Pride in Place: Tackling Incivilities

Desk-based Research Report
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1. Introduction

‘Environmental incivilities’ such as vandalism, graffiti, litter, broken glass and dog mess can have a significant impact upon citizens’ quality of life and wellbeing. In 2010, a representative survey of more than 1,000 adults across England found that 70% of people were very or quite concerned about the appearance of their local area. This figure was up 7% from 2009 and was higher, for example, than the level of concern expressed about climate change, suggesting that for many citizens, the question of ‘environment’ is arguably as much as a local issue than a global one.1

The Carnegie UK Trust was set up in 1913 to improve the wellbeing of the people of the UK and Ireland. We believe that in local areas where environmental incivilities are significant, reducing them would lead to improvements in both individual and community wellbeing, in terms of the connection between people and their local community, the health of individuals, and the ability of citizens to engage in physical activities within their local environment.

Successive administrations in the UK, devolved nations and at local authority level have committed to reducing environmental incivilities. At local level, Local Strategic Partnerships and Community Partnerships have often been at the forefront of efforts to highlight and prioritise environmental incivilities, reflecting the cross-cutting nature of the issues and the multi-agency response needed including a pivotal role for communities and civil society organisations, which has increasingly been recognised.

As the data in this paper shows, the action taken has contributed to marked improvements in a number of these issues in many local areas. However, the data also shows that environmental incivilities remain a major concern for many communities – and that those living in deprived communities are significantly more likely to experience these problems. We therefore believe that there is considerable merit in examining how incivilities can most successfully be addressed in communities experiencing disadvantage.

The Carnegie UK Trust believes that one of the most effective strategies for tackling the problems that a community might be experiencing is to focus on the assets each community has available to it. If communities can successfully identify and capitalise on these assets, this can help build capacity and confidence – thus enabling communities to find solutions to a range of difficulties that they might be experiencing.

To improve our understanding of how to tackle environmental incivilies in this context, the Carnegie UK Trust undertook research to identify and showcase examples of good practice, where local communities and civil society groups have adopted innovative and effective approaches to tackling incivilities which are problematic in their area.

To support this case study work, this paper sets out the current literature on the topic of incivilities. The paper:
- uses attitudinal survey data to explore national trends in the prevalence of incivility;
- explores links between incivility and wellbeing;
- identifies policy initiatives that have been implemented throughout the past 15 years across the UK; and
- considers the current policy context in which environmental incivilities are being tackled, and the new approaches which are being developed to address them.

1 Keep Britain Tidy, Word on our Street, 2011
2. What do we mean by environmental incivilities?

Defining incivility is a difficult task and the word is often used interchangeably with anti-social behaviour. However, it is best seen as a sub-set of anti-social behaviour. In defining anti-social behaviour, the Home Office in 2004 identified four key aspects that contribute to anti-social behaviour. These include:

- The misuse of public space (eg drinking in the street, drug dealing and vehicle related nuisances)
- Disregard for community and personal wellbeing (eg noisy neighbours and rowdy behaviour)
- Acts directed at people (eg verbal abuse)
- Environmental damage (eg graffiti/vandalism and rubbish and litter)

It is the fourth element of the Home Office’s definition of anti-social behaviour that the Trust is interested in. This is not to suggest that other aspects of anti-social behaviour are not important and do not impact on wellbeing - rather that environmental quality issues have often received less attention than other aspects of anti-social behaviour, such as noisy neighbours or young people’s use of public spaces.

While many commentators are critical of the subjective nature of the definition of anti-social behaviour, local environmental quality issues can be objectively measured and assessed. Specifically, when referring to environmental incivilities, we can refer to the range of environmental factors that were identified within the 2004 Scottish Social Attitudes Survey (SSAS). This survey was the first of its kind in the UK to consider these issues in depth and explore the correlation between wellbeing and incivilities.

The specific factors identified in the 2004 Scottish Social Attitudes Survey include:

- Vandalism and graffiti
- Litter and rubbish
- Broken glass
- Cat and dog mess
- Dumped cars/fridges etc
- Uneven pavements
- Discarded needles

These environmental quality issues are also commonly identified in other surveys as incivilities, though the SSAS remains the most in-depth study carried out across the UK which uses this terminology.

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2 Home Office, 2004
3 Scottish Government, Scottish Social Attitudes, Environmental Injustice, 2004
3. What is the prevalence of environmental incivilities?

This section outlines findings from surveys across the UK to show the prevalence of environmental incivilities. The key sources of data are the British Crime Survey (for England and Wales), the Northern Ireland Crime Survey and the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey. Data is not available for all of the environmental incivilities identified in the previous section.

Vandalism and Graffiti

In England, the 2006/07 Local Environmental Quality Survey of England (LEQSE) found an incidence of graffiti at 26% of 19,000 sites surveyed. The percentage of sites affected by graffiti showed a ‘slow but steady’ decline since 2001. Of all the English regions, London is the most affected by graffiti but between 2005 and 2007, it had reduced from 16% to 10%\(^4\). Similarly, the British Crime Survey, as illustrated in Chart 1 below, shows a decrease in the extent to which people in England and Wales consider vandalism and graffiti to be a big problem in their area, from 34% in 2001/02 to 21% in 2010/11.

The proportion of people in Scotland who report vandalism and graffiti appears lower, but care should be taken over comparisons due to different approaches to data collection and questionnaire design. As Chart 2 below shows, the proportion of people in Scotland reporting that they experience vandalism and graffiti has been reducing since the early 2000s, from a high of 19% in 2002, to 11% in 2010.

Meanwhile, the 2011 Northern Ireland Crime Survey also found a decrease in the percentage of people reporting vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property between 2003/04 (28%) and 2010/11 (20%).

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\(^4\) Environmental Campaigns Limited (EMCAMS) Good Graffiti, Bad Graffiti? A new approach to an old problem, 2008

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**Chart 1: People saying there is a ‘fairly big’ or ‘very big’ problem in their area with vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property in England and Wales**

![Chart showing percentage of people with problems](chart.png)
Littering

The British Crime Survey shows the proportion of people in England and Wales who view littering and rubbish lying around as a problem. There has been a slight decrease in this level from 32% in 2001/02, to 28% in 2010/11.

In Scotland, the Scottish Household Survey has found a similar decrease in the reporting of litter as a common problem. As Chart 5 shows, the number of people in Scotland reporting littering as a ‘fairly’ or ‘very common’ problem has fallen from 29% in 1999, to 24% in 2010.

The pattern is the same in Northern Ireland. The 2011 Northern Ireland Crime Survey reported a slight downward trend from the proportion of people who perceived rubbish and litter to be an issue in their local area, from 29% in 2003/04, to 27.1% in 2010/11.

However, further data is provided by the 2010 Northern Ireland Litter Survey conducted by TIDY for the Department of the Environment.

