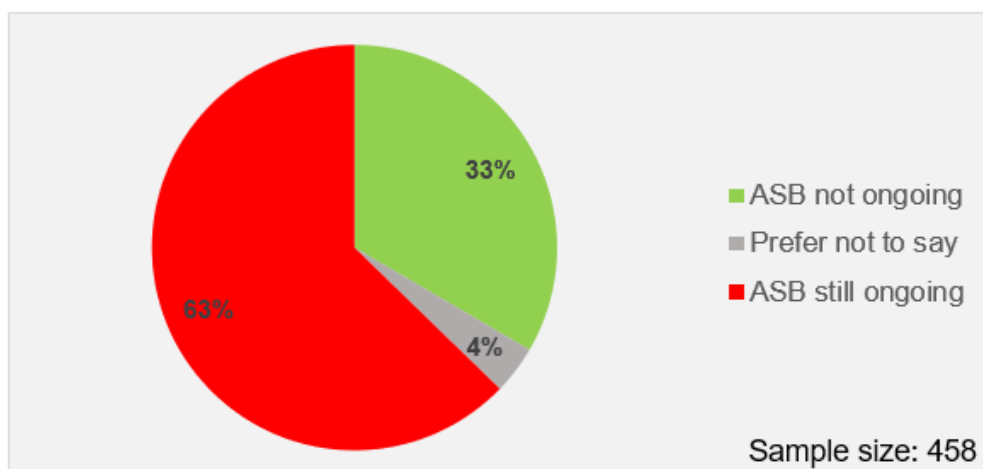
It takes everything out of you. It does. It really does. And the fact that people don't care, [housing association], the police, the council. They do not care. (Female, 45-54, London)

You're just powerless... You can't do anything, and there's nowhere to turn, all these things that are so-called out there, there is nothing out there. I think we'd covered all avenues and there was just nowhere else for us to go. (Male, 55-64, East Midlands)

Anti-social behaviour is left unresolved, and victims are left to face the consequences

The lack of resolution for victims and the extensive length of time the anti-social behaviour continues to be perpetrated is a further negative consequence of the current reporting and resolution landscape. For almost two thirds (63%, n = 290) of victims who had reported the anti-social behaviour to key agencies, the behaviour was still ongoing (figure 5). For those victims where the anti-social behaviour was still ongoing, half (50%, n = 145) had been experiencing the behaviour since 2019 or before. This results in a huge proportion of victims who are suffering for multiple years without any resolution to the anti-social behaviour. This is concerning given the detrimental impact it has on them.

Figure 5. Proportion of anti-social behaviour victims who have reported the anti-social behaviour and the current status of the anti-social behaviour.



The lack of resolution after victims reported the anti-social behaviour resulted in them becoming increasingly desperate for a way out of the situation. We spoke to victims who expressed their struggle to know what else could be done, with some describing reaching out to social services, homelessness charities or suggesting that they would be prepared to receive a restraining order if it meant the perpetrator would be given one too.

I'm at my wits end here. I don't know what to do. (Female, 45-54, London)

I contacted the charity Shelter to ask them if there was anything that could be done, even if we could be placed in temporary accommodation ... There was a point that I phoned social services up and I said if I took my own life, my children would be taken out of this situation and they then made a report to the housing association. And a day later, the housing association called the ambulance crew and told them I was trying to take my life. So it was like, no, I wasn't trying to, I was literally begging for help. That's how low it got me. (Female, 35-44, South East)

I have been to every single authority that I can and have tried everything within my power to try and get some sort of help... The Council said to me, "well, it's difficult for us because we don't know who's telling the truth" and I'm like, "right, ok, put [a restraining order] on us all." And she's like, "Oh, no, no, we can't do that, that looks like a punishment." [I said] "I don't look on it as a punishment, I am going to look on that as a protection. That's fine. If you want to put a restraining order on us, please do that because we know we're not going to do anything and haven't done anything. But if it means the other side have one as well, that makes us feel a bit safer." But they wouldn't even do that. I thought, I don't know what else I can do or say. (Female, 55-64, South West)

The victims we spoke to also described the financial impact of trying to resolve or at least reduce the anti-social behaviour themselves, through modifying their property or instructing a legal representative.

In the end, obviously I went through purchasing a whole new load of fencing and putting barriers up to stop them from doing it. But even with the higher fencing, the parties, the verbal abuse, that would be awful. (Female, 35-44, South East)

We had no choice but to instruct a solicitor. I had no confidence after the policeman told me that the acceptable behaviour contract was basically a deterrent. I thought, well, I'm gonna have to take civil action... we had a cease and desist letter sent through... and that seemed to work because it was a threat of court action next... But that was £2000 for solicitor's fees. (Male, 45-54, Yorkshire and the Humber)

Some respondents described how instead of bringing about resolution, reporting the anti-social behaviour to agencies had made the anti-social behaviour even worse.

