

COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Wednesday 28 January 2004
(*Morning*)

Session 2

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COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

4th Meeting 2004, Session 2

CONVENER

*Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Scott Barrie (Dunfermline West) (Lab)

*Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)

*Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green)

Campbell Martin (West of Scotland) (SNP)

*Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)

*Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES

Shiona Baird (North East Scotland) (Green)

Christine May (Central Fife) (Lab)

Shona Robison (Dundee East) (SNP)

Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)

John Scott (Ayr) (Con)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO ATTENDED:

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab)

THE FOLLOWING GAVE EVIDENCE:

Alice Bovill (Dundee Federation of Tenants Associations)

Joe Callaghan (Haldane Community Group)

John Corcoran (Central Alexandria Tenants and Residents Association)

Samantha Dale (Echo Youth Group)

Dennis Daly (Communities that Care)

Sarah Gillen (Communities that Care)

Stefan Howat (Echo Youth Group)

Stevie Little (Echo Youth Group)

Lloyd Livingstone (Echo Youth Group)

Frances Nelson (Dundee Federation of Tenants Associations)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Steve Farrell

SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Gerald McNally

ASSISTANT CLERK

Jenny Goldsmith

LOCATION

Committee Room 1

Scottish Parliament

Communities Committee

Wednesday 28 January 2004

(Morning)

[THE CONVENER opened the meeting at 10:05]

Antisocial Behaviour etc (Scotland) Bill: Stage 1

The Convener (Johann Lamont): Welcome to this meeting of the Communities Committee. We have received apologies from Elaine Smith and Campbell Martin, who are unable to attend.

The first item on the agenda is consideration of evidence relating to the Antisocial Behaviour etc (Scotland) Bill.

Before I start, I should point out that members of the Transport and General Workers Union, from whom we were meant to hear evidence last week, have apologised for being unable to attend and have said that they will provide us with written evidence to add to the evidence that we got from the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers.

I welcome our first panel of witnesses: Frances Nelson, the chairperson, and Alice Bovill, the treasurer, of Dundee Federation of Tenants Associations; John Callaghan, the chair of Haldane Community Group; and John Corcoran, the chairman of Central Alexandria Tenants and Residents Association.

We appreciate your being here and thank you for the written evidence that you have provided us with. We were keen to get evidence from local communities about their experience of antisocial behaviour. In keeping with our usual procedure, we will ask you questions, but if you feel that those questions have not enabled you to say certain things, we will be happy to hear from you afterwards. If you feel that you are unable to answer certain questions because they relate to something outwith your experience, that is fine.

The Scottish Executive has stated that the consultation process leading to the bill was unprecedented in terms of the number of communities, organisations and individuals who took part in it. Do you have any comments on how good you felt the consultation process was? Can you give us any examples of the way in which you have consulted on the issues with your organisations and the people whom you represent?

Frances Nelson (Dundee Federation of Tenants Associations): Personally, I think that the consultation process was dealt with the wrong way around. Where were the tenants when the policy was being put together? When someone was thinking about the provisions, tenants who live with the problems in the estates and the cities should have been with them. Dundee City Council has done well with its consultation process. The Scottish Executive may have done the best that it can as far as it is concerned, but, as far as tenants are concerned, it did not. Tenants should have been involved from the beginning.

John Corcoran (Central Alexandria Tenants and Residents Association): I was quite happy with the consultation process that was undertaken in relation to my organisation. Margaret Curran came through and we had every opportunity to put our views, which I was pleased to do—in fact, I played quite a part that day. While the consultation process was good in that respect, what happens now and hereafter is the most important thing.

Joe Callaghan (Haldane Community Group): I endorse what John Corcoran said. Margaret Curran came to a meeting in our area, which was well attended. The response was overwhelming. The reason why we are here is to see how far we have taken the process. We hope to see some fruits of our labour.

Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP): If the Parliament is to legislate on antisocial behaviour, the bill must define what that behaviour is. From your experience, does the definition contained in the bill make sense? Should it be changed in any way? The bill says that antisocial behaviour occurs when a person

“(a) acts in a manner that causes or is likely to cause alarm or distress; or

(b) pursues a course of conduct that causes or is likely to cause alarm or distress”—

in other words, if they act in that way over a period of time. Does your experience suggest that that is the right definition, as it could cover a wide range of things? Other people have said that it is not sufficiently focused. What are your views on that?

Alice Bovill (Dundee Federation of Tenants Associations): If behaviour is causing a tenant distress in their home, it should be regarded as antisocial behaviour. The person responsible for the behaviour does not have to be the tenant next door—it may be any member of their family or a visitor to their household. The definition that Stewart Stevenson has given applies only to the tenant of the house and should be extended to anyone in the area.

Stewart Stevenson: I will not try to explain the bill to you, as I might explain it incorrectly. Your point is well made, but it is worth my suggesting

that the definition does not apply only to housing. Does the representative of the Central Alexandria Tenants and Residents Association wish to comment?

John Corcoran: As far as I am concerned, the definition covers a great deal and cannot be wide enough. Antisocial behaviour affects nearly everyone who lives in local townships. I have had the pleasure of living in Alexandria for 40-odd years and it used to be a fine little town. We had a lovely little township that has been destroyed systematically by antisocial behaviour of one kind or another. In my view, the behaviour described in the bill certainly falls into the category of antisocial behaviour. However, the bill must go deeper, further and wider. If antisocial behaviour affects anyone, we must take cognisance of it and address it.

Joe Callaghan: I endorse what John Corcoran has said and will illustrate his point with an example. The definition of antisocial behaviour relates to the conduct of antisocial neighbours and to youths gathering at local shops. Until recently, I lived on an estate. Recently, our Co-operative store was burned down as a result of antisocial behaviour. That cost more than £600,000. We have held many meetings with the police about such issues. I will address the issue of the dispersal of youths. In the case that I mentioned, the Co-operative was targeted systematically. Security staff who had been engaged were assaulted and had their cars damaged. Shop staff were also threatened.

Senior police officers told us at various meetings that their dispersal powers were limited and that they could not move people on from the area. Whether people move to other areas or to a different part of the scheme is a separate problem. Eventually, the Co-operative had to let customers in one at a time, so that security would not be breached by a gang entering behind customers. Had the power of dispersal existed in legislation at the time, the police could not have said at the meetings that they attended with us that they did not have the powers to deal with the issue.

Stewart Stevenson: My colleagues will ask about specifics later and I will not trespass on the subjects that they want to talk about. I will just put a couple of points about what antisocial behaviour is. What antisocial behaviour is not criminal behaviour? For example, burning down the Co-op sounds awfully like a criminal activity; indeed, much of the behaviour that you described sounded like criminal activity. If such behaviour is criminal, do not powers exist to deal with that? What is the distinction?

10:15

Joe Callaghan: I do not want to hog the discussion, but I will answer the question. We have watched events happen. Fifty years ago, I moved to the scheme to which I referred. I have watched the culture changing. The problem should have been addressed 20 or 25 years ago. The escalation in all forms of antisocial behaviour can be seen. We have watched the wreckage outside our windows. People on all those estates are in a war zone. That is unsustainable.

The monetary situation is also unsustainable. We have a £10 million regeneration programme in place in our area and we are knocking down about 360 perfectly good houses with central heating and double glazing because they are tenemental properties. We cannot sustain those properties because once a bad egg is in, the problem spreads like a cancer and moves all the way up the street. We have big holes in our estates. Everything is being burned down. Windows are no longer knocked in. At our community group meetings, we see the devastation that is caused out there.

We must have intervention and we must engage with the problems now. I have described antisocial behaviour. It starts with wee things such as kids going out at all hours of the night. Nobody is engaging with them. They are out in gangs and taking over and nobody can intervene—not the police, not the shopkeepers, not the public and not the authorities. Teachers are hamstrung and cannot teach because of antisocial behaviour, which is endemic in our culture.

The bill is only the start of the process of dealing with the issue. I hope that, eventually, some of the powers that will be created will become redundant, if we can deal with the culture and with how we have reached the present position.

Stewart Stevenson: It is fair to say that the committee accepts that the problems that you describe exist. We have seen them elsewhere. Obviously, we are focusing on the measures in the bill. It is not for me as an Opposition politician to defend all the measures in the Government's bill, although of course I support many of them.