6 Northern Ireland Crime Survey, 2011
7 TIDY, Northern Ireland Litter Survey, 2010
Chart 4: People saying there is a ‘fairly big’ or ‘very big’ problem in their area with rubbish or litter lying around in England and Wales

Chart 5: How common is rubbish or litter lying around in Scotland (by percentage who say ‘very’ or ‘fairly common’) 1999 – 2010

Chart 6: Percentage of people in Northern Ireland perceiving rubbish and litter to be an issue in their area
TIDY surveyed more than 500 sites across 26 council areas in Northern Ireland. They found that only 2% of areas surveyed had no litter recorded, and 14% failed to reach an acceptable standard – up from just 8% in 2009.

In terms of the types of litter or rubbish reported as a problem by communities, a 2011 survey by Keep Britain Tidy found that in England, cigarette litter was the biggest problem identified (by 54% of respondents) followed by confectionery wrappers, chewing gum, cans and bottles and fast food packaging (all mentioned by over two-fifths of respondents). Similarly, the top three litter types identified in the 2010 Northern Ireland Litter Survey were cigarette-related litter (82%), confectionery (61%) and drinks litter (50%).

Other issues identified in the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey as environmental incivilities made an appearance in the Keep Britain Tidy survey, but were referred to by far fewer individuals. For example, only 1% reported problems with drug paraphernalia or broken glass.

**Abandoned vehicles**

According to the Local Government Association, the number of abandoned vehicles reported to

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8 Keep Britain Tidy, The Word on the Streets, 2011

9 Northern Ireland Crime Survey, 2010
local authorities in England and Wales was 828,534 in 2002-03. This represented a 28% increase from the previous survey carried out in 2000-01. The British Crime Survey shows a marked decrease in the number of people reporting problems with abandoned and burnt-out cars between 2001/02 and 2010/11, from 20% in 2001/02 to just 4% in 2010/11.

Since 2007, the Household Survey has asked people in Scotland to report on how common it is to see abandoned or burnt-out vehicles. Overall, only a small number of people in Scotland report this to be ‘fairly’ or ‘very common’, falling from 2% in 2007, to 1% in 2010.

The Northern Ireland Crime Survey 2011 found that perceptions of abandoned or burnt-out cars steadily fell from 11% in 2003/04 to 5% in 2010/11 (Chart 10).

In Ireland, the 2010 Crime and Victimisation Survey found that householders’ experience of burnt-out vehicles was low - however, reports have risen from under 0.5% in 2003, to 2% in 2010.

**Dog and cat mess**

While the British Crime Survey does not collect data on dog and cat mess, it is repeatedly reported as a significant issue. For example, out of a list of nine environmental incivilities that the public felt councils should spend more on, dog fouling was rated third most important. The same survey found that it was joint first (with littering) on the list of how big a problem the issue is for their area.

A 2011 survey for Keep Britain Tidy reinforced this, with dog fouling seen as the most problematic issue in their area and the most important environmental incivility that councils should spend money tackling. A separate survey for Keep Britain Tidy found that of the 54 local authorities surveyed in England, incidence of reported dog mess was found to have increased slightly, from 6% in 2007/08 to 7% in 2009/2010.

In Scotland, the 2004 Scottish Social Attitudes Survey found that 64% of people reported that dog and cat mess was either a ‘problem’ or a ‘really big problem’ in their local area. However, more recent figures from the 2010 Scottish Household Survey found that the percentage of people saying that ‘animal nuisance such as noise or dog fouling’ was a ‘very/fairly big problem’ in their local area was around 23%.

In Northern Ireland, the 2010 Litter Survey reported a marked increase in the observation of dog fouling between 2009 (3%) and 2010 (15%). Conversely, in Ireland, the 2010 Litter Monitoring Body System Results survey of local authorities found that the observed incidence of dog fouling had decreased slightly from 1.5% in 2008, to 0.8% in 2009.

It is notable that all the charts included here show a (broadly) downward trajectory in people’s experience of environmental incivilities. What the data cannot tell us is the extent to which this reflects an actual decline in the prevalence of the issue, rather than an increasing tolerance of environmental incivilities. Changes in the requirements on local authorities to monitor and report data relating to environmental incivilities (see discussion on the abolition of the National Indicator Set in section 6) may limit the scope for answering this question in future.

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10 Northern Ireland Crime Survey, 2011
11 Crime and Victimisation Survey, 2010
12 ENCAMS, Local Environmental Quality Survey of England, 2002
13 Keep Britain Tidy, The Word on the Streets, 2011
14 Keep Britain Tidy, The state of England’s local environment, 2010
15 Scottish Executive, Scottish Social Attitudes 2004: Public Attitudes and Environmental Justice in Scotland, 2005
16 Northern Ireland Litter Survey, 2010
17 Litter Monitoring Body System Results, 2010
4. Who experiences incivilities?

Repeated surveys from around the UK have shown that environmental incivilities are more likely to be experienced, and experienced more deeply, in deprived and urban environments. In addition, environmental incivilities may also be experienced differently by people depending on their age.

When looking at reports of perceived prevalence of neighbourhood problems, the 2010 Scottish Household Survey found that:

- 17% of those living in large urban environments reported that vandalism, graffiti or other deliberate damage to property was a ‘fairly’ or ‘very common’ experience, compared to 13% across Scotland as a whole (and only 4% in remote rural areas).

- 30% of those living in large urban environments reported that rubbish or litter lying around was a ‘fairly’ or ‘very common’ experience, compared to 25% across Scotland as a whole (and only 13% in remote rural areas).

- 31% of those living in the 10% most deprived areas reported that vandalism, graffiti or other deliberate damage to property was a ‘fairly’ or ‘very common’ experience, compared to 13% in the rest of Scotland.

- 45% of those living in the 10% most deprived areas reported that rubbish or litter lying around was a ‘fairly’ or ‘very common’ experience, compared to 25% in the rest of Scotland.

It is widely recognised that perceptions of neighbourhood problems are often greater than that which are actually experienced. However, despite lower overall percentages in the extent to which individuals experience the problems described above, the same differences between more and less affluent areas can be observed.

