

ABCs and ASBOs

In December 2007, a 16 year old boy signed up to an Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC), agreeing, amongst other things, not to associate with certain people, drink alcohol or be under the influence of alcohol in a public place. He had been engaging in anti-social behaviour which included acts of vandalism and public disorder. A multi-agency group, which includes police officers, council officers, the Youth Offending Service and Registered Social Landlords, had met to discuss the best way to prevent further anti-social behaviour from this boy. It was agreed he should be given the opportunity to sign an ABC, a voluntary contract where the individual agrees not to do certain things that have been causing harassment, alarm and distress to the community. ABCs are also signed by agencies such as the police and Borough Council.

The number of ABCs that have been signed in Bracknell Forest since they were first used in 2004 is 28. Contrary to public perceptions, the majority of these have been with adults. They have proved to be a successful tool in Bracknell Forest for curbing anti-social behaviour as in the majority of cases there has been no requirement for further intervention. However, when an ABC is breached, the multi-agency group will consider further action, which may result in an application to the courts for an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO). ASBOs are used as a last resort in Bracknell Forest, as if breached, the consequences can be serious for the recipient, with a maximum penalty of 5 years imprisonment. There has been a total of 10 ASBOs in the borough, with 8 currently still running. Only 2 of these have been with juveniles.

At the time of writing, there are further ASBOs and ABCs being applied for or considered. We want to assure people that action is being taken to tackle anti-social behaviour in the borough. However, taking action requires evidence and we need the community to help in obtaining this. We will always consider the most appropriate action for individual cases where the evidence is present. The majority of the time this means sending a warning letter or making a warning visit. However, we do take anti-social behaviour seriously, and we will not hesitate to use ABCs and ASBOs where individuals ignore the warnings and persist in their unacceptable behaviour.