When we came out of lockdown, it just, it continued because of, of course, I'd made the complaints. That's when they started targeting against me directly...The more we complained, the more she did it. (Female, 35-44, South East)

We took the decision quite early on, [that] we were going to stop ringing the police because it didn't help matters. Nothing ever got done. And she always thought it was us anyway, so every time somebody else called the police, because we directly opposite, we got the blame, even though it wasn't us and they told her it wasn't us. And so, she quite often would come hammering on our door. And the police said a couple of times said to us, you know, "do you want us to do anything? Do you want us to arrest her?" And we said, "well, no, it's just going to make the problem worse, 'cause, you'll arrest her and then nothing will happen, and it will just make it more difficult for us." (Female, 55-64, Yorkshire and the Humber)

Other victims described how reporting the anti-social behaviour to agencies also hindered their ability to escape it. Victims explained how their reports of the anti-social behaviour to the police, or the local authority were legally required to be declared to prospective buyers. This subsequently devalued their property and left them unable to afford to move house.

I would have moved as soon as I could, but because I legally had to declare it when I spoke to estate agents, obviously it devalued my house, which then meant I couldn't afford to move whatsoever. (Female, 35-44, South East)

A beautiful home that I have loved and has always been a happy home. But I had had it. I just, it was killing me...then we find out we had to declare everything. So we felt even more trapped. (Female, 55-64, South West)

We won't be able to sell the property to an estate agent because we'd have to disclose all the problems. The price of our property's gone down as well. (Male, 45-54, Yorkshire and the Humber)

Some victims faced additional emotional distress due to the conflict between moving house to escape the anti-social behaviour and not declaring the anti-social behaviour to prospective buyers.

[Council staff member] is looking into what you have to disclose when you sell... it's not a question of what I have to disclose, whether I have to disclose it or not. What about do unto others as you have done unto yourself? I can't sell to somebody with a clear conscience, knowing what I've gone through. (Female, 55-64, South East)

I've sold it and we're waiting for a move date, and the guilt I feel for these new neighbours because obviously I don't want to tell them that I've had issues...I feel so awful in knowing that this poor family is going

to be moving in and possibly putting up with the same thing. (Female, 35-44, South East)

Victims' trust and faith in statutory agencies is eroded

The lack of resolution following victim reports to statutory agencies such as the police and the local authority, combined with the way they were treated, resulted in victims losing trust in statutory agencies. Many of the victims we spoke to said they would not report anti-social behaviour again in the future due to a lack of faith in agencies being able to help.

I wouldn't [report again in the future] because there's no help whatsoever. Nothing... We were in a losing battle from the start and had I have realised this; I wouldn't have started the report. Because I honestly felt that by doing the reports I would eventually win and I kept going on no matter how my mental health was... there was, you know, nothing that could be done... It's a case of, I wasted all my time, my effort, my anxiety. (Female, 35-44, South East)

I don't even know if I would phone the police now. I have no faith in them... the whole system is broken. It is not fit for purpose. None of it. I have no faith in the authorities ever. I would never trust a person from the council as long as I live. (Female, 55-64, South West)

"Ok, we'll get an officer round". Nobody. I didn't hear anything back after that. I made another call couple of hours later to say that it's still there and still nobody turned up and that kind of ended my trust in the police to actually do something. (Male, 45-54, Yorkshire and the Humber)

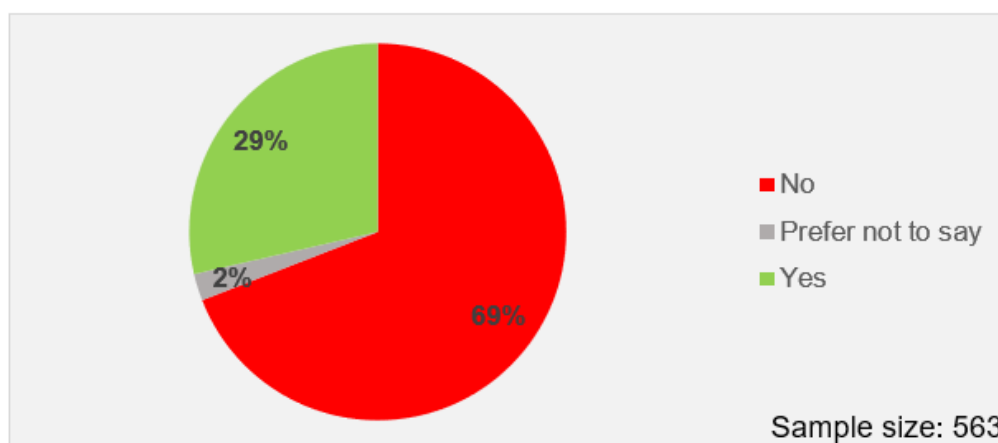
For many victims, the current processes not only fail to stop the behaviour, they also result in victims being treated poorly by agencies. The onus is placed on the victim, and they feel overburdened by the need to collate evidence and to research the relevant anti-social behaviour processes in their local area. Often, reporting the anti-social behaviour can make the situation worse and can prevent victims from being able to sell their homes to escape the behaviour as a last resort. This results in many victims losing trust in statutory agencies and an unwillingness to report future anti-social behaviour. For anti-social behaviour to be resolved, it needs to be reported, so disengagement of victims will only make anti-social behaviour issues in England and Wales worse.