For example, the Scottish Household Survey found that those living in the most deprived areas of Scotland were more likely than those living in the rest of Scotland to experience:

- vandalism, graffiti or damage to property (16% compared with 7%);
- litter or rubbish (27% compared with 18%); and
- abandoned or burnt-out cars (3% compared with 1%)

Meanwhile, as illustrated in Chart 9, the same survey shows that those living in large urban areas were more likely to experience vandalism, graffiti and damage to property; rubbish and litter; animal nuisance including dog fouling; and abandoned or burnt-out cars than those in other parts of Scotland.

| Chart 9: Experience of neighbourhood problems by Scottish urban rural classification |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Percentage                      | Large urban areas | Other urban areas | Accessible small towns | Remote small towns | Accessible rural | Remote rural |
| Vandalism/graffiti/ damage to property | 25               | 20               | 15                | 10                | 15               | 10              |
| Rubbish or litter lying around  | 20               | 15               | 10                | 5                 | 10               | 5               |
| Animal nuisance such as noise or dog fouling | 10               | 5                | 10                | 10                | 15               | 10              |
| Abandoned or burnt out vehicles | 5                | 5                 | 10                | 5                 | 10               | 5               |
This reinforces earlier research by Curtis et al. (2005) which found that within Scotland, those living in one of the four largest cities were most likely to report that 11 out of 16 incivility items were a ‘really big problem’ compared with those living in small towns and rural areas. They concluded that: ‘those living in the most deprived parts of Scotland are more likely to report a wide range of environmental incivilities as a problem in their area.’

Surveys in other parts of the UK show similar findings. For example, research across England published by ENCAMS in 2007 found that less affluent groups – particularly those living in social rented accommodation and in more deprived urban areas − were likely to have a lower quality of life than more affluent groups, with...
dissatisfaction with the appearance of their local neighbourhood and anti-social behaviour often significant factors contributing to this.\footnote{ENCAMS, Measuring Quality of Life: Does Local Environmental Quality Matter, 2007}

Meanwhile data from the British Crime Survey demonstrates that perceptions of high levels of anti-social behaviour\footnote{Defined as the following seven strands: noisy neighbours or loud parties; teenagers hanging around on the streets; rubbish or litter lying around; vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property; people using or dealing drugs; people being drunk or rowdy in public places; and abandoned or burnt-out cars.} increase in relation to the level of deprivation within a local area. Home Office analysis\footnote{‘Perceptions of anti-social behaviour’, http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110218135832/rdse.homeoffice.gov.uk/rdse/pdfso8/hosb1508.pdf} found that in England and Wales in 2008, 36% of residents in the most deprived 10% of wards reported high levels of anti-social behaviour in their area. This was more than double the figure reported for all adults surveyed (16%) and five times higher than the figure reported in the 10% least deprived wards (7%).

Comparison with a similar analysis in 2006\footnote{http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110218135832/rdse.homeoffice.gov.uk/rdse/pdfso6/rdseol2106.pdf} shows that whilst perceptions of high anti-social behaviour had fallen slightly overall (from 17% of those surveyed in 2006, to 16% in 2008), perceptions of high levels of anti-social behaviour in the most deprived areas had increased by one fifth during 2006-2008 (from 30% in 2006, to 36% in 2008).

Analysis of the 2008 survey by specific environmental incivility (Chart 11) shows that perceptions of environmental problems in the 10% most deprived wards are at least 60% higher than the overall average for England and Wales and several times higher than in the most affluent wards.

The 2010 Northern Ireland Crime Survey found that the following problems were seen as ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ big problems by people living in the most deprived areas of Northern Ireland, compared to those living in the least deprived areas:
- vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property (43% compared with 15%)
- rubbish or litter (48% compared with 18%)
- abandoned or burnt-out cars (16% compared with 2%).

In addition, similar to the findings of the Scottish Household Survey, the Northern Ireland Crime Survey shows that those living in urban areas of Northern Ireland are more likely than those living in rural areas to report environmental incivilities in their area as a ‘fairly’ or ‘very’ big problem. For example:
- 29% of those living in urban areas reported that vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property was a ‘fairly’ or ‘very’ big problem compared with 14% of those living in rural areas.
- 32% of those living in urban areas reported rubbish or litter was a ‘fairly’ or ‘very’ big problem, compared with 22% of those living in rural areas.
- 7% of those living in urban areas reported abandoned or burnt-out vehicles was a ‘fairly’ or ‘very’ big problem compared with 3% of those living in rural areas.

Younger people are also more likely to report that they experience environmental incivilities than older people. For example, the 2010 Scottish Household Survey found that:
- 17% of those aged 25-34 reported that vandalism, graffiti or other deliberate damage to property was a fairly or very common experience, compared to 9% of those aged 60-74 and 7% of those aged over 75 years.
- 30% of those aged 25-34 reported that rubbish or litter lying around is a ‘fairly’ or ‘very’ common experience, compared to 23% of those aged 60-74 and 16% of those aged over 75 years.
Similarly, in Northern Ireland, the 2010 Crime Survey shows that those aged 16-24 were more likely than those aged 75+ to report vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property (29% compared with 11%); and abandoned or burnt-out vehicles (8% compared with 1%).

Finally the British Crime Survey also identified a relationship between the level of community cohesion in an area and the perceived level of anti-social behaviour reported by residents in that area. Around a third (34%) of people who disagreed that people within their neighbourhood were willing to help their neighbours, had a high level of perceived anti-social behaviour, compared with only 13% of those who agreed that their neighbours helped each other.

Furthermore, 29% of individuals who reported that people in their local area did not greet each other if they met on the street, reported high perceived anti-social behaviour. This compares to 14% amongst individuals who agreed that local people greeted each other.

The nature of the data collected through the British Crime Survey means that it is not possible to determine the direction of causality, ie whether higher levels of anti-social behaviour are caused by a lack of community cohesion, or if a lack of community cohesion is the result of the prevalence of anti-social behaviour.
5. What is the impact of incivilities on individual and community wellbeing?

The evidence suggests that incivilities can impact on individual and community wellbeing in a number of ways including increased crime levels and the perception of increased levels of crime; impact on health and psychological wellbeing; levels of trust and empowerment within the community.

A considerable amount of academic debate on environmental incivilities has focused on the question of whether such incivilities lead to an increase in crime levels, or whether they only impact on the perceived crime level in an area.

This debate has been ongoing since the 1980s when Wilson and Kelling published their influential paper introducing their ‘broken windows’ theory\(^22\). The theory, which is supported by primary research, uses the ‘broken window’ as a metaphor for the cycle of decline in neighbourhoods which can occur when seemingly small issues are not dealt with. They posit that this allows those with criminal intent to calculate a lower level of risk in carrying out crime, leading to an increased crime rate. The difficulty with proving this theory is that there are few longitudinal surveys that allow researchers to explore the process as it happens, and large scale surveys can only show correlations, rather than causation.

What is less contentious is the link between environmental incivilities and fear of crime\(^23\). For example, surveys repeatedly show a link between how areas look and how safe people feel in them\(^24\). As much of the academic literature is from a criminological perspective, there is little attention paid to this as a problem in itself.

However, our starting point is that incivilities have an impact on individual and community wellbeing, as highlighted (in relation to interpersonal civility) by research undertaken by the Young Foundation, which found that ‘civil behaviour makes us feel better about ourselves and where we live’\(^25\). And it is well-documented that perceptions of crime levels, and fear of crime, have a detrimental effect on wellbeing.

