

Understanding Antisocial Behaviour in East Staffordshire

March 2020

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- ◆ Burton Albion Community Trust
- ◆ Burton Pupil Referral Unit
- ◆ East Staffordshire Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)
- ◆ Staffordshire County Council - Families & Communities
- ◆ Staffordshire Police ASB Co-ordinator (Burton & Uttoxeter)
- ◆ Staffordshire Youth Offending Service
- ◆ Youthnet - Connect Stafford Youth Project

"People's perception and tolerance of ASB has become distorted over time, young people are experimenting with boundaries as we once did"

(Interviewee)

Executive Summary

Background to the project

This research is the third of four pieces of work commissioned by the East Staffordshire Local Strategic Partnership on behalf of the local Community Safety Partnership. All four themes have been identified as priorities by partners, and areas of work that would benefit from additional insight prior to determining the best and most relevant interventions moving forwards.

In responding to antisocial behaviour (ASB) it is critical that partner organisations understand as fully as possible the behaviours we are seeking to address, the location where incidents happen, the people who are responsible including their age, and the type of ASB that is occurring.

It is also crucial to understand what options are available to counter ASB, whether that be punitive interventions such as ASB Contracts and Dispersal Orders or more creative youth engagement

The fact that some of this information was hard or impossible to access to enable us to write this report (Staffordshire Police excepted), suggests that the current response to ASB may not be asking the right questions of the right people, to be able to put in place the most appropriate responses.

Research Aim & Objectives

The overall aim of the research is to better understand ASB in East Staffordshire. The project comprises four component research objectives:

- ◆ What are the causes of ASB?
- ◆ How are young people drawn into ASB?
- ◆ Is it just young people who are perpetrators of ASB?
- ◆ What good practice examples exist to address ASB?

Evaluation Methods

Utilising qualitative research approaches, SCVYS utilised the following evaluation methods in the compilation of this report:

- ◆ **desktop analysis** of local and national data and reports
- ◆ **1-2-1 semi structured interviews** conducted with local practitioners from both the statutory and VCSE sector
- ◆ **information requests** to local partners

Key Findings

- ◆ **Causes of ASB included:** Factors relating to the home and family environment; Drugs; A lack of regular activities or limited opportunities for young people; Boredom or No interests and School Exclusion.
- ◆ **Factors as to why young people are drawn into ASB included:** Negative peer influence and association; Status elevation & Social media; Rejection and attachment issues and Vulnerability relating to cultural identity.
- ◆ **Is it just young people who are perpetrators of ASB?** Data highlighted that youth ASB is only a small proportion of the overall ASB picture for both the borough and Staffordshire as a whole.
- ◆ **Principles & Examples of good practice to address ASB.** Highlighted approaches that build relationships with young people, those that nurture progression and aspiration, restorative justice practices and multi-agency community engagement to find solutions to locally important issues. Also apparent was the importance of youth voice in co-producing and designing activities.

Recommendations

- ◆ Tackle the root cause issues presenting within family environments.
- ◆ Invest in relational youth work support and longer term outcomes for young people.
- ◆ Commit to the ongoing promotion and support of the Youth Seen campaign.
- ◆ Work with East Staffordshire communities to explore vulnerabilities linked to a community's cultural identity.
- ◆ Research the type of support and provision local young people might want for the future.
- ◆ Research the effects and impact social media engagement has on young people.

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction to the Research

This research project was funded by the East Staffordshire Community Safety Partnership who were seeking to gain a better understanding and insight into the problem of ASB in the borough, with a view to identifying some potential solutions based on other good practice examples.

1.2 Where is the research located?

This research sits within the field of Community Safety. In Staffordshire there are two established partnership groups; one for the City and one for the County, in addition to eight district-based governance structures. In East Staffordshire this responsibility sits with the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) who commissioned this piece of work. The local community safety priorities for East Staffordshire as identified in the Locality Deal Fund 2019-20 include:

- ◆ Domestic Abuse
- ◆ **Antisocial Behaviour**
- ◆ Public Place Violence (including Youth Violence)
- ◆ Road Safety
- ◆ Substance Misuse
- ◆ Protecting Vulnerability (including modern slavery, honour based abuse, CSE and child abuse, victims of radicalisation, organised immigration crime, hate crime, mental health)

The specific ASB Strategic objectives adopted locally are as follows:

- ◆ To increase community confidence that Staffordshire Police is acting effectively to tackle ASB
- ◆ To reduce the volume of ASB, whilst encouraging reporting
- ◆ Prevent and reduce repeat victimisation and repeat offending
- ◆ Effectively tackle ASB through a planned approach to trends and patterns
- ◆ Provide an outstanding service to victims of ASB from initial contact to resolution
- ◆ Identify vulnerable people and work with work with partners to safeguard them from harm and meet their specific needs

1.3 Research Aim & Objectives

The research aim and composite objectives were outlined by the East Staffordshire Locality and Partnership Development Manager (on behalf of the LSP) in November 2019. The research aim is to provide a greater understanding of ASB in East Staffordshire. Underpinning this aim are the following research objectives:

Research Objective 1: What are the causes of ASB?

Research Objective 2: How are young people drawn into ASB?

Research Objective 3: Is it just young people who are perpetrators of ASB?

Research Objective 4: What good practice examples exist to address ASB?

2. Desktop Review

2.1 Introduction and definition

This section will provide a brief analysis on what has already been published in the context of the research aim and objectives, pulling on both national and local material where available.

Staffordshire Police use the following definition and explanation for ASB:

‘Behaviour or conduct which has caused or is causing nuisance or annoyance to any person, (this could include harassment, alarm or distress). This is behaviour effecting one or more persons not of the same household as the complainant’.

ASB is a broad term used to describe the day-to-day incidents of crime, nuisance and disorder that make many people’s lives a misery. Examples of ASB include:

- ◆ Nuisance, rowdy or inconsiderate individuals
- ◆ Vandalism, graffiti and fly-posting
- ◆ Abusive neighbours
- ◆ Street drinking and public drunkenness
- ◆ Environmental damage including littering, dumping of rubbish and abandonment of cars
- ◆ Prostitution related activity
- ◆ Begging and vagrancy
- ◆ Aggressive dogs
- ◆ Fireworks misuse
- ◆ Inconsiderate or inappropriate use of vehicles

Such a wide range of behaviours means that there is a collective responsibility for dealing with ASB which is shared between a number of agencies, including the police, local authorities, fire & rescue service and social housing landlords.

2.2 A National Perspective

2.2.1 What are the causes of ASB?

According to Parenting First Cry (2018), the reasons ASB manifests in childhood are numerous, but can be generally grouped into a few categories.

