RSA

21st century enlightenment

The Woolwich model

*Can citizens tackle
anti-social behaviour?*

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The RSA is an enlightenment
organisation devoted to finding
innovative practical solutions to
today's pressing social problems.

The RSA

The RSA has a new strapline: 21st century enlightenment. This pays tribute to the eighteenth century founders of the Society and to the pioneering spirit which inspired them. It makes a statement about the role the RSA can play today, as an organisation established over 250 years ago but which believes its best days may yet be to come.

At the heart of the RSA's contemporary mission and public debates about the future prospects for the human race is the question 'can we go on like this?' Will the ideas and values which transformed our world in the last two centuries be sufficient to find solutions to the challenges we now face or do we need new ways of thinking?

The RSA's focus on twenty-first century enlightenment invites us to return to core principles of autonomy, universalism and humanism, restoring dimensions which have been lost and seeing new ways to fulfil these ideals. The Society is committed to stimulating new thinking, social innovation and – among its 27,500 Fellows – a powerful ethos of collaboration. Its strapline underlines not only the RSA's interest in ideas and experiment but in becoming the kind of organisation the twenty-first century needs. The RSA is publishing a series of essays all of which, in their different ways, will contribute to this thinking.

Acknowledgements

Biography

Ben Rogers is an associate fellow of the Institute for Public Policy Research (ippr) and Demos. He has been a team leader in both the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit and Department for Communities and Local Government. He was head of Policy at Haringey Council in 2007–8 and before that Associate Director at ippr. His books include *A J Ayer, A Life* and *Beef and Liberty; Roast Beef, John Bull and the English Nation*.

The Woolwich model

We live in a society that is straining for control. Driven by fears about the risks of being a victim of crime, that intermingle with a more diffuse and inchoate sense of insecurity, we clamour for new measures to try to regulate the people, places and behaviours that we believe threaten our sense of security. . . . [But] at the same time as our society is straining for control, it is also straining for freedom.[1]

At the heart of the RSA's thinking around the need for twenty-first century enlightenment is a concern about the gap between people's aspiration for their communities and society at large, and the way in which we act. As Matthew Taylor argued in the first of this series of pamphlets, closing this gap is going to require citizens to be more engaged; to do more in delivering services and tackling some of our most pressing problems.[2] The huge pressures on public spending – pressures which, as the 2020 Public Services Trust hosted by the RSA has highlighted, are going to last for many years – only makes the need to forge more productive relations between citizens and services all the more urgent.[3]

It is in this context that some of the RSA's recent work, including its new Citizen Power project in Peterborough, has been developed. Aiming to generate a practical understanding of sustainable citizenship, the RSA is working with the local authority and others in piloting new approaches to service delivery – in schools, drugs services and the arts – based on activity involving local people.

1. M Martin. *Understanding Social Control: deviance, crime and social order.* OUP 2003.
2. M Taylor. *Twenty-first century enlightenment.* RSA 2010.
3. The Commission for 2020 Public Services. *Beyond Beveridge.* 2020 Public Services Trust 2010.

This essay speaks to just one particular challenge: that of anti-social behaviour. It argues that while public concern for low-level disorder remains high, citizens have, for a number of reasons, withdrawn from day-to-day intervention. At the same time, policy has tended to focus on top-down, professionally-centred approaches to tackling the problem.

Here I argue there could be great gains in taking a different approach – modelled on first aid – where people, including those with direct responsibility for managing the local public realm, are trained in basic community safety skills. Giving people the capacity to respond to anti-social behaviour and defuse conflict could, if pursued alongside continuing support for other forms of community policing, help reduce the problem and people's concerns, while bringing wider benefits.

The RSA's emphasis on twenty-first century enlightenment suggests the need to think differently and a greater role for public deliberation. But it also requires us to search for new practical approaches to persistent and new challenges.

What I call here 'the Woolwich model' could provide just one example where the real potential of co-production – where citizens are actively engaged in service delivery and design – could be met. This is consistent with the RSA's work on user-centred drugs services and its arguments for wider and deeper engagement of offenders and the public in the criminal justice system, including prisons.[4]

The good shepherd

In January 1878 a small group of local people gathered in a 'penny a week' school hall in Woolwich, South East London, for the first in a series of classes on how to provide emergency care to people 'injured or suddenly taken sick'. Woolwich, with its munitions factories, training grounds and barracks, was an

4. See www.thersa.org/projects/user-centred-drug-services and R O'Brien. *The Learning Prison*. RSA 2010.

important military centre, and the class – the first 'first aid' lesson taught – was conducted by a young army doctor, Surgeon-Major Peter Shepherd.

