

Criminal Damage Strategy

Purpose of this Strategy

This strategy sets out how Doncaster deals with criminal damage and focuses on the approach to be taken over a three year period from 2012-2015.

The strategy has been produced by the Safer Doncaster Partnership. The Safer Doncaster Partnership is a statutory body comprising of representatives from the Police, Local Authority, Health Authority and other statutory and voluntary agencies which work together to reduce crime and disorder in Doncaster, including criminal damage.

Criminal damage is a significant issue that affects society in a number of ways. In Doncaster in 2011/12 there were 4439 criminal damage incidents reported out of a total of 23,461 Home Office crimes. This constitutes 19% of reported crime.

By its nature, the visible impact of criminal damage can be greater than other forms of crime. A vandalised bus shelter, for example, will potentially be seen by hundreds of people in a community whereas a burglary, albeit a serious crime in itself, may only directly impact on a small number of individuals. Criminal damage therefore has the potential to have huge implications for levels of confidence and satisfaction across whole communities.

Moreover, left unchecked it creates the impression, real or imagined, of uncared for and disrespected environments, creating the conditions for further acts of criminal damage. Also, there is evidence to support the position that failure to tackle what might be considered less serious criminal damage leads to a spiral of more significant offences as the lack of respect for a neighbourhood and consequent lessening of a sense of belonging and ownership translate into more serious criminal acts such as arson and violence. Certainly, the so called "broken window" approach taken in New York had at its core a strong belief that crime in its entirety would not be tackled by targeting resources solely at the most severe offences such as murder and organised drug dealing. On the contrary, it maintained that only by including a focus on attending to the more minor incidents such as smashed windows, vandalised phone boxes and graffiti could the spiral into more serious offences be arrested.

There is a particularly strong connection between criminal damage and anti-social behaviour. Certainly, the public perceive many acts of criminal damage to be anti-social and the approaches taken by partners to deal with criminal damage significantly echo those directed at anti-social behaviour. Consequently this strategy is similar in approach and content to the Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy adopted by the Safer Doncaster Partnership.

The Safer Doncaster Partnership recognises the huge effect that crime, including criminal damage has on communities and therefore has made reducing it one of its key priorities.

In dealing with criminal damage, Doncaster's approach is directed within three distinct strands: prevention (including education), intervention and enforcement. By focusing on these 3 themes, inevitably much attention is directed at the perpetrators and potential perpetrators of criminal damage. This approach runs the risk of minimising the needs of victims and witnesses. Consequently, this strategy makes a commitment to consider the needs of victims and witnesses throughout its range of activities.

What is Criminal Damage?

Criminal damage refers to crimes where a person intentionally or recklessly destroys or causes damage to another person's property.

It is important to note that damage caused by accident is not included within the definition of criminal damage. Also, non-permanent damage which can be rectified, cleaned off or removed at no cost, for example the letting down of car tyres or writing chalk on walls does not constitute criminal damage.

The terms criminal damage and vandalism are often used interchangeably. Vandalism is a term used in the British Crime Survey which limits its definition to damage against household property including cars.

The types of incident that constitute criminal damage/vandalism include:

- Graffiti
- Damage to communal property such as bus shelters, phone kiosks, street furniture, hoardings
- Fly-posting
- Damage to trees/plants/shrubs/hedges
- Damage to private property such as breaking glass, damaging perimeter walls/fencing, scratching vehicles, breaking wing mirrors/aerials, scratching cars

In terms of recording criminal damage the police use the following classifications:

- Arson endangering life
- Arson not endangering life
- Criminal damage to a dwelling
- Criminal damage to a building other than a dwelling
- Criminal damage to a vehicle
- 'Other' criminal damage
- Racially or religiously aggravated criminal damage to a dwelling
- Racially or religiously aggravated criminal damage to a building other than a dwelling

- Racially or religiously aggravated damage to a vehicle
- Racially or religiously aggravated 'other' criminal damage
- Threat or possession with intent to commit criminal damage

Where are we now?