- ◆ A home environment that is constantly filled with stressful incidents, domestic violence, unstable conditions or generally lacking a feeling of calm and safety.

- ◆ Parents that fail to guide children properly or who make use of improper and aggressive parenting practices causing a negative impact on the child.
- ◆ A history of antisocial behaviour in families, leading to the presence of genetic factors.
- ◆ The neighbourhood of the child being a hostile environment or the school failing to take care of children and providing them with a safe space.

Supplementary to this, national charity, Shelter in its 'Back on track' report (2006) provides some other interesting insights:

Communities that suffer from ASB are desperate for a solution to the problem. However, groups such as children's charities and advocates of young people's rights have serious concerns that the kinds of action being taken against the bad behaviour are creating, rather than solving, problems.

These groups have expressed alarm at the powers the police now have to disperse groups and put young people under curfew. They also worry that children could end up in the criminal justice system for breaching an ASB Contract – even though they have committed no crime. Measures targeting families, such as demoted tenancies and Parenting Orders, could also lead to increased eviction rates.

There is very little research about the causes of ASB, but what evidence there is suggests perpetrators often come from vulnerable groups, are 'socially excluded', and have a range of complex support needs. As more punitive measures are introduced, there needs to be an accompanying realisation that, to work effectively with targeted individuals and families, we need to address these support needs.

Shelter believes that a more rehabilitative approach to dealing with the problems associated with ASB will lead to longer term solutions. Individuals, families, and communities need more than 'quick-fix' remedies, which may punish behaviour but fail to address the underlying causes of that behaviour. They highlight four distinct '**Risk factors**' that are likely to feature in providing a causal link to ASB:

- ◆ **Family risk factors** include poor parental supervision and discipline, family conflict, low income and poor housing.
- ◆ **School risk factors** include low achievement, beginning in primary schools, and truancy.
- ◆ **Community risk factors** include living in a disadvantaged neighbourhood, community neglect, and a lack of social investment.
- ◆ **Risk factors relating to individuals / peers** include alienation and friends being involved in problem behaviour.

Conversely, they also identified some **'Protective factors'** through the project, which are defined as those giving children resilience in adverse circumstances.

- ◆ **Social bonding** means the strengthening of bonds between children and family members, friends, teachers and other socially responsible adults.
- ◆ **Healthy standards** refer to having parents, teachers, community leaders and others who lead by example, and have clearly stated expectations for children's behaviour.
- ◆ **Opportunities for involvement** is about giving children the chance to feel involved and valued in their families, schools, and communities.
- ◆ **Social and learning skills** entails equipping children with the social reasoning and practical skills they need to take advantage of opportunities on offer.

2.2.2 How are young people drawn into ASB?

Recent research from the University of Essex in their Young Colchester Report (2018), indicates that young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) or otherwise disengaged or marginalised are more likely to be drawn into ASB and other forms of youth crime. It also suggests that (re)accessing education/employment, rebuilding positive and valuable relationships with trusted adults/peers and a connection to local youth-focused community assets helps reduce ASB in young people. The creation and extension of constructive opportunities for young people can incentivise them to stop offending.

Effective prevention programmes for vulnerable children and families include:

- Children's Centres
- Pre-schools
- Primary and Secondary schools
- Youth services
- Safeguarding services

Several studies suggest that ASB and other types of crime occur when three factors come together at a given space and time. These include:



Where members of a community or neighbourhood have higher levels of trust between themselves, it is more likely that a safe environment can be created and maintained.

2.2.3 Is it just young people who are perpetrators of ASB?

It is a widely held premise that young people and antisocial behaviour are synonymous. There is however a significant body of evidence which suggests young people are as likely if not more likely to be victims of ASB than other age groups, and also that young people gather in groups at night because it makes them feel more secure. (Berry, 2003)

Conversely, such gatherings are perceived by some residents and sectors of the community as being intimidating and a significant element of ASB. However, not all young people cause nuisance; not all young people are rowdy and intimidating. Many feel just as victimised as those members of the community who report such offences, if not more so. This is therefore important to recognise and to target ASB interventions on clearly defined problems, areas and root causes.

Unfortunately, at the time of writing we were unable to obtain nationally recorded ASB incident figures from the Home Office or Staffordshire Police knowledge hub. We would have liked to have identified the national percentage of incidents that were attributable to the youth demographic to provide a comparable context to the East Staffordshire youth qualifier percentage. Although locally, it is clear from the 2019 data provided by Staffordshire Police below that youth ASB is only a small proportion of the overall ASB picture for the borough.

2.2.4 What good practice examples exist to address ASB?

The Big Lottery Fund (2017) published a range of good practice guides for organisations working with young people in different contexts. These were evidence based built on the learning and evaluation of projects they had previously funded under the Young People's Fund. They concluded that the following principles are key to delivering successful interventions with young people. Approaches need to:

- Be enjoyable and engaging leading to voluntary participation from young people;
- Provide opportunities for personal and social development;
- Break cycles through positive peer, role models and trusted adult relationships;
- Offer opportunities for active and meaningful involvement – including opportunities to contribute back to their communities through social action, volunteering, etc;
- Intentionally intervene as early as possible;
- Involve the wider community and all relevant stakeholders to increase mutual respect including intergenerational programme elements;
- Sustain positive behaviour change through ongoing engagement – joining a club, etc;
- Look at underlying factors such as unemployment, debt, substance misuse, poor relationships and social networks.