I will introduce my final point before the convener moves on to let someone else speak. It has been put to the committee that people who have autism, which is a developmental problem, can unknowingly cause alarm and distress to people in the community. Will the definition of antisocial behaviour include behaviour by people who have problems that must be dealt with? Could such people be criminalised? I ask Alice Bovill to respond first, because I know that she wants to respond to some other points.

Alice Bovill: You asked what antisocial behaviour is not criminal behaviour. If groups were challenged and dispersed before any criminal activity took place, that would be great. The problem is that when a group is dispersed, whose front door does it go to next? The area where I stay has no community facilities. Resources really need to be put into communities to allow them to build community facilities for people. It would be pointless to disperse groups to another area where they could bother someone else.

John Corcoran: Stewart Stevenson asked how antisocial behaviour should be defined. I will give a personal view of what antisocial behaviour is. Antisocial behaviour by an unruly neighbour is the reason why I was awake at 3.15 yesterday morning. From 3.15 until 4.15, a problem continued, which I reported to the police twice. My sleep ceased at 3.15 yesterday morning. I am a busy person and I had loads of committee meetings yesterday. I worked all day, and by 7 o'clock last night I was absolutely bushed. That, ladies and gentlemen, is one very small definition of antisocial behaviour. That is what is happening to people like me. It is happening all over the place. I have photographic evidence that would shock you, although I am not going to show it to you. I have neighbours who are terrified. I knew an 80-year-old woman who was so terrified that she could not leave her house; sadly, she has since died.

I have given you written evidence. For the most part, my evidence is contained in that written submission. We have to address the problem. I am aware that there is no easy fix but we have to address it. I am an apolitical person, but we have to consider all parties getting together and working towards a change in culture. If we do not do that, we are going to go into anarchy. That is what antisocial behaviour means to me.

Frances Nelson: I have five sons, 14 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. We were poor, but I was able to bring my five children up with standards in life, and they knew what they were. All the things that I was able to use to chastise my children—"You'll get smacked," or, "You'll go to bed without your supper"—have gone. When I went to school, people did not come home and tell their mum that they got the belt from the teacher because if they did, they got worse from their mother. That has all gone. They have taken away everything that could be used to control kids nowadays; it is not there any more. I am not talking about people abusing and battering their kids; I am talking about smacking them on the back of the hand or on the bottom and putting them to bed without supper.

My sons cannot look at their children now. A father who looks at his children feels fear. Even to

be cuddling a child is wrong in some people's eyes. It has all gone wrong. To me, we have to go back the way to what we had before. We did not have riots and carry-ons in the estates where I brought my kids up. They knew how far they could go. Excuse me, but many a time, my kids got a kick in the bum from the policeman and were told to go home or the policeman would see their mother or father. There is none of that any more. The kids on the estates laugh at the police and call them pigs and all the rest of it.

Kids nowadays have no respect. Respect has gone out of the window, but respect is what we have to get back. You have to do all the things that you say you are going to do. If they are not enforced, it will all be a waste of time.

Stewart Stevenson: I have a brief question for Frances Nelson, although she might not be able to answer. You said that one of the difficulties that parents have is that they now lack the ability to chastise their children physically in a variety of ways. Do you know that in Scandinavia it has, for a long time, been illegal to chastise children physically? The Scandinavians do not have the kinds of problems that we have in our communities and they do not have the difficulties that we have with our children. Why is Scotland different from Sweden and Norway?

Frances Nelson: Unfortunately, we are not privileged enough to be able to go to Scandinavia to see and hear about those things. No one comes to Dundee to tell us how they are able to do those things in Scandinavia. Maybe that is what we should be doing; maybe some people should be coming to our areas to tell us how those things work.

In Dundee, we have an antisocial behaviour strategy. Dundee City Council is good at trying to deal with such things but for many years, like a lot of other councils, it sat back and did nothing until the tenants got up in arms and made it look at the facts. Now the council is trying everything, but there is only a certain amount of things that it is able to do because it is told, "You can't do this because of that," or, "You can't do that because of this." People's hands are tied and they are told what they can and cannot do. If, in places like Scandinavia, the problem has been solved and people do not hit their kids, good on them. I would be delighted to know how they have done that because that is what we should be doing here.

Joe Callaghan: The comparison of Scotland with any other European country is stark. Whether the comparison is of literacy levels, the number of single teenage mothers or other problems that have been developing in the past 20 or 25 years, we come top of the poll in pretty much the whole lot of them. Those problems are endemic in our culture; that is part and parcel of the sufferance of the community. The situation is unsustainable.

Some time ago, I said to Jackie Baillie at a meeting that, although we have had £10 million to regenerate our estate and we are beginning to see £2 million and £3 million regenerations going on here and there, because of our culture, we have no guarantee that those projects will change what happens. I hope that people realise that, if we multiply the figures to take into account the whole of Scotland, such projects will cost us billions of pounds in the long run without any guarantee that the culture will change, which is what we need to address the situation.

As has been highlighted, we must go back to the drawing board. Empowerment of people is the issue. The bill will require local authorities to engage with communities and people like us who are suffering, but who are trying to solve the problems. However, we must be empowered. We are seeing the fractionalisation of communities; fewer people are getting involved because they are frightened of all aspects of doing so. Perhaps that is because of a fear of retribution or victimisation or because people do not feel that there is a cause to fight for because they have been expelled from the process.

The bill will require local authorities to get communities involved through community participation committees and so on. However, people must feel that they can engage in the process, instead of sitting in scores of meetings looking out the window at a bomb site or a war zone. If we do not get action and people do not get empowerment, we will go nowhere and people like me will disappear off the map. Any legislation that makes local authorities engage with us will be fruitless because we will not get involved with something that, at the end of the day, just shortens our lives and gets us nowhere. Basically, that is a thumbprint of where we see ourselves, unless something can be done.

I am glad that the First Minister has put the issue at the top of the agenda. As John Corcoran says, we are apolitical. In some respects, we have lost faith in the system. Unless there is a cavalry charge—unless somebody comes out and helps us—we will be sitting surrounded by the Indians. Do not get me wrong—I am not against kids; I have a granddaughter and a daughter who nearly died in a fire. The reason why our group started four years ago was because a wee girl died in a fire as a result of antisocial behaviour. The antisocial behaviour should have been tackled—a process was engaged with, but not robustly enough. As a result, a wee six-year-old died—I saw her carried out by the firemen that night, which is something that sticks with you. That is not the only death that has happened on our estates. We are in a war zone. We are surrounded by grief, misery and changed lives. Unless we do

something to engage people in the process and to change our culture, we will be in big, big trouble.

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): The policy memorandum states:

“Antisocial behaviour strategies are intended to provide the basis for promoting joint working”

and tackling antisocial behaviour. The witnesses have raised interesting points and I wonder whether they wish to comment on the existing strategies.

I say, “Well done you” to Frances Nelson for making her points; I am pleased to hear that she is keeping Dundee City Council on its toes. The federation’s submission was passionate. It states:

“Experience and views from our members tell us that social work may often have a different agenda from those wishing to enforce tenancy agreements”.

We are looking for joint working and one of the main players in joint working is social work. I ask the witnesses to comment on that.

I ask John Corcoran to address some points from the Central Alexandria Tenants and Residents Association submission. On page 3, you state:

“we are sick and tired of hearing the old chestnut that more money is being ploughed into Policing ... this may well be the case, BUT IT IS STILL NOT SUFFICIENT”.

You also state that we need more police on the beat.

Another point that you raise, which I thought was a bit odd, is about joint working. The submission states that you

“would like greater involvement from some local councillors, particularly those in senior posts who have lost the ability to either answer letters or take any positive action.”

As the bill looks for joint working, I would be grateful if you could clarify those points.

The Convener: I ask John Corcoran to respond in general terms to the question about how councillors conduct themselves. If there are specific issues about individual councillors, it would be appropriate for them to be pursued elsewhere—this meeting is not necessarily the place to do that.

10:30

Frances Nelson: In Dundee, those who are involved in mediation, the police and councillors from all the political parties—one councillor from each party—all sit on the group. There are more tenants on the working party than there are officials, which is a good idea. However, the social work department does not sit on the working party. It always says that it cannot talk about its work for reasons of data protection. That lets the social

work department out of an awful lot; its representatives are not prepared to sit round the table with tenants.

