

SAFE Journey

ASBOs: the way forward?

Anti-social behaviour orders - ASBOs - have been around since 1999, but it is only recently that progress has been made in using them to fight crime and bad behaviour. How might they help in preventing problems on public transport?

The point of ASBOs is to tackle what is known as "sub-criminal" behaviour, which includes things like intimidation, threats of violence, throwing stones and even swearing. They can be used on people aged from 10 upwards.

ASBOs should be seen as the last step in a long process, because they are very serious and breaching one could lead to imprisonment for the offender. Because of this, each case is looked at very carefully by a panel of senior people in conjunction with the police.

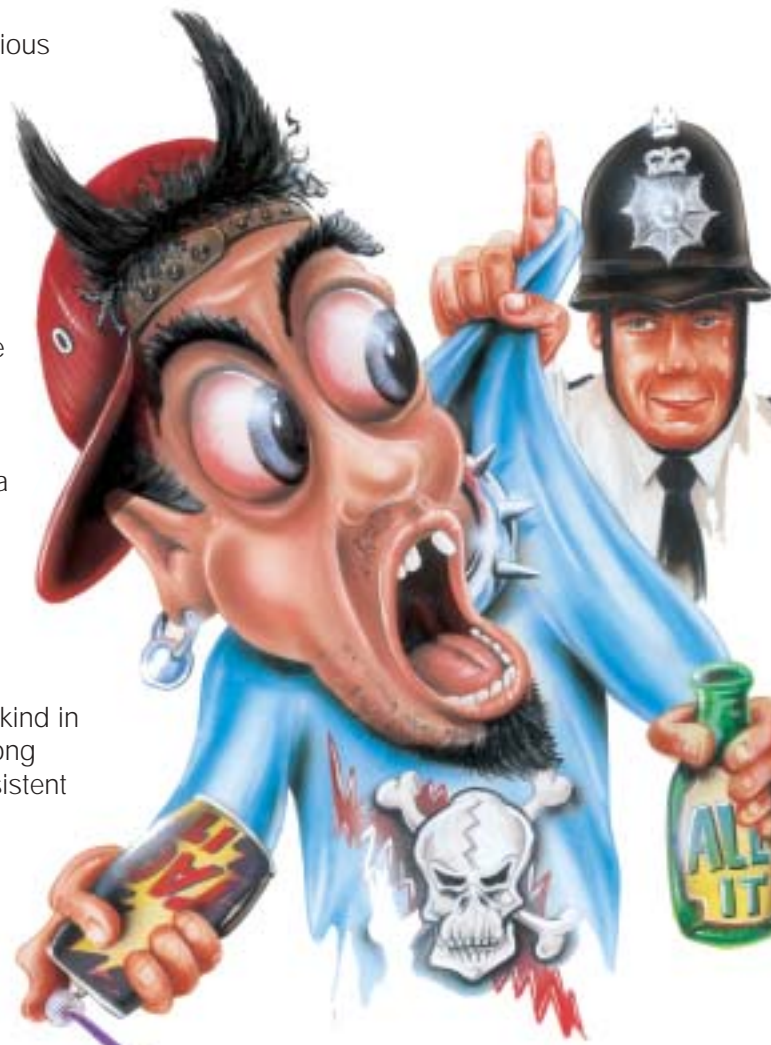
Proof has to be produced of serious and repeated offending, and there has to have been determined attempts to solve the problems in other ways.

However, for really persistent offenders, this could well be the way forward. Chief Inspector Malc Chiddey of South Yorkshire Police said:

"We are working with the SAFE partners to obtain an ASBO for a troublesome passenger - and are taking him to court to prevent him from travelling on any form of public transport in the area."

"This will be the first order of its kind in the country and will act as a strong deterrent to other would-be persistent trouble makers."

Readers should watch out for more on this important safety initiative.



The SAFE partners are: BOSSY (which represents local bus, tram and rail operators)

• British Transport Police • First • Arriva Trains Northern

• South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive

• South Yorkshire Police • Stagecoach Supertram • Yorkshire Traction

SAFE-r on the railways

by Supt David Bruce, NorthEast Area Commander, British Transport Police

The British Transport Police are committed to providing a safe and secure environment on the railways, where passengers can travel and staff can work without fear of crime or harassment, and freight can be transported without interference. We welcome the opportunity to be actively involved with the SAFE initiative.

We believe that the issues highlighted by public transport employees are not exclusive to any form of transport and so should be tackled in partnership to ensure that employees feel safe whether they work on trains, buses, trams or taxis.

Since October 2002, we have been actively encouraging representatives from the rail industry to become involved with SAFE and have already secured commitment from Network Rail, Arriva and GNER to be involved in the future.

