



**Communities Directorate
Stronger, Safer and Healthier Business Unit
Safer Neighbourhood Service
Head of Service: Paul Brannan**

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Date: 4th June, 2018
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Dear Dan

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

For the past couple of months we have witnessed an increase in people presenting in a semi-conscious state in prominent locations in the town centre due to the consumption of drugs. Whilst this phenomena is not new (you will recall only too well the problems associated with the old "head shop" and Mandela Gardens) it is something we had managed to get top side of over the previous 12 to 18 months. Therefore the starting point for the council and police, notwithstanding responding to the understandable public concern, has been to really try and get to the root of what has changed. This has not prevented ongoing proactive action both to manage problems as they present and to try and reassure the public

Can I initially say how grateful I am for your comments recognising some of the significant improvements we have achieved in partnership with South Yorkshire Police to tackle general antisocial behaviour in the town centre. This has required a sustained and concerted partnership effort to deal with both the symptoms and causes of antisocial behaviour through a range of interventions, engagement and enforcement activity. We have collectively sought to fairly but firmly tackle those engaged in behaviours causing alarm to others and have also sought to try and address some of the underlying issues affecting the way that people may behave. In terms of recorded antisocial behaviour over the 12 month period to March 31st 2018 more than a 20% reduction had been achieved, and for key locations such as the Interchange and Peel Square the reductions have been even more significant.

To some extent therefore the recent upsurge in concern has been a little surprising bearing in mind the improvements achieved and this has required a more forensic analysis and understanding of these more recent problems. I now think that we are in a position to give some clarity as to what has changed and subsequently how we will aim to address it.



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Significantly we have seen a very recent infiltration from an Organised Crime Group [REDACTED] which operates a very aggressive drugs supply chain. By means of coercion and recruitment this group have managed to change the dynamics of the illicit drugs supply chain into the town centre and this has had a major knock on effect on the strength and quantities of drugs being consumed, its availability and how frequently drugs are being used. The group have targeted existing users and it appears clear that the synthetic cannabinoid “spice” responsible for people presenting in semi-conscious states is much stronger than was previously the case and has been brought in by this group. Our colleagues in South Yorkshire Police now have a full intelligence picture relating to this group, three significant arrests have been made this week and a tactical plan is in place to initially disrupt their activity with the overall objective of “running them out” of Barnsley altogether. Whilst not minimising the impact of the alarming way in which those under the influence of Spice appear to most members of the public, to some extent their behaviours are a direct result of this new supply chain and it is only by tackling this element that we will achieve a sustainable solution.

However each and every semi-conscious individual photographed by the public and generally reflective of the concern your constituents are raising are currently subject to direct tailored interventions. Typically we have been using Civil Injunctions against these individuals which, amongst other things, seek to restrict where people can be and who they can associate with. Breaches of Civil Injunctions are usually frowned upon by the judiciary as they are in contempt of a court order therefore ultimately this can result in imprisonment. Barnsley have really pioneered the use Civil Injunction in this way successfully securing more than 20 in the last 12 months many of which are for those behaving antisocially in the town centre.

The Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) in my view is a lower tier intervention which is effective to address volumes of antisocial behaviour but not as effective in addressing more persistent offenders or those involved in criminality. Therefore much of the reduction in recorded incidents can be attributed to the effective use of PSPO powers to disperse individuals before problems escalate. The majority of people respond positively when challenged using the PSPO powers and typically do not come to our attention again. But for a smaller number of people the PSPO does not act as a deterrent and these are the ones we tend to require a more tailored approach to tackle such as the use Community Protection Notices and Civil Injunctions.

Finally for the organised criminal element described above our enforcement options need to be escalated even further. The police will therefore look to pursue specific charges linked to specific drugs and violent offences and the council will support this by looking to contribute towards attaching Criminal Behaviour Orders and potentially gang injunctions.



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We are actively exploring how we can best use these powers to respond to the threat to our town posed by this external organised crime group.

I hope that the information I have provided is helpful in describing the context of our current antisocial behaviour challenges and provided some reassurance that together with the police we will continue to do everything we can to address this. We also have some ambitions we are developing to collocate a broader team of uniformed officers from the council and police into the new Glassworks development, further enhancing resilience to tackle antisocial behaviour longer term.

If you would like a further discussion to go through in more detail any or all of the detail above please let me know as I appreciate this is a complex issue for which I have only been able to summarise our current and planned responses.

Yours sincerely

Paul Brannan

Head of Safer Neighbourhood Service