Mary Scanlon: Do councillors not insist that they sit round the table with you?

Frances Nelson: No. I do not think that the councillors realise that they could do that. In Dundee, the social work department is a power and an entity of its own. We have been able to get social work representatives to come to a meeting now and again on something specific that we wanted to talk about. However, that was only in relation to getting a sheltered lounge for tenants—the tenants are old-age pensioners—in a complex that did not have one. That is the only time that the social work department has ever turned up to anything that we were doing.

Mary Scanlon: What did you mean when you said that social work often has a different agenda? I did not understand that comment.

Frances Nelson: The social work department would be there for me if I was doing something wrong to the kids or if my husband was being bad to me. In those circumstances, the social work department would become involved, but in Dundee that is all that the social work department sees its role as being.

To be perfectly honest, I think that most of you would agree that consultation is taking a while to get through in most council departments. All that the departments ever say is that it is a matter for the housing department and it does not relate to them. The departments have never seen consultation as part of their remit, but the federation is breaking down their doors to get in there to be consulted. It is difficult for some councils to let that happen, but Dundee City Council is very prone to tenant participation.

I will say, to our credit, that Dundee City Council has realised that there is merit in talking to tenants. We have saved Dundee City Council lots of money by way of the council not going ahead and doing something and then three months later having to knock it down because nobody wants it. The council has learned that talking to the tenants in Dundee saves it money. A lot of other councils have not yet got that far.

I mean no disrespect to anyone who is sitting round this table, but some councillors see tenant groups and federations as a threat: they seem to think that we want to take away their power. We have no intention of taking away anybody's power. We want to go to the councillors to tell them what we are being told by tenants and to let them deal with the matter.

Mary Scanlon: Yes, but to implement antisocial behaviour strategies there must be good, positive, constructive engagement with social work.

Frances Nelson: We do not have that.

Mary Scanlon: Right.

Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Lab): The bill requires each local authority to prepare a strategy for dealing with antisocial behaviour and it requires local authorities, in conjunction with chief constables, to share information. Will that be an improvement on what happens just now?

Frances Nelson: That is more than likely for a lot of people, but we have had that arrangement in Dundee for some time. For example, the chief constable comes to federation meetings and talks to tenants. I think that Jackie Baillie would confirm that, because she has been to Dundee to speak to us. We seem to be a step further on than others, but I can say categorically that the social work department in Dundee does not have a strategy. Perhaps, behind closed doors, the council has a wee strategy going on, but it certainly has nothing to do with the tenants or citizens of Dundee.

The Convener: Do the other witnesses want to respond to Mary Scanlon's questions?

John Corcoran: Yes. I am aware—I think that most sensible people are—that a great deal of extra money has been put into policing. However, that money was needed. Certain crimes, such as internet crime and paedophilia, are getting out of control in the UK and must be addressed. Therefore, we need more money for policing, but my view is that the money so far has been insufficient. I believe that that is also the view of the majority of people out on the street.

I am a little bit old-fashioned, because I believe that the greatest deterrent to crime is a bobby on the beat; I think that most people agree with me on that. I am wise enough to understand that we cannot just flood the place with policemen, because that would not be economically viable. However, I would like to see more beat policemen and a rapid-response group of police, who could be situated in certain areas so that they could respond quickly to hot spots.

I have a discussion almost daily with my local inspector, because certain aspects of antisocial behaviour necessitate that. He hits me all the time with the statement that the police do not have enough resources. I understand where he is coming from. We must put more money into policing. However, as you know, that is not the whole answer. Providing more money for policing is only one element of what we must do, but it is an important element because we must stop some of the niggling little crime that just gets bigger and bigger with the end result that we have major criminals on our doorstep.

Mary Scanlon: Do you realise that there will not be a penny more for the police to implement the provisions in the bill?

John Corcoran: That may well be the case, but, as I said earlier, I am apolitical.

Mary Scanlon: I am stating a fact.

John Corcoran: You have stated a good fact, because we must find money. I am retired, but I am still a taxpayer. As far as I am concerned, if I want to improve my way of life, there is only one way of doing that—I must pay for it. Any improvement must come out of my pocket.

I repeat that I am apolitical and that I do not want to offend any of the members' political parties. However, I want three things in life: a reduction in crime figures; good educational standards; and a health service of which we can be proud. If I have to pay for those things, I will do so because that is the only way. As I said in my written submission, we are whistling in the wind if we do not face that fact. You are the people in power and you must make the decisions about the necessary money. However, I will be fighting for it.

You asked about councillors. The bill refers to those who will be consulted, and we certainly have to talk to councillors. I believe that, at present, we have lost the plot with local politics. Local politics were designed, as far as I am concerned as a 65-year-old, to help people in the community. Local politicians are not there to bow the knee to a whip, as happens in the Scottish Parliament or at Westminster. If I were a local politician, I would be there to support and serve the community that elected me. I do not think that that happens any more. I believe that national politics have, to an extent, taken over local politics.

I want to see councillors, whatever their party and whatever they represent, looking at the genuine areas of need in a specific town or community. I do not think that that is happening at the moment, and we have to get back to that. In that way, perhaps we will be able to address issues that may be arising in Frances Nelson's area, in Joe Callaghan's area or in my area. Until we start talking like that, we cannot address those issues, and local politicians and councillors will have to do that.

Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD): I would like to ask about antisocial behaviour orders—on individuals, not on groups—on which your evidence says a lot of interesting things. Do you approve of antisocial behaviour orders? Do you support the idea of antisocial behaviour orders being available for 12 to 16-year-olds as well as for other age groups? You raised a minor but important point that has not been raised with us before when you asked who pays for antisocial behaviour orders. What are your views on that?

Alice Bovill: We support the antisocial behaviour orders, but when we had our conference last year, our members wanted the minimum age to go as low as eight. They did not want the orders to apply just to 12 to 16-year-olds and older individuals. We have a major problem in Dundee because our antisocial behaviour team is paid for from our council rents. The team also got extra money from the Scottish Executive and employed two extra staff for the private sector. The cost of that is coming out of the council tax, so the tenant is paying twice—through council tax and through rents. We would like the whole lot to come out of taxation rather than us paying twice.

The antisocial behaviour orders for under 16-year-olds should have some clout. The household that the young person comes from should be penalised; the antisocial behaviour order should penalise that household's tenancy. We are looking for the police to have some powers to issue antisocial behaviour orders; they would then be more vigilant in looking for any breach of those orders, which they do not really understand right now.

Frances Nelson: From the Dundee perspective, we also support interim antisocial behaviour orders. Sometimes it takes a wee bit longer to get an antisocial behaviour order, and something needs to be available more quickly than that so that action can be taken. The police need to be able to give out antisocial behaviour orders too.

Joe Callaghan: Now, if you get fined £30 or so, there is an added £5 increment, which pays the victims of crime. Surely some ingenious plan could be made to incorporate that idea into dealing with problems of antisocial behaviour. Perhaps Donald Gorrie does not really understand what is happening out there and the amount of damage that is being caused. I am talking about millions of pounds worth of damage in a comparatively small area, and that is being replicated throughout Scotland.

I will not go into the matter in any depth, because I understand that we need to get on with other questions, but the age limit for antisocial behaviour orders has to be lowered to include the younger age group. I hope that those powers will become redundant as time goes on, but they can be used as a salutary message, if you like, to the ones who are currently causing problems.

Had it been possible to disperse the group that I mentioned earlier and to move it on under the powers that are in the bill, something would have been saved, although the group is also causing serious problems in other areas of the estate. We regard the powers as a stopgap; we are looking for extra powers and we hope that this is only the beginning of the process in our community's fightback. I agree that the power will have an

effect on the people who it is aimed at. I hope that it will act as a deterrent to the group in relation to problem areas and that it will have a salutary effect.

10:45

The Convener: I want to ensure that we cover all aspects of the bill. We could be here for an awful lot longer than the time that has been allocated. We will move on to Cathie Craigie's questions and if you think that you have missed particular points, we will give you a chance to address them at the end.