Shepherd was not working alone. His classes found their context in a broad, religiously inspired movement aimed at helping sick and injured soldiers. Florence Nightingale had become a national heroine for her work with ill and wounded soldiers in the Crimean War in the 1850s; the horrors of the battle of Solferino had led to the setting up of the Red Cross in the 1860s, and members of its British arm – the National Aid Society – had helped care for soldiers and civilians in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870. Some of these volunteers then worked with Colonel Francis Duncan, a colleague of Shepherd's at Woolwich, to establish the St John's Ambulance Association. This was established in 1877, with the mission to create a body of trained volunteers ready to supply humanitarian aid on the battlefield. Shepherd was a prominent member.[5]

In drawing up the syllabus for his classes, Shepherd was able to make use of a fast developing body of expertise in how to treat sick and injured soldiers. Shepherd himself, who coined the term 'first aid', had played a leading role in developing new stretcher techniques and training officers in them. Nevertheless, Shepherd's classes marked something new. They were intended explicitly to give volunteers skills for use in military *and* civilian emergencies. While drawing heavily on military medicine, they included, for instance, instruction on how to deal with such non-military problems as 'hysterical fits', epilepsy and snake bites.

Shepherd and his associates had clearly hit on something. First aid spread like contagion, first across Britain and then around the world. Within weeks of the first Woolwich classes, courses were being taught in Chelsea Barracks and Sevenoaks. Within three years over 15,000 adults had received training.[6]

5. H Blogg. *The Life of Francis Duncan*. Kegan Paul 1892 and J Pearn. "The Earliest Days of First Aid," in *British Medical Journal* Vol 309, 1994.

6. E D Renwick. *A Short History of the Order of St. John*. Order of the Hospital of St John 1962.

Within a decade there were 300 centres teaching first aid in Britain, India and the Colonies; in this time it is estimated that around 500,000 people had attended classes, 150,000 gaining certificates.[7] During the early 1900s the first aid movement spread across America and by 1962 the St John's Ambulance had issued more than nine and a half million first aid certificates worldwide.[8]

The model developed during first aid's early years remains largely unchanged to this day. From the beginning, classes were taught for both women and men (though the two were taught separately), and those attending were expected to take a test certifying their expertise. As today, first aiders were encouraged to return for further training throughout their lives. By the turn of the century first aid courses were being taught not just through voluntary organisations like St John's Ambulance, but in schools and in the workplace.

Shepherd's name went on the first manual of first aid, published at the end of 1878.[9] Sadly, he never lived to see the movement take off. Shortly after teaching the world's first class he was sent to the Zulu War, and was one of almost 2,000 killed in the massacre at Isandhlwana. Despite his influence, he is now almost completely forgotten. There is no entry for him in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, or any encyclopaedia I can find.

A skills-based approach to co-production

Today first aid is so well established that we take it for granted. Yet it represents perhaps the best example of a form of public participation or 'co-production' in public services that I want to argue has continuing unfulfilled potential.

7. Blogg. *Op cit.*
8. Renwick. *Op cit.*
9. P Shepherd. *First Aid for the Injured*. St John's Ambulance 1878.

A great deal has been written about the importance of co-production to public services.[10] It is not hard to see why; co-production gives expression to venerable democratic republican values of self-rule and civic participation.[11] It is particularly timely today. Meeting the challenges we face – whether climate change, worklessness, or chronic ill health – increasingly depends on the active engagement of citizens and service users. With public services facing dramatic cuts, this is even truer today than it was only two or three years ago.

The hallmarks of what could be called 'the Woolwich approach' to co-production are simple. First, it is skills-based, with the curriculum designed by professional experts and regularly revised in light of developments in expert knowledge. Second, the curriculum is simple, so that almost anyone can master it. Third, despite its simplicity, it is aimed primarily not at children but at adults. In this, it goes against the grain of our tendency to expect schools to do ever more by way of shaping and equipping future citizens. Fourth, it appeals to civic or humanitarian motives *and* to less selfless ones: first aid skills can save strangers' lives but they can also be used to help a family member or a friend, or even oneself. A first aid certificate can enhance a CV and provide people who are relatively unqualified or not employed with public recognition.

This chimes well with the simple idea that lay behind the creation of the RSA Fellowship over 250 years ago and which still drives the organisations' 27,500 members today: people can be encouraged through access to networks or a chance to develop their own skills, to work for the common good.

First aid is, not surprisingly, by far the best example of the Woolwich model. But looking around, it has cousins all over

10. See H Cottam and C Leadbeater. "The user-generated state: public services 2.0," in P Diamond (ed.) *Public Matters: The renewal of the Public Realm*. Politicos 2007; M Horne and T Shirley. *Co-production in public services: a new partnership with citizens*. Cabinet Office 2009; D Boyle and M Harris. *The Challenge of Co-Production*, Nesta Discussion Paper, Nesta 2009.

11. P Petit. *Republicanism*. Oxford University Press 2007.

the place. Adult courses have been developed and more or less widely taken up in a range of life, social and civic skills. This includes 'community empowerment' and the starting up and running of small charities, like those taught by the National Communities Resource Centre. There is an array of training programmes for job-hunters, including classes in how to hunt for jobs, prepare a CV and undertake interviews. Foreign nationals are expected to study citizenship, often in classes, and to take a test, before being granted British citizenship. The National Childbirth Trust, founded in 1956, prepares around 65,000 mothers and partners for childbirth every year. In 2009 around 4,000 parents attended its post-natal classes. In response to environmental concerns, local authorities and voluntary groups have begun offering 'grow your own' gardening courses, composting classes and similar. In the last decade, there has been an explosion in classes and programmes directed at improving parenting skills.

