
Socio-economic Research and Intelligence Observatory



Final Report

Evaluation of Project 709: Addressing Anti-Social Behaviour in Devonport

March 2009

Socio-economic Research and
Intelligence Observatory

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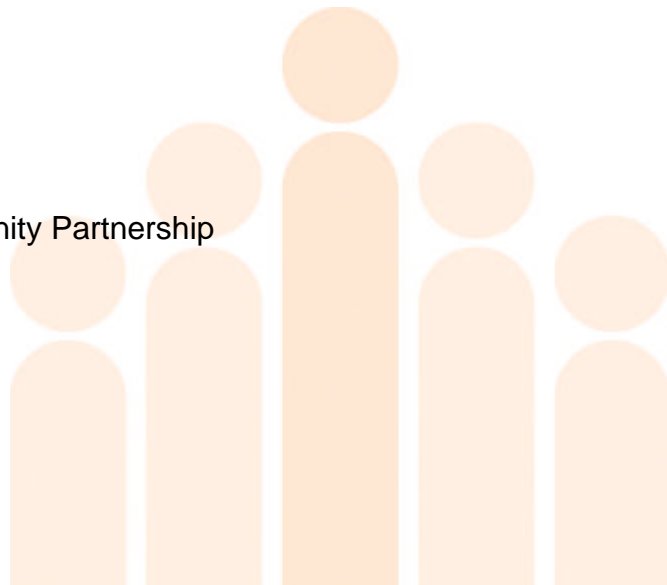
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Devonport Regeneration Community Partnership

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Executive Summary

- ❖ Project 709 was established with the aim of providing a dedicated Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) caseworker for Devonport, and a set of objectives geared towards the provision of a more effective response to ASB by supporting, advising and working alongside stakeholder agencies in the local community. It was intended to begin in July 2006, and to end in March 2009. In the event it did not begin until December 2006, and at times, because of sickness absence and restricted duties, a limited service has been provided by the Project, particularly in the last six months.
- ❖ The Project is broadly aligned with crime and ASB-related strategic aims and objectives adopted by DRC Partnership, by Plymouth LSP, by the Government Office for the South West, and by central government PSAs. The translation of its aims and objectives into more specific targets and actions is at times somewhat ambiguous.
- ❖ The caseworker participates in a range of different activities, with case management, broadly conceived, absorbing approximately 75% of the workload. The caseworker works alongside a number of stakeholder agencies, through formal meetings and informal communications. Police officers, police community support officers, housing officers from all social housing providers, and residents comprise the main points of contact. Stakeholders can hold conflicting expectations about the proper role of the caseworker, and this has been the source of some tension within the Project.
- ❖ The Project operated under initial expectations that it would be strongly enforcement-oriented, but such expectations have not been realised. These expectations are still incorporated into a performance monitoring and recording process that is therefore in need of updating. Monitoring outputs, including ethnic monitoring, are also vaguely and inconsistently specified, and more recognition needs to be given to the progress of actual cases in order to assess the impact of the Project on ASB in the locality.
- ❖ Although it is not easy to assess the impact of the Project, it is apparent that the services provided by the caseworker have been greatly appreciated in specific instances, by residents and by local agencies, and it is apparent that the community-based nature of the casework ensures better communications and a speedier response to ASB, particularly through multi-agency case conferences. The multi-agency ASB forum is under-exploited but has great potential for monitoring and responding effectively to ASB-related problems. The Project lacks a high profile in the locality.

- ❖ The Project is unlikely to continue in its present form after March 2009. There are plans within Plymouth Anti-Social Behaviour Unit (ASBU) to mainstream the caseworker post within Plymouth ASBU, but the post would not remain Devonport-based, as this does not fit the working style of, or resources available to, Plymouth ASBU. Plymouth ASBU plans for future development are themselves dependent upon the results of an impending tenancy transfer vote in Plymouth.

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Evaluation of Project 709: Addressing Anti-Social Behaviour in Devonport

1. Introduction

The University of Plymouth's Socio-economic Research and Intelligence Observatory (SERIO) was commissioned by DRC Partnership to conduct an evaluation of Project 709: Addressing Anti-Social Behaviour in Devonport. This report presents the results of the evaluation. The brief for the evaluation was set out by DRC Partnership in its invitation to tender documentation, and the structure of the evaluation report was prescribed in the same documentation, and is followed here.

The research informing this evaluation was conducted by Dr Zoë James and Dr Daniel Gilling, of the Criminal Justice Studies team at the University. The research consisted of a desktop examination and review of project documentation forwarded to the evaluators by DRC Partnership, and of other relevant documentation connected to the project and its broad policy domain. In addition, interviews were held with a list of stakeholders that had been identified by DRC Partnership in the invitation to tender documentation. Some of these interviews were one-to-one, some were group-oriented, and a small number were conducted over the telephone or through e-mail exchange. The evaluators were able to interview persons from each stakeholder group, although not everyone who was approached was willing or able to contribute to the research. The evaluators would like to express their gratitude to all of those participants who were able to contribute to the research, as well as to those personnel from DRC Partnership who provided project documentation and responded so quickly to requests for additional information and clarification.

2. The Original Purpose of the Project

The proposal for Project 709 was conceived by a design team that included members of the Plymouth ASBU and representatives of DRC Partnership. It received approval in May 2006, and was intended to begin in July 2006. In essence, Project 709 comprises the dedicated services of a specialist ASB caseworker for the Devonport NDC area. The Project is intended to meet a number of specific purposes, these being:

- (i) To expedite the progress of cases against alleged ASB perpetrators in the NDC area. Prior to the initiation of the Project, cases had been caught up in a bottleneck of cases referred to an under-resourced ASBU, which services the entire Plymouth area.

- (ii) To advise and support housing officers from the local authority and other social housing providers in both preventive and enforcement-oriented activities relating to the anti-social behaviour of local residents.
- (iii) To inform and educate residents about ASB and its associated remedies. This includes the provision of support and advice to victims and witnesses of ASB.
- (iv) To work with other agencies, including schools, the police, environmental services, businesses and all housing providers, in providing a co-ordinated multi-agency response to the problem of anti-social behaviour in the NDC area.

2.1 Project Fit with DRC Partnership Objectives

The Crime and Community Safety theme of DRC Partnership's strategic aims for 2005 to 2011 (as updated in January 2007) are as follows:

CS1	Increase community confidence and reduce the fear of crime
CS2	Reduce overall levels of crime
CS3	Keep residents informed of the actual levels of local crime
CS4	Modify the behaviour of young people and families in rejecting crime and anti-social behaviour through positive problem-solving interventions (including prevention, diversion and enforcement)
CS5	Prevent and deter crime and anti-social behaviour through innovative working with key partners
CS8	Improve support to victims of hate (prejudice) incidents and increase community cohesion and the value of diversity
CS9	Actively tackle domestic abuse, increasing awareness, advocacy and reporting
CS10	Reduce the impact of substance misuse

As specified in the Project Appraisal Form, Project 709 was aligned to a selection of these aims, namely:

CS1	Increase community confidence and reduce the fear of crime
CS4	Modify the behaviour of young people and families in rejecting crime and anti-social behaviour through positive problem-solving interventions (including prevention, diversion and enforcement)
CS5	Prevent and deter crime and anti-social behaviour through innovative working with key partners

2.2 Summary of Activity to Date

Project 709 was originally envisaged as a project of nearly three years' duration, beginning in July 2006 and running up until the end of March 2009. In the event, the caseworker did not take up the post until December 2006, and her period of employment in this post was cut short by maternity leave which started on 18th October, 2008, after annual leave taken from 22nd September 2008. A replacement ASB caseworker took up post in October 2008, after gradually taking over from the original caseworker, and the evaluators understand that he will be employed for the remaining duration of the Project. The original ASB caseworker's period of involvement was punctuated by some periods of sickness absence, from 20th June to 11th July 2007, and then 8th April to 11th April 2008, and 21st April to 7th July 2008, after which time the caseworker was employed on a reduced workload as a result of on-going health-related concerns.

The evaluation for Project 709 began in August 2008, at a time when in effect the caseworker had not been in post or performing normal duties since the beginning of April – a period of nearly four months. Many stakeholders perceived this absence as problematic in terms of reducing the available resources for tackling ASB in the NDC area, and in terms of increasing the burden on others, notably local police community support officers (PCSOs) and local housing officers.

The caseworker informed the evaluators that approximately 75% of her time was taken up with case management, a generic term that includes cases that have been formally referred to the ASBU from local agencies, local cases that have required the calling of a multi-agency case conference as part of the escalation process (see below), and cases that have come to the ASB caseworker's attention from members of the public or from local agencies operating in the area. The caseload of the

caseworker does not include all cases of ASB occurring in the NDC area: much ASB that occurs is not reported to any public authorities, and of that which is reported, reports may be made to many different agencies depending upon the nature of the problem, but also to some extent upon the preferences of the reporter. These agencies may deal with ASB themselves, through their own policies and procedures, or they may refer cases to the ASB caseworker, for advice, or when cases have moved through the escalation process and require a multi-agency case conference or enforcement action. Consequently, since ASB comes to official attention through a complex network of different official channels, or not at all (if it is not reported), it is very difficult to gain an overall impression of ASB, and activity taken against ASB, in the NDC area. The problem is exacerbated by the definitional breadth of ASB (see below).