Cathie Craigie: The bill proposes to introduce community reparation orders for those aged between 12 and 21. It focuses on offenders making reparation in their communities. That part of the bill is covered in part in your written submissions, but will you give me your views in more detail? Perhaps you could return to the question of encouraging people to have respect for the community in which they live, which Frances Nelson mentioned. Could CROs be a way of doing that?

Alice Bovill: I sit on a panel in the children's hearings system and I think that we do not have enough teeth at the moment. I, and the federation, welcome reparation orders because, by making young people work, they will make them more aware of the damage that they have done to the community. Some children do not find compulsory or voluntary supervision to be a problem, but reparation is like community service, which improves the community in which it is done. If children have done something to improve their community, that will give them pride in it. It should be their local community that benefits.

Frances Nelson: As Alice Bovill said, the community reparation order must relate to the area in which the child has done wrong. In Dundee, we heard that that might not be the case, and that a child might live in Beechwood but have to put their actions right in Kirkton. I remember that, a long time ago, there was graffiti all over the place on the shops near where I live. It was the mothers who made the kids go down there with buckets of whitewash to clear it all up. The kids did not do it again, because of the red faces that they got—their pals were laughing at them because their mums made them go down to clear up the mess. Something good came out of that.

At the moment, if kids go to court, they are put on a scheme and they have to go and paint an old lady's house or whatever—community service, is that what you call it? No, CROs must be served in the area in which the young person did the vandalism or whatever.

John Corcoran: I certainly believe that there is a place for reparation orders but, as Alice Bovill

said, we must be careful to direct them to the right places. That is something for you folks to look at; in some cases, reparation orders will be totally useless.

I want to make a quick comment in reply to Donald Gorrie's question. ASBOs are a must, and we must reduce the age limit for them. We must also have a way to make them operational more quickly than they are at present. We must make people understand that they cannot get away with what they are doing all the time.

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): Alice Bovill mentioned the children's hearings system in relation to reparation orders. Do you agree with those who argue that the new disposals in the bill, if any, should be given to the hearings system, and that—rather than young people having to go through the court system—the hearings system should be properly resourced to implement those disposals?

Alice Bovill: The hearings system's hands are tied because it has to find in the best interests of the child, which is not necessarily punishment. If a child is committing vandalism, the furthest that the hearings system can go is to recommend secure accommodation—and that can be done only if there are resources, of which there are very few in Dundee. Reparation orders would give the system more teeth, to force people to do something for their community.

Children who are persistent offenders do not care if they are put on compulsory supervision—to them, it is just a social worker coming out to see them. If they are sent to a special school once or twice a week, they see that as a perk because they do not have to go to their usual school every day.

Patrick Harvie: Rather than asking whether the disposals should be used, I was asking whether they should be used in a court setting or in the children's hearings system. Would it make a difference?

Alice Bovill: Do you mean the reparation orders?

Patrick Harvie: Any of the disposals.

Alice Bovill: For persistent offenders, I feel strongly that we should extend the Hamilton experience and have youth courts. Both the courts and the children's hearings system should be used at the moment, because we do not yet have youth courts. In the children's hearings system, we have to split people into first-time offenders, abused children and persistent offenders. We cannot take a blanket approach.

Patrick Harvie: I want to ask all the witnesses about the power of dispersal, which has been mentioned a lot. I assume that you are familiar

with the power in the bill to designate an area in certain circumstances. We have heard various comments about the power of dispersal. The Scottish Police Federation and the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland told us that the reason that their current powers are not exercised successfully is that the police do not have the people on the ground, the resources or the time. They say that those constraints would still apply with the new power of dispersal. How do you feel about those points?

Joe Callaghan: There seems to be an ambiguity. Earlier, I gave a particular example to do with the Co-operative. That is still a sore issue, even though we have had scores of meetings with the police. We have been left unsure whether the police had the necessary powers and whether they were used. The police reckoned that they were limited in how they could disperse people. Questions remain about the powers that the police had. The power of dispersal would seem to resolve the issue—the police would not be able to come to meetings and make the excuses, “We don’t have the powers,” or, “Our powers are limited.” I do not think that the issue comes down to manpower. There is a total lack of respect for the police, although that is another issue.

I sympathise with the point that John Corcoran made. We come from nearby areas and we have suffered the same as people in Dundee or anywhere else. When you live in certain environments, you understand the need for effective powers. We are starting to crack, with a big hammer, the wee nuts that we are trying to sort out—although we seem to be heading down the track of overkill.

Over the past 25 years, there has been social and cultural change—and the change has been such that the culture of 50 years ago is now unrecognisable. Such problems have to be addressed, and they are being addressed. However, we have to take an overview and sympathise with people. We have to deal with the problems on the ground that have caused massive misery and damage to our communities. Initially, we have to take swift action. Some people might feel that the present proposals are overkill, but I hope that they could lead to other, softer, options. There are problems out there and we need these powers of dispersal to deal with them instantly.

Frances Nelson: I will answer that with reference to the past—that is the worst thing about old age, you see. When my kids were wee, they could not loiter around the streets because the police had powers to move them on, even at that time. They do not need the powers that you are offering them because they have that power already. If kids are standing in a group, they can be moved on for loitering. I do not understand

what the new power is for. I can also understand the police saying that they do not have enough men to go out and move all the groups. The police already have the power that we are talking about but they do not have the manpower to move on all the groups. Am I allowed to ask you about the power? Are you talking about giving them an extra power or do they already have the power?

The Convener: That is precisely the discussion that we are having. The police told us last week that they have the necessary power and do not need further powers. However, I think that the experience that was described by Mr Callaghan is echoed in other areas and it is felt that, if the police have the power, they are not exercising it. In some cases, it might be the case that the police do not have the resources to act, but that is not what the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland told us last week.

Communities say that they cannot do anything about the problem and I think that the USDAW representative said that their members’ hands are tied because they have no power to move groups on. We are trying to work out whether the police have the power but are not exercising it, whether there are problems with the exercising of the power or whether, at local level, communities are being told that the police do not have the power.

Frances Nelson: Will you now be saying to the police, “You have the powers—use them”?

The Convener: That is the debate—

Frances Nelson: Everybody out there needs to know that the police have the powers. I knew that they had them.

The Convener: The key thing about the new power is that, rather than being a power to disperse a group, it is a power to identify an area to which a group cannot return if the situation has become really bad.

Obviously, people are telling us different things. The key thing that you are telling us is that you recognise the need to be able to move youngsters away from areas. We can have a debate about whether the police have the power to do that and what might be preventing them from exercising that power.

John Corcoran: We have an opportunity to revive the powers that the police have. We must ensure that the police can disperse crowds of the sort that we are talking about. Furthermore, once the group is dispersed, the people involved must not be able simply to move from point A to point B. The police had powers to move on such groups previously and we have to revitalise those powers. Dispersal is a key part of cutting crime.

Resources are important, but that is another issue. The point is that dispersal is not effective at

the moment. The police need to be told that the powers of dispersal will be reintroduced in the bill and that they have a responsibility to prevent such young people gathering in groups. The police need to be told that they have to move them on and that any group of three or four people who gather for any length of time has to be disbanded and dispersed.

Patrick Harvie: You touched on the problem of groups just moving from place to place rather than the behaviour of the people in them being changed. In your communities, when a group is moved on, what sort of places do they go to? Are there facilities that they start to use once they are moved on? Do they cause the same problems elsewhere? If so, will the designation of specific areas from which they can be moved be genuinely helpful in the long run?

11:00

Frances Nelson: Some members of the DFTA and some council officials went to Sedgefield. We found that visit to be extremely productive. At that time, there were wardens there whose prime job was to go about the place moving people on. The police did that as well. However, there were community centres and youth centres that the people in the groups would be taken to. They were told that that is where they had to be. If they did not want to do that, they had to go home and were therefore off the street. If they did not go home after being told to do so, the police charged them with loitering. As a result, the people in Sedgefield were able to deal with the situation, and did not have the same kinds of groups hanging around and doing whatever they were doing. They had somewhere to take, or to direct, those young people. Moreover, once the young people had been introduced to that environment, they liked and used it.

