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Public Perceptions of Anti-Social Behaviour within the London Borough of Sutton

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Researching Perceptions of Anti-Social Behaviour in the London Borough of Sutton

Anti-Social Behaviour has had a relatively short lifespan as a major problem for local crime prevention partnerships. However, it is now seen as a serious concern for many people. The Government recently announced its five year strategic plan for addressing crime and disorder (Home Office, 2004) in which tackling anti-social behaviour plays a central role.

Available evidence suggests that Sutton is one of the safest and least disorderly of the London Boroughs, although many Sutton residents appear to share a perception that crime and especially disorder are increasing. It is sometimes suggested that, because Sutton is a 'low-crime' London Borough, the level of concerns expressed regarding anti-social behaviour is anomalous or 'out of proportion'. At the outset, however, we would suggest that there is no 'correct' proportion between a given level of crime and a given level of fear and concern. Rather, the concerns about anti-social behaviour that people have need to be understood and explained in their own right and this is what we have set out to do in this report.

Any meaningful survey of anti-social behaviour has to account for both the underlying rates of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour as well as the nature of public perceptions, this is especially the case when the different indicators appear to be moving in opposing directions. The outcome of the borough-wide MORI survey in 2003 showed that crime, fear of crime, vandalism and anti-social behaviour are key concerns for Sutton residents.

This work has focused upon public perceptions of anti-social behaviour and public priorities. To this end we have embarked upon a wide range of fieldwork exercises, in order to determine the options available in seeking to address the concerns about Anti-Social Behaviour identified here

The chief aims of this research were to:

- Explore residents' understanding of and attitudes to anti-social behaviour;
- Probe the responses from the 2003 borough-wide survey and to investigate the apparent anomaly between fear of crime and actual victimisation;
- Examine residents awareness of the role of the Council and the police in tackling anti-social behaviour;



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