The evaluators understand case management to involve some or more of the following tasks:

- ❖ The provision of advice to residents, e.g. to keep logs of ASB incidents, or where to direct complaints.
- ❖ The provision of advice to agencies, e.g. on the escalation process, on evidential requirements, or on available ASB remedies.
- ❖ The calling and administrative servicing of multi-agency case conferences, as a part of the ASB escalation process, both in order to seek solutions to the problem and to demonstrate compliance with the statutory requirement that multi-agency consultation has taken place prior to further action.
- ❖ The preparation of court cases, within the ASBU, seeking enforcement action against ASB, as a last resort in the escalation process.

In addition to case management, the caseworker is or was engaged in the following core activities:

- (i) The advertisement and provision of drop-in surgeries for residents with ASB-related concerns. Surgeries were scheduled throughout 2007 but were very poorly used by residents, leading to their abandonment in the final quarter of 2007/08. In 2008/09, the surgeries were replaced with an arrangement whereby the caseworker accompanied a patrolling PCSO on routine community contact patrols, thereby bringing her into close contact with members

of the community, including local businesses. Due to sickness absences, only one or two such joint patrols have been held.

- (ii) The provision of advice sessions to housing officers from Plymouth City Council and other social housing providers, from a two days per week base in Devonport Development Office in George Street.
- (iii) The establishment and maintenance of a Devonport-wide multi-agency ASB group, meeting every six weeks or so to review ASB-related issues in the NDC area.

In addition to these core activities, the caseworker is or was engaged in a number of more occasional tasks, including the following:

- (i) Personal training and development.
- (ii) The preparation of occasional written articles on ASB-related themes for the DRC Partnership newsletter, which is distributed to all residents in the NDC area.
- (iii) Case management on non-NDC area cases lodged with the Plymouth ASBU.
- (iv) Visiting local schools to promote ASB-related work inside schools, including participation in the city-wide Lifeskills Event for Year 6 pupils in primary schools.
- (v) Participation in specific initiatives such as Project Sunrise, which entailed the visiting of residents in the Mount Wise tower blocks, in order to audit and/or identify ASB-related concerns.
- (vi) Attendance at Crime Theme Group meetings and the production of quarterly progress reports in advance of them.
- (vii) Attendance at resident group meetings.

3. A Summary of the Problems that Project 709 Seeks to Address

ASB is defined by S.1(1)(a) of the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act as behaving:

“...in a manner that causes or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household”.

This is widely recognised to be a necessarily broad definition that focuses less on the *action* than the *reaction* to particular behaviours. The Home Office's Anti-Social Behaviour Unit broadly classifies ASB into three categories, namely street problems, nuisance neighbours and environmental crime, and the Home Office Research Development and Statistics Directorate has developed a more detailed typology that is widely used as a point of reference for practitioners.

Because of the complex network of agencies involved in responding to ASB, and because of the vagaries of public reporting behaviour, it is very difficult to quantify the extent of the ASB problem in the NDC area. The Project Proposal Application Form noted that in 2004/05 Plymouth City Council's Devonport Housing Office recorded 62 cases of ASB, while Plymouth ASBU gave advice on 46 cases of ASB from the Devonport area. Police statistics on disorder, meanwhile, showed a total of 973 disorder incidents in 2004/05 in the Devonport Neighbourhood, rising to a total of 1091 disorder incidents in 2005/06. These statistics include a number of categories of disorder, which since April 2006 have been incorporated into a national recording standard for disorder in a bid to facilitate a more consistent approach to recording ASB-related disorder incidents across the country. In Devonport, the most commonly occurring disorder incidents within the national recording standard are:

- ❖ Rowdy/nuisance behaviour;
- ❖ Inconsiderate behaviour;
- ❖ Malicious/nuisance communications;
- ❖ Criminal damage;
- ❖ Vehicle-related nuisance; and,
- ❖ Rowdy/nuisance neighbours.

Police ASB-related statistics do not include unreported incidents. Neither do they include incidents of ASB that are reported to other agencies (such as noise complaints reported to Environmental Services), although sometimes incidents can be reported to more than one agency, and, to complicate matters further, incidents of ASB may therefore occasionally be double-counted.

An alternative measure of ASB relies upon perceptions of disorder, rather than counts of specific incidents. Perceptions of disorder are measured in a list of questions that are employed in the annual British Crime Survey,

but which are also used in the MORI surveys of residents in all of the NDC areas, which have been conducted in 2002, 2004 and 2006. The ASB caseworker's role focuses upon ASB in its broadest sense, although in practice, since the role is oriented towards later stages in the escalation process, the caseworker's main business is with *'high end'* ASB – specifically those forms of ASB that are at greater risk of enforcement action.

4. Stakeholders of Project 709

Project 709 has a number of different stakeholders, identified for the evaluators by DRC Partnership. They, and their roles with regard to ASB, are as follows:

(i) Housing Officers:

By virtue of their roles as managers of the social housing stock, housing officers have a key role to play in ensuring the appropriate behaviour of their tenants, and all social housing providers are required by law to have clear published policies in regard to ASB within the area of their housing stock. In the NDC area, the main social housing providers are Plymouth City Council, Devon and Cornwall Housing Association, Sovereign Housing Association and Westcountry Housing Association. In Devonport, Plymouth City Council housing officers occupy office accommodation in Granby Way, while City Council housing officers and officers from the housing associations are co-located in Mount Wise in the Devonport Development Office.

Housing officers may themselves deal with ASB cases of which they become aware, for example, by reminding tenants of the terms of their tenancy agreements and issuing them with informal warnings, or by asking complainants to keep incident logs. Alternatively, as they proceed through the escalation process they may seek advice from the ASB caseworker, or refer cases to multi-agency case conferences, or via the ASB caseworker to the ASBU. According to established working practices, where cases are referred to the ASBU, the referring officer remains the lead officer for the case, and in such instances the ASB caseworker advises the lead officer on the steps necessary to take in particular cases, for example, with regard to the collection of evidence.

A number of the housing officers employed by Plymouth City Council have a considerable amount of experience in dealing with ASB, and much of this experience precedes the establishment of

Project 709. Such housing officers, consequently, were less in need of advice from the ASB caseworker, and more in need of practical support, which in their opinion was not always forthcoming. They did recognise, however, that the presence of the caseworker ensured that multi-agency case conferences were held rapidly, and not caught up, as they had been hitherto, in the ASBU's caseload bottleneck, which could create delays of several weeks' duration. The housing officers based at the Devonport Development Office in Mount Wise, and particularly those from the housing associations, had rather less experience of ASB and consequently were on balance more in need of, and appreciative of, the advice given by the ASB caseworker, and it appears that the caseworker's physical presence in the Devonport Development Office may have had a positive impact here.

(ii) The Local Police:

Devonport NDC area is policed by a combination of the remaining four officers of the DRC Partnership-funded Bobbies on the Beat team, a supporting team of PCSOs, and response and other specialist officers from the Policing Area of the wider Devon and Cornwall Constabulary. The four Bobbies on the Beat and the PCSOs together comprise Devonport's neighbourhood policing team, who are major stakeholders in Project 709, given the prominence of ASB in the business of neighbourhood policing. As a visible and accessible policing presence, these four police officers either directly encounter, or receive and respond to reports of, ASB within the area. Such reports may come from members of the public, or they may take the form of referrals from other agencies such as local schools. The neighbourhood policing team also has a responsibility for local problem-solving, which includes provision for multi-agency working with other agencies, including the ASB caseworker.

Prior to the inception of Project 709, the Bobbies on the Beat team played an instrumental part, often in collaboration with the local Plymouth City Council housing office, in securing a number of crack-house closures in response to problems of drug-dealing, as well as in negotiating acceptable behaviour contracts, and in other enforcement measures, such as the issuing of penalty notices for disorder (PNDs), although these may also have been issued by response officers. The advent of Project 709 brought an additional resource for tackling ASB, and it is apparent that the police anticipated that this resource would be used '*on the ground*', particularly to gather evidence of ASB from residents who were

reluctant to talk to the police for fear of reprisals from other residents, but who would be much more comfortable talking to a 'civilian' ASB caseworker. However, following the working practices of the ASBU, the caseworker was less inclined to work 'on the ground', and more inclined to serve as a source of advice for police officers or PCSOs coming to her as 'lead officers' with regard to incidents of ASB. This interpretation of the caseworker's role became a source of frustration for the local police.

There were some occasions, however, when the ASB caseworker and the police worked together in a more proactive way. These included Project Sunrise, where the caseworker and PCSOs together systematically visited residents of the Mount Wise tower blocks with a view to auditing the ASB problems therein; the joint 'patrols' of PCSOs and the caseworker that did take place in 2008; and specific operations such as Operation Arthur Daley, which targeted local garages that were the source of a number of ASB and crime-related problems, resulting in successful enforcement action, including the crushing of cars, the seizure of drugs, and prosecutions for benefit fraud and obtaining insurance by deception.