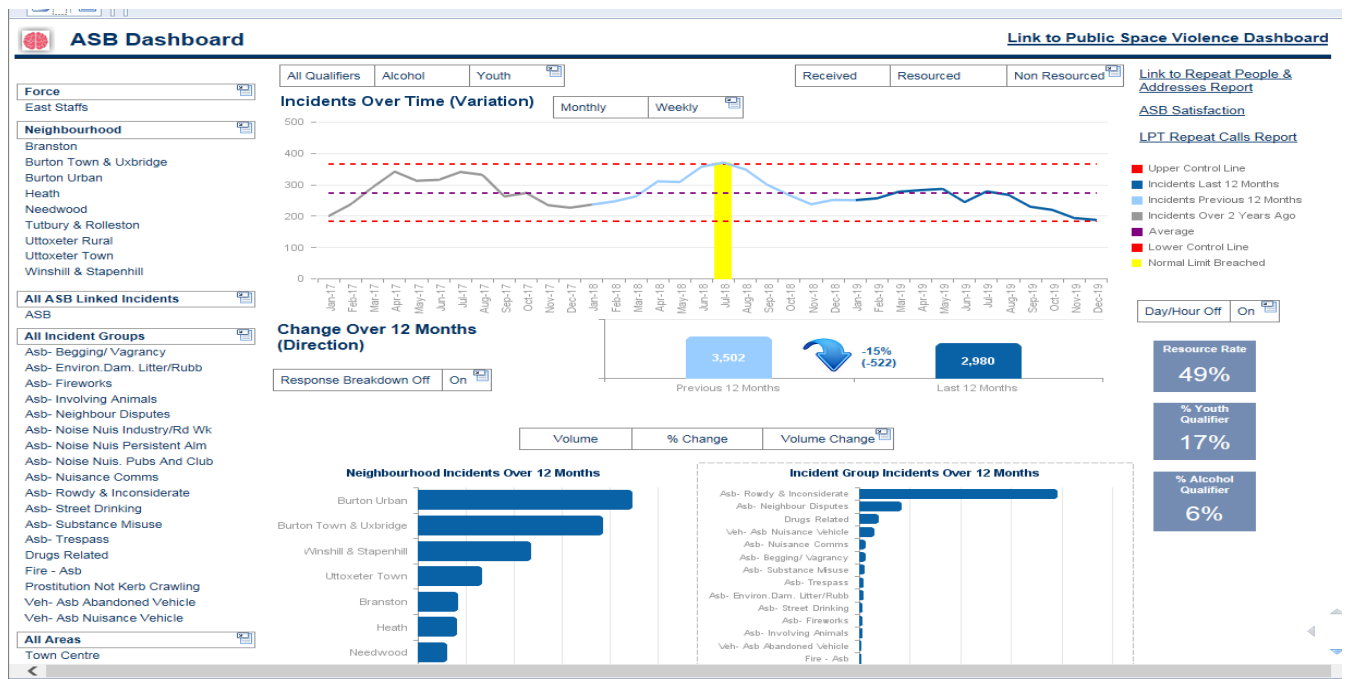
“Active involvement can develop the technical, personal and social skills of young people. Active involvement also makes young people feel valued and can bring about greater engagement and motivation for participation more widely.”

Example projects cited as having a positive impact in the report include sports programmes, environmental projects, opportunities for intergenerational connection, acts of community service, opportunities to learn new skills, taking on responsibility and peer leadership etc.

In a sense the specifics of the activity (sports, arts, outreach, skills programmes, mentoring, counselling, etc.) are less important than the need to meaningfully involve young people in activities that they choose to engage with and that offer them opportunities to progress towards the life they want to live. The youth practitioner or trusted adult role here is therefore key in building positive relationships and providing support and challenge to young people to become the very best versions of themselves.

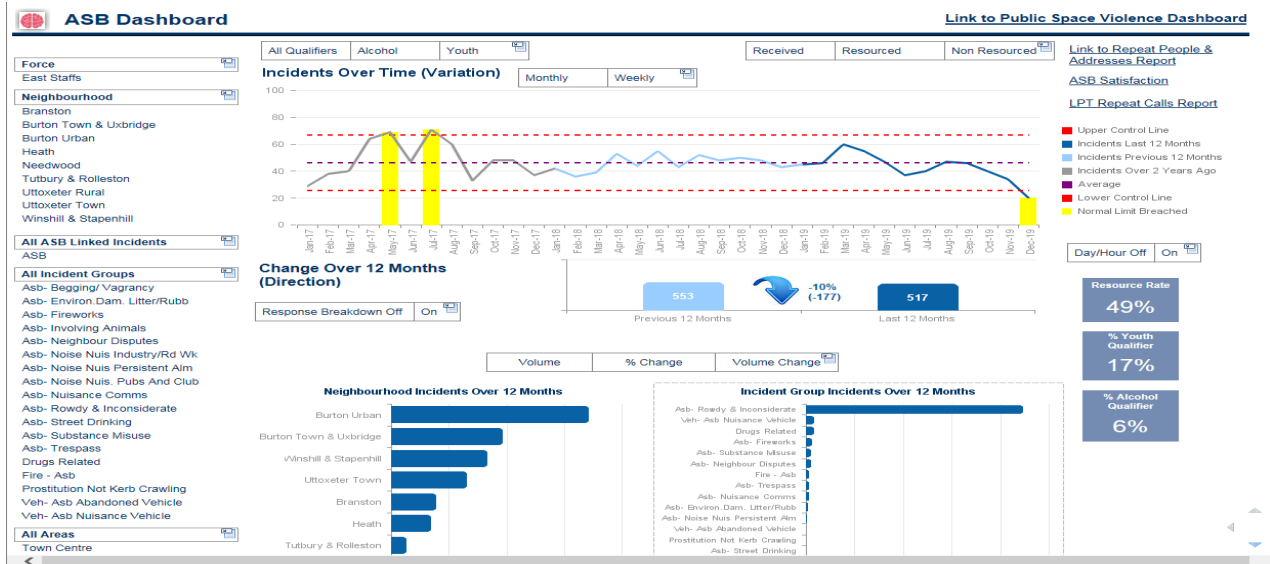
2.3 A Local Perspective - East Staffordshire

The dashboard below shows a 15% reduction from 3,502 to 2,980 in total recorded ASB incidents across East Staffordshire borough during 2019. These statistics also reveal that just over 17% of ASB is attributed to young people (qualified as up to Age 16).