This link is shown in the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey from 2004, which found that those who report a high level of environmental incivilities in their local area are:

- more likely to report that they feel anxious (140% more likely than those with a low incidence of environmental incivilities);
- more likely to say that they have not walked one mile in the past year (125% more likely than those with a low incidence of environmental incivilities);
- more likely to say they get depressed (90% more likely than those with a low incidence of environmental incivilities);
- more likely to say that their health is poor for someone their age (90% more likely than those with a low incidence of environmental incivilities); and
- more likely to say that they are smokers (50% more likely than those with a low incidence of environmental incivilities).

Given the prevalence of incivilities in deprived communities, it is no coincidence these issues are also common indicators of socio-economic


\(^{24}\) Keep Britain Tidy, The Word on the Streets, 2011

\(^{25}\) The Young Foundation, Charm Offensive: Cultivating Civility in 21st Century Britain, 2011
deprivation. However, other factors, such as age, gender or socioeconomic status, may also impact on these correlations. The researchers therefore carried out detailed multivariate analysis. They found that even after taking these factors into account, those who reported the highest incidence of environmental incivilities were more likely to report anxiety, depression, poor health, smoking and poor exercise than those with more positive views on this aspect of their local environment.

Rogers (2011) argues that environmental incivilities contribute to these issues, as the degradation of the local area can:

‘leave inhabitants with a deepened feeling of being “moral outcasts”, as their physical world conveys the idea that they are inferior and “unworthy”.’

Furthermore, those who say that their local area lacks pleasant areas to walk are more likely to report that they have not taken a walk of a mile or more over the last year than those who live in areas with pleasant areas to walk. The report suggested that:

‘street level incivilities and the absence of goods would appear to have an adverse psychosocial impact on health and health behaviour.’

In terms of community wellbeing, the same survey found that the subjective reports on the presence of ‘street level incivilities’ - such as vandalism and graffiti and broken glass - had an effect how likely people were to feel that they could trust others. They found that amongst those with a low ‘street level incivilities’ score, no less than 59% of those surveyed said that generally people could be trusted; with this figure falling to 44% amongst those with a high street level incivilities score. This is supported by the research by the Young Foundation highlighted previously, which found that ‘simple acts of incivility can have powerful effects on our wellbeing.’

In the 2004 Scottish Social Attitudes Survey found that those living in areas with a high level of environmental incivilities were also more likely to report that they felt helpless in being able to improve their local area. Just 8% of those with a low level of environmental incivilities reported that they felt helpless about living around there, compared to 23% of those who have a high reported incidence of environmental incivilities. Similarly, 18% of those who experience low levels of incivilities report that they thought it would be difficult to improve their area, compared to 39% of those living in areas with a high reported incidence of environmental incivilities.

While more recent surveys have not collected data on environmental incivilities that can be analysed for understanding citizens’ relationship with their local area, the 2010 Scottish Social Attitudes Survey did show that feeling disempowered and unable to do much about improving things in the local area is linked to feeling dissatisfied with the local area itself. This 2010 survey showed that 39% of those who agreed that it is difficult for them to improve their area were dissatisfied with their area, compared with only 15% of those who disagreed.

Qualitative research has explored this issue further. Research by Rogers in Cadoxton, South Wales found that when asked about their reaction to local environmental incivilities, many reported that it was either none of their business, or not something they could do anything about.
There have been a number of government policies and initiatives to reduce environmental incivilities in the past 15 years. Often, these have been seen as part of wider strategies to reduce anti-social behaviour and mainly have taken a punitive approach. More recently, initiatives focusing on community empowerment and behavioural change models have been introduced, and community-led approaches are becoming more common. This section will explore these trends and the available evidence on their effectiveness.

**New Labour and anti-social behaviour (1997 – 2006)**

*England and Wales*

While environmental incivilities were considered to be an issue during the 1980s, it was not until the New Labour government was elected in 1997 that they gained prominence in national debates and policies.

Early interventions by Labour focused on legislative solutions. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 enabled policing officials to impose anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs) on individuals, and required local authorities and police forces to work together to put in place a strategy for dealing with crime and anti-social behaviour in their local area. The ASBO enforcement measure was used in instances where an individual’s behaviour did not warrant a criminal breach, yet was destructive in the sense that it was causing distress to others. The ASBO was initially viewed as an effective tool for managing anti-social behaviour, including environmental incivilities. However, it was increasingly called into question, particularly for blurring the distinction between criminal and civil issues.\(^{30}\)

The Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001 provided police with greater powers to tackle anti-social behaviour through fixed penalty notices for disorderly behaviour. Furthermore, the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 introduced greater powers for landlords when dealing with anti-social tenants, introduced parenting contracts and dispersal orders, as well as providing increased powers for tackling environmental problems such as noise, graffiti and waste. In addition to the Anti-social Behaviour Act, in 2003 the Home Office set up the Anti-social Behaviour Unit (ASBU) in order to develop policies and initiatives for tackling anti-social behaviour.

As part of this approach, the UK Labour government introduced Community Support Officers in local areas to address, amongst other issues, common complaints like graffiti, vandalism, disorder and anti-social activities which have a disproportionate effect on people’s feelings of safety. Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) were introduced by the Police Reform Act 2002. At the end of April 2007, the Home Office reported there were approximately 16,000 PCSOs in England and Wales. PCSOs have important powers that allow them to address environmental incivilities, including issuing fixed penalty notices for littering, breach of dog control orders, as well as for cycling on a footpath and removing abandoned vehicles.

While fixed penalty notices have been part of UK legal systems since the 1950s, many more were introduced over this period to give police and public authorities in England, Scotland and Wales a tool against anti-social behaviour, including environmental incivilities. They are designed to reduce paperwork for police and council officers by allowing low-level, anti-social behaviour to be dealt with on the spot. Newer types of notice exist for disorder, environmental crime, truancy...
and noise. A fixed penalty notice is not a fine or criminal conviction and the recipient can opt for the matter to be dealt with in court instead of paying. However, if the recipient neither pays the penalty nor opts for a court hearing in the time specified, the penalty may be increased by 50% and registered against the recipient as a fine. It may then be enforced by the normal methods used to enforce unpaid fines, including imprisonment in some circumstances.

There is some debate about the effectiveness of fixed penalty notices in tackling environmental incivilities. Research published by Keep Britain Tidy in 2011 found that:

‘in areas where fixed penalty notices are more frequently issued, satisfaction with levels of cleanliness is often low.’

Nevertheless, the charity does believe that fixed penalty notices have an important role to play in addressing incivilities, as long as these are only one part of a wider strategy which has a significant focus on community education and engagement.

In addition to the deployment of PCSOs by local police forces, many local authorities across England and Wales have, over the past decade, employed ‘neighbourhood wardens’ to help tackle anti-social behaviour – with environmental incivilities often a particularly important focus of the wardens’ work. Although the role, remit and resources of wardens can vary significantly between different local authority areas, core tasks might include:

- identifying and reporting issues such as graffiti, broken glass or discarded needles;
- patrolling local neighbourhoods to act as a deterrent to anti-social behaviour;
- speaking with the perpetrators of anti-social behaviour to dissuade them from engaging in such activities; and
- working with local residents and community groups to encourage a sense of pride in the local area.