(iii) Plymouth ASBU

Plymouth ASBU, based at Windsor House near Derriford, is the managing agency for Project 709 on behalf of Plymouth City Council. The ASBU provides line management for the ASB caseworker, and assumes responsibility for the caseworker's training and personal development, as well as providing office accommodation. The caseworker, therefore, is not primarily based in the NDC area, although normally for two days each week she works out of the Devonport Development Office in George Street, particularly holding advice surgeries for housing officers.

The ASBU, first established in 2001, comprises a small team of staff that takes referrals of ASB cases from other agencies at a particular point in what is referred to as the escalation process. This two-stage process, which informs the ASBU's working methodology, operates as follows:

Stage One:

- ❖ **Step one:** single agency response (usually police or housing officer).
- ❖ **Step two:** joint agency response: police & housing officer working together and involving other agencies as necessary (e.g. referral to children's services, education welfare etc).
- ❖ **Step three:** multi-agency meeting to share information and to work together to engage individuals and families and to stop poor behaviour by addressing unmet support needs.
- ❖ **Step four:** referral to the ASBU.

Stage Two:

Enforcement action by the ASBU

It is important to recognise that this process guides the actions both of the ASBU and of the ASB caseworker. It demonstrates that there is an expectation that other agencies will in the first instance deal with ASB-related issues before referring cases to the ASBU. For the caseworker, the referral '*kicks in*' at step three of stage one, because the caseworker calls and chairs the multi-agency meetings. It also demonstrates that while the ASBU prepares cases for enforcement action, its contribution to responses short of enforcement, such as preventive or diversionary actions, is more advisory than '*hands on*', although the area-based nature of the caseworker's role meant that in practice she was more engaged in the earlier stages of the escalation process than other ASB officers would normally be.

With the exception of the service provision of a caseworker under Project 709, staff in the ASBU do not work in an area-based way: their caseloads will be made up of cases from across the city of Plymouth. The ASBU appears to be understaffed, and this problem has been exacerbated by staff sickness absences. One consequence of this, and the very short notice of much court-related work, is that staff in the unit have to work on one another's cases, as demand and resource availability dictates. Thus, from time to time the caseworker employed on Project 709 worked on ASB cases from outside of the NDC area, although no quantified

measure of this was made available to the evaluators to gauge its full extent.

(iv) Local Businesses

Local businesses have a number of different potential interests in ASB. They can be victims to forms of ASB such as graffiti, for example. Their activities may also indirectly contribute to ASB, for example, through licensed premises. And they are also a resource in tackling ASB, for example by rapidly clearing up graffiti and other signs of damage attributable to vandalism, as well as by reporting ASB to public authorities. The evaluators' understanding is that following initial visits by the caseworker, there has been little engagement with local businesses since. The caseworker reported that many businesses were reluctant to take any high-profile or formal action against ASB through a concern that this might make them targets of reprisals that would then make the ASB problem worse, rather than better. One exception to this was the Co-op Supermarket in Mount Wise, which has successfully deployed the Mosquito device to deter gatherings of young people immediately outside the shop.

In the initial visits, local businesses were encouraged to keep logs of ASB incidents if they did occur, for evidential purposes, and the caseworker was of the opinion that if businesses did identify ASB problems that they wanted resolved they were likely to take their concerns to the local police, and not to her. The project co-ordinator of the Devonport Business Support Service, who personally was unaware of the existence of the ASB caseworker's post in the NDC area, confirmed this, pointing out that local businesses tend to have greatest contact with the patrolling PCSOs. The project co-ordinator attends six-weekly meetings with the Bobbies on the Beat team at which she puts forward *"suggestions and information on crime from local businesses"*.

(v) Environmental Services

Under the terms of the Environmental Protection Act, Plymouth City Council Environmental Services have a statutory duty to investigate complaints about environmental problems such as excessive noise, the build-up of household rubbish and smoke pollution from bonfires, and where necessary to prosecute perpetrators of those particular problems. They are therefore an important part of the local anti-social behaviour infrastructure.

Environmental services may receive complaints directly from the public, or complaints may be referred to them by other agencies, such as housing officers working for the local authority.

There are two officers from Environmental Services who cover the locality of the NDC area, and their investigative role has been assisted by the DRC Partnership-funded purchase of MATRON noise monitoring equipment, as a part of Project 709.

Environmental Services possess a small number of MATRON equipment sets for deployment across the city, but the provision of dedicated equipment for the NDC area improves the speed with which noise complaints can be investigated there. The caseworker initially was trained in the use of MATRON but the service-level agreement specifies that the MATRON equipment is deployed in the NDC area by Environmental Services officers. The equipment is useful for substantiating or disproving a complaint about noise, but the evidence it provides is not always sufficient, without corroborating evidence, for enforcement activity.

Officers from Environmental Services are sometimes invited to multi-agency case conferences, depending upon the nature of the ASB problem presented there.

(vi) Local Schools

Schools have a number of different interests in ASB. Their premises are vulnerable to acts of ASB, particularly because they are often unoccupied at weekends, during evenings and during school holidays. Through their educational roles they have a responsibility in the broadest sense of preventing ASB by fostering the development of pro-social attitudes and behaviours. Also, during the school day they are responsible for managing the behaviour of their pupils, including ASB, which can be disruptive in the classroom, impacting negatively upon the educational experiences of others.

In addition to the three primary schools in the NDC areas there was, until recently, a secondary school at Parkside. That school has now closed, but when it was operating the ASB caseworker did make contact with the school, and was involved in the setting up of a school contract with a pupil there.

The three primary schools demonstrated a lack of awareness of the ASB caseworker's role – none of the head teachers had met the caseworker, although they had been invited to, but not attended, the multi-agency forum convened by her. Thus, the lack

of knowledge may have been attributable in part to the caseworker not making contact with the schools, but it was also a case that representatives of the schools did not necessarily attend all of the crime and ASB-related meetings to which they were invited. Normally, cases of ASB within schools were dealt with utilising existing internal processes, procedures and sanctions, and in the event of a need to call upon outside agencies, the schools were inclined to use the Bobbies on the Beat team as their first port of call, or social services if there was a '*children in need*' issue. They have all struck up a good relationship with the police team, partly because the police make regular visits to the schools, and partly because some of the team have in the past delivered the DARE educational programme to Year 6 pupils, although the delivery of this controversial programme has now been halted through the intervention of the education authority. Particularly in view of the withdrawal of this programme from the schools, the schools could see the utility of an additional resource for tackling ASB which might involve the delivery of a constructive, preventive educational programme for their pupils – one that focused more on the importance of good behaviour rather than the (punitive) consequences of bad behaviour. This is not something currently offered by the ASB caseworker, but potentially could be.

(vii) Local Residents

Residents are the ultimate beneficiaries of Project 709, but they are also stakeholders in a number of more specific senses. There are, for example, resident representatives on DRC Partnership's Crime and Community Safety Theme Group, which meets quarterly and to which the caseworker reports through quarterly monitoring forms. The Theme Group exercises a governance role for DRC Partnership with regard to Project 709, although line management runs through the ASBU Manager to Plymouth City Council. The caseworker also proactively seeks out resident concerns about ASB by attending resident group meetings. Finally, the caseworker is also a point of contact for resident complaints about ASB, either through drop-in surgeries, or directly by telephone or e-mail. Some residents evaluated the role performed by the caseworker very positively, mainly because they had had direct experience of her resolving their complaints; whilst others had a very limited knowledge about the Project, and others, on the basis of their overview of ASB within the NDC area, held a more cynical attitude, suggesting that in the final analysis the authorities appeared unwilling or powerless really to resolve ASB

problems. In sum, resident attitudes ranged from the positive and confident, to the negative and unconfident.

5. Local Context

Consideration is given in what follows to how the project dovetails with other providers' objectives; and to how it meets local need within the NDC area.

5.1 How the Project Dovetails with Other Providers' Objectives and Working Practices

As noted above, ASB is the concern of a complex network of agencies operating in the NDC area, with different agencies focusing upon different manifestations of ASB. When ASB comes to their attention, some agencies may deal with the problem entirely *'in house'* while others, depending upon the nature of the problem and the point reached within the escalation process, may refer the matter on to other agencies, and ultimately to the ASBU. It is apparent, therefore, that there is no single systematic approach to ASB, and while notionally there is a unified escalation process, the extent to which such a process is adhered to remains open to question. The evaluators were informed, for example, that whilst some agencies are legally obliged to investigate single reports of ASB, others are disinclined to act unless single reports are corroborated by other reports. Similarly, the inclination of agencies to inform complainants about the availability of different remedies for ASB, or to refer complaints on to more appropriate agencies, varied considerably not only from agency to agency, but also from employee to employee. The problem is exacerbated by spatial territorial boundaries: some agencies such as the housing associations operate in defined parts of the NDC area, and once an ASB problem moves off their *'patch'* it is no longer their territorial concern, even though the ASB may have moved elsewhere within the NDC area.