6. Support for anti-social behaviour victims²⁸

As part of their journey to resolution and recovery, victims interacted with statutory agencies, non-statutory agencies and sometimes victims' support organisations. Respondents highlighted examples of good practice where they felt listened to by someone who was proactive. Unfortunately, there were more reports of the barriers victims faced, such as a lack of provision, lack of tailored support and a lack of independence from police. They also identified how support provision for anti-social behaviour victims could be improved by the provision of wrap-around support and anti-social behaviour advocates.

Many of the victims we spoke to during this research had received minimal support when reporting the anti-social behaviour and trying to seek resolution. Only a minority (29%; n = 161) had received any help or support from an organisation in relation to their experiences of anti-social behaviour (figure 6). For those victims who had reported to the police, the proportion who received support was slightly higher than this at 34% (n = 142), though this is still low. The Victims' Code requires that victims of crime be offered support but due to a lack of recognition or acknowledgement that what they are experiencing is a crime, victims of persistent anti-social behaviour are often left without support.

Figure 6. Proportion of anti-social behaviour victims who received help or support from an organisation in relation to their experiences of anti-social behaviour.



Experience with statutory agency support

Anti-social behaviour victims often interacted with multiple statutory agencies in their attempts to resolve the behaviour. We found that where victims had a single point of contact from a statutory agency, they had a better outcome. These individuals acted as a liaison between the various agencies involved, they kept the victim updated, listened to the victim, and tried to help them. Victims described the valuable role that specialist anti-social behaviour staff employed by the police or local authority played in supporting them through the process and helping them receive a resolution.

²⁸ Support in this context includes support from staff at statutory agencies, for example, the police; support from staff at non-statutory agencies, for example, the housing association; and formalised support from victim support services. Support refers to help with resolving the anti-social behaviour and support for victims to cope and recover from the impact of the behaviour.

[The anti-social behaviour co-ordinator] was particularly a machine. I can't praise her enough. She was absolutely amazing. She was straightforward. She gave me all the information I needed. And she said, you should have had this at the beginning. It should have been given to you the first time you phoned in. And I said it would have been helpful because I would have at least known what to do... [She] again kept me informed. So as soon as she had a response, she would let me know. (Female, 65-76, East of England)

She was a fantastic woman...it was the first time we felt that there was somebody that was actually listening to us and on our side and prepared to try and find ways to help us. She arranged multi agency meetings and we went and we had all the authorities there... She was the one ray of light that we had in this whole experience. And I can honestly say if it wasn't for her, I really don't know where we would be now because she was able to come in, I think as a fresh head and just look at the facts of what had gone on. she collated the most wonderful working document and in it she had the dates that things had happened. She had the dates that I had emailed the police or the council...she had everything...I don't know what we would have done without her. (Female, 55-64, South West)

In some cases, having the support from an anti-social behaviour specialist from a statutory agency provided victims with much needed validation after having been ignored and dismissed by agencies which had left them questioning themselves.

[The anti-social co-ordinator] said, "I cannot understand. You've been left like this for so long" and I thought, for her to acknowledge that when it's in her field of work, because sometimes I felt that, was I experiencing it too much, was it me feeling that it was worse than what it was? You know, you start to turn inwards, and you project it onto yourself. You think, oh, well, maybe it's me? Maybe I just can't live near people? Maybe I do need to move? (Female, 65-74, East of England)

One victim reflected on how the successful resolution of the anti-social behaviour seemed to be dependent on the chances of getting a proactive and engaged person from a statutory agency involved, who was able to drive the investigation forward and help resolve the anti-social behaviour.

When you do see somebody getting prosecuted, a lot of the time, it seems to boil down to if you're lucky enough to find the right officer that will follow through and push it through all the way. (Female, 55-64, South East)

Victims also highlighted that if key agencies like the police and the local authority will not help to resolve the anti-social behaviour, they should at least signpost victims to information. This may help them resolve the anti-social behaviour through other avenues

and find support to help them cope with the impact of it in the meantime. For some victims this did happen, but for many others it did not.

The council, the community safety, always put [support services details] on any response back to me. Also, local counsellors that I've been bugging as well had signposted me. But mostly it was kind of the police really themselves. (Female, 45-54, West Midlands)

I am aware of the different institutions that are there to help. But only through my own research, not through somebody saying, oh, you can get help from this place. (Male, 45-54, Yorkshire and the Humber)

If the PC said to me, OK, we may not be able to help you, but you might want to have a look on this website...I think they could make sure that you've got the information that you need, and that you're getting help from [a victim support organisation, just to give you the energy to carry on with life, really... I wasn't given a website I could go to. I wasn't told how I could get support. I was just told to get incident numbers off the police. (Female, 65-74, East of England)

Experience with victim support organisations

We heard from some anti-social behaviour victims who had very positive experiences with victim support services. One victim explained how transformative it was for her husband to have someone listen to his experiences of anti-social behaviour and the impact it had.

