

REMEDIES FOR THE ERADICATION OF ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND KNIFE CRIME

Introduction:

England and Wales suffers acutely from Anti Social Behaviour and Knife crime, most of which is localised; some areas have huge problems other areas have no problems at all. ASB and knife crime is committed, I believe, by people mostly between the ages of 12 and 24 but there are people either side of those ages guilty of such behaviour. So far as I can ascertain nothing very much is being done to find the base reason why such behaviour exists. There are agencies or groups of people involved in trying to find the answers but they are not being very successful, mainly I would suggest because they are not getting down to the fundamentals and are not producing the radical remedies required.

England and Wales is a large area but it can be broken down into more manageable areas probably based upon the 43 Police force areas. If that were to happen the existing problems could be identified and focused upon without too much difficulty. Each area of England and Wales could be researched. All that is required is the will of relevant and able people in each area to bring this about.

I with other like minded people with the necessary experience and ability would like to organise and complete research to find the base reason why ASB and knife crime exists as it is a fairly recent problem, no more than ten years old. We would of course need the help of the various agencies, including the Police, Crown Prosecution Service, Schools, Courts and social and probation services.

Intelligence:

So that the research and eventual Report is credible we will need to enthuse all relevant Agencies to work with complete openness and for this we will need Government assistance to provide the authority to arrange this. We will also have to engage members of the Public who are affected by ASB and knife crime to provide the evidence to us for the Report.

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Current View:

Prior to the research, my current uneducated view is that ASB and knife crime occurs for a whole host of reasons, some of which are as follows:-

- a. Offenders feel outcasts within Society; not included as part of the Community. Not even included as part of a family. Many have no live in Fathers or parents who care about them
- b. Offenders have no understanding or respect for others or their property
- c. Offenders have no self discipline and a poor education, some have no education because they do not attend school
- d. Offenders have no understanding that their lives are going to last probably another 60-70 years and how they need to live those lives.
- e. Offenders are lacking proper Education from parents and schools. Do schools actually teach good behaviour and life issues? What sanctions are there when their behaviour is unacceptable?
- f. Offenders do not value anything in life except their own desires.
- g. The justice system is sadly lacking! There is far too much time lapse between the commission of the Offence and the Offender going to Court and being sentenced
- h. The operation of the Crown Prosecution Service. How efficient is it? Do they have enough resources to follow through every arrest? Are they governed by numbers i.e. can they only bring so many cases because of so called Budget restraints?
- i. Are the Police in sufficient numbers on the Streets at times when crime is committed? The answer I and many other people know is NO. What intelligence do they use to combat crime? Do they take sufficient interest always in combating crime? Do they issue too many cautions or are they bound by Government diktat?
- j. Do the Courts take ASB and knife crime seriously enough? Do they provide the correct sentencing? Are they bound by Government diktat as to the numbers who should go to Prison?
- k. When Community Service Orders are made are they sufficiently 'policed' to make sure that they are carried out correctly? What happens if they are not? Are there sufficient Community Service orders because there is a huge amount that could be done to help the community, litter picking, graffiti removal, decorating etc.

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- l. Social services: how are they involved in dealing with the individuals and families of ASB and knife crime offenders? Do they pursue cases with sufficient diligence to find answers? What do they do to get involved with the whole problem of ABS and knife crime?
- m. Overall are there sufficient overarching services that are looking at the causes of ASB and knife crime and what to do about it to eradicate the problem?

Action:

1. To start the research we will need to obtain the official figures of all ASB and knife crime in England and Wales. We would then evaluate the types of ASB and knife crime, where and when it is committed and by whom, what age, what gender, what social strata, whether from cohesive or non-cohesive families. Interview Police officers both senior and beat officers to receive their views on why it is happening, what it is and why is it happening. What in their view needs to be done to eradicate the problem?
2. Talk to parent and teacher groups to get their views on what Education is being dispensed and where the failings are. Where the Education system has in general failed.
3. Visit the Courts to see what is actually happening in the Courts. See whether the Offenders are taking advantage of the system by not turning up for their Hearing, behaving in a disrespectful way and generally not seeing the Court as something they need be afraid of. Understanding whether the Courts are not taking the problem seriously enough by giving inappropriate sentences. Generally, to see if the Courts as part of the equation are not performing properly.
4. Visiting the various Crown Prosecution Service offices to understand their procedures to ascertain that all persons that should be charged are dealt with in the appropriate way. Their cases are thoroughly investigated to make absolutely sure that no case is dismissed before coming to Court for expedient purposes. Making sure that all prosecutors are up to the job and that there are no weaknesses in the prosecution.
5. Visiting the Agency responsible for monitoring Community Service Orders to ascertain that that punishment is not what a lot of people consider is a 'soft touch'. To check the procedures of that Agency are fit for purpose. Likewise with the Probation Service visit them to ascertain that their systems are also working as the Public expect.

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6. Visiting Social Services to ascertain their position in regard to ASB and knife crime. What part they play and what improvements they believe can be made to improve the service both to clients and the Public.
7. Finally the most important part of the Project to meet and talk to the people who are committing ASB and knife crime to find out their reasons for doing what they do. Understanding them as individuals and their life predicament and what they require to take them out of existing behaviour, which in the future will not produce any meaningful life for them.

Skills Academies

In August 2006 Jack McConnell MSP, the then Scottish First Minister, came up with the idea of Skills Academies. I wrote to him agreeing that it was a good idea but the Academies should be linked to the eradication of ASB and now knife crime. He is no longer the First Minister so will not be taking the matter forward. I would however like to do so.

I have no idea how many ASB and knife crime offenders there are in England and Wales but I have read that there are 1.2 Million NEETS. People who are wasting their young lives, with no focus and a waste to Society and themselves.

My remedy to eradicate ASB and knife crime, apart from the ideas and actions above, is radical and far-reaching and probably very expensive in the short to medium term. I believe however that Skills Academies are the way forward to improve behaviour education opportunity and the reduction of crime. They will start at the age of 10, where appropriate, to take children away from broken families, poor areas and put them into something which will give them a future and will improve the life experience of all residents around their area, by eradicating the ASB and knife crime which is blighting so many communities.

Academies would be set up firstly in the areas most blighted i.e. Manchester, Liverpool, Nottingham, London etc., and would be open to all children from the age of 10 upwards. They would certainly in those areas need to be secure residential Academies with walls and fences where the children would be unable to leave unless they showed they were capable of leaving and returning and not committing crime on the outside. In other areas where children could demonstrate they could behave normally and not commit crime on the outside they could be allowed to come and go on a scheduled basis. The Academies would be staffed by teachers and surrogate Mothers and Fathers who would provide something like home care for them as if they were at home in a loving cohesive family.

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Children would qualify for attendance at these Academies on the following basis:-

1. failure to attend regular school
2. after the commission of two minor crimes or one major crime, i.e. robbery, assault, serious criminal damage etc.
3. attending normal school until school leaving age but showing no interest in getting a job or going to university

Attendance would finish at the age of 17/18 if the person had demonstrated they could leave and go straight into a job, including the armed forces or to University. By that age hopefully enough education and skill tuition had been absorbed they could then leave to go out into the real World.

The Academies would teach the following subjects:-

- 1 reading writing and arithmetic
- 2 life skills, how to be a useful person
- 3 respect
- 4 proper behaviour
- 5 after the age of 15, job skills

Summary:

I do hope that this Paper provides you with sufficient ideas to take forward so that we can make a start and then eradicate ASB and knife crime over a period of five to ten years.

David Cooper

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