The caseworker's establishment of an NDC-wide multi-agency group was in part motivated by a desire to bring some order to this rather complex and potentially chaotic ASB policy environment, and many participants recognised that this multi-agency group provided a more holistic strategic overview of ASB in the locality. While this may be the case, it is not clear to what extent the multi-agency group – which did not meet through the prolonged sickness absence of the caseworker in 2008, but which has since been reconvened – has affected practice on the ground, although the caseworker's advisory role, particularly for housing officers from the housing associations, has evidently had a positive impact.

Three particular working practice tensions were revealed to the evaluators. Firstly, it is apparent that local agencies have developed their own working practices with regard to ASB, since they have had to deal with ASB both in the period before the establishment of Project 709, and in the period subsequent to its establishment. These working practices may not always be in alignment with those promoted by the Project. For example, it was suggested to the evaluators that in the early days of the Project the approach of the local police, which has since been modified as a result of personnel changes, was predominantly exclusionary, moving very quickly towards the enforcement end of interventions, before other options had been exhausted. This went against the inclusionary objectives of the ASBU, which saw enforcement as more of a last resort, and which were consistent with the wider inclusionary objectives of Plymouth City Council.

Secondly, and perhaps conversely, it is apparent from a number of the stakeholder agencies that their expectations were for more *'on the ground'* or *'front line'* working from the ASB caseworker, involving such things as collating evidence and ensuring that agency responses were properly joined-up. However, the ASB caseworker tended to adopt the working orthodoxy of the ASBU, which was to advise local *'lead officers'* on the steps they needed to take to address ASB problems, either prior to or leading up to the enforcement action stage. This working orthodoxy was not always welcomed: from the perspectives of the other agencies it could be interpreted as the caseworker's reluctance to get involved, indicative both of a limited presence in the NDC area (since her base with the ASBU was outside of the NDC area) and a somewhat non-assertive personality. The perceived reluctance was also interpreted as an inclination to off-load tasks and responsibilities on to others. In this regard, a number of stakeholders noted that while they welcomed the additional resource for dealing with ASB in the NDC area, the resource needed to be more *'front line'* than it was. That said, as the instances of joint working with the police, and joint visits with housing officers, indicate (see above), the caseworker did occasionally operate in a more *'front line'* way.

Thirdly, the limited presence of the caseworker in the NDC area was identified by some stakeholders as being particularly problematic for ASB-related work. This work, it was suggested, often required close consultation about confidential and sensitive matters, as well as rapid action, and neither of these requirements lent themselves to working practices where the ASB caseworker was absent from the area for any great length of time, or otherwise hard to contact.

5.2 How the Project Meets Local Need within the NDC Area

The project formally adopts DRC Partnerships' strategic aim CS1, namely to *"increase community confidence and reduce the fear of crime"*, and although it is not explicitly stated in the documentation, presumably this is to be achieved at least in part by responding positively to resident concerns about ASB. This would require attempts to raise awareness about ASB problems and responses in the locality, and to this end the caseworker produced articles on ASB for the DRC Partnership newsletter, she attended resident association meetings, she knocked on doors in the Mount Wise tower blocks as a part of Project Sunrise, and she publicised local surgeries, although attendance at these proved to be very disappointing, as they had previously been for the Bobbies on the Beat team. The evaluators encountered suggestions that the caseworker could have been even more proactive, for example, by extending the knocking on doors to other residential areas, by visiting youth clubs and schools, and generally by having a greater presence in the area. It is also apparent from stakeholders that the caseworker had limited engagement with local businesses, and there was also no evidence of engagement with tenants of private rented properties or owner-occupiers, although both sectors comprise only small proportions of the total housing stock in the NDC-area. The general flavour of these suggestions and observations are that the caseworker needed to be more visible and accessible in the NDC area.

6. Policy Fit

Attempts to identify policy fit are always to some extent hampered by the regular revision of strategy documents, strategic priorities, outcomes, and performance measures. These have changed in the course of the life of Project 709. The main focus of this section is on the most recent policy strategies, justified by the criterion of sustainability. Thus, while it may be relevant to consider the historic fit between Project 709 and the various strategic tiers from local through to national government, it is arguably of greater relevance to consider the contemporary context.

6.1 Local (NDC Area) Strategy

The Crime and Community Safety theme of DRC Partnership's strategic aims for 2005 to 2011 are as follows:

CS1	Increase community confidence and reduce the fear of crime
CS2	Reduce overall levels of crime
CS3	Keep residents informed of the actual levels of local crime
CS4	Modify the behaviour of young people and families in rejecting crime and anti-social behaviour through positive problem-solving interventions (including prevention, diversion and enforcement)
CS5	Prevent and deter crime and anti-social behaviour through innovative working with key partners
CS8	Improve support to victims of hate (prejudice) incidents and increase community cohesion and the value of diversity
CS9	Actively tackle domestic abuse, increasing awareness, advocacy and reporting
CS10	Reduce the impact of substance misuse

As noted above, the Project Appraisal Form specifically aligns Project 709 to the following strategic aims:

CS1	Increase community confidence and reduce the fear of crime
CS4	Modify the behaviour of young people and families in rejecting crime and anti-social behaviour through positive problem-solving interventions (including prevention, diversion and enforcement)
CS5	Prevent and deter crime and anti-social behaviour through innovative working with key partners

These aims are undoubtedly relevant ones for Project 709 that demonstrate its fit with DRC Partnership's strategic aims, and other Projects sponsored by DRC Partnership address the other strategic aims not specifically included within the scope of Project 709.

6.2 Citywide Strategy

Plymouth Local Strategic Partnership's Local Area Agreement from 2007 until 2010, which has since been superseded by a Local Area Agreement from 2008 to 2011 (see below), included a number of strategic priorities of relevance to ASB:

Under the general aim **to reduce crime**, a specific indicator was a *reduction in BCS category criminal damage*, with a baseline of 7191 in 2005/06, and targets of 8035 for 2007/08, 8373 for 2008/09 and 8692 for 2009/10.

Under the general aim **to reduce the harm caused by illegal drugs**, there was a specified outcome to *reduce public perceptions of drug dealing and drug use as a problem*, using an indicator derived from the Local Government User Satisfaction Survey, with milestones set for successive years.

Under the general aim **to build respect in communities and reduce anti-social behaviour**, there was a specified outcome to *increase the percentage of people who feel informed about what is being done to tackle anti-social behaviour in their local area*, using an indicator drawn from the Local Government User Satisfaction Survey, with a baseline from the 2006 survey, and with milestones set for successive years.

Under the general aim **to build respect in communities and reduce anti-social behaviour**, there was a specified outcome to *increase percentage of people who feel that parents in their local area are made to take responsibility for the behaviour of their children*, using an indicator drawn from the Local Government User Satisfaction Survey, with a baseline from the 2006 survey, and with milestones set for successive years.

Under the general aim **to build respect in communities and reduce anti-social behaviour**, there was a specified outcome to *decrease the percentage of people who feel that people not treating other people with respect and consideration is a very big problem or a fairly big problem in their local area*, using an indicator drawn from the Local Government User Satisfaction Survey, with a baseline from the 2006 survey, and with milestones set for successive years.

Under the general aim **to build respect in communities and reduce anti-social behaviour**, there was a specified outcome to *reduce people's perceptions of ASB*, using indicators drawn from the Local Government User Satisfaction Survey, with a baseline from the 2006 survey, and with milestones set for successive years.

Plymouth Local Strategic Partnership's updated Local Area Agreement from 2008 to 2011 includes two strategic priorities relevant to ASB, namely:

- ❖ **Reduce re-offending rates, violence and acquisitive crime.** This includes a local performance indicator of *reducing criminal damage* from a baseline of 6391 incidents over the year from May 2007 until April 2008, by 3.5% in 2008/09, 2% in 2009/10, and 1.5% in 2010/11.
- ❖ **Improve levels of confidence in local agencies to tackle community concerns of crime and anti-social behaviour.** This includes a national performance indicator, NI21, dealing with local concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime by the local council and police, although at the time of the production of this report the draft LAA has yet to specify in its documentation a baseline and targets attached to it for the following three years.

Overall, it is apparent that there is a fit between the aims adopted by Project 709 and some of those adopted by the citywide Local Strategic Partnership.

6.3 Regional Government

Government Office South West (GOSW) currently has a Corporate Plan for the years 2008 until 2011. Within the Corporate Plan there are five priorities, one of which, namely **improving services and tackling problems (through the PSAs and LAAs)** is of relevance to ASB. Matched to this priority are a number of key outcomes, of which two are particularly relevant, namely:

Key Outcome One: *To ensure local authorities deliver high quality services efficiently and work with their partners to tackle agreed local priorities successfully.*

Central to this will be encouraging the 16 Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) to develop a transformational vision for their areas.

Key Outcome Six: *To reduce crime and re-offending rates; drug and alcohol misuse; and improve community safety and public confidence, particularly in those areas with the greatest potential to improve.*

Regional objectives are cast at a necessarily broad level, but it is apparent that Project 709 fits under their broad umbrella.