As well as the approaches targeted at a range of anti-social behaviours or environmental incivilities, policymakers have also sought to take action to target certain incivilities more specifically. For example, the Dogs (Fouling of Land) Act 1996 made it a criminal offence for dog owners not to clear up dog faeces on designated land. In 2005, a survey for ENCAMS found that more that 93% of local authorities in England had designated land under this Act. The same survey found that over 90% of councils employed at least one dog warden in their area, with the enforcement of dog fouling legislation being a central element of the wardens’ work. The survey also found that more than 80% of local authorities had adopted a fixed penalty scheme for dog fouling; and had engaged in anti-dog fouling initiatives including anti-fouling signs and the provision of dog waste bins.

The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 repealed the Dogs (Fouling of Land) Act, and replaced it with similar and new powers, which the majority of local authorities have used. The charity Keep Britain Tidy believe that these policy responses have been effective, and have contributed to a reduction in levels of dog fouling in England, but they argue that fixed penalty notices for dog fouling should be more widely used.

For other environmental incivilities, legislative approaches have played a less prominent role in policymakers’ responses. For example, local authority responses to drug-related litter regularly include measures such as employing a dedicated team or staff member to collect discarded needles; education campaigns and safety measures aimed at local communities; needle exchange schemes; and partnership initiatives with other public sector bodies.

31 Keep Britain Tidy, The Effectiveness of Enforcement on Behaviour Change, 2011

32 ENCAMS, Control of Dogs Survey, 2006
Scotland
Scotland has also introduced a number of legislative frameworks for addressing the issue of anti-social behaviour and environmental incivility. These largely followed the New Labour model until the election of the SNP Government in 2007.

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998, highlighted previously, also introduced ASBOs in Scotland, while in 1999 the (then) Scottish Executive launched Community Safety Partnerships, similar to the multi-agency partnerships established in 1998 in England and Wales, to take a co-ordinated approach to addressing crime and anti-social behaviour in local areas. Community wardens are employed in many local authority areas in Scotland. Although these wardens have a role in tackling environmental incivilities, similar to neighbourhood wardens in England and Wales, they have also have a broader community safety role in some areas.

In 2004, the Anti-Social Behaviour (Scotland) Act was passed, introducing a range of new measures to try and tackle anti-social behaviour, including environmental incivilities, within local communities. Amongst other measures, the Act placed a duty on councils and chief constables to publish plans to deal with anti-social behaviour in their areas; extended the use of ASBOs; introduced fixed penalty notices for fly tipping and dropping litter; increased penalties for a number of environmental incivilities; gave local authorities new powers to enforce the removal of graffiti; and banned the sale of spray paint to under 16s. In addition to these measures, the wide-ranging Act also included provisions in relation to the dispersal of groups, the prevention of ‘noise nuisance’; the registration of private landlords; the imposition of parenting orders; the introduction of electronic tagging; and the powers available to sheriffs in children’s hearings.

Again, similarly to England and Wales, there has also been separate legislation in Scotland to deal with specific types of environmental incivility. For example, the Dog Fouling (Scotland) Act was passed in 2003.

Northern Ireland
The strategic context for tackling environmental incivilities in Northern Ireland is somewhat different than other parts of the UK, due to the particular history of the province; the political context there; and the different government arrangements which have been in place over the past decade.

Unlike England, Scotland and Wales, ASBOs were not introduced in Northern Ireland as part of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, for a variety of reasons. Firstly, unlike councils in the rest of the UK, local authorities in Northern Ireland were not in a position to administer ASBOs through housing, education and social services, as these services were centrally run. Secondly, the comprehensive review of the Northern Ireland criminal justice system, conducted between 1998 and 2000, did not include any specific proposals in relation to anti-social behaviour. Policymakers therefore decided to monitor the effectiveness of the ASBO approach elsewhere, before taking a decision on whether they should be implemented in Northern Ireland at a later date.

In 2003, the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order was passed, giving social housing providers a range of new powers to tackle anti-social behaviour in the localities in which they operate. All social housing providers, including the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, are required to publish a set of policies and procedures on how they will tackle anti-social behaviour. ‘Environmental quality issues’ such as graffiti, dog fouling and fly tipping are included within the definition of anti-social behaviour adopted by most providers.

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34 Northern Ireland Office, Measures to Tackle Anti-Social Behaviour in Northern Ireland – A Consultation Document, 2004
ASBOs were subsequently introduced in Northern Ireland in 2004, through the Anti-Social Behaviour (Northern Ireland) Order. This Order gave the Northern Ireland Housing Executive; the Police Service of Northern Ireland, and District Councils the power to apply to the courts for an ASBO to be applied.

Community Safety Partnerships, similar to those in operation elsewhere in the UK, were introduced on a voluntary - rather than statutory- basis in Northern Ireland in 2003. As in other jurisdictions, the aim of these partnerships is to support local authorities, the police, housing providers, and local businesses, community and voluntary organisations to work together to reduce the prevalence of anti-social behaviour, including environmental incivilities, in local communities. Local Neighbourhood Policing Teams play an important role in helping to tackle anti-social behaviour in Northern Ireland, while neighbourhood warden teams have also been deployed in many areas - although these have often had a greater housing-focus in their role than their counterparts in other parts of the UK.

A shifting focus to prevention (2006 onwards)
The next wave of interventions focused on what was termed the ‘Respect Agenda’ in England and Wales. This approach focused less on punitive approaches, although enforcement mechanisms remained an important element, and more on fostering a sense of civic responsibility. It arose out of criticisms that the initial attempts by New Labour to reduce anti-social behaviour by legislation created a situation whereby: ‘underlying much of the policy response is the paradox of imposing civility through coercion or at least the threat of it’ and reflected a growing view that ‘top-down efforts to enforce civil behaviour through rules and sanctions alone can in the long-term prove counter-productive.’

A ‘Respect Task Force’ was set up by the UK Government in 2005, and a ‘Respect Action Plan’ was published the following year. Illustrating the shift in emphasis the front page of the plan stated: ‘The only person who can start the cycle of respect is you.’

Key measures in the Respect Action Plan included a ‘national parenting academy’ to train a range of professional groups in providing advice to parents; more powers for local communities in relation to the policing of their neighbourhood; and a range of measures relating to young people, school discipline, and ‘problem families’. The agenda may therefore be seen as a move away from more traditional legislative approaches to address anti-social behaviour and incivilities, instead providing greater powers and resources for local public sector agencies - and in some cases communities - to penalise those engaging in anti-social behaviour and take action to try and prevent such behaviour from occurring in the first place. It was a combination of both preventative and reactive approaches, but with a focus on action being taken quickly, at a local level, across a range of relevant organisations including schools, housing associations and local authorities. The Respect Task Force was disbanded in 2007 and much of its work taken on by a new youth task force.

