

# Tired of Hanging Around - Using sport and leisure activities to prevent anti-social behaviour by young people



A guide for councils'  
overview and  
scrutiny function

January 2009

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**For further information on the work of the Commission please contact:**

**Audit Commission,  
1st Floor, Millbank Tower,  
Millbank, London SW1P 4HQ  
Telephone: 020 7828 1212  
Fax: 020 7976 6187  
Textphone (minicom): 020 7630 0421  
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This guidance is for members of scrutiny committees or panels and the officers who support them. It provides the framework for a scrutiny review of youth anti-social behaviour and the availability of activities to reduce or prevent it.

The questions in the framework are based on the findings of the Audit Commission study *Tired of Hanging Around*.

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## 1 What can scrutiny achieve?

Youth anti-social behaviour is a local concern in many areas. And most people agree that ‘having nothing to do’ is a trigger. Scrutiny provides an opportunity for elected members to engage with a complex topic, assess what is happening locally, and identify opportunities for improvement. Scrutiny panels or committees can review issues from several different viewpoints:

- Young people are worried about their own safety and the lack of things to do locally. Scrutiny can help them to become more involved in the design, commissioning, delivery, and review of services.
- Residents are often concerned about anti-social behaviour amongst young people and the lack of things for young people to do locally. Scrutiny can help them to make their voices heard, and identify common ground between the different generations.
- Scrutiny of young people and anti-social behaviour has the potential to review and drive improvement in issues that affect community cohesion, but which are not the direct or sole responsibility of councils.
- Councils have a duty to provide positive activities for young people. Scrutiny could help them to assess their progress.
- Effective scrutiny can assess whether local agencies are working together effectively.

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## **2 How can *Tired of Hanging Around* help us understand the issues?**

The study focuses on the use of sport and leisure activities to prevent and reduce anti-social behaviour by young people. The main findings from the study relevant to scrutiny are:

- Sport and leisure activities have an important role in preventing anti-social behaviour.
  - Most councils, and many other local agencies, provide or commission some good targeted activities. But there is little evidence of comprehensive area-based approaches.
  - Commissioning decisions are limited by a lack of data on costs and performance.
- Young people's views are rarely taken into account when planning new activities. Young people want activities that are accessible, reliable and relevant.
  - National funding arrangements are inefficient. Projects have to deal with unreliable short-term funding that is time-consuming and expensive to administer.
  - Solutions that benefit communities lie in engagement with the appropriate young people, delivery through local joint working and coordination of national and local funding.

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### 3 How can *Tired of Hanging Around* help us ask the right questions?

The main areas in which councils and their local partners need to make improvements in are:

- consulting and engaging young people and communities;
- funding arrangements;
- coordinating activities; and
- using evidence to inform commissioning decisions.

These are the areas that are covered in the suggested questions listed below. One of the key themes of *Tired of Hanging Around* is that young people, and the communities they live in, need to have their voices heard.

Some of the questions are also suitable for asking young people themselves, either at formal scrutiny committee meetings or at more informal events specifically designed to engage with and talk to young people.

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### Consulting and engaging young people and communities

- What is the process for identifying and engaging with those young people who might take part in anti-social behaviour to ensure their views are included in consultation?
- What efforts have been made to consult those young people who might take part in anti-social behaviour about the effectiveness of current provision and the type of activities they would like to see?
- To what extent are those young people who might take part in anti-social behaviour directly involved in local decision making about sport and leisure activities?
- What examples are there of local provision changing as a result of input from young people?
- How are activities publicised and marketed to those young people who might take part in anti-social behaviour?
- What has been done to understand and remove any barriers young people face in participating in activities?

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- How do councils and their partners ensure that activities are accessible, relevant and available regularly for those young people who might take part in anti-social behaviour?
  - How do councils and their partners ensure that activities meet the needs of all young people in their area – including young women, black and minority ethnic young people, those living in rural areas, and other groups?
  - What work takes place locally to increase the level of understanding about anti-social behaviour, improve perceptions of young people, and manage expectations about what can be done to tackle anti-social behaviour?

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### **Funding arrangements**

- How secure is the funding for projects working with young people?
- Is short-term funding leading to inefficient use of resources (for example through projects stopping and restarting)?
- How far have local partnership agencies (children's trust, crime and disorder reduction partnerships, local strategic partnerships) worked to support pooling or aligning of budgets?
- What has been done to secure long-term support for effective projects?
- How is value for money assessed, and what measures are in place to ensure projects provide value for money?

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## Coordinating activities

- How are all the different activities for young people coordinated across the area to prevent duplication or gaps in provision?
- What steps are taken to involve all relevant partners (including schools, third sector organisations, and registered social landlords) in both decision making about and delivery of projects?
- How are links made with all relevant partners working on related agendas (such as obesity, community cohesion, teenage sexual health, and reducing school exclusions)?
- Are there clear links between the crime and disorder reduction partnership and children's trust over plans to prevent young people engaging in anti-social behaviour and do they cooperate effectively to reduce risks and occurrences?

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## Using evidence to inform commissioning decisions

- What sources of data are used to measure the incidence of anti-social behaviour at a local level? How reliable is the data – are incidents or reports of incidents being counted? Are reports to the council and to the police consolidated into a single database? What does the data say about where and at what time of day incidents occur and the age of the perpetrators?
- Are activities provided at the times, and in the places, that there are problems with young people engaging in anti-social behaviour?
- What type of evidence is available about the effectiveness of activities?
- What examples are there of evidence being used to inform commissioning decisions?
- Is there a map of the range of activities running across the area, where and when they take place, and who delivers them?

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## 4 Who should we talk to?

The final list of who a scrutiny review should talk to, or collect evidence from, will depend on the terms of reference and the resources available. In preparing *Tired of Hanging Around*, evidence from the following people, groups, and organisations was collected:

- local young people that may be at risk of engaging in anti-social behaviour;
- parents and carers of young people at risk of engaging in anti-social behaviour;
- residents and tenants associations;
- registered social landlords;
- police services;
- fire services;
- youth offending teams;
- youth services;
- anti-social behaviour teams;
- leisure and cultural service department;
- crime and disorder reduction partnership chairs;
- chairs of children's trusts;
- local strategic partnership leads;
- parish councils;
- local businesses;
- voluntary and community sector providers;
- local faith groups;
- education service regarding school exclusions;
- extended schools coordinators; and
- play services.

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## 5 What else can we learn from *Tired of Hanging Around?*

*Tired of Hanging Around* presents research on how well councils and their partners are working together to use sport and leisure activities to prevent young people aged from 8 to 19 years from engaging in anti-social behaviour. It aims to help councils and their partners get the best outcomes from activities for young people at risk of anti-social behaviour. It also:

- assesses the impact and efficiency of current funding arrangements; and
- includes the perspectives of young people on what they want and what they value from projects.

The report is accompanied by guidance and tools to help councils and their partners implement some of the findings from the study. Copies of the report, tools, case studies and supporting DVD can be downloaded from [www.audit-commission.gov.uk/hangingaround](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/hangingaround)

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**Audit Commission**  
**1st Floor**  
**Millbank Tower**  
**Millbank**  
**London**  
**SW1P 4HQ**

**Telephone: 0844 798 1212**  
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