6.4 National Government

Project 709 was conceived in the period covered by the National Community Safety Plan for 2006-09. The Plan contained five thematic priorities, namely:

1. Making communities stronger and more effective;
2. Further reducing crime and anti-social behaviour;
3. Creating safer environments;
4. Protecting the public and building confidence; and,
5. Improving people's lives so that they are less likely to commit offences or re-offend.

All of these thematic priorities are of relevance to ASB, variously in terms of prevention, resettlement/rehabilitation, enforcement, and support for witnesses and communities. The priorities are backed up by a number of specified outcomes contained in Public Service Agreements (PSAs), and a corresponding set of statutory performance indicators to monitor progress towards those outcome targets.

The National Community Safety Plan has now been updated, and the most recent Plan now covers the period from 2008-11. The Plan contains a set of strategic priorities that are set out in a new set of PSAs, some of which are cross-cutting. The following comprises a list of the PSAs for 2008-11, all of which, with the exception of PSA26 hold some relevance for ASB:

PSA23: **make communities safer** [Priority action 3 of PSA 23 specifically commits to:

“...tackle the crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour issues of greatest importance in each locality, increasing the public confidence in the local agencies involved in dealing with these issues.”]

PSA26: reduce the risk to the UK and its interests overseas from international terrorism.

PSA21: build more cohesive, empowered and active communities.

PSA17 (Indicator 4): increase the proportion of people over 65 who are satisfied with their home and their neighbourhood.

PSA14: increase the number of children and young people on the path to success.

PSA13: Increase children and young people's safety.

PSA24: deliver a more effective, transparent and responsive CJS for victims and the public.

PSA25: reduce the harm caused by alcohol and drugs.

PSA16: increase the proportion of socially excluded adults in settled accommodation and employment, education or training.

Once again, there is a clear connection between the terminology of these PSAs and some of the strategic aims adopted by Project 709, particularly with regard to building community confidence, and improving young people's lives. It is perhaps noteworthy that Project 709 commits itself to 'prevent and deter' rather than to reduce ASB. The latter is more easily measurable as an outcome.

7. Project Progression

This section considers the progression of the project over the funding period and plans for future development; as well identifying areas of significant change and the policies and procedures that are in place.

7.1 The Progression of the Project over the Period of Funding

The Project was intended to begin in July 2006, but the caseworker did not take up the post until December 2006, a delay of between five and six months. Over the first few months, from December 2006, the caseworker was involved in an amount of training and personal development work that limited the contact she had with the area, and she was also engaged in a process of familiarisation with the local context, comprising both agencies and residents. In addition, it was pointed out to the evaluators that there were initially two barriers to the progression of

the Project. Firstly, as a consequence of the bottleneck of cases coming into the ASBU, there were a number of outstanding Devonport cases that required her input in the preparation of files for drug-related enforcement action. Secondly, the caseworker reported some difficulty in imposing her presence over local agencies such as the police who had developed their own particular way of dealing with ASB. As the evaluators understand it, the caseworker's intention was to use the ASBU's escalation process as a structure around which the actions of local agencies in respect of ASB could be organised, but local agencies were not necessarily abiding by this process in their existing working practices. Because of the many routes through which ASB comes to the attention of public authorities, and through which action can be taken against ASB, it is not apparent that this tension has been wholly resolved. The ASB process, in other words, is a difficult one upon which to impose a structure of control.

In mid-2007, further delays were encountered with Project Sunrise, an initiative that intended to audit and map ASB in the Mount Wise tower blocks. The idea for this project originated in the acknowledgement that the tower blocks were a major source of ASB in the NDC area, but that, because of problems of rapid tenancy turnover, voids and informal sub-letting, there was poor agency knowledge about the identity of those residing within them. The plan was therefore to provide an audit of the residents and associated ASB problems, but the plan encountered legal obstacles in the shape of concerns about the violation of human rights legislation. The delay was attributable to a series of meetings and communications with city solicitors, and in the event the intended audit was scaled down. The Project became a joint initiative between the caseworker and the local police, particularly the PCSOs, which involved knocking on doors (approximately half of all residents were visited), introducing the ASB caseworker service to the residents, and inviting the residents to articulate any concerns they had about ASB at that time, or in the future, to the caseworker or the police. One longer term outcome of this Project was that each tower block was subsequently allocated its dedicated PCSO, each tower block was fitted with improved security doors, and the caretakers of each tower block now have radios and have become a part of the Devonport Against Retail Crime (DARC) network.

In the course of 2007, the caseworker also established the multi-agency forum to consider ASB-related issues across the NDC area; operated drop-in surgeries for residents with ASB-related concerns; met with resident groups; and further established her position with regard to local agencies, coming to Devonport for two days a week, amongst other things to offer advice to housing officers at Devonport Development Office, and taking Devonport ASB referrals to the ASBU.

It is apparent that Project 709 stalled around April 2008 when the caseworker began a lengthy period of sickness leave, although Devonport cases that had been referred to the ASBU were progressed by other ASBU staff members. It is anticipated that the replacement caseworker, who has started work in October 2008, will bring the level of service provision back up to that expected for the remainder of the Project.

7.2 Plans for Future Development

The replacement caseworker started work only after the fieldwork that informs this evaluation took place, and thus it was not possible to ascertain what plans there may be for the future development of this specific Project. The activity profile for the year 2008/09 would appear to indicate that the Project will continue with much the same format, outputs and targets as before, albeit with the necessary addition of an exit strategy, the details of which have yet to be articulated.

7.3 Areas of Significant Change

The main changes from the Project as originally envisaged are as follows:

- (i) The original intention of the ASBU, which was a source of concern for DRC Partnership from the outset, was for the ASB caseworker to be based in office accommodation outside of the NDC area, with other members of Plymouth ASBU. Over the course of the Project, while the caseworker has remained based within Plymouth ASBU, the caseworker when not on sickness leave has spent two days per week or more at the Devonport Development Office in George Street, in order to provide advice and support to housing officers on ASB-related matters.
- (ii) The drop-in surgeries for residents with ASB-related concerns were held throughout 2007 but were not well attended or used, and in 2008 they were dropped in favour of joint patrols with PCSOs that would enable the caseworker to make contact with NDC residents and businesses on a regular basis. Unfortunately only one or two such patrols were possible before the caseworker began an extended period of sickness leave in April 2008.
- (iii) The original Project proposal envisaged the caseworker working with schools, with businesses, with providers of private rented housing, and with the owner-occupied sector. It is not apparent that any

substantive work took place with any of these, although the 2007/08 work plan made provision for an action to “*tackle anti-social behaviour in schools*”.

- (iv) The original Project proposal was somewhat ambiguous about the extent to which the caseworker would be involved in preventive or ‘*on the ground*’ work within the neighbourhood of the NDC area. In the event, the work plan for 2007/08 did not specifically make reference to such work and it is apparent from comments received from various stakeholders that the caseworker through her actions did not necessarily share their views on the importance of such ‘*on the ground*’ work.

7.4 Policies and Procedures in Place

The caseworker’s main responsibilities are set out in a work plan developed by the ASBU and agreed with DRC Partnership. A work plan was devised for 2007/08, but the evaluators understand that as a result of the caseworker’s sickness absence, no work plan has been drawn up for 2008/09. The work plan for 2007/08 specifies a number of actions and the rationales underpinning them. For each action there is a box to indicate by when the action should be taken, and a box to chart progress. The evaluators did not see copies of work plans with any entries in the boxes charting progress. However, there is also a quarterly project update report, combined with a financial claim form that is normally completed by the caseworker and submitted in advance of the quarterly meetings of the Crime and Community Safety Theme Group. This report does provide an opportunity for the caseworker to comment upon progress against targets, although there is not always a close correspondence between the contents of the update report and the actions specified in the work plan: that is to say, the updates do not routinely and systematically address each of the actions in the work plan.

Whilst DRC Partnership’s Crime and Community Safety Theme Group meetings provide an opportunity to review progress, it is also the case that the primary responsibility for reviewing progress and updating work plans lies with the managing agency.

8. Outputs and Monitoring

This section of the report is concerned with the Project’s monitoring system and requirements as well as the ASB baseline measures and monitoring systems. Output data are also discussed.

8.1 Monitoring Systems

The monitoring system comprises the requirement for the caseworker to produce quarterly update reports to the Crime and Community Safety Theme Group of DRC Partnership, which also meets quarterly through the financial year. There is a standard proforma that in addition to covering matters related to the financial claim also requires the caseworker to address sections on:

- ❖ General progress;
- ❖ Progress against milestones; and,
- ❖ The delivery of outputs and targets, together with a commentary on these.

While reports have been provided for each quarter, the proforma has not always been used in their compilation: for some quarters, for instance, the report has taken the form of a themed narrative. This inconsistency does make it more difficult than it should otherwise be to monitor progress from the reports alone, although the evaluators note that DRC Partnership routinely collates data from this and other projects on its own monitoring forms. In addition, there is some ambiguity in the style of completion of some sections of the report. When outputs, such as the number of Acceptable Behaviour Contracts issued, are noted, it remains unclear by whom they were issued: whether, for example, by the caseworker or by housing officers. Ideally, such lack of clarity and ambiguity should be addressed through routine line management processes before the final drafts of reports are submitted to the Crime and Community Safety Theme Group.