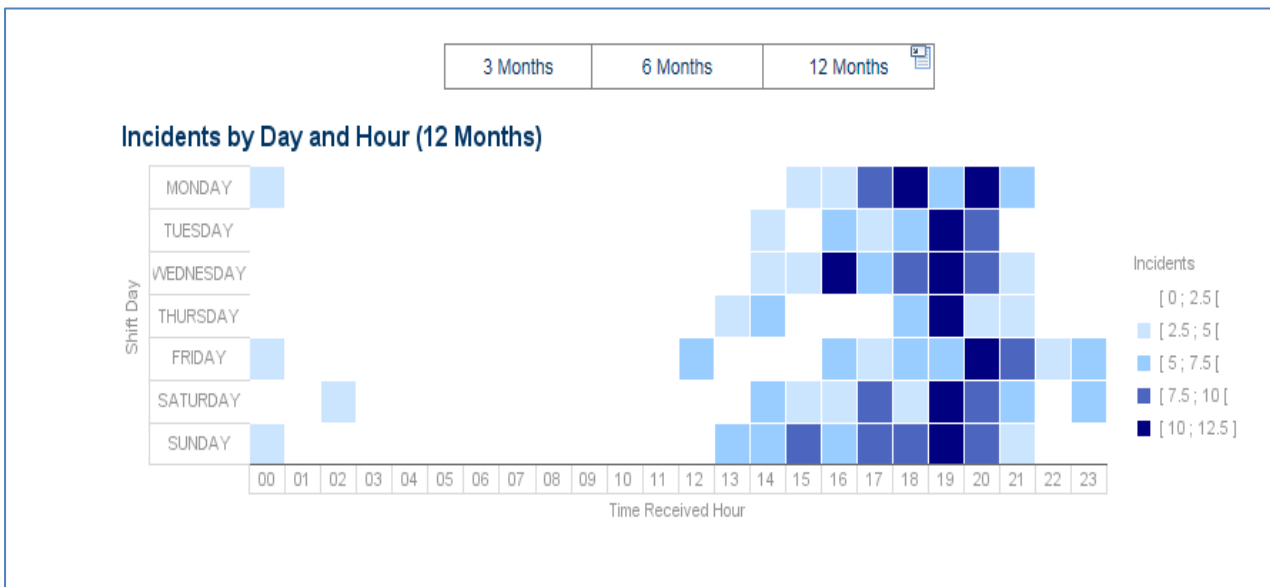
2.3.1 Youth ASB Incidents

In relation to youth ASB specifically, the dashboard below shows that this has decreased by 10% during 2019, from 553 incidents to 517, with the most prevalent incident category being 'Rowdy and Inconsiderate Behaviour', accounting for 86% of these and with 6% of cases involving alcohol as a factor. Incidents against this category overall has fallen by 18% on the previous 12 month period.



2.3.2 When does youth ASB occur?

This following graph shows the most problematic days and times that youth ASB is occurring across the borough. Unsurprisingly, this shows a higher concentration of incidents between the hours of 5pm and 9pm, with a greater occurrence level being over the weekend.



When looked at on an even more local basis we can see that in most places, overall ASB is decreasing as is youth ASB, with just one or two exceptions:

- ◆ In Branston overall ASB has increased by 8%, although youth ASB has decreased by 8% with the most problematic areas being Clays Lane and McDonalds Centrum Retail Park.
- ◆ In Winshill and Stapenhill, although overall ASB has decreased by 13% there has been a slight rise of 1% in youth ASB with hot spot areas around Stapenhill Gardens and Canterbury Road where there is a community centre and play area.
- ◆ Uttoxeter Town also saw a significant decrease in overall ASB of 38%, and a small increase in youth ASB of 1% with ASDA Carter Square and High Street being hot spots.
- ◆ In Uttoxeter Heath there has been an overall increase of 14% in ASB and youth ASB has risen by 23%, with McDonalds (A50 bypass) and Bramshall Road and Park being the most problematic areas.

Certainly, the increase in youth ASB in Uttoxeter could warrant further investigation to understand the contributory factors behind this localised increase, at a time when most other parts of the borough are seeing a decrease.

2.4 Contextual Safeguarding

Finally, it is worth highlighting here the connection to Staffordshire's Contextual Safeguarding approach, aimed at understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their family unit. It recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abusive behaviour. Parents and carers have little influence over these contexts and settings, and young people's experiences of extra-familial abuse can further undermine the parent-child relationship.

Locally, children's social care practitioners including youth offending teams, child protection systems and the Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Children Safeguarding Board are engaging with individuals and sectors who have influence within extra-familial contexts e.g. the voluntary youth sector via SCVYS, and recognise that the interface with these spaces is a critical part of safeguarding practices. It is apparent that young people are vulnerable to abuse beyond their front doors, thus demonstrating the importance of providing safe spaces that enable young people to share their issues.

3. Evaluation Methods

3.1 Research Aim & Objectives

The overall aim of this study is to better understand ASB in East Staffordshire. Underpinning this aim are the following research objectives:

- ◆ What are the causes of ASB?
- ◆ How are young people drawn into ASB?
- ◆ Is it just young people who are perpetrators of ASB?
- ◆ What good practice examples exist to address ASB?

3.2 Research Approach & Collection

In an attempt to meet the above research aim and objectives, SCVYS decided to adopt multiple qualitative elements, as highlighted below between December 2019 and February 2020.

3.2.1 Desktop Review

A brief analysis of secondary research was undertaken in the form of local and national reports, articles and data which would provide a broader context to the research aim and objectives. This would also assist in highlighting any similarities or differences within the subsequent findings and analysis section.

3.2.2 Qualitative Semi-structured Interviews

SCVYS contacted a number of local partner organisations to arrange face-to-face interviews. Interviewees comprised representatives from Staffordshire Police, Burton Albion Community Trust, Staffordshire Youth Offending Service, Burton Pupil Referral Unit and Youthnet (Connect Stafford Youth Project).

The questions posed during the interviews included:

- ◆ Thinking about the term 'Antisocial Behaviour' what words immediately come to mind?
- ◆ What knowledge and/or experience do you have in relation to the research topic?
- ◆ Who do you think are the main perpetrators of ASB and why do you think this?
- ◆ What do you believe to be the main causes of ASB locally?

- ◆ Thinking about young people specifically, how do you think they get drawn into ASB and do you have any specific examples to demonstrate this?
- ◆ What good practice examples are you aware of to address ASB? (This could be locally or nationally)
- ◆ Are there any other comments you would like to make?

Participants were emailed the questions in advance to allow for a degree of preparation, with the exception of the first question which was omitted to enable the interviewer to gain a quick snapshot response.

3.2.3 Information requests

Staffordshire Police provided a very comprehensive briefing paper including the latest ASB statistics and trends, with specific information on ASB hot spot areas, etc.

3.3 Data Analysis

Responses to the semi-structured interview questions would be analysed via facilitator's notes and transcription of the audio recordings taken on the day. This would enable common themes to be drawn and categorised, supplemented by any pertinent quotes that were provided by interviewees to elaborate on any particular themes.

4. What are the causes of ASB?

4.1 Introduction

Whilst not explicitly linked to causes an initial 'cold' introductory question was posed to participants to get an immediate snapshot of what came to their mind when thinking about the term 'Antisocial Behaviour'. The responses given are presented in the diagram to the right and could be categorised as follows:

- ◆ Perpetrators/Victims - Young People
- ◆ Locations / Concentration - Parks, Shopping Centres, Crowds
- ◆ Impacts - Cost, Disruption, Nuisance, Intimidating, Communities affected
- ◆ Causes - Lack of things to do, Drugs
- ◆ Other - Knives, Crime, ASBO, Lack of control



It was interesting that the most popular response given was 'Young People', cited on three occasions. Yet it was unclear as to whether this was stated to highlight young people as perpetrators and/or victims of ASB or just to indicate a general association between the two. This may also be partly due to interview participants working more closely with this age group as part of their professional role. This will be explored in more detail in Section 6 below.