He spoke to somebody for quite some time...he found that really helpful... He felt listened to, that was the main thing, that somebody listened to the fact that it has impacted on him so much. (Female, 55-64, Yorkshire and the Humber)

Another victim described how good the support she received was, with the support organisation having offered to undertake the Case Review on her behalf.

They [anti-social behaviour support organisation] were actually very good. They came back and basically said the consensus was that [they would] undertake the case [review] for me, but at that point I had reached an impasse where it looked as if they were actually going to do something because he'd been arrested, so I didn't follow through with that. In retrospect, I really wish I had. I wish that I had been able to hand over all of the awful things that had happened to us, to somebody with a clear head. (Female, 55-64, South West)

However, it was often difficult for victims to access support services. A high turnover of support staff meant there was often a lack of continuity in the people they were dealing with. Some services placed additional conditions that victims needed to meet to be able to receive support. Victims also perceived a lack of independence of support services from police and commented that the support provision was too generic and did not address their needs.

Several victims reflected on the lack of staff consistency they experienced when engaging with support services, which undermined the impact of the support they received.

I did have a really supportive person in the beginning, but then she left and then it was somebody else. (Male, 55-64, East Midlands)

I had several conversations with them, and they kept changing staff frequently. So every time I called, [I spoke with] somebody different, which is also not particularly a good idea. (Female, 55-64, South East)

Support for victims of anti-social behaviour should not be contingent on their involvement with the criminal justice system or anti-social behaviour escalation processes. However, one respondent described how support services told them that they would not receive support because their case had been closed by the police.

"We've talked to the police, and they closed the investigation." It's like, no, they haven't, it's still ongoing... ..I've checked with the officer, and she says "no, it's not been closed." So why would the police allegedly tell the support group that it had been closed when it hadn't? And why is the support group turning around, saying we can only deal with people [whose] investigations are active?... You sort of sit there going, that doesn't mean it's over... So you end up with what is supposed to be a support organisation for victims, also turning their back on you as well (Female, 55-64, South East)

Another victim described how support services told them their support would be withdrawn if they did not proceed with the anti-social behaviour Case Review.

She's saying if there's been more than three incidents within six months, you need to activate [the anti-social behaviour Case Review]. And I said, I don't want to get anybody in trouble and I don't really want to be this complainer. And she said, you have to do it, otherwise, we have to withdraw our support because you're not doing what we're recommending you do anyway. (Female, 55-64, South West)

Additionally, one respondent suggested that there was a lack of victim services available for those who did not live in London, and described how she was unable to access certain support services because she lived in a more rural area.

What would be done? And you can't access it. You know, very frustrating because you know, people who live in some parts of the country are just, as likely [to be a victim] as somebody who lives in London. (Female, 55-64, South East)

In recent research, the Victims' Commissioner highlighted the 'postcode lottery' of support provision for victims, resulting in an inconsistency in the types of support available across geographic areas.²⁹ This emphasises the need to ensure all victims can access the support they require.

²⁹ [Annual Victims' Survey 2023](#)

The victims that we spoke to also cited negative experiences with the police due to their response or lack thereof to victims' anti-social behaviour reports. As a result, several respondents were concerned about the lack of independence of some victim support services from the police.

Mostly, the case worker that I had was based in a police station. I'm like, Jesus Christ. I mean, if that's not political influence, I don't know what is... I think it's really bad that victims support are based in police stations. Think it's shocking... I think they need to be located away from the police. (Female, 45-54, West Midlands)

This is an issue seen across crime types and is not limited to victims of anti-social behaviour. Research by the Victims' Commissioner into victim advocates highlighted the benefits of independence of support from statutory services, including fostering victim trust and engagement, particularly for those not involved in the criminal justice process.³⁰

One victim we spoke to was deterred from accessing support services until he received confirmation that they were independent from police. However, there were inconsistencies in the communication he received around whether the information he shared was being kept independently from the police, which damaged his trust in statutory services.

They [local authority] kept telling us to speak to them [victim support service]. I said "no, they're part of the police", they said "no, they're separate"... We did speak to them and I checked "are you a separate entity to the police and is everything confidential?" "Yes", they said. So, I described the problems of the neighbour and the mental health, but I asked them, can you do anything about the corrupt police officer? "Yes, we can help with that." So, I [poured] my heart out to them. He said "we'll get back to you". Six weeks later," Oh, we can no longer help you 'cause your [risk and vulnerability assessment]] has stopped", which is not true. You don't even have to have [reported] a crime for them to help you, that's what they told me. So, I asked them for a subject access request, they told me I had to contact [the police] for that. So, nothing is private and confidential between [victim support organisation] and the police. (Male, 55-64, Wales)

When asked about the support they had received, respondents suggested it appeared to be quite generalised and not tailored to their individual situation or needs. This was an issue highlighted in responses to the Victims' Commissioner's 2023 Victim Survey, as well as her report on victim advocates, with both identifying the need for more specialised victim support services, including 'by and for' services, to cater to the different needs and vulnerabilities of all victims.³¹³²