The monitoring system, as noted above, reviews progress against milestones. The evaluators offer two observations with regard to this. First, those milestones specified in the quarterly update reports are not always closely related to the actions specified in the work plan. Some work plan actions (for example, the establishment of an ASB baseline for the NDC area, or the intention to tackle ASB in schools) therefore may end up getting 'lost' as the project progresses. Alternatively, new milestones may appear in the quarterly update reports that have not originated in work plan actions, and whose rationale is not clearly articulated. An example from Quarter 2 in 2007/08 is '*consider the need for a Landlord Forum*'. Second, whilst a work plan was produced for 2007/08, there is no evidence that the work plan was reviewed or modified in the course of 2007/08, whilst no work plan was produced at all for 2008/09. This may be attributable in part to the unavoidable

sickness absence from April 2008, but the absence of a 'live' work plan makes it more difficult to monitor the activities of the caseworker, and it is therefore advantageous, where possible, to keep the work plan as a 'live' rather than an historical document.

The caseworker is line managed through Plymouth ASBU, and managerial supervision is evidently utilised to review progress. For example, it is evident from one quarterly update report that the line manager's advice was sought in the decision to replace drop-in surgeries with joint patrols with PCSOs. Arguably better use might have been made of line management also to update work plans, and to ensure a closer fit between the work plan and milestones set out in the monitoring system outlined above.

8.2 ASB Baseline Measures and Monitoring Systems

The aim of establishing an ASB baseline measurement was specified as an early milestone for the Project, as recorded in the project proposal documentation. Such a baseline was regarded as an important means by which the performance of the Project, and its contribution to tackling ASB in the NDC area, could be assessed. The evaluators have encountered no evidence that such a baseline was established, however. The caseworker has not asked the local police to provide her with statistics on ASB-related incidents, for which a national recording standard has been in place since April 2006. Nor has the caseworker obtained data on ASB-related incidents from analysts working for the police and local authority through Plymouth CRDP. The CDRP has collected this data for each Plymouth neighbourhood since April 2004, and such data is accessible to Plymouth ASBU. It is perhaps noteworthy that while ASB is a priority area for Plymouth's Local Area Agreement 2008-2011, other than for criminal damage the baseline measure is an indicator based not upon the number of ASB-related incidents, but upon public perceptions – obtained by survey – of local agencies' ability to deal with local concerns about ASB. The choice of such a measure, dictated by the new national Assessment of Policing and Community Safety (APACS) performance measurement framework, may reflect the problems inherent in using incident counts as a measure of ASB, and may help to account for a certain unwillingness in using such a baseline measurement in Project 709. Problematically, however, the APACS survey measurement is not available at the NDC area's level of resolution, and the MORI surveys that are conducted specifically in NDC areas include other survey measures, based upon British Crime Survey questions regarding perceptions of disorder.

There are alternative sources of information on ASB that may have informed a baseline measurement. These include complaints records of environmental services, which have a statutory duty to investigate every complaint made, but also records of ASB kept by social housing providers and schools. The evaluators were informed that Plymouth City Council did have a central register of ASB-related cases in their managed housing stock, but that the person responsible for the collation of this data was on long-term sickness absence, as a result of which the data was unavailable to the ASBU.

Counts of ASB-related incidents suffer a number of limitations. Firstly, there is a '*dark figure*' of incidents that for various reasons may not be reported to public authorities, and such a dark figure does not remain constant over time. For example, the high profile national *Respect Action Plan* from 2006 onwards may have increased reporting rates for ASB, and indeed this is anecdotally thought to be the case. Similarly, the publicised presence of the ASB caseworker in the NDC area may have had the same effect. Increased reporting of ASB may thus feed statistical increases in ASB incidents, but perversely such increases may represent success rather than failure, as they are indicative of growing public confidence that something can be done about ASB. In this regard, ASB is similar to other often under-reported problems such as domestic violence and racial harassment, but without large-scale public surveys it is impossible to gauge the extent to which statistical increases in incidents are due to higher reporting rates rather than an increase in the number of incidents.

Secondly, there are problems with how ASB incidents are counted. For example, several complaints may be received by the same agency about the same incident. Alternatively, given the complexity of the local ASB infrastructure, complaints about the same incident may be made to different agencies, thereby raising the possibility of double-counting. It is also by no means clear what constitutes a single incident, as a number of ASB problems are on-going, and indeed it is their on-going nature that gives them their status as ASB. Agencies, moreover, as well as workers within agencies, do not necessarily share the same inclination to record ASB. The evaluators were informed, for example, that ASB problems will not be recognised by housing officers unless individual complaints are corroborated by complaints from others; whilst some agencies, such as schools, may prefer to deal with ASB on an informal level – in this regard the evaluators were informed that there was '*very little*' ASB in the local primary schools. There are, then, significant difficulties with measuring ASB from reporting and recording practices that can both under- and over-count the problem.

The caseworker claimed to acquire her sense of the local ASB problem from the amount reported to her through her interactions with local residents and local agencies. In effect, such reports comprised local *'intelligence'* that provided a composite picture of the extent of ASB in the NDC area. In her view she was in a good position to monitor ASB and to establish whether the ASB problem in the area was being contained or was *'going off'*. Her overall sense was that ASB incidents were declining across the city, despite a greater willingness or preparedness to report ASB in the NDC area.

The caseworker employed the same approach when it came to the identification of ASB hotspots in the area, a priority task as noted in the 2007/08 work plan. Hotspot analysis can be performed as a statistical task using technological supports such as geographical information systems (GIS), but there is no evidence that such analysis was done in the NDC area. Instead, the caseworker's local presence and interaction with local residents and agencies put her in a position to identify points where ASB-related problems appeared to be concentrated. Such local opinion, for example, played some part in the decision to target the Mount Wise tower blocks for Project Sunrise from 2007 onwards. It was also in response to the perceived build-up of ASB problems in a particular area that the multi-agency forum for ASB was established, and this forum later extended its purview from that geographical area to the whole of the NDC area. Since this was a forum that could potentially bring together all local agencies with an interest in ASB, and to whom ASB might be reported, arguably an opportunity was missed to develop a more systematic approach to the sharing and reporting of ASB-related information, as enabled by the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act, and more strongly required by the amendments contained within the 2006 Police and Justice Act. This might have made monitoring systems more robust, particularly as systems that rely upon the more informal practices described above are more vulnerable in the light of the prolonged absence, or turnover, of personnel.

8.3 Output Data

Outputs for Project 709 are detailed in the project appraisal form, agreed between DRC Partnership and Plymouth ASBU. They comprise a number of measures that can be grouped as follows:

1. Enforcement or preventive measures:

- a. ABCs issued.
- b. ASBOs applied for.
- c. Drug dens closed.
- d. Injunctions sought.
- e. Prevention initiatives implemented.

2. Actions with other agencies:

- a. Advice sessions.
- b. Child-in-need meetings.
- c. Joint visits.
- d. Multi-agency meetings.
- e. Theme group meetings.
- f. Referrals to other agencies.

3. Public contact:

- a. Families supported.
- b. Resident meetings attended.

4. Publicity:

- a. Articles for DRC Partnership newsletter.
- b. Public events.

5. ASB Reported to the Caseworker

These data raise a number of points of observation. Firstly, the data measure outputs rather than outcomes: thus, they provide some measurement of what the caseworker has done, but they do not contribute towards an understanding of the success or otherwise of the Project. More specifically, the measures do not in themselves give any indication of service outcomes: for example, were referrals to other agencies taken up? And were the outcomes satisfactory? Were ABCs kept or broken? In many respects, and particularly because ‘*case management*’ took up 75% of the caseworker’s workload, it would have been preferable to devise measures that charted or tracked the progress of cases: how many were resolved, how many are on-going etc.? Statistics of ASB-related incidents might have been used as a part of this measurement process.

Secondly, some of the output measures are ambiguous. For example, in one quarterly report the caseworker notes that it is difficult to quantify the number of advice sessions held for partner agencies because advice may be delivered in different ways, such as formal advice sessions, informal guidance, advice given over the telephone or through e-mail. Similarly, with regard to ASB reported to the caseworker, it is not clear whether the count relates to incidents of ASB, or reports made of such incidents: as noted above, incidents can be reported by different people. In the light of these sorts of difficulties, it is possible that some measures could have been articulated with greater degrees of precision in order to make them more meaningful and useful.