The British Transport Police are working with Network Rail through the 'Partners Against Route Crime Initiative.' Our School Liaison officer is working with those of the Transport Executive to give a combined message around public transport.

Sharing information through SAFE has already identified areas within South Yorkshire where both trains and buses are being targeted by stone throwers. In partnership with South Yorkshire Police we should be better placed to tackle these problems for the benefit of all public transport employees.

We cannot do this in isolation. Crime affects everyone and everyone can play a part in tackling it. We have a strong track record of partnership and community involvement and will be seeking to strengthen these relationships as we make the railways a safer environment.



"The fight back starts here!"

Readers will see, in this magazine, a lot about the various initiatives and plans that the SAFE partners have put together to try to crack down on thuggish behaviour. But is any of it working?

The answer is a resounding "yes", as you can see in the following stories.

Four months' sentence for youth who committed unprovoked assault on bus driver

Thugs who assault public transport staff were given a sharp reminder in February that such behaviour will not be tolerated, when a seventeen year old who attacked a bus driver was sentenced to the maximum four months detention.

The youth, who cannot be named for legal reasons, committed a savage and unprovoked attack on a 61 year old Yorkshire Traction driver one night last November in Station Road, Wath.

After delivering a rain of blows on and around the head of the driver, the youth ran off across open fields. But he was unaware that a passenger on the bus had recognised him and gave his name to the driver. The police confronted the youth who immediately confessed and blamed his actions on having drunk too much in the course of the evening. The judge took a stern view of the incident, and handed out a detention and training order to be served at a Youth Offenders Institution.

Daryll Broadhead, Yorkshire Traction District Manager, said he was pleased with the result and hoped that the severity of the sentence would act as a deterrent to others.

"This was a particularly nasty incident", he said "and the driver is still off work, having been very shaken by the attack. In fact, he still does not want to go out at night.

"I understand that the culprit is devastated by the sentence and shows signs of genuine remorse. However, the brutal nature of the incident has been recognised by the court, and I think the right signal has been sent out."

Commenting on the incident, Pam Horner, External Relations Manager at the Transport Executive said: "There is never any justification for attacking someone who is just doing their job, and on behalf of all the SAFE partners I heartily welcome this sentence.

"The fight back against the thugs and vandals continues."

Serving the public

Ambulance drivers, firefighters and other workers are public servants. If any of

these people are subjected to assault in the course of their duties, magistrates and judges are encouraged to make the punishment for the offender as severe as possible.

Bus drivers and other public transport workers also provide a public service, and should deserve the same consideration. But some had voiced concerns that assaults against them were not always treated seriously by the police and the courts.

Meetings have taken place to make sure that everyone involved understands what the rules say: public transport employees ARE classed as public servants.

So the situation is that, in just the same way that, for example, an assault on a nurse could rightly attract a custodial sentence, a similar attack on a Supertram conductor could lead to the same sentence.

Magistrates and judges have the power to put offenders away for increasingly longer custodial sentences.

Now you know that the law is there to protect you. Make sure you report all incidents - it's the best way to get justice. (See article on back page).

Making Worsborough Common SAFE-r

The spate of problems that led to buses in Worsborough Common being withdrawn was a concern for both the residents of the village and the SAFE group.

It's a tricky situation: most passengers are law-abiding and rely on the buses, so why should they suffer just because a few louts are out to spoil things?

On the other hand, drivers and their passengers have to feel safe during the journey, and if that is undermined then action has to be taken.

The withdrawal of services acted both as a warning and a cooling off period. It also allowed the police and other authorities time to investigate the roots of the problem.

Once it was clear that the situation had improved, the Aston express service 265 was reinstated, and Yorkshire Traction put back the services they had withdrawn.

So SAFE seems to be working in this instance at least - which is good news for everyone!



SAFEMark: what's that all about?

Some drivers may still not be aware of how the SAFEMark Awards scheme can help them do their job better. So here's a brief reminder.

The partners in SAFE - which includes your company - are trying to create positive public transport messages, especially to school students.

The MegaTravel card is one way. It proves that the holder is entitled to the concessionary fare. And because it cuts out the hassle factor, it definitely leads to a better understanding between under 16s and drivers.

One other area of concern is home-school-home public transport, particularly the behaviour of a small number of students from some secondary schools. That led to the SAFEMark Awards scheme.

This award is only granted to those schools that show an interest in helping to solve these problems and are willing to tackle transport issues.

It's obvious why drivers welcome this scheme. But what's in it for the schools? Well, there are at least two areas in which schools who qualify for a SAFEMark can benefit.

First, a school that takes its responsibilities seriously in home-to-school will almost certainly be a happier school; and second, a school which can boast a SAFEMark Award will appeal to parents.