In order to obtain an accurate and on-going assessment of the extent of criminal damage, the Safer Doncaster Partnership has access to statistics on the number of police recorded incidents of criminal damage and secondary arson. Also available is data from Doncaster MBC in relation to specific types of environmental damage referred to above such as graffiti. In tackling criminal damage, the Partnership adopts the approach that it is better, particularly in relation to boosting public satisfaction and confidence, to use available resources to respond to incidents pro-actively as much as possible rather than wait for the public to report an issue. The Partnership therefore collects information which splits responses into pro-active and re-active categories.

As well as the actual incidence of criminal damage/vandalism, the Partnership focus on measurements around the public's perceptions in relation to criminal damage and associated perceptions.

The table below therefore shows both the incidence within these categories for the period April 2010 to March 2011 as well as the latest available figures around perceptions.

Category of criminal damage	Number of incidents Apr 11 – March 12	Source of Statistics
Total number of police-recorded reports of criminal damage	4439	South Yorkshire Police
Reported Graffiti	320	DMBC
Graffiti proactively dealt with	3433	DMBC
Reported Secondary Arson	1250	SYFRS
% of residents who agree that Police and Council deal with Crime/ASB successfully	42%	YVC
% of residents who agree that Police and Public services seek their views on Crime/ASB issues	48%%	YVC

Doncaster has seen significant reductions in criminal damage in recent years. During 2011/12, there were 4439 criminal damage incidents compared with 7097 during 2008/09. Therefore criminal damage has decreased by 37.5% between 2008/09 and 2011/12.

Overview of Current Services

A wide range of services and activities are currently delivered within Doncaster to prevent the emergence of criminal damage and tackle it when it has occurred.

This strategy captures the main services and activities and, through effective performance management arrangements detailed in a later section, aims to maximise and co-ordinate optimum outcomes from these resources.

As a general point, it is the case that over recent years some of the individual services that have an input into dealing with criminal damage have co-located with other individual services in order to manage it and associated issues, such as anti-social behaviour, in partnership at a neighbourhood level. The development of the borough-wide Neighbourhood Response Team in which police community support officers and Doncaster Council Neighbourhood Response Team Officers work as part of one team is a practical example of this unified service delivery.

In addition, we now have a multi agency Anti Social Behaviour Team which deals with a variety of applications including those for Anti Social Behaviour Orders, Injunctions, Drink Banning Orders and Premises Closure Orders. Each of these applications is endorsed by the strategic Anti Social Behaviour Panel, that also manages all victims classed as vulnerable. These orders are primarily designed to deal with anti social behaviour but do have an affect on criminal damage as the two offences are often linked.

A variety of other services and activities directed at criminal damage, such as the FLAG Team (Fighting Litter, Abandoned Vehicles and Graffiti) operate outside of co-located teams. However, effective multi-agency working is achieved throughout every level of Doncaster's approach to criminal damage from strategic, borough wide performance management at the Safer Doncaster Partnership Executive through to multi-agency participation drilled down to a neighbourhood level at Neighbourhood Action Groups.

The following summarises the main services and activities currently addressing criminal damage in Doncaster, though it is not intended to be exhaustive. In line with the overall three pronged approach, these are split into prevention (including education), intervention and enforcement.