Thirdly, it is apparent that the output targets, particularly for enforcement and preventive measures, were gross over-estimations of the numbers actually achieved in the course of the Project. Thus, for example, the projected number of ASBOs was 24, whilst the actual number to date is one; the projected number of drug den closures was 16, whilst the actual number to date is none. The achievement of much smaller numbers of these measures does not imply failure on the part of the Project, but it is perhaps indicative both of the difficulty of identifying appropriate output measures for ASB projects, and of the difficulty of anticipating how community-based projects will unfold in practice. Thus with the benefit of hindsight one might suggest that many of the output measures were necessarily speculative. Whilst the output targets set out in the project appraisal form correctly anticipated that actions with other agencies and public contacts, including the reporting of ASB, would comprise a significant proportion of the caseworker’s workload, the overall number of enforcement actions was grossly over-estimated. This would have been apparent by the end of the first year of the Project, if not sooner, and it might have been appropriate to revise the output targets in the light of

this, in order to preserve the targets as part of a working document, and thus of an evolving performance management framework, rather than an historic and obsolete one.

Fourthly, it is observed that in the quarterly reporting process, target output measurements generally are divided equally across each quarter. For example, in 2008/09 output targets specify 10 multi-agency meetings in each quarter period, and 15 advice sessions delivered to housing officers in each quarter period. Some targets may be logical, such as the target of one theme group meeting attended in each quarter, but other targets assume a consistency to the workload that is both unwarranted and unrealistic, and the targets might easily become relatively meaningless. This point strengthens the case both for reviewing the appropriateness of output targets, so that they may be used to manage rather than simply monitor performance, and for devising targets that are more meaningful, particularly in terms of measuring service outcomes.

9. Sustainability and Mainstreaming

The original project proposal application demonstrates that project mainstreaming was anticipated if the Project *“proves its worth”*, and if it is economically viable. The same document also notes the following:

“It is envisaged that other landlords will eventually buy into the service and provide income to ensure the long-term economic sustainability of the post”.

The evaluators did not encounter any evidence to suggest that other landlords, whether from the social or the privately rented sectors, had been approached with a view to continuing the funding of this particular Project after its current DRC Partnership funding stream comes to an end in March 2009. However, it is apparent that Plymouth ASBU has developed plans to continue the post, albeit not in its present form. Plymouth ASBU has produced a strategic plan that envisages an increase in the numbers of ASB caseworkers working across the city of Plymouth. These caseworkers will continue to adopt the working practices of the ASBU, so that caseworkers will not be area-based in terms of their deployment: their caseloads will be city-wide. This is in part because the nature of work demands makes it difficult for staff to specialise in cases only from one geographical area: areas vary in their workloads and caseworkers must be prepared to work on any cases as the demands of the court process and staff availability dictate. That said, on the basis of Project 709, the ASBU manager does recognise the value of area-based work, in terms of building good working relationships with local agency personnel, and to this end the strategic plan includes a

proposal that caseworkers will deliver surgeries to housing officers in different city neighbourhoods.

The fate of the ASBU strategic plan was partly entwined with the fate of the vote on the proposed transfer of Plymouth City Council's housing stock to a new registered social landlord, namely Plymouth Community Homes. This proposed stock transfer, which was adopted as an aim by Plymouth City Council in February 2007, only a short while after the start of Project 709, introduced a good deal of uncertainty into the ASBU. The vote eventually took place in November 2008, and the stock transfer will now go ahead as proposed. In the future, then, the ASBU will negotiate a service-level agreement with Plymouth Community Homes, in which the latter buys in services from the ASBU. Other registered social landlords are also likely to buy in such services, and it is likely, therefore, that advice surgeries will form an important part of these services. It is anticipated that the ASBU will be retained by Plymouth City Council because its remit runs wider than the management of the social housing stock.

10. Implementation Arrangements

This section examines Project 709's management arrangements as well as the perceived quality of service.

10.1 Management Arrangements

Project 709 is managed by Plymouth ASBU and overseen by DRC Partnership through its Crime and Community Safety Theme Group, which meets quarterly, and which receives a quarterly progress report and funding claim from Plymouth ASBU. The aims of the Project are set out in the project proposal application form and the project appraisal form, and the caseworker works to a work plan, which is:

"...produced in collaboration with [the] ASB Unit Manager, [the] Bobbies on the Beat sergeant, Local Housing Officers, DRCP and Residents" (2007-08 work plan).

The work plan contains details of proposed actions, the rationale for them, and the dates by which such actions are expected to be implemented.

The caseworker operates from two sites, either from within the central ASBU covering all of Plymouth and based outside of the NDC area, or in accommodation within the Devonport Development Office in Mount Wise.

The initial project proposal envisaged the caseworker working entirely from the central ASBU, but following negotiations an agreement was reached whereby the caseworker worked two or three days a week within the NDC area.

In practice, the caseworker works with a limited amount of day-to-day managerial oversight to a set of project aims and to a work plan. While this leaves the caseworker with some discretion, in practice the workload is determined largely by routine commitments – the advice sessions for housing officers, resident meetings, and so forth; and by the *ad hoc* demands of case management – following up on complaints, holding multi-agency meetings, visiting victims and witnesses, preparing cases for court action and so forth. This may not necessarily be problematic, but without careful workload management there is always a danger of slippage, and evidence of such slippage can be found, for example, in the failure to devise a baseline measurement for ASB in the NDC area, and in the relative neglect of planned actions such as the development of ASB interventions in schools. Stronger managerial oversight would have reduced the likelihood of such slippage.

10.2 Quality of Service

With regard to quality of service, the two main stakeholder groups are residents and local agencies. Resident opinion varied. Some residents, despite articles in the DRC Partnership newsletters, were barely aware of the Project's existence, whilst some – specifically those who had been helped by the caseworker with complaints of ASB – were fulsome in their praise for the caseworker and the work she was doing. There was similar variation in responses from local agencies, with the caseworker receiving a noticeably more positive evaluation from those agencies, especially housing officers from housing associations or with limited experience of managing ASB, with whom the caseworker was co-located whilst in Devonport, and with whom the caseworker presumably spent more time.

The quality of service provided by the ASB caseworker is difficult to assess because there is scope for ambiguity and disagreement about the nature of the '*product*' provided by the caseworker. As noted above, the ASBU expected the caseworker to conform largely to the working practices of the ASBU, with regard to following the escalation process and intervening most prominently only when cases have passed through earlier stages of the escalation process, under the oversight of other local '*lead agencies*'. Other stakeholders, however, imagined a more '*hands on*' role for the caseworker. The two most experienced and involved local stakeholders, namely the police and local housing officers, both had ideals that diverged from the ASBU model. Perhaps tellingly, one police

officer suggested that what was really needed was a local ASB enforcement officer, perhaps uniformed, who could take on ASB cases at an early stage, collecting the evidence that would facilitate enforcement actions to take place. One housing officer, meanwhile, suggested that the caseworker would have been better employed as a specialist ASB housing officer, receiving and dealing with complaints and problems at their inception rather than at some point down the line of the escalation process.

It is apparent that some of the services provided were informed by best practice elsewhere. More specifically, the escalation process is now widely adopted in Devon and Cornwall and further afield, having first been put forward as best practice in the 2003 White Paper *Respect and Responsibility*, although the process is open to some interpretation. Additionally, Project Sunrise, entailing the proposed audit of ASB and residents in the Mount Wise tower blocks, was based upon a similar scheme in Bristol.

Although there are other area-based ASB initiatives operating in other NDC (e.g. Hartlepool) and non-NDC areas, and although multi-agency working is a significant feature of such schemes, it is unclear to what extent the multi-agency forum model developed by the Project is replicated elsewhere. The forum strikes the evaluators as a model of good practice. It appears that the forum was used to monitor on-going ASB issues in the NDC area: arguably its brief could have been extended to include a data-driven strategic review of ASB trends and patterns in the NDC area, and it may be, therefore, that careful thought could be given to both the functions and appropriate membership of this forum, and its relationship to other agencies and processes operating in the area.

11. Value for Money

The project summary document indicated approval of plans that were initially costed at £179,512 over the life of the Project, including the purchase of capital equipment (in the form of MATRON noise monitoring equipment), revenue costs and an in-kind contribution from Plymouth City Council. DRC Partnership's expenditure profile for Project 709 shows a planned spend over the life of the Project of £196,261.

Whilst far fewer cases than anticipated in the original project output targets have resulted in formal enforcement actions such as drug den closures or ASBOs, it may be that this is partly attributable to the much speedier handling of cases that has been afforded by the appointment of a specialist ASB caseworker in the NDC area. The caseworker's presence has ensured a much more responsive approach to setting up

multi-agency meetings, and since one purpose of such meetings is problem-solving, it may be that more potentially serious ASB problems have been solved at a stage short of formal enforcement action, thereby obviating the need for such action. The evaluators regard the speeding up of this process as an indicator of the Project's value for money.

The local presence of the ASB caseworker not only sped up the process, but it also ensured the development of good informal face-to-face relations with other agencies, which as some stakeholders noted helped to ease communications over a subject that is often sensitive, and often requires close, on-going communications. It is likely that such multi-agency working also helped to resolve ASB problems more effectively than a more distant process, with its caseload bottlenecks and formal communications, would have been able to do. Consequently, the local placement of the ASB caseworker contributed to the value for money of the Project, although it should be noted that the caseworker only spent two to three days of each working week in the NDC area. Arguably a stronger local presence might have enhanced the value for money of the project, and reduced the risk of the caseworker being sidetracked into other city-wide ASB cases, as an inevitable consequence of the ASBU's short-staffing and excessive workload, although it is not known how frequently this occurred in practice.