In Scotland, the SNP Scottish Government published their new framework for tackling anti-social behaviour, Promoting Positive Outcomes, in 2009. The framework outlined four key themes of prevention, integration, engagement and communication, and aimed to promote positive outcomes and spread existing good practice across Scotland. Although the framework does not seek to abolish previously introduced measures, it aims to take a much broader approach to the issue of anti-social behaviour and environmental incivilities, and address underlying issues which can cause

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37 The Young Foundation, Charm Offensive: Cultivating Civility in 21st Century Britain, 2011
38 Home Office, Respect Action Plan, 2006
these problems to occur. Therefore, the framework includes provisions in relation to diversion activities, mentoring, family support, action to tackle drug and alcohol problems, housing allocation policies, the promotion of positive role models, community reparation, and a greater role for communities in determining how funding to tackle anti-social behaviour should be spent.

In many ways, this move towards a more preventative approach in Scotland is not surprising. Data has shown that the approach to tackling these problems in Scotland over the past decade has generally been less enforcement-driven than in England and Wales - even although authorities in Scotland have many of the same powers available to them. For example, only a very small number of ASBOs have been granted in Scotland compared to the figures in England and Wales. It has been suggested that one of the main reasons for this is the way that the Children’s Hearing System operates in Scotland, with a strong focus on welfare.

In Wales, the Welsh Government has often sought to adopt a similar tone to that now being pursued by the SNP in Scotland: ‘Children and young people are by no means the only perpetrators of anti-social behaviour, though the likelihood of pro-social behaviour in adulthood will stem from initiatives focussed on promoting positive behaviour in people’s formative years and in tackling the causes of anti-social behaviour. In view of this, many Assembly Government anti-social behaviour policies and initiatives are focused on the promotion of positive behaviour and through tackling wider social problems such as poverty and social exclusion.’


At a local level, since 2001 the Welsh Government has invested in a programme called Communities First which aims to improve economic and social outcomes for target communities (identified using the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation). By 2011, the programme was supporting 150 communities covering almost 20% of the population of Wales. While there is limited quantitative data on the impact of these activities on environmental incivilities, a recent evaluation of the programme concluded that:

‘Although there is variation across the areas, the general message from the case studies is of improvement to local area environments . . . in the majority of areas, it is said that there is now a greater pride in, and awareness of, the local environment (and as a consequence reduced incidence of nuisance behaviour such as fly-tipping and vandalism). This has also had spin-off consequences – particularly in terms of increased feelings of community safety, but also greater potential for new economic and tourist activity.’

The Communities First evaluation highlights three themes that have underpinned successful environmental improvement projects:

- engaging the community (including young people in particular) in informing and undertaking improvements (and thereby promoting pride);
- undertaking a campaigning and advocacy role - providing a bridge between the community

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40 Tenants Information Service; Information Note – Anti-social behaviour legislative changes and non-legal remedies for tackling anti-social behaviour


42 Welsh Government, The Evaluation of Communities First, 2011
and organisations such as the local authority - providing a local intelligence role;

- ‘sorting out the little niggles’ - including issues such as car parking, fly tipping, dog fouling and specific issues.

While these ‘niggles’ are not the main focus on the Communities First programme, it is interesting to note that it appears difficult for communities to move on to larger scale improvements until they are resolved.

In Northern Ireland, social housing providers are central to the approach to tackling anti-social behaviour. The anti-social behaviour policy which each provider is required to publish usually includes a number of preventative measures. These include provisions relating to, for example, mediation, partnership work involving a range of relevant agencies, and ‘introductory tenancies’ to allow housing providers to assess the behaviour of a tenant before agreeing a longer-term lease.43

The Coalition, Localism and the Big Society

With the establishment of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition in 2010, the Home Secretary launched a review of existing anti-social behaviour powers. This review found that there were too many tools available to practitioners, resulting in only a small number being used. Furthermore, the more formal tools, such as ASBOs were found to be bureaucratic, slow and expensive resulting in fewer organisations using them. This problem was further illustrated by Home Office statistics which showed that over 10,000 of the 18,500 ASBOs issues between 1999 and 2009 were subsequently breached, suggesting that ASBOs had not proved to be a successful deterrent for the behaviour they were intended to address.

In May 2012, the UK Government launched a new anti-social behaviour White Paper - ‘Putting victims first: more effective responses to anti-social behaviour’. The proposals in the White Paper, which would apply in England and Wales, would reduce the number of different anti-social orders from 19 to six. ASBOs would be replaced as part of this process, while a new ‘community trigger’ would require police, councils and agencies to take action on an issue if five households made a complaint, or if three complaints are made by the same person.

Under the new proposals, ASBOs and six related orders relating to the behaviour of individuals, such as Drink Banning Orders, will be replaced in England and Wales by two orders: the Criminal Behaviour Order (CBO) and a Crime Prevention Injunctions (CPI). The CBO will be used against people convicted of crime. The CPI is a civil order and similar to the existing ASBOs, but will be available at an earlier stage and will be easier and faster to use. CBO and CPI have a lower standard of proof and will be easier and quicker to put in place.

The white paper also proposed that ten existing laws relating to protection of places will be reduced to three types of Community Protection Order. The range of existing powers which enable police to force people to leave an area are to be consolidated into a single power, under which the police will not need to designate a dispersal zone in advance and can order people to leave an area for up to 48 hours. People who fail to comply with the order face a £2,500 fine or three months’ imprisonment.

The six new orders in detail are as follows:

- **Crime Prevention Injunction** – allowing agencies to protect victims at short notice.
- **Criminal Behaviour Order** – to stop convicted criminals from engaging in particular activities or going to certain places.
- **Community Protection Notice** – issued to an individual to deal with a range of problems affecting quality of life in a community.

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• **Community Protection Order (Public Space)** – a flexible local authority power to address a range of anti-social behaviour and prevent future problems.

• **Community Protection Order (Closure)** – will simplify existing powers to close particular premises that cause severe anti-social behaviour.

• **Directions Power** – will consolidate existing police dispersal powers into a single power, enabling police to deal quickly with emerging trouble.

Meanwhile, a number of the UK Government’s other actions/policy decisions have significant implications for the way in which incivilities are tackled. Broadly, much of the debate on localism and the Big Society applies to environmental incivilities in the same way that it applies to other local issues. Rather than expect local or UK government to step in and resolve issues, the UK Government approach is to encourage communities to take ownership of issues and find resolutions that suit their local needs:

> ‘Government is overseeing a fundamental shift of power away from Westminster to councils, communities and homes across the nation. A radical localist vision is turning government on its head by giving power to the people rather than hoarding authority within government.’

