

# Enforcement powers for specific types of anti-social behaviour (ASB)

Legislative powers for specific anti-social behaviour types – including different forms of personal, nuisance and environmental anti-social behaviour.

First published 27 March 2023 Updated 3 October 2024

This page lists anti-social behaviours (ASB) and relevant legislation and policing powers. This includes:

- the different categories of ASB
- powers for specific ASB offences
  
- [See other resources for tackling ASB in our ASB toolkit](#)
- [See general enforcement powers for ASB](#)

## Categories of anti-social behaviour

There are three main types of anti-social behaviour (ASB). These are:

- personal
- nuisance
- environmental

The topics and anti-social behaviours listed on this page may fall into more than one category of ASB.

### Personal ASB

Refers to incidents that deliberately target an individual or group of people, rather than the community. It is when an incident causes concern or stress and may impact on people's quality of life. For example:

- intimidation

- harassment

## Nuisance ASB

Refers to incidents affecting the community, rather than an individual victim. This is when an act, thing or person causes the community trouble, annoyance, inconvenience or suffering. These incidents can interfere with public interests such as health, wellbeing, safety and quality of life. For example:

- drug or substance misuse
- vehicle-related nuisance
- animal-related problems

## Environmental ASB

Refers to incidents where individuals or groups impact their wider surroundings. It includes environmental damage and the misuse of public spaces or buildings. For example:

- criminal damage or vandalism, such as graffiti or damage to bus shelters
- littering

## Animal-related problems

This section contains a list of powers for animal-related ASB problems, such as noise and uncontrolled animals.

### Dangerous dogs

- The [Dangerous Dogs Act 1991](#) allows police to impose restrictions on dogs that present a serious danger to the public.
- [See XL Bully dog ban guidance for dog owners \(GOV.UK\)](#).

### Nuisance noise

- If noise such as barking meets a certain threshold it can count as a statutory nuisance under the [Environmental Protection Act 1990](#).

## Uncontrolled dogs

- Some public areas in England and Wales are covered by [Public Spaces Protection Orders \(PSPOs\)](#). This means dogs should be kept on a lead at all times in these areas.

## Welfare concerns

- The [Animal Welfare Act 2006](#) is the principal law relating to animal welfare. Animal welfare concerns should be reported to the [RSPCA](#).

## Begging

Powers to address begging when it may be classed as ASB.

## Children

- The [Children and Young Persons Act 1933 s 4](#) covers causing or allowing a child under 16 to be used for begging.

## Coerced begging

- The [Modern Slavery Act 2015 s 45](#) covers incidents where a person is being forced to beg by another.

## False representation

- The [Fraud Act 2006 s 2](#) is relevant for those pretending to be injured or destitute for their own gain. For example, those dishonestly presenting themselves as homeless when they have accommodation.

## Fear or provocation of violence

- The [Public Order Act 1986 s 4](#) covers situations when fear or violence is used.

## Harassment

- The [Protection from Harassment Act 1997](#) provides both criminal and civil remedies to protect people from harassment.

## Intentional public nuisance

- The [Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 s 78](#) covers intentionally or recklessly causing public nuisance. Note that the threshold for serious harm is deliberately high. Begging is highly unlikely to meet this threshold on its own.

## Organised crime

- The [Serious Crime Act 2007](#) is relevant for begging that involves crime, organised crime or joint enterprise.

## Wilful obstruction

- The [Highways Act 1980 s 137](#) covers wilful obstruction. For example, if someone is approaching cars to beg they may be blocking free passage along a highway.

## Drug and substance misuse

Powers to address drug-related ASB, such as littering drug paraphernalia.

### Drug taking

- The [Misuse of Drugs Act 1971](#) may apply if a person is in possession of controlled drugs.
- [A PSPO may be used under the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014](#) if the persistent use of psychoactive substances is causing a detrimental effect on local residents' quality of life.

### Littering

- The [Environmental Protection Act 1990 s 87](#) may be relevant for littering of drugs paraphernalia, such as empty cannisters of nitrous oxide.