I have said for a long time that, although we might have community centres, they are always closed when they are needed. For example, they do not open at weekends and are closed at night, because the man responsible for looking after them has to get home or has to be paid overtime. Community centres do not really work: I always thought that they were supposed to be for kids, but they seem to open only during the day and are only for people who want to learn to knit and sew or to become computer buffs. They are closed when kids come out of school. Kids might be able to go to the centres between five and half-past 6—a few of them are open until 8 o'clock—but that is the end of it. That is when the kids start getting into bother.

There are facilities that we can use already. The staff of a community centre in our area did not want to open it in the evenings because they were

not being paid for working until that time of night. As a result, the tenants federation asked whether it could open and be responsible for the centre at the weekend. "Oh, heavens, no", we were told. "Your federation is not on our insurance policy and you're not allowed to open the doors or lock up." The committee should be addressing those sorts of issues.

The Convener: There is good practice across the country in that respect.

Frances Nelson: Do you know of any centres that allow people who are not staff to open them?

The Convener: Well, community centres in my constituency open at night and many of them are staffed by volunteers. Obviously the situation is different in different places.

Frances Nelson: Good. It certainly does not happen in Dundee.

Alice Bovill: In response to Patrick Harvie's question, I want to tell the committee about the experience in my community. We have no community centres at all. We have to apply for funding from outwith the council to social inclusion partnerships and other organisations. Although we are fortunate to receive funding for a youth group, we have to hold its meetings in a sheltered lounge that can be used only if the pensioners are not using it for a bingo evening.

That said, the group has worked very well. Indeed, the youths are so receptive to and good with the elderly people that only last week they gave them a Burns supper. Furthermore, the local community police officer helps to run the club, plays football with the kids and is always there for them to talk to. As a result, instead of simply calling the police "pigs" all the time, the youths are being taught respect for them.

However, that is our only community facility. We have nothing for five to 12-year-olds. We have also had to apply for more funding for our outside play scheme, which consists of a minibus going round areas twice a week for an hour to organise games for the children. I am speaking as a resident of an area that is deprived of any community facilities.

Joe Callaghan: As I explained, we have implemented a regeneration programme and are engaging in various outdoor activities, outward bound and other activities. Many people out there are working very hard to regenerate play areas and so on.

However, the problem is that a large and increasing minority of troublemakers have been allowed to reach a certain level of antisocial behaviour. Those people have been identified, so we need the powers of dispersal. Although a massive number of young people are only too

willing to engage with the process of getting on with the community, that large minority is now causing havoc and has been doing so for a considerable time. It is time to engage with those young people and to put resources into amenities for those who are needful of them.

The Convener: Jackie Baillie may ask a question, if she is quick.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): I will try to be quick, but there is something about the Haldane story that has not quite come out. I would like to ask Joe Callaghan some important questions that need yes or no answers.

Do you accept that the local authority and voluntary organisations have provided a huge range of facilities in Haldane that are accessible at all times of the night for young people of all ages?

Joe Callaghan: Generally speaking, yes.

Jackie Baillie: So the problem is not a lack of facilities.

Joe Callaghan: No. Facilities are being improved. Some facilities are still to come on-stream, but there are numerous facilities.

Jackie Baillie: Let us consider the case of the fire at the Co-op. Evidence that the committee has received from USDAW also mentions fires. Do you think that if the police had powers of dispersal, they might have been able to use those powers to stop people from congregating and therefore could have stopped the Co-op from going up in flames?

Joe Callaghan: Most certainly.

Jackie Baillie: That is helpful.

Finally, on whether more policing or more powers are required, we have had local discussions about numbers of police officers, but people recognise that deployment of police officers is a matter for chief constables and not the Parliament. Perhaps the bill presents an opportunity and a route towards getting communities involved in discussions about needs and the deployment of police officers.

Joe Callaghan: If communities were engaged in such a process, I am pretty sure that it would be valued. I am sure that John Corcoran would agree with me.

The Convener: Thank you—that discussion was a model of precision.

Scott Barrie (Dunfermline West) (Lab): I would like to turn to another part of the bill, which concerns parenting orders. Dundee Federation of Tenants Associations has said that it broadly supports the concept of parenting orders. For the *Official Report* and our colleagues from Alexandria, would the witnesses from Dundee say

whether parenting orders would improve matters, bearing in mind that the policy memorandum states clearly that no parenting order could be imposed unless a parent had failed to take up voluntary resources that had been offered? Perhaps Alice Bovill would like to say something first, because she has experience of the children's hearings system.

Alice Bovill: Parenting orders would be used in many circumstances, such as children not going to school, children being neglected and children causing vandalism in communities. The problem lies in getting parents to work with agencies for the three months that are stipulated. If parents do not work with the agencies, they will be fined. Many of them claim benefits, so who would pay those fines? Will parents simply not pay fines? Parenting orders would last for a year and could then be extended.

I understand what Scott Barrie says. Sometimes, parents will not work with supervision orders at all—we find that happening in the children's hearings system. Parenting orders are a good thing, but I agree that children's hearings should not be able to impose them on parents. A hearing could only advise the reporter to apply for a parenting order. Obviously, the children's hearings system cannot deal with children's parents—we can deal only with children. However, Dundee Federation of Tenants Associations believes that parenting orders would probably be a good thing.

Scott Barrie: You have experience as a children's panel member and have rightly explained to the committee that the only real power that a children's panel has is in imposing statutory supervision requirements on children, whereas sometimes the root of the problem is parents' failures. Are parenting orders a solution to the dilemma in which members of children's panels find themselves whereby they must do something in respect of a child but want to direct resources at the parents?

Alice Bovill: Yes. When we impose a compulsory supervision order, the child is often willing to work with the social worker. He or she will come in and will phone the social worker at all hours of the day or night. However, social workers go to parents' doors but the parents are never in, or they are told that the parents will be back in half an hour, but they do not come back in that time. Therefore, the parents never engage with the social worker and the root of the problem is never dealt with. There is engagement only with the child, which can probably happen anyway without a supervision order.

Scott Barrie: Do any of the witnesses from Alexandria want to comment on parenting orders?

John Corcoran: Parenting orders are a must: parents must start to accept responsibility for their offspring. They are not doing so, so parenting orders must be part and parcel of the bill. If they take only one third of those young individuals who engage in antisocial behaviour out of the cycle, parenting orders will be successful. We have to try everything that is available to us to put a stop to what is going on. I would back parenting orders 1,000 per cent. They might sometimes fail; we know that there are other problems out there, but we must go ahead with them.

Joe Callaghan: For the first time, I might have a wee bit of difficulty with what John Corcoran has said. We need to have a broad umbrella that covers a lot of areas. I agree with the principle behind parenting orders, but I do not see how the desired effect can be achieved. I will give you a wee example. A mother has three kids, down to about five months old. Already, the two older kids have been taken into care. She has been a real scourge of the community, this one. She has been moved from one area to another, then she was moved again. Her ex-partner stays through the door and up the stair, and deals drugs. It is a pitiful situation. The kids witness blood-baths, drug dealing and all sorts of abuse. They are trailed out to go drinking with the mother at all hours of the morning.

If care is not provided in the community for situations like that, with three kids getting trekked through a main street, soaking wet and with the mother drunk, how can we implement the measures that the bill proposes? If people have no respect for the law as it stands, how can we get them to care for their kids? That takes us into the whole question of where the antisocial behaviour started. By the way—staying with that example—after the mother was removed from her house, after fires and whatever else, she was moved to another area. She was recently moved on from there, too, as a result of the neighbours all ganging up on her and putting in complaints. In that case, the problem is just being moved around.

If we can engage with people like her in the context of estate management, we will be doing it for their sakes. We are not criticising them—they are victims as much as we are. However, we need a process in which we can engage with them and with their weans and families. We have to be able to intercede and to help them as much as we can. Otherwise, we are useless, hopeless and defenceless.

Scott Barrie: Those were very useful points. On the part of the bill that deals with parenting orders, and looking at it from the child welfare perspective, I point out that, parents have in some cases been unwilling, rather than unable, to parent their children. There is child welfare legislation for bairns who find themselves in that situation.

To return to Alice Bovill's point, parenting orders could be used as an extra tool in cases involving children who come before children's hearings, but whose parents' obvious lack of willingness, rather than their inability to be parents, seems to cause the problem.