One advantage of this approach when applied to environmental incivilities is that it recognises the essentially social nature of the issue. In a recent publication on interpersonal incivility, the Young Foundation suggested that we would benefit from viewing civilities as a type of bacteria, ‘invisible to the outside observer but critical for helping organisms to survive.’ Thought of in this way, civilities, or the connections between people, promote virtuous cycles whilst their absence allows disintegration into spirals of decline. As Crawford notes:

> ‘this relationship quality of social capital means that it is believed to operate as a form of social glue that fosters integration, cohesion and order.’

There is a risk however, that focusing on only social capital approaches to reducing environmental incivilities could lead to a reductionist argument whereby neighbourhoods are blamed for their decline. It is worth noting, as Crawford does, that in many areas which do not suffer from environmental incivilities, there is also low social capital. While social capital can be seen as a tool in encouraging improvements in environmental incivilities, it does not automatically follow that low levels of social capital are necessarily the cause of incivilities. Rather, what they are lacking is capacity and confidence to intervene in a way that would reduce incivilities.

In his study, Crawford concluded that neighbourhood wardens could significantly improve areas by providing the ‘bridging’ capital that helps communities to connect with the people and resources required to make improvements. The case studies which have been developed as part of this Carnegie UK Trust project illustrate how local communities and civil society groups have found the capacity and confidence that they need to tackle incivilities in their area - showing how these approaches have emerged, why they have worked and what impact they have had.

Policy decisions more directly impacting on approaches to tackling incivilities include the introduction of community budgets (see following section), and the decision to discontinue Local Area Agreements and the National Performance Indicators (NPI) against which they were

44 DCLG, www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/content/big-society-overview, 2010

45 The Young Foundation, Charm Offensive: Cultivating Civility in 21st Century Britain, 2011

46 The Young Foundation, Charm Offensive: Cultivating Civility in 21st Century Britain, 2011

measured, in order to reduce the burdens placed on local government by central government and allow local authorities to respond to local, rather than national, priorities 48.

Many local authorities/local strategic partnerships measured progress on tackling environmental incivilities using indicators from the NPI (in particular NI 195, the Cleanliness National Indicator), and the removal of the requirement for them to report these to DCLG means tracking progress may now be more difficult. Incidences of fly-tipping are the only relevant indicator which is now required to be reported by local authorities to national government, although Keep Britain Tidy will continue maintain and develop the NI 195 database, providing all local authorities with free access to allow them to continue to monitor the cleanliness of their local area 49.

The UK Government’s interest in behavioural change models (or ‘nudge’ techniques) also provides a clue to their likely direction of travel. A recent publication by the Institute of Government highlighted the need for public policy to pay more attention to how we can effectively shape behaviour without the use of coercion. They stress that measures such as incentives and information can be effective tools to change behaviour.

In 2009, Keep Britain Tidy began a detailed two year study titled Perception of Place; the aim of which was to: ‘understand not only what drives perceptions of place but also how levels of deprivation impact on perception formation, if at all.’ The study identified three ‘perception principles’. These are essentially rules of thumb that have been identified at varying levels of deprivation - the way people view their community; the make-up of social networks in a community and how this influences perceptions; and the level of empowerment within a community to take action to deal with issues.

These three principles vary greatly depending on the intensity of deprivation within a community and mean that public sector agency, responses to local needs/issues should vary accordingly. For instance, in less deprived areas, residents are often unlikely to know fellow residents more than two to three doors away from them, due to wider social networks, whereas residents in more deprived areas have closer personal relationships with their neighbours.

Given these differing starting points, behaviour change approaches to tackling environmental incivilities must be adapted accordingly. In less deprived areas, positively encouraging residents’ participation may involve highlighting the economic benefit in terms of property prices resulting from clean neighbourhoods. In contrast, residents from more deprived areas were found to respond better to approaches which highlight the impact that poor perceptions are having on particular social groups in the area, such as the elderly.

Information and awareness-raising campaigns on environmental incivilities have of course been running since the 1950s, with Keep Britain Tidy often at the forefront of these. Recent initiatives have focused on using innovative communications techniques to improve the impact of these campaigns. The Perceptions of Place study also identified seven key drivers that influence individuals’ perception of place. By better understanding these drivers, approaches and interventions that encourage a positive change can be developed and implemented.

As an example, the Institute of Government uses the case of a campaign to reduce littering in Southwark. Rather than traditional information campaigns or fixed penalty fines, the council hired actors in giant litter costumes to ‘create a scene’ in busy streets. The actors explicitly aimed to engage with the public, for example by cheering and thanking passers-by who put litter in bins. While other aspects of the campaign

48 http://www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment/decentralisation/tacklingburdens/singledatalist/
49 http://www.keepbritaintidy.org/
also contributed, it is noteworthy that resident satisfaction with street cleanliness in Southwark increased over the period of the programme\textsuperscript{50}.

**Current Policy Drivers**

Current thinking on tackling environmental incivilities is influenced by two more recent policy innovations. The first is increased use of the ‘assets-based approach’ in which the focus is placed on the assets held by a community rather than focusing on what it lacks. The second is the ‘community-led approach’ which is based on a belief that communities have the potential to generate solutions to the issues they face and the role for the funders/public sector agencies is to create the conditions in which this can happen, rather than deliver an imposed, external ‘solution’. Approaches to funding are also changing, driven by the government’s desire to improve outcomes for citizens whilst saving public money, for example through the use of Community Budgets\textsuperscript{51}.

In Scotland in recent years, interventions to tackle issues such as child poverty and health inequalities have placed greater emphasis on what has been termed the ‘assets based approach’. In his 2009 Annual Report, the Chief Medical Officer for Scotland, Dr Harry Burns, suggested that greater success in improving health and wellbeing can be derived from focusing on the assets of a community, such as social networks and the skills and knowledge of local residents, rather than overly focusing on negative aspects.

Such an approach has been demonstrated throughout the UK to link well with the current community development agenda towards tackling incivilities through improving the positive social aspects of a community. In North Glasgow, for example, the Children’s Inclusion Partnership (CHIP) has used an asset-based approach to organise a number of activities involving young people and their families in order to improve their local area. This has included environmental work to bring vacant and derelict land back into community use, and a photography-based history project of the area. These projects have contributed towards an improved local environment whilst providing children and young people with a sustained and varied mix of activities which can impact on their social development.

The community-led approach has also gathered significant momentum in recent years. This is based on the belief that all communities have the potential to develop their own solutions to the issues that they see as priorities and that the role of funders and other support agencies is to help create the right conditions for community led approaches to succeed rather than impose solutions on a set of assumed priorities. There are many examples where communities have identified priorities that local agencies, for example councils, would not have recognised as a priority for the area.