As alluded to above, the causes of ASB can be dependent upon the presence of a variety of different factors presenting at both a personal and environmental level. The findings and themes emerging from interviews with the perspective of local practitioners in Staffordshire will now be presented and compared to the desktop review as appropriate.

4.2 Findings

In this part, the particular views on the causes of ASB are explored. These have been categorised into common themes and in order of prominence.

4.2.1 Factors in the home and family environment

All interview respondents made some reference to the impact an unstable and insecure home life can have upon a young person. A specific example given by a participant related to a young female they had engaged with who shared **"I hang around town because I don't want to go home as my stepdad has been drinking."** This infers a degree of vulnerability and avoidance of home which may lead to ASB, but this would be more likely to occur when other influences come in to play.

Consistent with the reasons cited by Parenting First Cry above, there was reference to a **"lack of parental responsibility or the parental ability to be responsible"**, with no consequences for inappropriate behaviour at home coupled with a normalisation of negative behaviour originating from the parents: **"Its normal for their parents to swear at them, so they [young people] think it's normal to use abusive language at others outside of the home."**

4.2.2 Lack of regular activities or limited opportunities for young people

The second most featured comment related to a lack of regular activities or limited access to / awareness of opportunities for young people, to act as diversionary measures for ASB. Some respondents had the view that **"traditional youth club settings were no longer fashionable - it's all about online gaming at home"**, particularly for the older age groups. For example, evidence shared of the 2019 SPACE programme highlighted that some older young people welcomed and utilised the offer of free gym passes at set times during holiday periods. (Staffordshire Police)

Conversely, Burton PRU highlighted that most of the young people they support, **"don't have access to online gaming at home or they haven't got the concentration level for it anyway."** This was supplemented by commenting that **"activities don't work for everyone - the kids we work with won't turn up - there is a fear that we are making them do something they don't want to."**

4.2.3 Boredom or No interests

Linked to the previous perceived cause, respondents stated boredom as a contributory factor to ASB, coupled with some young people "**not having any interests outside of school**". This was a particular observation made by Burton PRU when undertaking CV work with their pupils. It was also acknowledged that it was unlikely they had ever been encouraged to engage in positive activities by their parents when growing up, which is so important in developing resilience.

4.2.4 School Exclusion

Some interviewees felt that those who were excluded from school, either on a fixed term or permanent basis were more likely to get involved in ASB locally. This is consistent with the Young Colchester Report (University of Essex, 2018) who cited well-documented connections between school exclusion, ASB, youth offending and youth victimisation.

An example from the interviews referred to a local school who were initially very quick to exclude kids for disruptive behaviour which then had a knock on effect in terms of ASB in the community. As a result, the school has recently changed its approach to one of retaining pupils in school so they know they are safe, can avoid that pupil feeling rejection, thereby reducing the risk of them 'kicking off' and displaying negative behaviour outside of school.

4.2.5 Drugs

The use of drugs across both youth and adults was generally cited as a major issue in Burton by some interviewees. More specifically to youth, the view was: "**Lots of kids smoke cannabis on a daily basis which is leading them into using other drugs such as THC, Spice and other things. A lot of them are hanging around in parks and they are involved in drug taking there, which is quite often leading to issues with both local residents and/or other groups of young people.**"

This view was echoed by a practitioner from another district, highlighting drugs as a peripheral aggravator to ASB. This can be intensified further by county lines and drugs being bought in from neighbouring areas.

5. How are young people drawn in to ASB?

5.1 Introduction

This section gives consideration to some of the reasons behind why young people might be drawn in to ASB. Again, these have been categorised into themes with examples provided as appropriate.

5.2 Findings

In this part, the particular factors on why young people can be drawn into ASB are explored. These have been categorised into common themes and in order of prominence.

5.2.1 Negative peer influence and association

Most notably, participants had observed the role that negative peer influence and association plays in young people getting drawn in to ASB. Often led by a 'ring leader' who is likely to display similar disruptive behaviour at school and is able to influence others because **"they think it's cool and feel it's safer to be associated with that person than not"**, thereby creating a 'pack mentality' which can then manifest into ASB outside of school.

5.2.2 Status elevation & Social media

The need for a young person to elevate their 'status' amongst their peers came through as a potential draw in to ASB. Young people often think there is a **"glamorisation to being part of a gang or crew that affords them considerable kudos"** and which is often fuelled by what they see in the big cities. This also resonates with those responses around 'image' as highlighted within SCVYS (2019) research on 'Understanding the growth of Knife Crime in East Staffordshire.'

Furthermore, the power of social media was cited as a factor that should not be underestimated in enabling young people to view negative or aggressive behaviour and to also post their own. This can often provide them with instant validation by their peers, or more worryingly escalate to creating rivalries and in some cases violence.

5.2.3 Rejection and attachment Issues

Reflecting on the aforementioned section and the impact of a poor family and home environment on ASB, this view is somewhat connected. Some young people can feel rejected and struggle to form meaningful attachments due to an unstable family environment. Parents are struggling to cope with them at home and they are then often passed to other relatives to look after them which affects their self-esteem and as described in one of the interviews, gives that young person a message of *"I don't want you"*. This young person then seeks out that acceptance and feeling of being wanted elsewhere, often amongst their peers but this can also increase vulnerability linked to county lines. An equivalent example was given by an interviewee relating to females often getting into inappropriate relationships to feel loved and valued.

5.2.4 Vulnerability relating to cultural identity

One respondent highlighted a known example of a young person's involvement in ASB as a reaction to a perception of vulnerability and isolation because of their culture. This young person was Polish and believed they needed to defend and protect their identity since recently arriving in the UK. A gang with other Polish young people was formed as ***"they felt a distinct level of vulnerability in Burton"*** and adopted the mentality of ***"we have to protect our own"***, which in itself has potential connotations relating to violence related behaviour. This view was also relayed of young people from the local Muslim/Pakistani community. Furthermore, this resonates with the findings within SCVYS (2019) research on 'Understanding the Perception of Crime in East Staffordshire' that highlighted a need for **'widening the understanding of differing cultural norms within diverse communities and challenging negative stereotypes through asset based community development work or large scale celebration events.'**

6. Is it just young people who are perpetrators of ASB?

6.1 Introduction

This section will provide some insight into who are considered to be the main perpetrators of ASB, both from a sample practitioner perspective in addition to actual statistical information on ASB incidents in East Staffordshire provided by Staffordshire Police.