Joe Callaghan: Let us get back to the relevant point. John Corcoran has had recent experience of upsets involving youngsters at the back of 3 in the morning. Apart from the issues of schooling and so on, we see children out in communities during the day and we wonder why they are never at school.

On parenting orders, we are talking about a 25-year generation gap here that involves the generation that sustained or encouraged all the bad parenting—or at least which never interceded and never engaged with it in any respect, be that social, legal or whatever. We are reaping the harvest of that now. If the mothers do not know where their kids are at 3 in the morning, how can they be responsible parents? The kids are out of control. I see them out at the garages at all times of the morning, always doing the same type of thing. They are out roaming the streets late at night. I do not know where parenting orders would be effective.

Cathie Craigie: The bill deals with antisocial behaviour by tenants of private landlords. The Dundee Federation of Tenants Associations, in particular, addresses that issue in its written evidence, so I know that the federation has experience of dealing with it in its community. Will the measures in the bill be sufficient to tackle the problems that you have experienced?

11:15

Frances Nelson: Obviously not. I do not think that the bill goes far enough. Registration of landlords must be implemented—there should be a register of all landlords. If someone owns and lets a house, that person is a landlord. Everybody has said to me that such a register would be very difficult to handle, but most people who have bought council houses on estates in Dundee are letting them to people who are claiming housing benefit; the houses are not let to people who are not on housing benefit. If someone rents a house, the landlord receives the housing benefit in return for allowing that person to stay there. As a landlord, I do not have to carry out any repairs nor do I care if the tenant is causing havoc—it would all be the same to me. The other tenants in the area would have to put up with it, but I would not because I would have bought a nice house and be paying my mortgage using that housing benefit: that is how it is done. We are saying that landlords who are not willing to register should not receive those housing benefit payments. That would be an incentive for them to register.

I also feel that we should ask why people are put into such houses. Why did they have to go to a private landlord to get a house in the first place? Has the council refused them a house? Should we look at that issue? However, that is a matter for another day.

I feel strongly that any landlord, no matter who, should be on a register with the council. In Dundee, we had a case in which a person was causing—dear God, it was terrible. However, the council did not know and could not find out who the landlord was, so it took a lot of time and effort to find that landlord. The money to do that all had to come out of the rent that we pay. It did not come from council tax, so it cost our landlord a lot of money to be able to deal with that tenant. There is a big problem and it is not just in Dundee—it is a problem all over Scotland and it is getting worse.

Cathie Craigie: I do not think that I need to ask you any more—you probably support my position.

Alice Bovill: Registration would probably discourage tenants—as Frances Nelson said—from buying their council houses and renting them out. If a landlord had one tenancy, they would probably use a letting agency, which would supply its management details. That would be a plus. A landlord with a single tenancy would not go to all the bother of registering.

John Corcoran: I agree with everything that has been said on that aspect of the bill.

The Convener: We have reached the end of this evidence-taking session. Thank you for attending and for providing such full and helpful responses. As I said at the beginning, if there are points to which you want to add, we will be more than happy to hear from you. I hope that you have a safe journey back home, given the weather outside the window. I suspend the meeting for two minutes.

11:18

Meeting suspended.

11:22

On resuming—

The Convener: Our second panel of witnesses is from the Echo youth group in Dumfries. I welcome Stefan Howat, Samantha Dale, Lloyd Livingstone and Stevie Little. I hope that you had a safe journey up this morning. We look forward to hearing what you have to say. We are keen to explore everybody's interests in the Antisocial Behaviour etc (Scotland) Bill and to hear their views. Certainly, when the committee goes out into the country, we are keen to talk to young people as well as to older people. There are

concerns about getting that balance right, so we appreciate the fact that you have come along today. If there are questions that you feel you did not get enough of a chance to answer, we are happy to hear from you later. Equally, if there are questions that you do not have a view on, you can tell us that you do not want to comment and we will just move on to the next question.

I will kick off on how the Scottish Executive has consulted on the bill. I am aware that you met some committee members last year. I wonder whether you were involved in any other consultation on antisocial behaviour in your area. Did anybody else organise anything? Do you have any comments arising from your meeting with committee members or from the consultation?

Stefan Howat (Echo Youth Group): The Echo youth group is arranging a project at a fire station control unit to show how antisocial behaviour can cause wheelie bin fires and other fires and to show how to deal with it.

The Convener: So your project is initiating some education on the impact of antisocial behaviour.

Stefan Howat: Yes.

The Convener: As nobody has any further comments on that first question, we will move on.

Stewart Stevenson: Good morning. With our previous panel of witnesses, we talked quite a lot about antisocial behaviour that is caused by young people. However, we all accept that antisocial behaviour affects young children as well as adults. What is your experience of how antisocial behaviour affects you? If you want to, you can tell us what antisocial behaviour you have been involved in, but I would guide you more towards the ways in which you are affected by the sort of things that are going on in your communities.

Samantha Dale (Echo Youth Group): It is always us that get the blame for antisocial behaviour, but it is not always us that are actually doing it. It is folk who are maybe 18 even, doing drugs and starting wheelie bin fires because they find it fun. Things are different from our point of view. You dinnae usually get to hear our point of view because folk think that it is always us, but it is not.

Stewart Stevenson: Can I develop what you have just said? You brought up the subject of drugs. One of the questions that I have been asking—as have others—as I have gone around the country is to what extent drink and drugs cause antisocial behaviour. I am thinking particularly about older children and adults—the 18 and 21-year-olds. What is your view of the effect of drink and drugs as a part of the cause of antisocial behaviour?

Samantha Dale: I would say that drink and drugs cause quite a lot of antisocial behaviour, especially in Dumfries. A lot of drugs and drink are done in Dock park and needles are left there. That causes a lot of bother.

Stewart Stevenson: Is drink a bigger problem than drugs?

Samantha Dale: No, I wouldnae say so.

Stewart Stevenson: Stevie, did you put your hand up to say something?

Stevie Little (Echo Youth Group): No.

Stewart Stevenson: That is all right. It is not compulsory. Does anyone else want to say anything?

Stefan Howat: I think that the problem is equal between drink and drugs. Drink causes a lot of problems in Dumfries, but drugs do as well. There are a lot of drunken people going about Dumfries and Dumfries is just not safe for children to go about. When children see those people, they think, "I'll try that." At local parks in Dumfries, needles and syringes are found and children might use them, which is a big problem.

Stewart Stevenson: So to some extent the behaviour of older children and adults is part of the problem. Do Lloyd and Stevie want to say anything about the behaviour of adults? You will never get a better chance.

Stevie Little: I think that junkies cause the biggest havoc, because they are all over the bit and nick stuff to sell it for their kit. We were up the town yince, in Blockbusters, and this junkie came along and went to steal my bike. We came out and he said, "I was only kidding," but if we had not come out he would have nicked it.

Stewart Stevenson: So your property is at risk from people who are older than you and who have a drug problem.

Stevie Little: Aye.

Stewart Stevenson: Do you want to say anything, Lloyd?

Lloyd Livingstone (Echo Youth Group): No.

Stewart Stevenson: Come on, you can slag off the adults now. You can really get it on the record.

Lloyd Livingstone: Weans are picking up needles and that round the flats where we stay. The flat landings are where a lot of the junkies do their stuff.

Stewart Stevenson: You have made quite clear the kind of antisocial behaviour that worries you. Thank you.

Mary Scanlon: Cathie Craigie and I certainly enjoyed meeting you in Dumfries. That meeting

was helpful to us. It is nice to see you in Edinburgh.

I want to ask about antisocial behaviour services. Stewart Stevenson has already asked whether you have experienced or been a victim of antisocial behaviour, but I would like to ask whether you have been involved in antisocial behaviour. Where would you go to get support? Would it be the police or the school? In your answer, will you explain how you got involved with Maggie Marr, who is sitting behind you? You all speak very highly of Maggie, who is your youth worker. How did you get the support of the youth worker? I ask Lloyd to start, because he was very talkative when we met in Dumfries.

Lloyd Livingstone: We were in Lochside, which is the bit where we all stay and where drugs are a problem. Maggie Marr came round with another woman and asked us to fill out a questionnaire.

Mary Scanlon: She came round the streets.

Lloyd Livingstone: Aye, with another woman. She asked us to fill out a questionnaire about drugs and alcohol.