Anti-social behaviour

There is one area, where the model has not been fully applied, but, where I want to argue, it has the greatest potential. This is in addressing anti-social behaviour and low-level public disorder.

   While we might disagree about the causes and why it matters, it is hard to deny that we have a problem with public order. The British Crime Survey shows that overall crime has fallen quite dramatically over the last decade and a half, and with it concern about being a victim of crime.[12] But it shows only small reductions in the levels of concern about anti-social behaviour.[13] The proportion of people perceiving anti-social behaviour as a problem did fall between 2002/03 and 2003/04: from 21 per cent

12. Home Office. *Crime in England and Wales: quarterly update December 2009*, Statistical Bulletin, 07/10. Home Office 2010.

13. D Moon and A Walker. *Perceptions of Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour: findings from the 2008/09 British Crime Survey*, Statistical Bulletin 17/09. Home Office 2009.

to 16 per cent.[14] The latest survey available does show another small but statistically significant improvement from 17 per cent reporting it as a problem in 2008 to 15 per cent in 2009. However, it did not fall between 2004 and 2008.[15]

This problem is concentrated among poorer neighbourhoods Nearly a third of people living in the most deprived areas report high levels of anti-social behaviour compared with only 7 per cent in the least deprived areas.[16] If anything, this data understates the scale of the problem in the worst areas. A study of a Sheffield estate found that 72 per cent of residents identified cars being revved or driven at high speeds as 'very big' or 'quite big' problems. Half identified littering and dumping and/or drug dealing as significant concerns. Over half reported three or more types of anti-social behaviour as being a problem and only 14 per cent said it was not a problem at all.[17]

A public priority

Surveys have shown that people identify the levels of crime and anti-social behaviour in the areas where they live as major determinants of the quality of their lives. They have also shown that people identify crime and anti-social behaviour as one of the things that they think most need tackling in their area. A 2007 study found that people identified friendship and family ties and living in a safe area as the factors most important to quality of life. Whilst most people were fairly happy with their relationships, they were dissatisfied with levels of crime and incivility where they lived.[18]

14. Home Office 2010. *Op cit.*

15. *Ibid*.

16. J Flatley, S Moley and J Hoare. *Perceptions of anti-social behaviour: findings from the 2007/08 British Crime Survey*, Statistical Bulletin 15/08, Home Office 2008.

17. A Bottoms. "Incivilities, Offence and Social Order in Residential Communities," A Von Hirsh et al, *Incivilities: Regulating Offensive Behaviour*. Hart 2006.

18. ENCAMS. *Measuring Quality of Life, Does Environmental Quality Matter?* ENCAMS 2007.

Analysis by Ipsos MORI indicates a very strong correlation between whether residents perceive high levels of anti-social behaviour where they live and whether they are satisfied with their local area; indeed, perceived anti-social behaviour is a better predicator of dissatisfaction than even poverty (see Figure 1).

So, what in particular are people worried about? The British Crime Survey measures seven different types of anti-social behaviour:

- teenagers hanging around on the streets;
- rubbish or litter lying around;
- people using or dealing drugs;
- vandalism, graffiti or other deliberate damage to property;
- people being drunk or rowdy in public places;
- noisy neighbours or parties; and
- abandoned or burnt-out cars.

Figure 1: Anti-social behaviour and satisfaction with local area
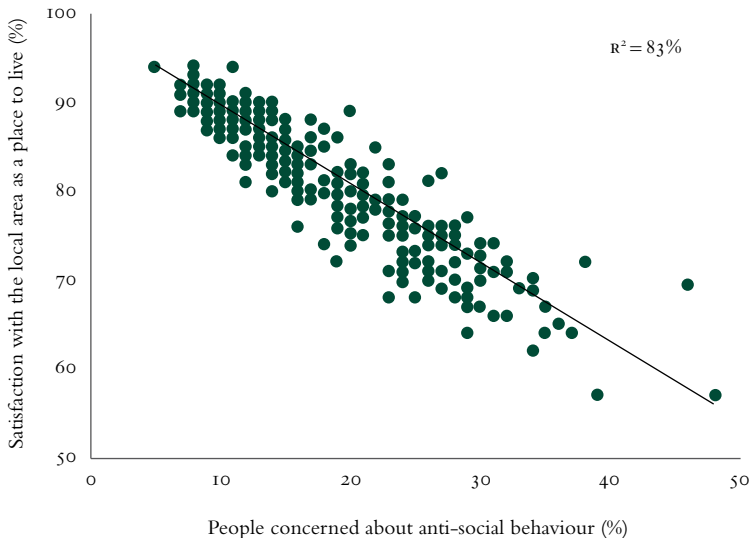
Source: Ipsos MORI. *Local*. 2009.

Looking back over the last few years, trends in relation to most of these types of behaviour have remained more or less flat. There are two exceptions. There has been a dramatic fall in the number of people reporting abandoned and burnt-out cars as a problem, from one in four to one in twenty. (This may be because this is the one sort of behaviour in the survey that can be tackled fairly easily by local services. Councils are now much faster than they were to remove abandoned cars.) There has also been a significant increase in the number of people reporting drunk and rowdy behaviour as a problem: from 19 per cent in 2003/04 to 26 per cent in 2008/09. Today, the first five types of anti-social behaviour cited earlier form a definite group, with between 25 per cent and 30 per cent of people describing each of these as a problem where they live. People are much less concerned about the last two.