³⁰ [Going above and beyond: Mapping the provision and impact of Victim Advocacy in the Criminal Justice System - Victims Commissioner](#)

³¹ [Going above and beyond: Mapping the provision and impact of Victim Advocacy in the Criminal Justice System - Victims Commissioner](#)

³² [Annual Victims' Survey 2023](#)

I think the problem is, it's just quite a general thing. And I'm not really sure how qualified you have to be to do that and what background you need to have? (Female, 45-54, West Midlands)

[They] gave me a list of the local mental health companies which, you know, I could have got all the information myself online, you know, it was like a generic form that they give to everybody and they just handed that to me. (Female, 35-44, South East)

Additionally, some victims didn't feel supported by the services available, with some being ignored by support organisations and others being told they did not know how to help them.

They were somewhat supporting me, saying that [housing association] should be doing more. They'll contact [the council] on my behalf to give them a kick up the backside. But then afterwards, [the support organisation] were just ignoring my emails. (Female, 45-54, London)

[Staff member at the council] put me in touch with [support service] as well for advocacy support, but they basically said, "well, we don't know what to do." And yeah, I haven't heard from them for ages. It just gave me more administration, quite frankly. (Female, 55-64, South East)

The difficulties some victims experienced related to the fact the anti-social behaviour was still ongoing. Several respondents explained to us that being provided with support was not enough, instead they needed support combined with action to resolve the anti-social behaviour and enable them to recover.

Although it did help a bit, it doesn't help solve the problem... It didn't change the circumstances that I had to live with day after day, minute after minute. (Female, 65-74, East of England)

The only support I got was, "phone these mental health charities up." And I phoned them up and I got told, "well, the situation won't resolve till they go or it stops"... So it was all well and good giving me these numbers for charities, but there was nothing that they could do because the situation wasn't being solved. (Female, 35-44, South East)

I've now got a diagnosis of complex post-traumatic stress disorder... I can't recover whilst I'm in this same situation. (Female, 55-64, South East)

Several of the victims we spoke to had resorted to pursuing support privately, which was likely to be due to the barriers and limitations of publicly available support.

So, I sought out myself some private counselling on the phone and I had six sessions, it was OK. (Female, 65-64, East of England)

I actually was able to pay for counselling myself. (Female, 35-44, South East)

How support for anti-social behaviour victims could be improved

In our interviews with anti-social behaviour victims, respondents also suggested how support for anti-social behaviour victims could be improved. Victims identified the importance of having support while the anti-social behaviour was ongoing, particularly when it was occurring at times of the day when they felt most vulnerable.

We need that support there when we are raising incidents. (Male, 45-54, East Midlands)

We need a wraparound service and I mean something that's, you know, during the night, somebody to deal with that. (Female, 45-54, London)

Other victims highlighted the importance of having in-person support and somebody they could physically talk to.

There is nothing that can actually help you. It's alright it being down in writing, but what you really need is somebody to sit and talk to and be advised by, and we were getting nothing...I've reached out to [support organisation], but it was just emails and it's not really helpful. (Male, 55-64, East Midlands)

Respondents also suggested that there was a need for advocacy for anti-social behaviour victims. These anti-social behaviour advocates could support them with the process of reporting, escalating incidents and having their voice heard when dealing with key agencies involved.

Nothing meaningful comes out of it [accessing support services]. It doesn't feel to me like they advocate very much for the victim. (Female, 45-54, West Midlands)

We need proper advocacy. We really do. We need proper services. (Female, 45-54, London)

The benefits that advocates offer to victims were documented in the Victims' Commissioner's recent report on victim advocacy. The findings highlighted that advocates provide significant emotional and practical support to victims, help to ensure that agencies comply with the Victims' Code³³, and keep victims engaged with the criminal justice system.³⁴

Where appropriate and proactive support is provided, this could be transformative for victims who, in many cases, have been experiencing persistent anti-social behaviour for years. However, this is unfortunately not the typical experience.

Often victims struggle to find or receive any support beyond a generic offering, frequently finding that they are just sign-posted to websites. Victims suggest they wanted to be advocated for and helped to have the anti-social behaviour addressed. Additionally, they want support in coping with the impact it has on them.

³³ [Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales \(Victims' Code\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/612212/Code_of_Practice_for_Victims_of_Crime_in_England_and_Wales_Victims_Code.pdf)

³⁴ [Going above and beyond: Mapping the provision and impact of Victim Advocacy in the Criminal Justice System - Victims Commissioner](#)

All victims should be able to access effective support that is appropriate to their needs and vulnerabilities. This should not be dependent on where they live, the luck of having a proactive person involved in their case or on them being engaged with escalation processes or the criminal justice system.

8. Key research findings

Anti-social behaviour is often persistent and has a significant adverse impact on victims' lives.

