

Young people at risk of Anti Social Behaviour or Offending

Young people can become involved in anti social behaviour and criminal behaviour for a wide range of reasons.

Each Local Authority has a Youth Offending Team (YOT) who's duty it is to deal with all young people who have been arrested for a criminal offence, be that for the first time or where there is ongoing offending. The YOT often identifies that the behaviour that has lead the young person to formally become involved in the criminal justice system has been evident for some time.

It is important to feel confident in identifying and approaching the issue as soon as it starts to develop as once it becomes "the norm" then the opportunity to cease this behaviour becomes more difficult.

Young people who experience the following issues are more at risk of becoming involved in anti social behaviour or offending: The below outlines some key indicators and should be considered when completing an Early Help Assessment or any other assessment.

Educational

- Difficulties achieving at or attending school
- School exclusion
- Has a Statement of additional needs

Physical

- Bullying (as a victim or perpetrator)
- Violence or conflict within the family or social environment

Family

- Drug or alcohol issues within the family or social environment
- Family or peer group attitudes which condone crime
- Living within a Domestic Abuse household
- No significant relationship with a family member (including extended)

Emotional

- Behavioural problems
- Hyperactivity or poor impulse control (e.g ADHD)
- Specific learning difficulties (e.g. dyslexia)
- Becoming or has been a Looked After Child
- Speech and Language difficulties
- Abuse or trauma in childhood

Environmental

- Poor housing or living in a neighbourhood with poor services
- Financial hardship
- Isolated community



The following are some behaviors specific to the young person that would cause concern;

Emotional

- YP shows no emotion
- No Remorse
- Irritable or aggressive attitude
- Impulsive behaviour
- Lack of focus
- Excessive focus on one task
- High level of anxiety
- Low mood

Environmental

- Young person hangs out in large groups
- Lack of friendship group
- Goes to areas known for ASB

Educational

- Not attending school
- Poor school attendance
- Not in further education or training (post 16)

Physical

- Substance misuse (alcohol, illegal drugs and prescription drugs)
- Lack of motivation
- Regularly missing from home
- Problems with sleep
- Problems attending appointments on time
- Poor presentation (unkempt)
- Emotional outbursts

If you are concerned that a young person might become involved in anti social behavior or offending, consider the following;

Children with ADHD, behavioural problems, developmental disorders or learning difficulties may not be able to control their impulses or may not understand the consequences of their actions. They may be labelled as 'naughty' or 'bad', if teachers or the police do not understand the reasons for their actions or behaviour and offer appropriate support. If they are struggling to cope at school, 'bad' behaviour may be a way of getting attention in alternative ways or hiding their real difficulties. This can end up with the young person seeing themselves as 'bad' or a 'lost cause', which means they give up trying to stay out of trouble.

Often young people who break the law are also very vulnerable to being victims of crime themselves. They may be exploited by others, forced to get involved in things they do not want to do, and find themselves getting in 'deeper and deeper'.

It can be very difficult to support a young person to stay out of trouble. Peer groups can be very powerful, and teenagers may feel it is more important to stay 'in with' their friends than to respect the law. If you think the young person is getting involved in crime, talk to them honestly about your worries, ask them what is going on, and if they won't talk to you, say you will be there when they are ready. You can say that everyone does unwise things but they have the chance to take responsibility and stop before it gets too serious.

Just one strong, positive relationship can offset many other problematic issues. Spell out clearly what is and isn't acceptable, and tell them why this is. Support the parent(s) and family in giving the young person firm but caring messages about keeping to boundaries.