## Other resources

- [Authorised professional practice \(APP\) on Policing drugs](#)
- [Nitrous oxide ban: guidance – GOV.UK](#)
- [Drugs penalties – GOV.UK](#)
- [Psychoactive Substances Act 2016: Guidance for retailers – GOV.UK](#)
- [Psychoactive substances – Crown Prosecution Service \(CPS\)](#)

## Fireworks misuse

Powers to address ASB using fireworks.

- The [Fireworks Act 2003](#) covers inappropriate use of fireworks, unlawful sale or possession of fireworks and noise created by fireworks.

## Other resources

- [See also Fireworks: the law – GOV.UK](#)

## Intimidation, harassment and stalking

Powers to address ASB such as harassment and intimidation.

- The [Public Order Act 1986 ss 4 and 5](#) cover intentional harassment, alarm or distress (single-incident offences).
- The [Protection from Harassment Act 1997](#) s 2/4 and s 2A/4A cover harassment and stalking (as part of a course of conduct occurring on at least two occasions).

## Other resources

- [Street harassment offences and preventative strategies – from the VAWG toolkit](#)

## Noise

Powers to address ASB in the form of nuisance noise, such as noisy cars or motorbikes, noisy neighbours, loud music, or noise from pubs or clubs.

## Nuisance noise

Noise can count as a statutory nuisance under the [Environmental Protection Act 1990](#) if it either:

- unreasonably and substantially interferes with the use or enjoyment of a home or other premises
- injures health or is likely to injure health

Local authorities and the police can issue [CPNs for noise under the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014](#).

## Other resources

- [How councils deal with noise complaints – GOV.UK guidance](#)

## Street drinking

Street drinking is a misuse of public space and can be classed as environmental ASB.

- The [Licensing Act 2003 s 137 to 159](#) covers offences relating to unauthorised licensable activities.

## Other resources

- [Alcohol licensing guidance – GOV.UK](#).

## Trespassing

Powers to address trespassing when it may be classed as ASB.

- [Part 4 of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022](#) covers unauthorised encampments.
- The [Criminal Law Act 1977 s 7](#) covers trespassers who refuse to leave a residential property.
- The [Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 s 61](#) allows police to direct any trespasser to leave land under certain circumstances.
- The [Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 s 68](#) covers aggravated trespass, where a trespasser intends to intimidate others or disrupt lawful activity (such as preventing customers entering a business).

- [The Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 s 144](#) covers squatting in a residential building.

## Vehicle-related nuisance and inappropriate use

This section contains a list of powers for seizing vehicles. These seizure powers may be appropriate for addressing ASB such as vehicle nuisance or inappropriate use of motors.

### General powers

- The [Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 s 19](#) allows police to use general powers of seizure.

### Careless or inconsiderate driving

The [Police Reform Act 2002 s 59](#) allows police to seize any motor vehicle if it is being:

- used in a manner causing alarm or distress
- driven inconsiderately or carelessly, contrary to the [Road Traffic Act 1988 s 3](#) or [s 34](#)

### Driving without licence, insurance or tax

- The [Road Traffic Act 1988 s 165](#) allows police to seize vehicles driven without licence or insurance.
- The [Transport Act 2000 s 173 to 175](#) allows police to seize untaxed vehicles.

### Vehicles used to commit an offence

- The [Environmental Protection Act 1990 s 34B](#) allows police to seize vehicles where they have been used to commit a relevant offence.
- The [Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 s 45](#) allows police to seize criminal assets. This includes vehicles that are subject to a restraint order where it's necessary to prevent the vehicle's removal from England or Wales.

### Rave events

- The [Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 s 64](#) allows police to enter land and seize vehicles in relation to rave events.

## Other resources

- [APP on Roads policing – Disrupting criminality](#)

## Learning and guidance resources

- [Anti-social behaviour: Your powers \(you will need to log in to College Learn\)](#)
- [Youth offending team \(YOT\) practitioner's guide: civil injunctions and the Criminal Behaviour Order](#)

## Tags

Crime reduction