In our research, we found that victim experiences of anti-social behaviour were varied and wide-ranging. However, what many had in common was that the behaviour was persistent over several years. Throughout our research the emotional, physical, and financial impacts of anti-social behaviour on victims was evident.

Key agencies³⁵ lack sufficient knowledge of the nature and impact of anti-social behaviour, which results in a lack of effective action being taken.

Our findings highlighted a lack of agency knowledge of anti-social behaviour and a lack of understanding of the impact it has on victims. This led to anti-social behaviour being categorised by key agencies as low level and low priority, as well as being handled as one-off incidents rather than a pattern of behaviour. Ultimately, this meant a lack of effective action in addressing the behaviour at an early stage, if at all.

There is limited accountability, collaboration and communication demonstrated by key agencies responsible for resolving anti-social behaviour.

Victims expressed frustration at the multiple agencies they had to deal with when reporting the anti-social behaviour and seeking a resolution. The lack of accountability taken by agencies was compounded by insufficient communication and collaboration which often meant victims were passed from one agency to another with little progress.

Awareness of the anti-social behaviour Case Review among both agencies and victims is lacking and there are barriers to the effective utilisation of the Case Review process.

Our research demonstrated a concerning low level of knowledge and awareness of the anti-social behaviour Case Review as an escalation process for persistent anti-social behaviour. This meant that victims often found out about the process after an extended period of suffering and often through their own research. We found that where Case Review applications were successful, victims often were not included or informed of the outcome. Where they were informed, many victims found the agreed actions to be ineffective in addressing the anti-social behaviour. Another concern was the anti-social behaviour Case Review lacked independence, with cases being reviewed by the same agencies who had originally failed to address the behaviour, meaning that victims lacked trust in its effectiveness.

However, where victims were given the opportunity to attend the Case Review meeting and have their experiences heard, they valued the experience. Where there were tangible

³⁵ Key agencies include the police, the local authority and the relevant housing association.

actions that were taken following the Case Review meeting, such as a Community Protection Notice, victims appeared more likely to experience a positive outcome to the situation.

Where victims encounter a proactive, single point of contact in their case, their experience is transformed.

Our findings highlight the value of having a single point of contact appointed to a victims' case. Cases of anti-social behaviour are often complex, long-lasting and require victims to engage with multiple agencies to report it and find resolution. Where there is an individual involved that can liaise with multiple agencies, instigate effective action and update the victim, victims are more likely to feel validated, stay engaged with the process and, ultimately, find a resolution.

The current reporting and resolution landscape for anti-social behaviour results in victims being overburdened, poorly treated, and losing trust in statutory agencies.

The barriers faced when reporting and seeking resolution, often places the onus on the victim to repeatedly report incidents, collect substantial amounts of evidence, and chase up communication. They often experienced being ignored and dismissed by staff from key agencies who had the power to help them. In some cases, victims were told to move house to resolve the situation.

Victims should not feel discouraged from reporting anti-social behaviour that is being perpetrated against them, but our findings demonstrated that their reporting experiences had a negative impact on their willingness to report again. Several victims highlighted that reporting the anti-social behaviour to agencies did not lead to resolution but instead devalued their home and prevented them from being able to sell it and prevented agencies from rehousing the perpetrators.

Only a small proportion of anti-social behaviour victims receive support, and this is often not sufficient or helpful to their situation.

Worryingly few victims told us that they received help or support. Our findings highlighted the limitations of current support provision for anti-social behaviour victims, which included provision being too generic and not tailored to individual needs. A high turnover of support staff limited victims' ability to have a single point of contact or consistency in the support they received.

Our research also suggested there was a lack of independence of support services from the police, which damaged victim trust. Some victims reported additional conditions placed on their ability to access support such as having an active police case or Case Review application. All victims should be able to access support that is appropriate and useful to them, regardless of whether they are engaged in the criminal justice system or other escalation processes.

9. Conclusion and recommendations

Anti-social behaviour is a prevalent issue in England and Wales, with 1 million incidents of anti-social behaviour recorded in 2023 by the police alone.³⁶ Anti-social behaviour is often described as a 'low level crime' but the impact of persistent anti-social behaviour can be detrimental to victims, affecting their mental health and quality of life. Some victims are forced to leave their homes and others are left feeling suicidal.

This research highlights barriers victims encounter when trying to get anti-social behaviour resolved. We found that despite making multiple reports to multiple agencies, victims were often ignored, deprioritised, and passed from one agency to another. This results in little, or no action being taken to address the anti-social behaviour, allowing it to escalate and cause victims further suffering. We also found there is a lack of knowledge about the anti-social behaviour Case Review amongst those working in statutory agencies responsible for resolving this behaviour and when a Case Review does take place, best practice guidance is not always followed. This further inhibits victims' ability to get key agencies to take appropriate action to resolve the anti-social behaviour. The anti-social behaviour Case Review also lacks independence which leaves victims with nowhere else to turn when they cannot get a resolution.