PREVENTION (Including education)	Service Provider
Summary of service/ activity	
Delivery of accredited parenting programmes	Trained staff from a range of agencies- co-ordinated by IFSS
Street based outreach work directed at young people.	IFSS
Youth Clubs	IFSS
After school patrols including signposting to available activities	Police / Area Officers
Truancy patrols	Police / Education Authority
Operation Anticipate-a wide ranging initiative in the run-up to and during the 'Mischief' period	Led by police in conjunction with a range of partners
Responsible retailer scheme-directed at retailers selling age restricted products, particularly spray paints.	Regulation and Enforcement
Test purchasing operations to deter under-age sales of age restricted products	Regulation & Enforcement and police
Embedded Fire-fighters	South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue
'LIFE' courses	South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue
Fire Cadet Scheme (Adwick and Edlington)	South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue
Bike patrols by South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue to target potential fire risks in public areas , other types of asb and encourage positive engagement	South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue (and sometimes in conjunction with other agencies)
Work in schools around citizenship	Schools, CYPOs (police), Neighbourhood Teams
Estate walks- regular multi-agency walk led by St Leger to identify a range of issues or emerging problems	St Leger, Neighbourhood Teams, elected members/ South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue
Clear conditions in tenancy agreements in relation to damage	St Leger, RSLs
Adoption of Respect Standard for Housing Management which includes inclusion of preventative measures	St Leger and some smaller RSLs
Use of overt CCTV to deter criminal damage	DMBC (incl NRT) and police
Designing out crime including use of Community Safety Initiatives Fund, St Leger Homes Decency Works and use of repairs and maintenance budget.	St Leger / DMBC / police

PREVENTION continued	Service Provider
Prompt removal of graffiti, litter, fly-tipping and abandoned vehicles to maintain acceptable standards in line with 'broken window' philosophy	FLAG/ Neighbourhood teams / Regulation and Enforcement
Neighbourhood Response Team-specifically deterring criminal damage throughout the evening and overnight	NRT
Regular and visible patrols by SNT and other staff	SNTs/ NRT/ St Leger/ FLAG
Work by Education Welfare Officers and Parenting Officer to minimise school absence	Education Welfare Service
Appropriate licensing conditions	Regulation & Enforcement
Lifewise Centre – interactive scenario based learning centre.	South Yorkshire Police

INTERVENTION	
'Yellow' warning letter through ABC plus scheme	IFSS with buy in from agencies including Police and St Leger Homes
'Red' warning letter through ABC Plus scheme	IFSS with buy in from agencies including Police and St Leger Homes
Warning letters from a range of other services including in relation to tenancy conditions.	St Leger
Acceptable Behaviour Contracts - setting out poor behaviour not to be repeated such as damage to property and confirming support to be offered for those under 18	IFSS with buy in from agencies including Police and St Leger Homes
Parenting Contracts	IFSS
'LIFE' courses	South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue
Fire Cadet Scheme (Adwick and Edlington)	South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue
'One to Ones' between the Fire Service and young people involved in fire setting, focusing on consequences	South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue
Use of Fire Stations for a range of positive activities, particularly in 'hotspot' areas	South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue
Operation Anticipate-a wide ranging initiative in the run-up to and during the 'Mischief' period	Led by police in conjunction with a range of partners
Youth Offending Service-working with young offenders across a range of court orders to address offending behaviour.	YOS

INTERVENTION continued	
Issuing 'First Course of Conduct Warning' under public order legislation	Police
Operation Alliance-focused multi-agency activity building in ongoing sustainability	Multi-agency
Community Clean-ups	Multi-agency
Referrals to specialist services where a specific condition is a factor in committing criminal damage	CAMHS, adult mental health services. Alcohol services
Victim Support – support to victims of criminal damage	Victim Support
Effective communications strategy aimed at informing the public about interventions made in respect of criminal damage	Input from Communication Teams from partner agencies.
Taking children to a place of safety-Children Act 1990 allows police officer to remove children out at night to a place of safety.	Police and partners in YOS, Social Services, Youth Service