6.2 Findings

Those interviewed were asked the question **"Who do you think are the main perpetrators of ASB and why do you think this?"** The responses given can be categorised as follows:

6.2.1 Children & Young People

- ◆ Three respondents answered in a very age specific way highlighting the 10-18 age range, whilst one provided a gender specific response in 'young males aged 10-13.' One stated they were probably incorrect in their assumption and it was more likely to be perpetrators in the 18-25 age bracket.
- ◆ One respondent made reference to a particular cohort and those children/young people who are not attending school (truanting) or those on reduced school timetables who were then congregating together.
- ◆ One respondent acknowledged that young people do commit ASB, however, they would question if this is to the same degree as the adult demographic and more specifically relating to the night time economy and drinking in town.

6.2.2 Adults

- ◆ One respondent referred to drunken adults coming out of the pubs on a Friday/Saturday night and shouting abuse at other people in the street i.e. Homeless, buskers.
- ◆ Another response relayed the impact of the long licensing hours of pubs which encourages 'all day drinking' amongst adults which then leads to ASB in the form of rowdy and inconsiderate behaviour.

6.2.3 Statistics

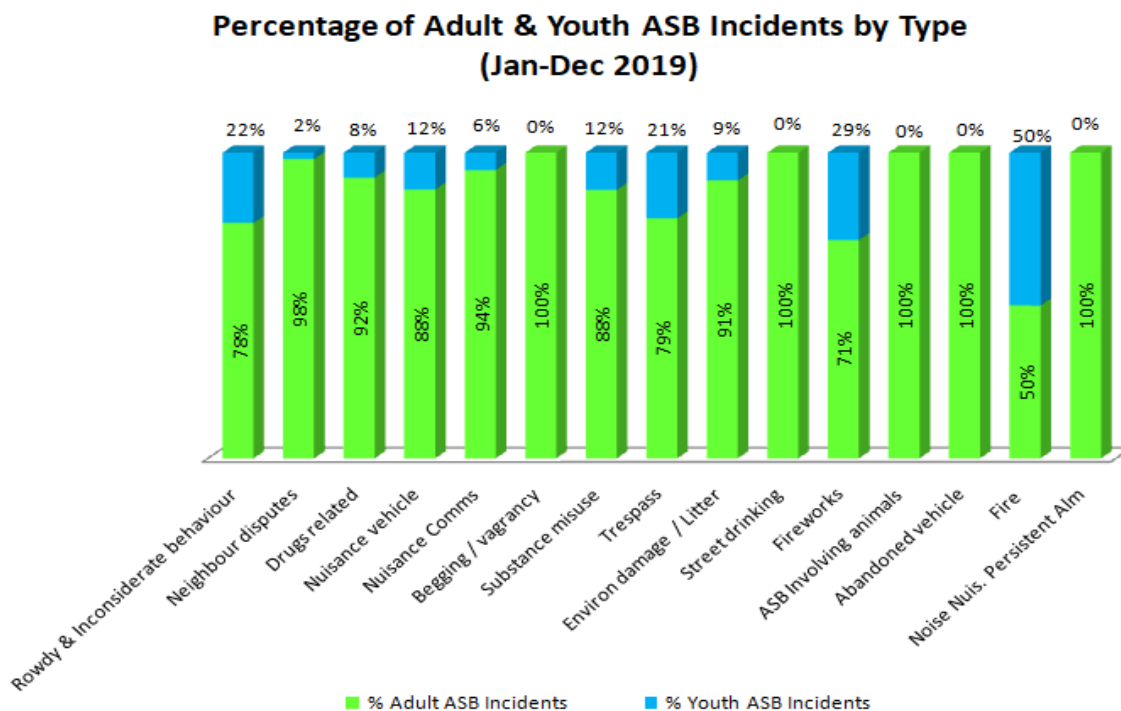
The following table highlights the number of ASB Incidents recorded by Staffordshire Police during the period January to December 2019 for both East Staffordshire and the County as a whole.

Geographical Area	Total YOUTH ASB Incidents Jan-Dec 2019	Total ADULT ASB Incidents Jan-Dec 2019	Total Overall ASB Incidents Jan-Dec 2019
East Staffordshire	517 (17%)	2,463 (83%)	2,980
Staffordshire	5,148 (16%)	27,742 (84%)	32,890

This overwhelmingly demonstrates that the level of ASB perpetrated by young people in East Staffordshire is in the minority, at 17% for the period, with the remainder being perpetrated by adults. Therefore, there is a negative correlation between the views of those interviewed and the actual ASB statistics for the borough and Staffordshire as a whole.

Interestingly, more recent anecdotal evidence from the Local Police Team Commander would suggest that through intentional and intensive police action the aforementioned ASB spike in Uttoxeter is now under control. This would suggest that whilst a single agency response can quickly make a short term difference to the statistics, a partnership response involving the community itself is the best way to address the root causes, change the cultural environment and therefore create sustainable solutions.

In terms of the types of ASB committed across the borough by the different age categories, the percentages of Adults versus Youth ASB incidents can be seen below. This again shows ASB perpetrated by Adults is in the majority across all but one ASB type, with the largest proportion of incidents recorded against 'Rowdy and Inconsiderate behaviour' for both age demographics.