Young people

The problems that concern people tend to vary significantly from locality to locality and even street to street. Drunkenness can be a big problem in one town centre – especially late at night – while another might have to wrestle with large gangs of teenagers gathering earlier in an evening. Joy-riding might be a problem in one part of an estate, drug-taking on another.

Digging down a bit, however, it is clear that people who report anti-social behaviour as a problem in their area largely associate it with young people. Nearly a third of the public say that teenagers hanging around is a problem in their local area. Recent work by the British Crime Survey confirms that most of those concerned about this say that the problem is not so much young people just hanging around but hanging around *and* behaving badly: swearing, littering, drinking, fighting and taking drugs.[19]

19. M Wood. *Perceptions and experiences of antisocial behaviour*. Home Office Findings 252. Home Office 2004.

Indeed, the public appear to associate most of the other strands of anti-social behaviour with young people and the British Crime Survey probably underplays the extent to which anti-social behaviour is largely viewed as something caused by teenagers. This is borne out by more granular studies of individual areas. Research for the National Reassurance Policing Programme in sixteen sites through England found that 'public concerns about local problems consistently tended to gravitate around issues connected with the perceived anti-social activities of groups of young people'.[20] Analysis of local government surveys show that as the ratio of younger people to older people in an area goes up, so does the proportion of people reporting anti-social behaviour as a problem.[21]

It is worth noting that young people themselves are as concerned as any other age group about anti-social behaviour and that its association with youth cannot just be dismissed as a manifestation of older people's tendency to worry about the young. In fact young people are the age group *most* likely to report high levels of anti-social behaviour in their area, and most likely to associate it with (other) young people. Where 22 per cent of people aged 65 to 74 said that 'young people hanging around' was a problem in their local area in 2003/4, a third of people aged 16 to 24 said this.[22] This should not surprise us. Young people tend to spend more time outdoors and make more use of public space than older people.

Britain and Europe

A recent survey of anti-social behaviour across six Western European countries corroborated the picture offered by the

20. M Innes and C Roberts. "Reassurance Policing, Community Intelligence and the Co-Production of Neighbourhood Order," in Tom Williamson (ed), *The Handbook of Knowledge-Based Policing*. Wiley and Sons 2008.

21. Ipsos MORI. *Local*. 2009.

22. *British Crime Survey* cited in Bottoms. *Op cit*.

British Crime Survey and other work cited in this paper. It found that across the countries as a whole, the UK was seen to have the most serious problem with anti-social behaviour (though this may be attributable to media representations of the problem in Britain rather than direct experience). The survey found that the British were more inclined than any other people apart from the French to say that they had the biggest problem with anti-social behaviour. Finally, it found that the British were most likely of all the countries surveyed to associate anti-social behaviour with young people. While 68 per cent of people in Europe as a whole said that anti-social behaviour was most associated with people aged 14 to 25, this rose to 76 per cent in Britain.[23] Other evidence suggests that young people in Britain have high rates of drunkenness relative to other European nations and fight more often (see figure 2).[24]

Figure 2: Percentage of young people involved in physical fighting in previous 12 months, aged 11, 13, and 15 in 2001
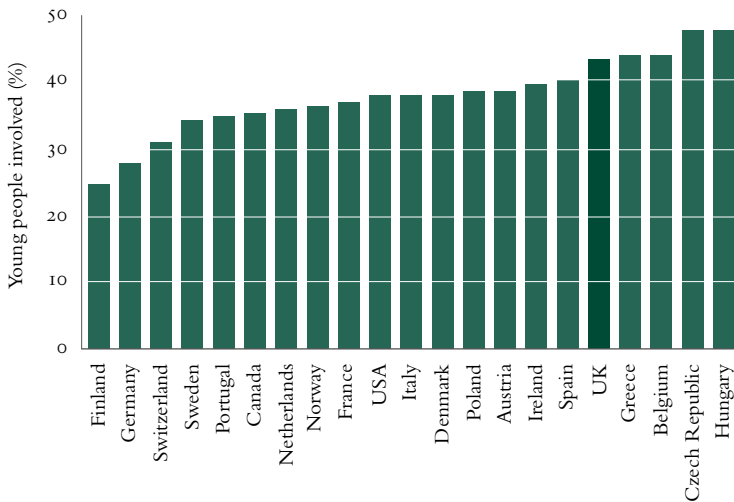
Source: Ipsos MORI presentation. "Is Britain Broken?" 2008.

23. ADT. *Anti-Social Behaviour Across Europe*. ADT 2006.
24. Unicef. *Child Poverty in Perspective: an overview of child well-being in rich countries*. Unicef 2007.

The policy challenge

So anti-social behaviour has not fallen in line with crime. Does this matter? The infringements involved, after all, appear relatively minor, at least when set against the damage done by 'serious crime'. And the young people who, as we have seen, cause most of the trouble, grow up and stop behaving so inconsiderately.