ENFORCEMENT	
Fixed Penalty Notice for a range of behaviour e.g. litter, graffiti, sale of age restricted products	DMBC(FLAG, wardens, Regulation & Enforcement /police
Court action for non-payment of fine and more serious environmental anti-social behaviour	DMBC
Removal of abandoned and untaxed vehicles	DMBC (FLAG)
Reprimands and Final Warnings, RJ's for criminal damage	Police
Fixed Penalties for criminal damage	Police
Prosecutions at court for criminal damage	Police
Designated Public Place Orders to control public drinking. Effective use should also impact on reducing criminal damage.	Local authority power to introduce a DPPO-police power to enforce
S27. (of Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006) directing a person 16 or over to leave an area for a specified period where alcohol is a factor in anti-social behaviour. Effective use should also impact on reducing criminal damage	Police
Dispersal Orders- power to direct one or more people in a group causing or likely to cause anti-social behaviour to leave a designated area for a specified period. Effective use should also impact on reducing criminal damage. Children under 16 years of age and not under proper adult supervision after 9pm can be taken home.	Police following consent from the local authority to designate an area

ENFORCEMENT continued	
Power to close premises associated with class A drugs for a 3 month period (extendable to 6). Effective use should also impact on reducing criminal damage.	Police following consultation with local authority)
Operation Alliance-focused multi-agency activity focusing on specific locations on a rolling programme, building in ongoing sustainability. Enforcement activity forms a key part of each Alliance.	Multi-agency
Operation Anticipate-a wide ranging initiative in the run-up to and during the 'Mischief' period	Led by police in conjunction with a range of partners
Multi-agency operations to control illegal off road motorbikes	Police / Regulation & Enforcement/Neighbourhoods /Neighbourhood Response Team
Power to close premises associated with anti-social behaviour for a 3 month period, (extendable to 6) Effective use should also impact on reducing criminal damage.	Police or local authority – applicant must consult with the other party able to make an application
Injunctions – Housing Act and s 222 Local Government Act	St Leger Homes, RSLs, DMBC
Anti-Social Behaviour Orders- free standing or on conviction for criminal offences	DMBC, police, St Leger, other RSLs, British Transport Police, a court of its own volition
Individual Support Orders – an order obliging a young person to engage in a specified support package following the issuing of an ASBO	YOS
Parenting Order – an order obliging a parent to engage in specified activities in the following circumstances involving their child: following an ASBO, criminal conviction, non-attendance at school, anti-social behaviour.	DMBC/YOS/IFSS, schools, Education Authority, courts of their own volition
Notice of Seeking Possession- served when the landlord intends to apply for possession of the property-not to be served as a warning	St Leger/ RSLs
Demotion Order-served when the landlord wishes to remove security of tenure. If court agrees to demote tenancy and a further breach of tenancy occurs, court will have no discretion to consider grounds on which possession is being sought nor reasonableness in granting a possession order.	St Leger/RSLs
Possession	St Leger, RSLs, private landlords
Drinking Banning Orders – both free standing and on conviction	Police, DMBC

Where do we want to get to?

The three pronged approach with all its constituent elements set out above represents a wide ranging, multi-agency response to anti-social behaviour.

The prevailing levels of negative public perceptions about crime and how agencies are dealing with it, make it clear that much work still needs to be done.

This strategy therefore aims to achieve the following high level objectives:

1. Reduce the number of reported incidents of criminal damage
2. Reduce the number of people who perceive crime and anti-social behaviour to be a serious problem in their neighbourhood.
3. Increase the number of people who perceive that the local council and the police are dealing with their concerns about crime and anti-social behaviour.
4. Involve the public more in how criminal damage is tackled.
5. Improve the support given to those who are victims of and/or witnesses to criminal damage in particular those assessed as vulnerable.