So it's in everyone's interests to encourage every secondary school in the county to become a SAFEMark school.

And it's just as important for drivers to know about the scheme and do their best to make it work.

If you have any questions about SAFEMark, call the SAFE Team on 0114 221 1452.

Passes: the rules

Before the No Pass - No Fare initiative - which is backed by all the transport operators, the Transport Executive and the Police - is launched countywide, everyone involved has to be sure of what is expected of them, particularly drivers and others who deal face-to-face with secondary school students.

Tests with selected schools have revealed that there is still work to be done to make sure that everyone knows what the rules are, and sticks to them. No date has yet been fixed for a full launch, but you will be kept informed through SAFE Journeys.

In the meantime, bus drivers who regularly do school runs and know the problems that arise over passes should stick closely to the agreed rules.

School-aged children who board a bus should always be asked to produce an appropriate pass. That means one of the following:

- A Zero Fare Pass - this proves the holder is entitled to FREE home-to-school travel (until 1900) between the places shown on the pass.
- A MegaTravel (Proof of Age) Pass for those claiming the concessionary fare.
- A Students 16-18 Pass - this has strict validity conditions about when the holder can travel between the places shown on the pass.
- A school-issued boarding pass.

Stat Nav!

Incident reporting by bus drivers is becoming hi-tec with GIS (Geographical Information System).

GIS helps identify precisely on the map of South Yorkshire where any incident occurs. This is then forwarded to all South Yorkshire Police Districts who link the information to their crime data on the same mapping system.

The result is an increasingly clear and comprehensive picture of where trouble spots are and where trends might be developing that way.

This is invaluable in helping to allocate exactly where police officers should be deployed for the best effect in tackling crime and disorder.

Already, several operations involving the police and public transport operators have seen a number of arrests.



Tackling truancy

Truants from school might not, on the face of it, seem to be a problem for bus drivers. After all, if students aren't going to school, then they can hardly be causing trouble on the home-to-school run, can they?

But when you think about it, life is a bit more complicated than that. For a start, quite a few of those truants will normally travel on tendered and commercial buses. And if youngsters think they can get away with the odd bit of truancy, they could easily come to believe that they can get away with more serious offences - like wrecking buses or attacking other passengers.

The Police are hoping, in the near future, to work with drivers and other public transport employees in their regular truancy sweeps

The old adage that one thing leads to another is still true, so the only answer is zero tolerance.

The schools who have signed up for SAFEMark are obviously trying to help bus drivers and operators to run better services. Perhaps drivers and operators might like to help out the schools in return by acting as eyes and ears.

The Police are hoping, in the near future, to work with drivers and other public transport employees in their regular truancy sweeps around the county.

The theory is that drivers in particular are aware of students who are travelling on buses at odd times of day, especially during school hours. If any such sightings can be reported back to control, it would help the Police on their rounds.

That in turn might nip truancy in the bud - and even have a positive impact on the behaviour of certain individuals when they are travelling on buses.

Think about it, and if your supervisor asks for your assistance, please try to help.

Safer transport - *the role of the court*

by David White, Clerk to the Justices

My job is to lead a large team of lawyers who work for the magistrates in Sheffield and Barnsley.

Magistrates deal with almost every criminal offence, apart from the most serious, that end up in the Crown Court.

The role of the Magistrates' Court is to prevent criminals offending again and to protect the public.

Last year Sheffield Magistrates' Court dealt with over 36,000 adult criminal cases and over 3,000 youth cases. Many of those involved acts of violence.

People who serve the public such as bus drivers, firefighters and traffic wardens are often victims of violence and they rightly deserve the protection of the courts. Violence against a public servant is an 'aggravating factor' and will usually mean that the offender receives a lengthy custodial sentence, even if the offender has no previous record.

One recent development has been the extension of the power to impose Anti Social Behaviour Orders, or ASBOs.

People, adults or youngsters, who cause harassment, alarm or distress can be brought before the court and if the court finds that it is necessary to protect the community from further anti social acts, then an ASBO will be made. They last for at least two years.

Breaches are taken very seriously. Courts have enormous powers - even up to five years' imprisonment in the worst cases.

Anti social behaviour includes such things as abuse and intimidating language or actions, excessive noise, drunken behaviour, vandalism and graffiti, threatening behaviour, racial abuse, substance misuse, assault and vehicle crime.

I commend the work being done by SAFEMark to make public transport safer not only for users but for providers. The courts are part of our community and I promise I will play my part in helping to make transport safe for everyone.

None of us should have to put up with violence or threats or bad behaviour. I realise that reporting and pursuing an offence can be difficult, but nowadays special measures allow witnesses to give evidence in safety and security. Without your evidence the courts are powerless. So please help the criminal justice agencies and we will do our utmost to help you.