NESTA and the Big Lottery Fund are currently championing this approach through their Neighbourhood Challenge projects. Involving 17 projects from across England, all of which believe there is latent potential within their neighbourhoods for greater community involvement, the Neighbourhood Challenge aims to show how communities, with the right support, can encourage people to work together and deliver innovative approaches to tackling local priorities.

Despite still being at an early stage, emerging findings after six months have highlighted three key priorities for successful community-led action\textsuperscript{52}:

- **Money**: Rather than using funding to address local needs or to fill gaps in provision, funding from NESTA is being used at the community

\textsuperscript{50} Institute for Government, MINDSPACE: influencing behaviour through public policy, 2011

\textsuperscript{51} http://www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment/decentralisation/communitybudgets/

\textsuperscript{52} Neighbourhood Challenge: Learning from innovative communities, http://www.nesta.org.uk/home/assets/features/Neighbourhood%20Challenge%20Learning%20from%20Innovative%20Communities
level to unlock potential, build relationships and uncover local ideas, skills and talents

- Power: Putting the power in the hands of local people by changing the relationship between local authorities and local people into a more participatory one.

- Relationships: Bringing people together to provide a catalyst for future opportunities through inspiration, support and underused resources, all of which help to improve the social capital that drives community-led action.

This approach is typified in Shiregreen, a social housing estate in Sheffield, one of the 17 projects. The aim of the Shiregreen Neighbourhood Challenge is to recover a sense of ‘neighbourliness’ on the estate, boost the sharing and exchange of skills and make more use of under-used buildings. The area has many assets and focusing on these, rather than ‘community needs’, has generated considerable enthusiasm.

Potentially underpinning these different approaches in the future, Community Budgets, introduced as part of the Spending Review in 2010, bring together local and national funding streams into a single pot, allowing local authorities and other agencies to re-design services around the needs of citizens, improving outcomes for local people and with the benefit of reducing duplication and thereby saving public money. ‘Whole Place’ and ‘neighbourhood’ level community budgets are being piloted in 14 local authority areas, including Cheshire West and Chester, where the focus is on reviewing 150 services with a joint budget of £3-4bn, with the aim of making neighbourhoods ‘safer and greener’. At the neighbourhood level, in White City in Hammersmith and Fulham, the focus will be on integrating neighbourhood service budgets, including the ‘clean / green’ budget.

Finally, another approach to be explored in the desire to achieve better outcomes using the same level of resource could involve targeting the provision of services, such as street cleaning and waste collection towards areas with the highest level of need (usually those with a high proportion of low income households or high-density housing). A 2009 report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation provided examples of how local authorities could: ‘reduce the gap in service outcomes and achieve desired levels of cleanliness across all neighbourhoods,’ within existing resource levels, by better targeting programmed services and relying less on top-up / responsive services. However, the report did note that political pressures could make it hard to target resources in this way and therefore a ‘stealth approach’ to targeting might be needed.

Harnessing the Power of Social Media
Greater take-up and use of social media has also led to it increasingly being harnessed as a tool for tackling environmental incivilities and galvanising community action. In recent years, there has been an emergence of social media-based projects aimed at tackling neighbourhood issues, which use social media to raise awareness, promote community action and change behaviours. These social media approaches have had significant coverage in the press and television (eg coverage of the use of Facebook to organise local clean-ups following the English riots in summer 2011).

Another recent project using social media is the Your Square Mile initiative. Initially launched as a series of pilot workshops in 16 communities throughout the UK and Northern Ireland, Your Square Mile aimed to encourage local residents to come together and engage in projects to improve their local community. The lessons learnt from these workshops and subsequent projects allowed Your Square Mile to develop a website providing information to assist future projects to get more


54 ‘Street cleanliness in deprived and better-off neighbourhoods’, JRF, 2009
people involved and give them the tools they need to drive their project forward.

Unique to Your Square Mile has been the recent formation of a mutual organisation that, for an annual subscription of £10 provides individuals with public liability insurance worth up to £1m for incidents that take place while they are volunteering. In addition, membership of the mutual provides communities with free access to a legal services helpline.

Similarly, the work of Mysociety has helped to empower communities to solve environmental issues in their local area by providing a range of websites that allow residents to report problems. Set up as a charity, and using the knowledge and skills of both volunteers and paid programmers, Mysociety aims to: ‘build websites that give people simple, tangible benefits in the civic and community aspects of their lives.’

One of its most successful websites to date, www.fixmystreet.com allows environmental problems such as fly tipping, graffiti, potholes or broken street lighting to be reported directly to the relevant local council department, simply by entering a postcode and problem description into the website. To date, the website has handled more than 170,000 complaints nationally.
7. Next Steps

This paper has explored the evidence on the prevalence and impact of environmental incivilities, and discussed the approaches that governments and others have taken to improving local environments.

The evidence supports our initial hypothesis that environmental incivilities have a detrimental effect on both individual and community wellbeing. While there have been improvements in the prevalence of some environmental incivilities, it is clear that the link between these incivilities and urban deprivation remains extremely strong. It is unsurprising therefore, that some of the literature refers to the issue as one of ‘environmental justice’.

During the 1990s and early 2000s, the policy solutions employed to reduce environmental incivilities focused on punitive measures, with an increasing use of fixed penalty notices and enforcement officers to reduce littering, dog fouling and abandoned cars. While these have clearly had an impact, they are costly in terms of staff time and do not appear to have had significant impacts in areas with high multiple deprivation.

Such policy initiatives may also have suffered from being seen as a subset of wider anti-social behaviour initiatives, with issues of young people using public spaces and noisy neighbours often taking precedence over the ‘niggles’ of environmental incivilities. More recently, there has been a general shift to prevention and community empowerment, with recognition that a better balance is needed between legislation/enforcement and community action to tackle a problem. The literature supports this trend and points to some strategies that have had success.

In these communities, building capacity and confidence to address one set of issues can lead to benefits emerging in many other areas.

Alongside this, there is a need to consider how environmental incivilities can best be measured – and whether what matters is the absolute incidence of the incivility or people’s perception of it. Evidence from the case studies suggests that ‘success’ in tackling incivilities is measured using a very wide set of indicators, many of which are specific to local areas and local circumstances. Meanwhile, the move towards community budgets (particularly in the context of severe constraints on public sector funding) means that the cost effectiveness of interventions is also being examined more closely, with a greater focus on the outcomes achieved for communities.

In order to complement this analysis of evidence and of public policy responses, the Carnegie UK Trust has carried out case study research in local areas which have successfully reduced the incidence of environmental incivilities. By identifying and highlighting these initiatives, we hope to illustrate how communities have built capacity and confidence and tackled incivilities in their areas, and encourage greater action by communities, policymakers and civil society organisations to address this important issue in the future.
The Carnegie UK Trust works to improve the lives of people throughout the UK and Ireland, by changing minds through influencing policy, and by changing lives through innovative practice and partnership work.

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