This line of argument has been very influential in shaping public policy, especially policing policy, for many years.[25] As crime rose during the 1970s through to the early 1990s, the authorities increasingly concentrated on tackling 'serious' crime, like violent crime, theft and burglary and, to some degree, domestic violence and abuse. Much less attention was paid to low-level local disorder. As we shall see, this changed significantly under New Labour.

Yet there is good reason to think that anti-social behaviour does matter and to want to tackle it. Its consequences can be devastating. Taken in isolation name-calling, dumping waste or vandalism can seem petty, but cumulatively anti-social behaviour can destroy lives. This is especially the case when offending behaviour is directed at individuals or families. The story of the Pilkington family illustrates the point. In 2009, the Leicester mother killed both her disabled daughter and herself after suffering years of abuse in her neighbourhood. Early this year, David Askew, a 64-year-old man with learning difficulties, collapsed in his garden, after local young people, who had long tormented him, broke into his garden and messed around with his bins. These two cases had particularly unhappy endings, but in some ways are not unusual; one in five victims of repeated anti-social behaviour describe themselves as disabled.[26]

25. See M Innes. "Signal Crimes and Signal Disorders: Notes on Deviance as Communicative Action," in the *British Journal of Sociology* 55, 2004 and Bottoms. *Op cit*.

26. HMIC Remarks on anti-social behaviour (ASB) from a speech by Denis O'Connor, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary, at the launch of My Police, Wednesday 10 March 2010.

But even where individuals are not targeted, anti-social behaviour can have very harmful consequences. Some commentators have suggested that people in this country are too willing to see dangers where none exist, and that we should, in particular, learn to be more tolerant of young people hanging around and having a good time.

There is something in this and there probably has been a hardening of public wariness of young people. According to Ipsos MORI, in 1997 over three quarters of the public agreed that 'young people have too much freedom and not enough discipline'. This had increased to 84 per cent in 2008. At the same time, much of the behaviour that people complain about, including the behaviour of young people hanging around, can *quite reasonably* be seen as menacing. There is nothing too fastidious in objecting, say, to having to face, on the way to the shops, a gang of six or more people 'hanging-around', especially if they are drinking or blocking the pavement. A 2003/4 study found that in nearly 70 per cent of incidents described as problematic, six or more young people were said to be involved; in nearly a third of cases they were drinking and in a third of cases they were blocking the pavement.[27]

There is also good evidence to show that even relatively harmless acts of incivility – dropping litter, dog-fouling, public urination and petty vandalism – can weaken local civic life and further hurt already disadvantaged areas. These acts tend to function as 'signal crimes'.[28] People read them as indicators of social breakdown more generally. Indeed, research into public attitudes to crime shows that many people admit to finding local 'signal' disorders as *more* threatening than more serious crimes like burglary.

27. M Wood. *Perceptions and Experience of Antisocial Behaviour*. Home Office Research Findings 252. Home Office 2004.

28. M Innes. "Reinventing Tradition?: Reassurance, Neighbourhood Security and Policing," in *Criminal Justice* 4; 151 http://crj.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/4/2/151. 2004.

One local person quoted in Surrey University research on signal crimes said:

Yes, it is daft, it is almost daft, but graffiti is the thing that sort of bothers me more, because it is in my face every day. I mean, obviously rape and murder are more horrendous crimes, but it is graffiti that I see.[29]

You don't, in short, have to subscribe to the 'broken windows' theory of crime – the theory that low-level disorder directly and strongly causes crime – to recognise that anti-social behaviour undermines people's sense of security and weakens community confidence and capacity, and in these ways contributes to crime. People respond to anti-social behaviour as they do to more visible crimes, by moving out of the area, or withdrawing inwards and pulling up their draw-bridges.

Tackling anti-social behaviour

So much for the importance of anti-social behaviour, but what drives it and what can be done to tackle it? Clearly there are a range of 'background' factors that contribute to Britain's stubbornly high levels of anti-social behaviour and continuing public and political disquiet about it. Poverty and unemployment take a heavy toll on parents, children and communities. As many studies have shown, poverty is associated with poor parenting, low school achievement and youth unemployment, all of which are in turn associated with anti-social behaviour.

At another level, poor 'quality of place', in the form of badly designed and managed buildings and public places, and poor, inaccessible services and amenities, can weaken local social and civic life, and the capacity of local communities to socialise

29. Quoted in Bottoms. *Op cit.*

young people.[30] There is growing and well-grounded public concern about the effect that the easy availability of drink, drugs and porn is having on young people, and about the way a consumerist culture of celebrity and wealth is lowering horizons, limiting choices and coarsening relationships.[31] There has certainly been a rise in 'binge drinking': evidenced by a significant increase in the number of people reporting drunken behaviour as a problem as well as British young people reporting getting drunk more often than their continental counterparts.[32] British people are more likely than other European nations to blame anti-social behaviour on alcohol and drugs.[33]

High residential churn and the arrival of new migrant groups can undermine community cohesion and capacity. Though there is nothing inevitable about this, and some of the areas with the greatest problems are in fact relatively 'stable', ethnically homogenous and insular. In addition, local and national media focus on crime and anti-social behaviour can work to amplify public anxiety and insecurity.