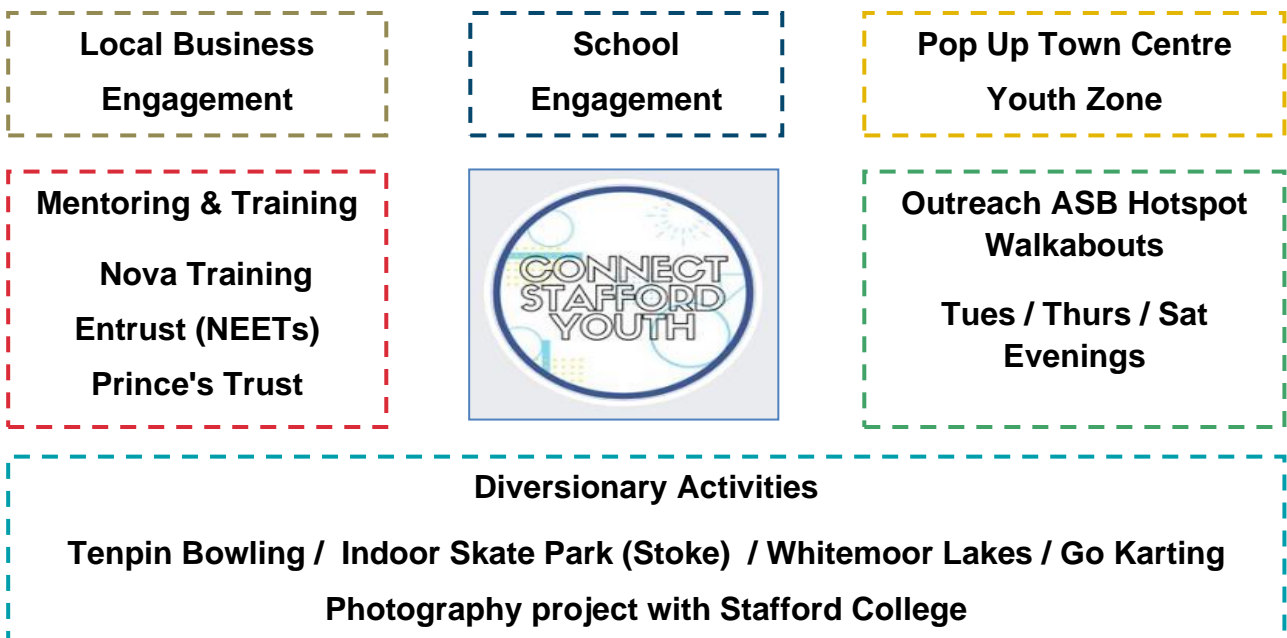


7. What good practice examples exist to address ASB?

The final research objective was to identify other good practice examples that exist to address ASB. Interview respondents were not restricted in their responses and were encouraged to speak from experience of both local and national examples they were aware of or had been involved in.

7.1 Connect Stafford Youth Project

In April 2019, Stafford Borough Council commissioned local VCSE provider [Youthnet](#) to deliver a detached youth engagement project called [Connect Stafford Youth](#). The aim of the project was to work with a cohort of young people aged 13-19, who have been identified by local agencies as causing persistent unacceptable antisocial behaviour. The project works in targeted locations in and around Stafford Town Centre. The project also allows for engagement with other vulnerable young people who are at risk of becoming involved in ASB through the connections they are making with others. The model is heavily focussed on building relationships with young people in different ways and then facilitating their wider engagement with local businesses, training providers and community networks.

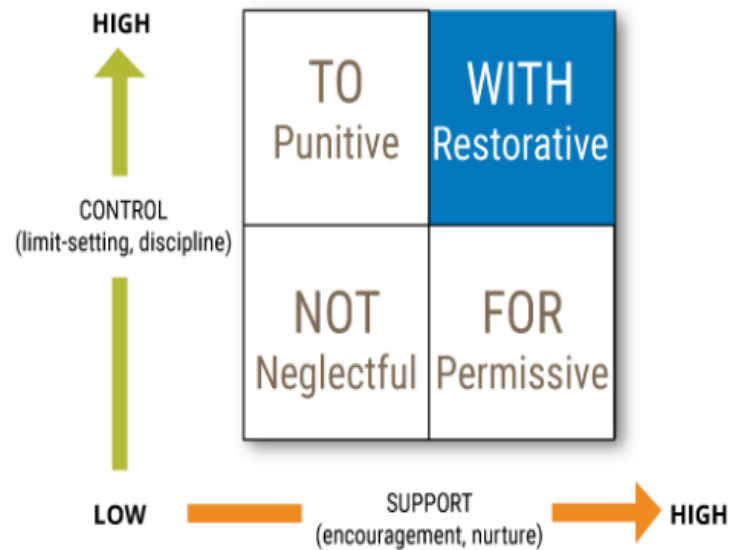


The project is now seeing 40-50 young people on a regular basis, whilst engaging a much larger number less frequently. Although it is early days, Staffordshire Police have reported a reduction in ASB locally which they believe to be partly attributable to the progress this project is making on the ground. More importantly, it is hoped this project will contribute in building the resilience and longer term outcomes for some of the young people it engages with and supports.

7.2 Restorative Justice Approaches

Secondly, one participant highlighted the positive opportunities that can be realised from taking a restorative justice approach, particularly when looking to address youth ASB in a community.

The example provided was an intergenerational project developed in response to youth ASB taking place on a small housing estate. Older residents felt particularly intimidated by young people hanging around being rowdy, inconsiderate and giving them verbal abuse on a regular basis.



A local ex-youth worker who lived close by secured a small amount of funding to start working with the young people involved, building the relationship and understanding their issues. After a while the young people started to realise the impact their behaviour was having on the residents and they decided to put on a bingo night for the older residents at a local community centre with the aim of rebuilding a trusting relationship with them. This also improved the tolerance and respect between the younger and older generations living on the estate.

The fundamental principle of a restorative justice approach is that young people will be happier, more cooperative and more likely to make positive changes in their behaviour when those in positions of authority do things with them, rather than to them or for them. This maintains that more punitive and authoritarian measures such as Antisocial Behaviour Contracts and Dispersal Orders may not be as effective as using more restorative, participatory and engaging methods.

7.3 East Staffs Diversionary Activities & Premier League Kicks Programme

The East Staffs Diversionary Activities programme led by Burton Albion Community Trust alongside partners Riverside Church and Burton Youth for Christ has been running since April 2018. The programme focuses on delivering a range of diversionary activities for young people in ASB hotspot areas. Activities include multi-sports (incorporating Premier League Kicks sessions); youth clubs; skateboarding at The Warehouse; specific groups on building self esteem / positive relationships and friendships in addition to craft, photography and animation workshops.

The project has engaged with 1200 young people since it began and case studies have shown it is contributing to the wider personal and social development outcomes for some of the young people it supports. Police data has shown a 12% decrease in ASB in the target wards over the last 3 years, as a result of activities relating to these programmes supported by the LSP.

7.4 Staffordshire Police Community Engagement

The approach to youth ASB by Staffordshire Police has changed in recent years to a model that encompasses the following elements:

Engagement - Education - Entertainment - Empowerment - Enforcement

One of the key parts emphasised in this model by the interviewee was that of engagement and the importance of ongoing visibility of PCSOs and other youth work practitioners in schools. This engagement is integral in building the relationship with both young people and their parents, subsequently making it easier to engage with them outside of school and within their local community.

Supplementary to this was the holding of a number of Community Engagement days across the borough, organised by the police and designed to involve a wide range of stakeholders (local authority, social landlords, residents groups etc) in finding solutions to local issues including ASB (perceived or otherwise).