Systemic change is required to improve how victims of anti-social behaviour are treated and supported by statutory agencies to promptly resolve the anti-social behaviour. Additionally, agencies and support organisations need to be able to offer more tailored and effective support, including advocacy to victims of anti-social behaviour to help them recover.

Recommendations

The following recommendations seek to address the key issues identified by the research findings. They aim to improve victims' engagement with statutory agencies after they have reported anti-social behaviour.

Improving identification of persistent anti-social behaviour and support for victims

We recommend:

- To ensure victims of persistent anti-social behaviour receive the support to which they are entitled under the [Victims Code](#) (the Code), we recommend the Ministry of Justice consult on updating the Code to make it explicit that when behaviour amounts to a criminal offence, regardless of whether police decide to pursue criminal charges, the victim falls within the ambit of the Code and must be referred to local victim support services.
- The Home Office should also take steps to ensure this requirement is reflected in the [anti-social behaviour powers statutory guidance for frontline professionals](#).³⁷ This recommendation aligns with a commitment made at the despatch box by the previous government in Spring of 2024.³⁸

³⁶ [Crime in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

³⁷ Issued in respect of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

³⁸ [Contribution by Lord Bellamy to Victims and Prisoners Bill Report Stage, debated on Tuesday 16 April 2024](#)

- To ensure vulnerability of victims is captured and processed, we recommend the College of Policing develop a process model for structured anti-social behaviour risk and vulnerability assessments, to be implemented by all police forces. This would identify and record whether the victim has any vulnerability-related risks as soon as an anti-social behaviour report is made. These assessments should be reviewed at regular intervals, in recognition of the impact that ongoing ASB can have on vulnerability.
- To enhance the effectiveness of the College of Policing's [pilot accredited training package for neighbourhood policing](#), we recommend incorporating two elements within the anti-social behaviour module. First, training on identifying and recording 'course of conduct' offences in the context of anti-social behaviour to ensure that criminal offending is appropriately identified and recorded. Second, training to equip officers with a deeper understanding of the harms caused by anti-social behaviour, which will inform forces' risk and vulnerability assessments.

Improving collaboration and communication between statutory agencies

We recommend:

- To promote the necessary collaboration and communication to achieve effective resolution for victims of persistent anti-social behaviour, the Home Office should promptly and fully implement the measures to strengthen Community Safety Partnerships which it consulted on in Phase 1 of its [Community Safety Partnerships review](#). The Home Office should also publish its proposed new guidance for Community Safety Partnerships for consultation, which should include details of consequences if minimum standards are not met.
- To improve the victim experience and streamline communication, we recommend the Home Office update the statutory guidance on anti-social behaviour powers to recommend that victims must have a single point of contact within the lead anti-social behaviour Case Review agency. This individual, vested with the necessary authority, would liaise with all relevant agencies, spearhead effective action, and keep victims informed throughout the process.

Improving awareness and utilisation of the anti-social behaviour Case Review.

We recommend:

- To ensure victims of anti-social behaviour are aware of their rights and understand their options, the Home Office should update the statutory guidance on anti-social behaviour powers. This update should recommend that agencies clearly explain the anti-social behaviour Case Review process to victims who file a second complaint within a six-month period. The explanation should detail the victim's right to request a Case Review, appeal the decision on whether the case meets the criteria for Case Review (threshold decision), and challenge the Case Review decision itself.
- To strengthen victim confidence in the anti-social behaviour Case Review process, we recommend the Home Office consult on whether there is a need to legislate a requirement for independent chairs of anti-social behaviour case reviews. These

chairs might be an elected representative of one of the agencies responsible for leading an anti-social behaviour Case Review, or an independent anti-social behaviour specialist. The relevant bodies must provide evidence of their satisfaction that the appointed chair has sufficient current and working knowledge of anti-social behaviour statutory provisions, practice and policy.

- To strengthen victim participation and ensure their voices are central to the process, we recommend the Home Office consult on the need to introduce legislation which guarantee victims the right to choose their level of participation in a way that best suits their needs. This might include attending the Case Review meeting in person, participating virtually, submitting a written impact statement detailing the anti-social behaviour's effects, or being represented at the Case Review by a chosen individual to ensure their perspective is effectively communicated.
- To ensure victims help shape anti-social behaviour Case Review outcomes, we recommend the Home Office consult on the need to legislate to guarantee victim consultation on an Action Plan before it is formalised. This would ensure victims understand proposed actions and can contribute their perspective on the plan's effectiveness in addressing their concerns.

Improving the reporting and resolution landscape for anti-social behaviour.

We recommend:

- To ensure consistent access to anti-social behaviour Case Reviews, we recommend the Home Office consult on the need to legislate to standardise the threshold for anti-social behaviour Case Reviews by placing it in statute (as opposed to guidance). This would prevent local authorities unilaterally adding caveats which make it more difficult for the victim to make a successful application. This consultation should also look at mandating access to Case Review applications via a range of options, including but not limited to paper, online, and telephone applications.
- To ensure a more comprehensive response to anti-social behaviour, The Home Office should update the statutory guidance for Community Safety Partnerships to encourage the use of integrated IT systems that allow for data sharing of anti-social behaviour reports and victim risk assessments between agencies at a local level. These systems should facilitate the identification of repeat victims and perpetrators, allowing for a holistic assessment of risk and harm levels across linked incidents. By analysing patterns of anti-social behaviour, agencies can develop more effective and targeted responses.