Finally, the effect of all these forces is compounded by a long-standing failure to invest in out of school activities for young people. The public has been complaining for many years that there aren't enough things for young people to do in their local area and making a link between this and crime and anti-social behaviour. Yet local and central government and the voluntary sector have only begun to invest in out of school youth services relatively recently.

As important as it remains to address these drivers of anti-social behaviour, we also need to attend to the way behaviour is regulated and policed in public places. For one thing, tackling these causes can't be done in a day; improving the way incivility

30. Prime Minister's Strategy Unit. *Quality of place; improving the planning and design of the built environment*. Cabinet Office 2009.

31. See M Dixon and J Margo. *Freedom's Orphans*. ippr 2006; R Reeves. "A Question of Character," in *Prospect*, August 2008, Issue 149; N Walter. *Living Dolls*. Virago 2010.

32. Dixon and Margo. *Op cit*.

33. ADT. *Op cit*.

is managed is *relatively* easier. It is also important to recognise
that even in the longer term, anti-social behaviour is likely to
remain a fact of modern life. Even in the best ordered, and most
cohesive modern societies, young people offend at higher rates
than do older adults.

Policing anti-social behaviour, then, will always be important
in addressing wider public concerns about safety and order.
Indeed, there is good evidence, from recent 'reassurance policing'
pilots and elsewhere, that tackling anti-social behaviour in areas
where it is a problem can help boost public confidence in the
police and satisfaction with the area.[34] Just as even relatively
low-level but high-profile disorders can signal to local residents
of an area that it is out of control, so relatively light touch but
high-profile efforts to address disorder can make a real difference
to people's sense of security and to local community life.[35]

The retreat of the public

To be fair, the case for tackling incivility, and in particular
improving the policing of incivility, is now largely won. Indeed,
one of the hallmarks of New Labour's crime policy was the
almost obsessive preoccupation with anti-social behaviour,
evidenced in the heavy investment made in neighbourhood
policing and, most obviously, in the 2003 Anti-Social Behaviour
Act, which gave police, local authorities and social landlords
powers to tackle unruly behaviour, including the issuing of
Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs).

This approach to low-level crime and disorder, however,
is open to the charge of being fairly top down and 'statist'. Its
main focus has been on policing in the narrower 'professional'
rather than wider 'community' sense. The idea of co-production
has become an important motif of government thinking about
public service reform. This will if anything become even more

34. Innes. *Reinventing Tradition. Op cit.*
35. *Ibid.*

important with the advent of a new coalition government committed to rolling back the state and promoting civic and community initiative. However, to date this approach has not featured particularly strongly or imaginatively in policy in relation to policing of local crime and disorder.

This is evidently true with some of the tougher aspects of New Labour's approach to incivility, for example, the creation of ASBOs and the extension of summary police powers. But even the promotion of community or neighbourhood policing has centred on getting police back into the public realm, and funding a new army of 16,000 relatively unskilled but uniformed Police Community Support Officers. Neighbourhood police teams are, to be sure, encouraged or obliged to consult the public, and engage with them in other ways. But the public are expected to take a largely secondary, backseat role, attending meetings, directing police focus and providing 'intelligence'. Criminologists like Martin Innes and others who champion community or 'reassurance policing', acknowledge the importance of co-production in tacking anti-social behaviour and promoting community safety. However, their allusions to it tend to be vague and programmatic.[36] The assumption seems to be that if we get policing right, co-production of some form will follow.

I want to argue, by contrast, that government should be looking to the Woolwich model – to public service workers, volunteers and ordinary residents – to play a much more active role in local policing, and helping prepare them to play this role.

The arguments for this are fairly obvious. The physical presence of the police – even in forces fully bought-in to community policing – is always going to be limited. To take just one example, the Sheffield housing estate case study cited earlier noted that anti-social behaviour tended to occur late at night, when police, including community support officers were thin on the ground.[37] The point can be put more positively.

36. Innes and Roberts. *Op cit.*
37. Bottoms. *Op cit.*

The police are only ever going to be a tiny fraction of the over-all public workforce in an area, let alone an area's over-all population. If we can further boost, even by a small amount, the skills and confidence of some people to manage low-level disorder we could dramatically improve community safety.

Indeed, there is good reason to think that while the rise in anti-social behaviour as a policy and political issue might be traceable, in part, to those background drivers mentioned earlier and in part to the retreat from community focused policing – as the police focused on 'serious' crime – it is in part traceable to a retreat on the part of the public itself. Put simply, the existence of local people beyond the police, willing and able to manage low-level disorder – especially disorder caused by young people – has an important part to play in maintaining local order. Yet, as is widely lamented, people appear to be less willing to intervene in Britain than they once were or indeed, than the citizens of other countries. Back in 2008 the London Mayor, Boris Johnson commented that violent crime was so rife in London that he would tell his own children to 'look after themselves first' rather than help a victim in distress.[38] The media largely presented this as regrettable but understandable.