In theory, the Project was established to deal with ASB across all tenure categories in the NDC area, with area-based working thereby militating against the tendency of the ASBU to focus upon ASB in social, particularly local authority, housing. In practice, the closer working relationship afforded by area-based working has ensured a better engagement with ASB-related concerns in social rented housing beyond the local authority, although such engagement has come at a time when all social housing providers have been required, anyway, to establish their own policies with regard to ASB. Engagement with the owner-occupied and privately rented sectors appears to have been more limited, although it is recognised that these tenure categories are very much in the minority in the NDC area anyway. Overall, the caseworker's capacity to extend the purview of ASB policy beyond the narrow confines of local authority housing management is another indicator of the Project's value for money.

12. Involvement of Minority and Excluded Groups

Project documentation reviewed by the evaluators shows the requirement for the caseworker to monitor the ethnicity of users of the service: indeed, the caseworker sought clarification of whether the requirement was for a note to be made of the ethnicity of all members of the public coming into contact with the Project (through information, advice and guidance work), or just those referred to the caseworker. The quarterly progress reports provide an opportunity for the caseworker to report on the ethnic monitoring of the caseload, but the evaluators found such a report only on one quarterly report, namely the January to March 2008 report, which simply notes that 28 white residents accessed the service. It is unclear why such ethnic monitoring was not reported more regularly through the quarterly reports.

From the first quarter of 2008/09, the quarterly progress report and claim proforma has a section (section 5) specifically devoted to ethnic monitoring, but neither of the quarter one or quarter two reports seen by the evaluators had this section completed.

A document detailing the activity profile for Project 709 for 2008/09 includes within it a reporting framework which notes the following:

“gender, age and ethnicity data should be totalled for each of the following outputs and reported as a project total on the quarterly claim form:

No. of ABCs, issued and existing

No. of ASBOs/CRASBOs successfully applied for

No. of drug dens closed

No. of injunctions applied for.”

As noted above, according to the quarterly progress reports for 2008/09 there is no evidence that such monitoring has been completed.

The availability of the ASB caseworker service is advertised through the DRC Partnership Newsletter, which reaches all households in the NDC area, and which is published on a monthly basis. On occasions, it is also apparent that leaflet drops have been organised in parts of the area in response to particular ASB-related problems identified there. On the newsletter it is stated that the newsletter is available in other languages, in Braille and in large print, thus efforts clearly are made to increase the accessibility of information about the Project, although details of the

Project are not included in every edition of the Newsletter, thereby missing a routine opportunity to advertise the service. In addition, the web presence of information about the Project is limited: to access information from the DRC Partnership website one has to follow links through projects and themes, and the details of the Project are very limited, with a brief description of the Project's aims and no details of the caseworker, how they may be contacted, or where and when they are located in Devonport.

13. Conclusion and Recommendations

Project 709 seeks to address anti-social behaviour in the NDC area through the provision of a dedicated ASB caseworker. Utilising the framework of the ASB escalation process, the caseworker provides advice and guidance to *'lead agencies'*; calls and chairs multi-agency meetings when requested to do so; and receives referrals of *'high-end'* ASB cases that are heading, via the ASBU, for enforcement action. In addition, the caseworker can be contacted directly by members of the public with an ASB-related complaint; and the caseworker proactively seeks out ASB-related concerns through attending resident meetings and through specific initiatives that may involve leaflet drops or knocking on doors. The caseworker also reviews ASB across the NDC area more strategically, through the vehicle of an ASB forum.

Project 709 carries with it a number of ambiguities. Firstly, there is not a particularly close tie in between its strategic aims, its output targets, associated actions and milestones. Secondly, there is some difference in the way the Project is perceived from different stakeholder agencies. In particular, the ASBU's anticipated involvement in the latter stages of the escalation process does not fit the anticipation of housing officers and local police officers for a more *'on the ground'* input from the caseworker. Thirdly, its original, and necessarily speculative, output targets have become obsolete in the course of the life of the project, and their relevance needs revisiting, as does the work plan, which does not closely fit the Project's strategic aims, and which in any case has not been completed for the 2008/09 year. The difficulties arising from these ambiguities have been exacerbated to some extent by the lengthy sickness absence of the ASB caseworker, and the lack of any substantial replacement back-up. This has made it difficult for the Project to progress far in its second year, and has removed an *'on the ground'* resource for addressing ASB in the NDC area.

It is very difficult to assess the impact of Project 709 in terms of its aims of increasing community confidence, reducing fear, preventing and deterring ASB, and modifying the behaviour of young people and young

families. This is because measurements of confidence are not available at the NDC area level, because data on perceptions of crime collected by MORI in 2008 (for comparison with 2006) are currently unavailable, because no baseline measure of ASB in Devonport has been established, and because cases are not tracked in order to establish whether, indeed, behaviour has been modified over time. The Project has been well received by direct beneficiaries when the sources of their complaints have been dealt with, and the presence of the caseworker has expedited multi-agency problem-solving, both within and outside of multi-agency meetings. Yet the service has not been as widely advertised or publicised as it may have been, and some members of the public and some stakeholder agencies continue to demonstrate somewhat cynical attitudes about the prospects of the Project making any difference to the ASB problem in the area. Without hard data, it is difficult to demonstrate what difference the Project has made.

The Project has some very positive features, notably the way it expedites multi-agency meetings, and strengthens multi-agency working, which may lead to better problem-solving short of enforcement action, although it is apparent that there is scope for more multi-agency working, including schools, businesses, and other housing providers, for example. The multi-agency forum, moreover, provides a model for the effective area-based strategic oversight of ASB, which has the potential to link into other strategic bodies. Even without stronger evidence of the Project's successes, these features alone may provide a case for the mainstreaming of Project 709, and it is positive in this regard that Plymouth ASBU has a strategic plan that envisages the absorption of the caseworker within the city-wide ASBU, and the adoption of the advice surgery model that has served to strengthen multi-agency working with regard to ASB in the NDC area.

On the basis of the research conducted for this evaluation, the evaluators have the following specific recommendations to make:

1. Strategic documentation surrounding Project 709 needs to be reviewed and revised through the managing agency, with a view to establishing a more consistent and logical tie up between Project aims, outputs and outcomes, work plan actions and milestones. The review should draw upon experience to update these aims, outputs etc., in order to produce a work plan that offers a clear strategic guide for the caseworker through the remaining months of the Project.
2. The Project needs to be more '*data-led*' in making use of existing information sources to identify ASB problems and to monitor progress from a still-to-be-established baseline, and possibly in

developing new information sources, such as diagnostic tools (equivalent to ASSET tools used by YOTs) that would permit the 'tracking' of local ASB cases over time.

3. The Project needs to widen the multi-agency network, particularly by addressing those elements of the original work plan that have suffered from slippage, including engagement with local schools, with businesses, and with other housing providers, particularly as their presence in the NDC area may be growing.
4. ASB is complex because there are several different avenues of complaint, and different means of redress, resolution and problem-solving. The Project needs to exploit the opportunity afforded by the ASB forum to provide a more co-ordinated ASB service and a strategic overview. The forum is the most appropriate vehicle through which agencies may 'sign up' to the escalation process, and through which roles, such as that of the ASB caseworker, may be clearly negotiated and assigned. Careful thought needs to be given to the membership of the forum, so that it is inclusive of agencies such as schools, youth services and environmental services as well as housing agencies and the police, as well as to its degree of formality and management 'buy in'. The forum is a very promising means of ensuring the sustainability of ASB policies and practices in the NDC area after Project 709 comes to an end, and the development of its role should form an important part of the exit strategy.
5. The management and monitoring of Project 709 need to be tightened up so that there is less ambiguity in quarterly reports, and less inconsistency in the completion of project documentation, including ethnic monitoring. This recommendation needs to be considered in concert with recommendation 1 above, since this should provide the greater clarity in aims, output measures and milestones that will reduce the risk of ambiguity in the reporting process. Like the Project, the monitoring process also needs to be more data-led.
6. Although Project 709 only has five months left to run, the Project should be more widely advertised and publicised, through the NDC Newsletter and DRC Partnership's website, but also through other sources, such as posters and local events. In view of the limited time left for the Project, and the time lost through sickness absence, careful consideration should be given to locating the caseworker in the NDC area for more than the two days currently scheduled, since the caseworker's presence is in itself an advertisement for the Project and a means of building community confidence through greater visibility. A stronger presence would also afford an

opportunity for the greater community contact that might result from the greater advertising and publicity exposure.

14. References

Activity Profile for Project 709 for 2008/2009.

ASB Caseworker's Workplan, April 2007-March 2008.

Project Appraisal Form for Project 709.

Project Proposal Application for ASB Officer (Devonport), Plymouth ASBU.

Quarterly Project Update Reports Produced by the ASB Caseworker for DRC Partnerships' Crime and Community Safety Theme Group.