Mary Scanlon: From filling in a questionnaire, how did you get involved with the Echo youth group?

Lloyd Livingstone: We were asked to come along to the Echo and participate in what was happening.

Mary Scanlon: What sort of support do you get from the youth group and how often do you go there?

Lloyd Livingstone: We go every Friday. You can talk confidentially and get free contraception and advice. It gets you off the streets as well.

Mary Scanlon: So you get advice about contraception and you can talk about anything that you feel you cannot talk to others about.

Lloyd Livingstone: Aye.

Mary Scanlon: Could you not talk to your parents?

Lloyd Livingstone: I talk to my mum and dad about things as well, but the group gives us somebody else to talk to. We cannae talk to teachers at school. I feel that I can go to the Echo and talk about things.

Mary Scanlon: Do you feel that the group gives you a lot of support and helps people who might otherwise be involved in antisocial behaviour?

Lloyd Livingstone: Yes.

Mary Scanlon: Stevie looks like he wants to say something. Where do you get support, Stevie? Have you been involved in antisocial behaviour?

Stevie Little: Not much. I would go to Maggie to speak about any problems. I got involved with the group because my pals were going and they said it was all right so I went just to see what it was like.

Mary Scanlon: So you enjoy going to the youth group.

Stevie Little: Aye. It is good.

11:30

Samantha Dale: I got involved because yin day yin of my pals was going to the gala or something and she told us to go along.

Mary Scanlon: What do you get out of the group? Have you ever been a victim of antisocial behaviour? How does the group help you?

Samantha Dale: If we have problems, Maggie is easy to talk to compared to folk like the guidance teacher at school.

Mary Scanlon: Do you not feel that you can talk to any of your teachers at school?

Samantha Dale: No.

Stefan Howat: I got involved with the Echo project because of a bad habit of mine—smoking. I was needing a light at the time and when I was walking past I saw Sam Dale in this place that I had never seen before—I did not even know that it existed. I went in and spoke to Sam and while I was in there I said hello to Maggie. She explained what they do and said that there was a youth group every Friday. Maggie is an excellent person to talk to. She runs her youth group every Friday, but if you have a problem on a Monday or a Tuesday, she has all the time in the world for you. She will let you come in on whatever day you have a problem and she will talk to you.

Mary Scanlon: We have certainly heard great reports about Maggie. Are there any services that you would like to be provided? We have asked you along because we are considering a bill on antisocial behaviour. Does being in Maggie's group help you to stay away from antisocial behaviour? Does it give you the confidence not to get involved? Does it help victims and others alike?

Stefan Howat: I would say it does, yes, but in a way it does not, because not everybody goes to the group. Some of my friends get involved in antisocial behaviour. I try to stay out of it as much as I can, but at the same time I do not want to fall out with them. I am at the Echo quite a lot, and the antisocial behaviour that we caused before is not happening now.

Mary Scanlon: What do you mean that you are doing quite a lot now? How has the Echo youth group helped you?

Stefan Howat: It is somewhere to go and hang out and talk to everybody else without anybody saying, "Let's do this and let's do that."

Mary Scanlon: Do you feel that you might be persuaded by your friends to get involved in drugs or antisocial behaviour if you were not involved in the Echo group?

Stefan Howat: Not me personally, but I can see that other people could be.

Cathie Craigie: I very much enjoyed my day down in Dumfries. We had about an hour, but our meeting could have gone on for about two hours that day, because you were all so talkative.

The Echo project started as a young persons' health project—it was about young people respecting themselves and so on. Lloyd, are you still the chairperson? Has your involvement in the project helped you to respect your wider community and look at your community differently?

Lloyd Livingstone: I do not know.

Cathie Craigie: Has the group taught any of you to get involved in your community or given you the desire to become involved in other things?

Stefan Howat: Yes.

Cathie Craigie: In what way?

Stefan Howat: Jobs, if you know what I mean. It is different for me, because I am older. It is hard to find a job, but since I bumped into Maggie Marr that has changed, because she knows everybody. She talks to them. I start a new job tomorrow thanks to Maggie and I sent away another application thanks to her. A placement might even be opening up at Echo, so fingers crossed.

The Convener: If only we could clone Maggie.

Donald Gorrie: We accept that there is a problem that young people feel that they are blamed for all the ills of mankind, although they are not to blame for them. However, some young people have problems with keeping to the straight and narrow and increasingly get into trouble with the police or their neighbours. One way in which the bill proposes to deal with that is through antisocial behaviour orders, which will be put in place by the courts. The orders apply from the age of 16 upwards, but they could be applied to 12-year-olds. From your experience, will taking a severe line with 12 and 13-year-olds who are beginning to go a bit astray help or not help?

Samantha Dale: It would help a lot. Some of the younger people are getting involved in antisocial behaviour because they see the older people doing it. If the age limit goes down a bit, that will help more people than if orders just apply to the older folk.

Donald Gorrie: Do the other witnesses agree that it would be helpful to have something to get a grip on 12 to 16-year-olds?

Stevie Little: Yes.

Patrick Harvie: I will ask about dispersal. You may have heard about that. It is one of the powers proposed in the bill, through which the police will be able to designate an area where there has been a serious antisocial behaviour problem and move on any group of two or more people. Would that have made a difference in situations in which you have experienced problems? Would the power be used against the people who cause problems for you? Where would those people go after they had been moved on? Might people who were not causing problems be moved on unreasonably?

If you have time, will you also tell us about the facilities that exist in your town, in particular for young people? We have heard a lot about the Echo project, but where else can people go if they are prevented from hanging around street corners or other hot spots?

Stevie Little: The only reason we hang around in big groups is because there is nothing to do in our community. It is just boring.

Patrick Harvie: What would happen if the power to disperse groups that were causing problems—or were thought to be causing problems—was used?

Stevie Little: There should be places to go where people can have fun, like new parks. The old ones are all broken up; the swings are broken and everything. There should be more facilities where we can do stuff.

Patrick Harvie: Do you ever have problems with other groups that are hanging around, for example when you are just walking in the streets?

Stevie Little: No, not much.

Stefan Howat: The power might cause conflict, because if the police tell a group of people who might not be doing anything that they have to move on, those people might think, "We're not doing anything and if we were they would tell us to move on anyway." The people in the group might decide to cause trouble elsewhere, just to get back at the police for moving them on. The police are not the favourite people in Dumfries—or anywhere, for that matter.

Patrick Harvie: Do you think that the measure might make the relationship with the police worse?

Stefan Howat: Yes.

Samantha Dale: I reckon that the new power is unreasonable. There might be a quiet group, but just along the block a bit there might be a load of

folk who were involved in antisocial behaviour. They might move on, but when the police arrived the quiet lot would get the blame, because there would be nobody else around.

The Convener: How would you deal with the group who had been causing the bother? For example, a group might be hanging around outside the sheltered housing, where there were a lot of older people and grannies who felt frightened and who had been getting a hard time from that group. How could we sort that out?

Samantha Dale: Like Stevie said, there should be somewhere for that group to go. There is nowhere—there is the Oasis youth centre up the town, but that is no good for someone who lives away down the bottom of Lochside. There is a community centre in Lochside, but it does not offer much for anybody.

The Convener: Sometimes folk do not use the community facilities; they do not like them or they do not think that the facilities are really for them. Sometimes some young people prevent other young people from using the facilities, too. Do we need to think about the kinds of facilities that are on offer?

Samantha Dale: Aye.

The Convener: Does anyone else want to comment on that?

You are basically saying that people need lots of places where they can go, such as the Echo project, so that they will not get involved in antisocial behaviour.

Cathie Craigie: The bill would introduce community reparation orders for people aged between 12 and 21. That means that people who had committed an offence would be required to make reparation to their local community, perhaps by removing graffiti or doing something else that would repair the damage that they had caused, so that the community could see that happen. Would that be an effective way of getting people to pay back their debt to society? Might it prevent people from offending again?

Stefan Howat: But how would you make people do that work? I cannot see that working at all, especially if the parents had something against it—parents are protective of their children.

Cathie Craigie: What if it was the law that they had a choice between washing off graffiti and being imprisoned or put into secure accommodation?

Stefan Howat: That would be different. That would push it forward. It would help.