Case Study: Mr J lived in Eton Park and was making numerous phone calls to the police during the summer months, regarding ASB that was happening near to where he lived. Mr J lived alone in his flat, had the windows open during the warm weather and was complaining of 'noisy kids playing in the nearby park and kicking their ball over the back of the flats'. He was also concerned that a number of non resident cars were being parked at night by young adults who were congregating and littering/urinating in the car park - a space that was allocated to resident car owners of the flats. Quite soon after the police held a Community Day in the area and invited the landlord and the council amongst others to identify residents' issues (Mr J's included). A number of factors immediately transpired:

- The perimeter fence to the nearby park was broken allowing balls to keep going over
- The park bench where kids were congregating was located right by the flats
- The access gate to the flats didn't lock properly enabling kids to go in/out
- There was no signage on the car park highlighting 'Residents parking only'

In response, the landlord agreed to fix the access gate and erect signage to deter non resident cars parking. The council fixed the park fence and moved the bench further away from the flats. Even though the kids weren't doing anything wrong and this was a case of perceived ASB, these simple and practical interventions identified via good community engagement helped solved the problem for Mr J and reduced further unnecessary calls to the police.

This example is suggestive of the need for ongoing education with residents on what does and doesn't constitute ASB. Moreover, this can be reinforced by promoting the positive contributions young people make in their communities and help in counteracting often misguided perceptions.

8. Findings & Recommendations

8.1 Findings Summary

8.1.1 Causes of ASB

The following causes of ASB were cited by interview participants. The first two can be applied to both adults and young people. The remaining three were articulated with specific reference to young people.

- ◆ Factors in the home and family environment
- ◆ Drugs
- ◆ Lack of regular activities or limited opportunities for young people
- ◆ Boredom or No interests
- ◆ School Exclusion

8.1.2 How are young people drawn in to ASB?

Interview participants felt the following factors should be considered when trying to pinpoint why young people get drawn into ASB. The final factor has specific relevance to culturally diverse communities.

- ◆ Negative peer influence and association
- ◆ Status elevation & Social media
- ◆ Rejection and attachment Issues
- ◆ Vulnerability relating to cultural identity

8.1.3 Is it just young people?

- ◆ Data pertaining to 2019 provided by Staffordshire Police reveals that youth ASB is only a small proportion (17%) of the overall ASB picture for both the borough and County as a whole (16%).
- ◆ ASB perpetrated by Adults equates to a significant majority of the incidents occurring across all but one ASB type, with the largest proportion of incidents recorded against 'Rowdy and Inconsiderate behaviour' and 'Neighbour Disputes.'

8.1.4 Principles / Examples of good practice to address ASB

Some principles and examples to consider when looking to address ASB are as follows:

◆ **Building relationships is key**

Relationships with young people are more likely to be improved where engagement is undertaken by individuals who are not linked to statutory organisations. The engaging individual can create that safe space to talk to young people and establish a level of trust with someone they can relate to. They can also facilitate other positive relationships to be formed by getting young people to engage with local police and businesses for example, particularly in town centres where ASB is more common. This doesn't mean a young person can't be positively influenced by a teacher or youth offending practitioner for example, however, a conversation within a less formalised framework can be beneficial.

◆ **Nurture progression, confidence and raise aspiration**

Give young people the opportunity to own and have responsibility for something they care about. For example, empower them to challenge their peers if they are not looking after the youth club equipment "don't break the table tennis net as we won't have anything to play on", thereby reinforcing and highlighting the impact of their actions.

Explore incorporating progression pathways into relevant provision or projects. For example, the Premier League Kicks programme enables young people to find routes into education, training and employment, building on volunteering as a key component of the programme. Nationally, 20% of the Kicks workforce is made up of coaching staff who were former participants, often hailing from the same town or city they are now working in.

◆ **Consider restorative justice approaches**

Whilst Police activity and enforcement interventions can push ASB statistics down, it isn't necessarily a long term solution that addresses the root causes of ASB or embraces a 'Do With' attitude. A restorative justice approach can foster greater tolerance and respect between generations or with those in authoritative roles within communities, such as the police. This type of practice also gives accountability for repairing the harm caused by ASB, restoring positive relationships and ultimately preventing further ASB taking place.

- ◆ **Co-produce and design activities with young people so they are more willing to participate.**

This also highlights the importance of youth voice in both VCSE and statutory arenas so young people are empowered to share their opinions and co-produce solutions to issues that affect them e.g. via youth council's, parish council meetings, town centre partnerships etc.

8.2 Recommendations

Based on the results from this research the following recommendations are made:

- ◆ **Tackle the root cause issues presenting within family environments.**

Ensure family support services are equipped to identify parental stress and that they can facilitate open communication between parents and children in vulnerable households. This could help in preventing and mitigating against neglect including rejection and attachment issues being experienced by children and young people.

- ◆ **Invest in relational youth work support and longer term outcomes for young people.**

This could be done by incorporating a relational youth work element to existing programmes operating in the borough or by developing a new pilot based on the interconnected elements of the Connect Stafford Youth project and trialling this in another area e.g. Uttoxeter.

- ◆ **Commit to the ongoing promotion and support of the Youth Seen campaign.**

Developed by SCVYS, the aim of the [Youth Seen](#) campaign is to value, recognise and celebrate the positive contribution young people make in general and to the communities of Staffordshire more specifically. Whether it is volunteering as a young leader in a local community organisation or caring for a relative whilst juggling their own school work. A secondary aim is to challenge any negative perceptions of young people which have been held and perpetuated by some adults for generations. This perception also came through via some of the interviews, whereas the ASB statistics clearly showed the opposite was true - that ASB isn't just a youth issue. It is hoped that through this campaign it can enhance community togetherness, help everyone feel safer and more valued, and encourage everyone to play their part in making a positive difference to their own place or community.



◆ **Work with East Staffordshire communities to explore vulnerabilities linked to a community's cultural identity**

Take a more positive and proactive approach working with cultural leaders in communities to celebrate and share what their cultural identity means to them. For example, a local mosque recently opened its doors to all facets of the community including residents, school teachers, police, churches etc. Young people were acting as stewards for the event and took pride in showing others "this is where I belong to and I want you to see it." This type of community development could be explored and mobilised with other diverse communities across the borough.

◆ **Research the type of support and provision local young people might want for the future.** As youth services are being seen as increasingly necessary, it would be timely to undertake some further research on what provision young people might want moving forwards. Five years on from the closure of the local authority youth service, a generation of young people have grown up without a local youth club, and whilst some have gravitated to other forms of positive developmental activity, some others are using parks, fast food venues, etc. as their preferred meeting place, which can perpetuate perceptions of young people and ASB. Understanding why, what they would want, and therefore what the youth spaces of the future might look like could be innovative and pre-emptive. SCVYS have already drafted a research proposal for this piece of work and would welcome a discussion with commissioners in the near future to explore its mobilisation, utilising resource from the already allocated 2020/21 budget.

◆ **Research the effects and impact social media engagement has on young people.**

Linked to the findings, a future piece of research on young people's engagement with social media platforms could prove insightful in identifying the positive/negative impacts and any associated behaviours that present as a result.

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