Appendix

Appendix A - Methodology

With this research, the Victims' Commissioner aimed to gain insight into experiences of victims of anti-social behaviour in England and Wales, and their attempts to resolve it. To facilitate hearing from as many victims as possible, we implemented a mixed methods design of a survey and interviews.

Survey design and sampling

Firstly, we designed a self-complete survey which included 19 closed questions. The only questions that required an answer were included to route respondents to groups of questions that were relevant to their experience (e.g., if they had applied for the ASB Case Review).

The survey was launched on 6th March 2024 and responses were collected on Smart Survey. Where we were contacted by respondents for a paper version of the survey, we fulfilled this request. Our office used X (formerly known as Twitter) to promote the survey and worked with stakeholders including Police and Crime Commissioners and victims' organisations to distribute links and information about the survey to members of their networks. The survey was closed on 3rd April 2024.

Survey analysis

We received 765 completed and partial responses, of which 671 answered 'yes' or 'I think so but I'm not sure' to being a victim of anti-social behaviour. After analysing how many questions were answered by the partial response group, we identified those respondents who answered all questions aside from the demographic questions and did not select 'Finish Survey'. We also removed any duplicate entries and added any paper responses. The final sample included 563 responses.

We prepared descriptive statistics and charts using responses to closed questions using Microsoft Excel.

Interview design and sampling

From the 336 respondents who had answered 'yes' in the survey to being contacted by the office to participate in a follow-up interview to discuss their experiences in more detail, we contacted a total of 25 respondents to invite them to participate. We used a combination of random and purposive sampling to aim to get a diverse group of respondents for interview.

We began with random sampling to identify 16 respondents from three main respondent groups.

- Those who had not applied for the anti-social behaviour Case Review but experienced ongoing anti-social behaviour.
- Those who had been unsuccessful in applying for the anti-social behaviour Case Review.
- Those who had been successful in applying for the anti-social behaviour Case Review.

This informed the first round of interview invitations, which were emailed to respondents with an information sheet about the research and a consent form.

Based on the response rate of the initial interview sample, we then purposively sampled the remaining survey invitations with the aim of ensuring representation across sex, age, region, ethnicity and the three main respondent groups.

We completed interviews with 13 respondents who had been a victim of anti-social behaviour. Interviews were conducted virtually via Microsoft Teams, using the recording and transcription tool included in the Teams software.

Interview analysis

The 13 transcripts were initially refined using the video or voice recording of the interview shortly after the interview had taken place, to ensure accuracy and understanding of what the respondent had said. We then carried out coding across the transcripts and a thematic analysis which identified recurring themes, issues, and concerns. To exemplify the key themes in the research, we have included anonymised quotations in the report.

Appendix B – Limitations

Survey

The sample of survey respondents was self-selecting and did not include all victims of anti-social behaviour in England and Wales, therefore we cannot assume the experiences and views included in this report are representative of all victims of anti-social behaviour.

Interviews

The sample of interview respondents was small and was limited to those respondents who had completed the survey, stated they would be happy to be contacted and responded to the invitation. Therefore, it is not representative of all victims of anti-social behaviour in England and Wales. The quotes included in this report are used for illustrative purposes to represent common themes, but it is important to note that they do not represent all experiences of victims of anti-social behaviour.

Over and under representation in sampling

Overall, within the sample, there was over representation of victims from a white ethnic background, victims who identified as heterosexual, victims from the region of Yorkshire and the Humber and older victims (age 45+). Consequently, victims from black and minoritised communities, LGBT victims, victims from other regions and younger victims (below 44 years old) were underrepresented. This has implications for the representativeness of our findings and limits their applicability to the wider population.

Appendix C - Demographic breakdown of the survey respondents

Sex: Female (50%), Male (41%), Unknown (9%)

Age (years): 0 to 15 (0%), 16 to 24 (0.4%), 25 to 34 (3%), 35 to 44 (9%), 45 to 54 (18%), 55 to 64 (27%), 65 to 74 (27%), 75+ (8%), Unknown (8%).

Ethnicity: White (81%), Asian/Asian British (2.5%), Black/African/Caribbean/Black British (2%), Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups (2%), Other/Unknown (12%).

Region: South East (10%), East of England (3%), London (6%), North East (2.5%), Wales (3%), South West (5%), North West (4%), West Midlands (2.5%), East Midlands (8%), Yorkshire and the Humber (50%), Unknown (6%).

Sexual orientation: Heterosexual (80%), Gay or Lesbian (4%), Bisexual (2%), Other/Unknown (14%).

Disability: Non-disabled (46%), Disabled (40%), Unknown (14%).³⁹

³⁹ Disability was defined using [The Equality Act disability definition](#) (EADD).