Type	Name	Data Source	Reporting Period	2011/12 Baseline	2012/13 Target
REACTIVE	Total number of police-recorded criminal damage reports	PROCAD	Monthly	4,439	Reduction in victim based crime.
	Reported Flytipping	Mayrise		3728	3542 – 5% reduction
	Reported Litter	Mayrise		1194	1134 – 5% reduction
	Reported Abandoned Vehicles	Mayrise		259	246 – 5% reduction
	Reported Graffiti	Mayrise		320	304 – 5% reduction
	Reported Primary Arson	SYFRS		254	229 – 10% reduction
	Reported Secondary Arson	SYFRS		1250	1188 - 5% reduction
PRO-ACTIVE	Flytipping Proactively dealt with	Mayrise		3056	3208 – 5% increase
	Litter proactively dealt with	Mayrise		586	615 – 5% increase
	Abandoned vehicles proactively dealt with	Mayrise		47	49 – 5% increase
	Graffiti proactively dealt with	Mayrise		3433	3605 – 5% increase
YVC	% of residents who feel that ASB is a problem in their area	YVC	Quarterly	23%	No more than 24%

How are we going to get there?

A number of key actions have been identified to implement the overall partnership approach to tackling criminal damage. The key elements of this approach are:

- A focus on supporting the needs of victims and witnesses. This includes being kept regularly informed of relevant developments, having processes explained clearly, knowing who they can contact and being told about final outcomes.
- Developing further the arrangements not only for the community to be kept informed about what is being done to tackle criminal damage but also how their voice can be heard through such mechanisms as the Policing Pledge, monthly 'Partners and Communities Together (PACT) meetings' and setting priorities in their neighbourhood.
- An acknowledgement that the causes and effects of criminal damage are complex in nature and consequently responses to both must be equally varied. This is precisely the rationale driving the three pronged approach of activities based around prevention, intervention and enforcement. These three elements are not mutually exclusive but, conversely, form a seamless range of activity to be selected and used appropriately to suit the circumstance. Experience shows that a particular supportive intervention may result in one individual's offending around criminal damage ceasing but fail to impact on a different person's conduct. For this reason, this strategy incorporates a comprehensive tool-kit of available measures including tough enforcement.
- An aspiration to prevent criminal damage before it occurs in order to reduce the number of victims but once it has occurred, a commitment to prioritise early intervention.
- A recognition that other partnerships, namely Younger Doncaster, Healthy Doncaster and Enterprising Doncaster, contribute to creating the conditions that prevent criminal damage as well as supporting actions that deal with it when it has occurred. For example, high quality universal and targeted services for young people which are the responsibility of Younger Doncaster and directly support the 'Every Child Matters' agenda, also have a major bearing on the management of criminal damage carried out by young people.
- This strategy crosses over into the work of other Partnerships. Consequently, both in its development and ongoing implementation this strategy has been and will continue to be shared with other Partnerships.

- Intelligence led activity supported by robust performance management in order to make optimum use of available resources. Fuller detail of how this will be achieved is covered in the next section.

Performance Management

The Safer Doncaster Partnership has overall responsibility for managing the priorities set within the Community Safety Strategy including that relating to reducing crime.

The monthly Safer Doncaster Partnership Performance meeting manages the overall performance of the partnership, including performance in relation to crime.

Accountable to the Safer Doncaster Partnership Performance meeting, the Anti Social Behaviour Theme Group, meeting bi-monthly, is responsible for delivering the Criminal Damage Strategy.

Borough wide statistics in respect of reported incidents of criminal damage and associated categories are scrutinised regularly at each ASB tactical meeting. Hotspots and the nature of problems are identified, often drilled down to a small geographical area, so that appropriate responses from the range of options available can be targeted to best effect. This forum also allows for the wide range of agencies present to share good practice and so drive up performance.

Sitting beneath the Theme Group at a neighbourhood level, and meeting monthly, are 5 Joint Action Groups (JAGs) each with an accompanying Neighbourhood Action Group (NAG). Both are made up of representatives from the police (from SNTs), key staff from the local authority's Neighbourhoods Team, other council departments, St Leger Homes, South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue and other agencies.

The JAG scrutinises performance across its geographical area of responsibility, directing activity to drive good performance and addressing areas of concern through the range of options available.

The NAG has responsibility for scrutinising activity down to a micro level, to include actions in respect of individual perpetrators of criminal damage and individual witnesses/victims.