Once again, this appears a particularly British phenomenon: 62 per cent of Britons would not feel confident intervening to stop a group of 14-year-olds vandalising a bus stop compared to 48 per cent across Western Europe as a whole. Although 60 per cent of Germans say they would feel confident about intervening in this situation, only 30 per cent of Britons would feel confident.[39]

There does not seem to be much research on the factors that have driven this decline in the public's willingness to intervene. A number of possibilities suggest themselves. First, changes in the local public workforce resulting in a decline in the presence of local 'authority figures', like caretakers,

38. "After another stabbing, London Mayor Boris Johnson warns: don't get involved if you see trouble," *Daily Mail*, 3 July 2008.

39. ADT. *Op cit.*

park keepers, milkmen, postal workers, street sweepers and public transport workers. Second, changes in the role of this workforce resulting in its members being less able and willing to intervene, (for example, because of increased pressure to deliver to narrow performance targets).

Third, changes to the character of local resident populations; more women going out to work and greater diversity and churn may have resulted in a loosening of social ties and expectations. Fourth, the spread of liberal or permissive norms, making people unsure of the rules when it comes to engaging with or admonishing their neighbours or their neighbours' children. Fifth, a rise in the perception that the system is weighed against people who 'take a stand' and in favour of 'offenders', with the former too often subject to official criticism or prosecution.

However, probably the most important factor has been the rise in fear of crime and disorder itself. High-profile knife crimes, including the death of Damilola Taylor in 2000, are likely to have exacerbated this. We are, in short, more fearful than we were that any intervention could result in us, our families or communities being attacked or otherwise victimised.

Civilian skills

So how would the Woolwich model work in practice in relation to crime and disorder? This paper seeks to highlight the benefits of the model and to make some untested suggestions about how it could work. Any policy to promote a first aid approach to anti-social behaviour would have to rest on thorough testing.

At whom should training in community safety skills be aimed? As with first aid, we all have an interest in having as many people as possible trained in basic community safety skills. But clearly some people have a particularly important role to play in tackling anti-social behaviour and promoting local civility and there would be special benefit in improving their ability to play this role. Two groups in particular stand out.

The first is made up of the local public realm workforce and frontline public servants including: park keepers, public transport workers, street cleaners, parking enforcement officers, caretakers, teachers and other school staff, social workers, community and youth workers and neighbourhood managers. Some of these, of course, already get some training in community safety skills, though most do not. But they all make, or could make, a large contribution to maintaining local order.

A second category is made up of people who are not in public service but by virtue of their work are present and potentially influential within their communities. This category includes, for example, shopkeepers, publicans and postal workers. There are clearly some grey areas between these two groups, especially with the spread of contracted-out services and government policy could do worse than to start by encouraging training among this overlap. More broadly this group could include those playing a much less formal role within their local communities, for example, retired citizens participating in Neighbourhood Watch schemes or young people engaged in improving community safety.

What would motivate people to take a course in community safety? Just as there are a range of motives that can prompt people to enrol for first aid training, so there are a number of motives that might lead them to take a course in basic community safety skills. People might want to strengthen their CV, and improve their employability or promotion prospects. Local residents might be encouraged by the desire to make an area safer for their families, in particular their children, especially if they were reassured that other parents were taking the training as well. Schools and after-school voluntary groups could provide training for young people. Of course government and local services could actively encourage or oblige the key groups identified above to take training. It could make it a requirement of employment that local public servants take training, or financially incentivise them to take it. Likewise, shopkeepers and others could be encouraged or even rewarded. Once again

there are analogies with first aid; though first aid began as a
voluntary movement, many employees are now expected to
take first aid training.

What skills would training aim to teach? The first point
to make here is that any curriculum should incorporate
basic skills in self-protection and restraint. These skills are
well established, of course, and are taught not only to police
officers, but community support officers, and in some cases to
security guards, teachers and others. It is important to know
what physical steps to take to minimise the risk to oneself or
others when confronted with a violent or potentially violent
situation, including knowing how to position oneself to affect
an escape, and how to defend oneself or others if attacked. While
the proposal to teach these skills more generally might make
some liberals uneasy, they are important in giving people the
confidence to intervene. Indeed the prospect of learning these
skills might increase the attractiveness of the curriculum to some
young people, especially perhaps young men.

At the same time, these skills would only ever form one
component of a broader curriculum. Two additional skills should
be core. First, people would need to be taught how to 'read' a
situation, to appraise when it is appropriate to walk on by, when
it is safe and appropriate to intervene, or when the police are
called for. Again these are skills that can be and are taught to
the police, community support officers and others. Second, and
perhaps most importantly, any curriculum would include training
in conflict resolution: skills for mediation and restoration. People
who take a community safety course should leave knowing
how to defuse an argument, forge an agreement, and, where
appropriate, elicit an apology. Most police and teachers are
– or should be – trained in these skills, which are also taught to
community workers and volunteers serving on restorative justice
panels. The teaching skills of mediation and resolution would
have important wider benefits. These skills are transferable to
other areas of life, including family and work life. They could
help spread an ethos of discussion and mediation more widely.

Some concerns

While there would need to be further discussion on the detail at both central and local government levels, there are already examples where 'the Woolwich model' is in practice. For example, Dfuse, a not-for-profit organisation set up two years ago, provides training 'to help people deal with challenging and anti-social behaviour wherever they encounter it'. Dfuse has developed a curriculum that aims to enable people better to understand risk, protect themselves and defuse conflict and anti-social behaviour. Training is provided by experienced police officers and professional hostage negotiators.

Dfuse is at the early stages and it will be interesting to see its impact. But it could provide a model for elsewhere. Courses have already been provided for social housing residents, as well as frontline public servants, including youth workers, teachers and housing managers. Feedback has been very positive, with many of those taking part noting that skills they have acquired have a wide applicability or transferability.[40]

It might be argued that the approach advocated here is just another way of cracking down on already marginalised young people and on deprived communities which are already under pressure. Government, the argument continues, has been heavy-handed enough in its approach to anti-social behaviour as it is.

There is a lot in the charge that the UK has taken an excessively intrusive and draconian approach to tackling anti-social behaviour in recent years. Though, as we have seen, the evidence suggests that this approach has not been successful. The conclusion here however is not that we should invest more power in the police and the state. On the contrary, it suggests that we should invest more in building up a culture of intervention beyond the police, and equip citizens and public servants more generally – especially those in areas of high social

40. www.dfuse.org.uk

pressure and those who work in the public realm – to manage anti-social behaviour.

This opens up a second charge: that equipping and encouraging people to intervene is nothing more than a vigilante's charter. But it is characteristic of a vigilante that he operates outside the limits of the law. One of the aims of training people to deal with anti-social behaviour is precisely to ensure that if they intervene they do so responsibly and constructively. Indeed, if this training becomes at all widespread, it would help make expectations and standards more explicit, so making it easier to draw a line between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour in tackling crime and disorder.

The coalition government has announced its intention to review the law in relation to violence committed by those protecting their own property. It needs to be stressed, the proposal here is not to encourage intervention in violent or dangerous situations; but to acknowledge that tackling anti-social behaviour brings potential risks. There are limits to what we as citizens can be expected or have a right to do for ourselves. Some types of anti-social behaviour are obviously criminal in character – for instance, drug dealing or serious vandalism to public or private property – and the police and other criminal justice agencies need to be engaged in any response to these. This still leaves a potentially significant role for citizens in intervening to address less serious types of anti-social behaviour.

The Woolwich model

This model speaks to the RSA's emphasis on social innovation and civic participation; its ambition of translating thinking around twenty-first enlightenment into practical action on the ground, often involving local communities and the 'users' of services. This is evident in its Citizen Power in Peterborough work and its Connected Communities project which seeks to

better understand the role of social networks in building trust and solving local problems in deprived neighbourhoods.

I have argued that the Woolwich approach to co-production in relation to anti-social behaviour can at its most basic, equip frontline workers with better skills and greater confidence in intervening. More ambitiously, it provides a mechanism for engaging people in deliberations about what is both anti-social and pro-social. Done properly, this should reveal both different perceptions (and prejudices) that shape our understanding of anti-social behaviour and some of the deeper problems that lie beneath local tensions.

While there is in fact quite wide agreement in abstract about what is acceptable by way of behaviour and what is not, expectations appear to vary from area to area.[41] There is perhaps even greater variation or at least uncertainty, when it comes to expectations around responding to anti-social behaviour. People who might agree that a certain type of behaviour is a serious breach of civility might disagree about the appropriate response, or simply be unsure about it.

Investment in training people to manage anti-social behaviour and defuse conflict, then, will need to go hand-in-hand with a more deliberate endeavour to agree and articulate local standards about when it is acceptable to intervene and how. Just as professional policing needs continued legitimisation through democratic dialogue and rule bound behaviour, so does its civilian counterpart.

This is not to argue that this approach to anti-social behaviour is a magic bullet. But it could make an important contribution to tackling what remains a major public policy issue. This approach would be one which, in the spirit of Woolwich 1878 – but perhaps even more in the spirit of today – relies on training and skilling people to meet social challenges, rather than always resorting to the law or police. There is a long tradition of civic republican thinking that underscores

41. Ipsos MORI presentation. "British Views on Respect," Ipsos MORI 2005.

the importance of citizens exercising military and police power for themselves and not relying on paid professionals.[42] The Woolwich model, as it applies to community safety, rests firmly in that tradition.

42. J Robertson. *The Scottish Enlightenment and the Militia Issue*. John Donald 1985.

RSA pamphlets

This is the second in a series of short essays that the RSA will be publishing over the coming months and which will explore the concept of twenty-first century enlightenment. The RSA is interested in ideas and action and the complex links between the two. With this in mind, we have commissioned a series of essays from leading thinkers and practitioners, looking not only at the history and theory that lies behind the notion of twenty-first century enlightenment, but also at the practical implications of what this may mean today.

Future pamphlets will address a range of questions including what new twenty-first century enlightenment approaches may be needed when approaching the market, economics and sustainability, and what role the arts, a sense of place and social networks may play.

All pamphlets will be available online at **www.theRSA.org** and we would welcome ideas from Fellows and others to:

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