Samantha Dale: That is quite a good idea, but, as Stefan says, it might not be pushed enough. If somebody was sitting scrubbing graffiti off a wall

and all their pals walked by, they would be so embarrassed that they would realise not to do it again, otherwise it will just happen again.

Lloyd Livingstone: If folk write graffiti and have to wipe it off the wall, they will just do it again to get back at the polis. They will write something on the wall about the polis to get back at the polis, then deny that it was them and refuse to scrub it off.

11:45

Stefan Howat: What would happen if somebody was in a gang and one or two out of seven were writing graffiti and nobody would say who it was? Would they all get made to scrub it off?

Cathie Craigie: A CRO would be used for somebody who had appeared before a children's panel or a court and who had been found, after all the evidence had been looked at, guilty of an offence. It is not intended that the police would be able to say to a group of people that they were all guilty and had to do something; the order would be used when somebody had committed and been found guilty of an offence.

The Convener: What do you think that we should do about graffiti? Is the fact that people paint on walls and other people's gates a problem? What should we do about it?

Samantha Dale: I do not know. If you are sitting by a big plain white wall with spray paint in yin hand and a big black marker in the other, you are obviously going to want to do something to the wall, because it is boring. You should make a wall like that look a bit decent. You should make it look brighter.

The Convener: If I had a big bright white wall and I liked it that way, would I have the right to be annoyed if somebody came along and spray painted it?

Samantha Dale: Aye.

The Convener: One of the things that the bill suggests is that we ban the sale of spray paints to under-16s, so you would not be sitting with it in your hands. Might that help?

Stefan Howat: The ban should be for people up to 21. Older people commit those crimes as well, not just 12 to 16-year-olds. I see graffiti as more a thing for 16 to 21-year-olds; I cannot see it being for people younger than that.

The Convener: So if we consider banning spray paints, should the age limit be slightly older?

Stefan Howat: Yes.

Scott Barrie: I am not sure whether you have any views on what I will ask about, but, if you do, I will be interested in hearing them. My question is

the same as the one that I asked the previous panel of witnesses—I think that you were sitting in the public gallery, so you probably heard it—and it is about parenting orders. The bill proposes a new power, so that, if the parents of children who were causing problems had not accepted the support that was offered to them, a court could issue a parenting order against the parent rather than having to take action against the child, which is what would happen at the moment. Do you have any views about whether that would be good or bad?

The Convener: Should parents ever be responsible for what you get up to?

Samantha Dale: No.

The Convener: Should your parents get in trouble if you do not go to school?

Samantha Dale: No.

The Convener: If the problem is that the parent is not helping the young person, what can we do?

Samantha Dale: It is not always the parents' fault. Some folk fight with their parents, so their parents cannae do anything about it. It is not their fault all the time; it might be sometimes, but I dinnae think it is fair to blame the parents.

Scott Barrie: We are not necessarily blaming the parents. You can disagree if you want to, but my view is that, when a parent is deemed not to have been doing what they should have been doing—irrespective of what their child has been doing, they have not been doing their bit to help the child in the way that Johann Lamont has just mentioned—it is more appropriate to target that parent rather than to take action against the child, which is what would happen at the moment.

Samantha Dale: That depends on the situation.

Scott Barrie: I accept that.

Donald Gorrie: What are your opinions on electronic monitoring? As part of a penalty on somebody who is over 16, the courts can tag that person. He or she might be placed under the restriction of being at home during some hours or staying away from some places. The tagging allows their movements to be followed.

The intention is to reduce the age from which people can be tagged to cover 12 to 16-year-olds. As part of a package to try to sort out the life of a young person who was in a bit of trouble, would tagging be helpful? Some people argue that being tagged is like receiving the Victoria cross—it is a sort of award for which someone's pals might look up to them. Is there anything in that?

Samantha Dale: I think that the mates of someone who was tagged would take the mick out of them. If the person who was tagged had the six-

by-six times, they would have to be in from 6 pm until 6 am. That would give them nae chance of going out for even a wee while with their pals. Some folk who go to Maxwelltown High School have to go all the way out to Heathhall or Georgetown to get hame, so there is nae chance of them getting back in time to go out for even half an hour, if they want to get in on time.

Stefan Howat: Some colleges do not finish until 5 o'clock. Those restrictions would be unacceptable in that situation.

Donald Gorrie: It would be up to the court to have sensible limits. The court can say that somebody must be at home during certain hours and tagging has some success in enforcing that. What do you feel about tagging young people who have been in trouble?

Stefan Howat: I do not like the idea at all. It is not a good idea.

Lloyd Livingstone: I think that tagging would work, because it would keep people away from the areas where they get into trouble. A curfew for being at home would keep people out of trouble for a while, until the tagging ended. After being tagged, the person might see sense and might keep out of trouble.

The Convener: As has been said, everybody is blamed for what one person does. If one person from a group graffitied a wall, we might know who did it. Some people would like all young people not to be out on the streets after a certain time, but instead of that the idea is to pick out the individual who is causing the bother and to work with them so that they are not involved in bother. Would tagging put off people you know from getting involved in bother if they thought that they would have to sit at home when their pals were out? Would tagging make a difference to them?

Stevie Little: It probably would. Their pals can stay out late, but a person who is tagged must be in at a certain time. If they have to go in at that time, obviously they will be bored in the house. That idea might put them off causing bother.

The Convener: Would it put you off if you thought that that might happen to you?

Stevie Little: Aye.

The Convener: I do not think that you would ever need tagging.

Mary Scanlon: Stefan Howat mentioned the police. In places with antisocial behaviour problems, what support do local councillors, community councils and the police provide? Lloyd and others explained that when we were in Dumfries.

Stefan Howat: I am sorry; I did not quite understand the question.

Mary Scanlon: Do the police and your local councillor do enough to support you and victims of all ages? Do they do enough to work against antisocial behaviour in your area?

Stefan Howat: No.

Mary Scanlon: You said that quickly. Do you work with your local councillor and the police? Why do you feel that they do not do enough?

Stevie Little: We never see policemen about. We hardly ever see them doing their job.

Mary Scanlon: When you ask the police for help—

Stevie Little: The police come.

Stefan Howat: They come about 20 minutes later.

Stevie Little: If somebody's shed has been broken into, the police arrive about an hour after they have been phoned. They are not on time.

Mary Scanlon: Do you feel that the police do not take such matters seriously enough?

Stevie Little: They do not.

Lloyd Livingstone: Lochside should have a small polis station. That would make it easier for the polis to reach what is happening, instead of coming all the way from the town.

Mary Scanlon: Do you feel that people do not report to the police everything that they should report because they do not have confidence in the police?

Lloyd Livingstone: Yes.

Mary Scanlon: It has been said that, in the local park, swings were broken and needles could be found. Dealing with that is your councillor's responsibility. Have you told your councillor about the problems and has he or she helped?

Lloyd Livingstone: We dinnae see the councillor going about the streets. I ken folk that stuff has happened to and the councillor has not dealt with it. Even though they have spoken to him, nowt happens. He said that the park would have new swings, but that never happened.

Stevie Little: We told the councillor that the fields should have lights in case stabbings happen. He does not help or do enough.

Stefan Howat: There is a great big field in Lochside where it has been said for years that a park would be created, but that has never happened.

The Convener: I thank all those who have attended for coming along. I do not know whether you have any last points to make. If you do not want to make them now, we will be delighted to

hear from you later. We appreciate the fact that people from the Echo youth group and Maggie Marr have come to the meeting. I hope that you found the evidence session productive.

Stefan Howat: At a previous meeting, the committee talked about community centres being more available and more open. The situation can be different when someone is present in a community centre just to supervise, because that can even cause antisocial behaviour. If a centre has two or three people there who young people do not know or talk to, the young people might go into the centre to draw on tables, do things to walls and vandalise the toilets. A project such as Maggie Marr's gives people a totally different view, because Maggie talks to people and has contact with them.

The Convener: People must feel that the centre belongs to them.

Stefan Howat: Yes.

The Convener: Perhaps that would be achieved if a youth committee were part of a community centre. There are some examples of that in my area. That means that a centre is not just a strange place that you go to.

Stefan Howat: Yes, it is ours.

The Convener: Because they have some responsibility for the centre, young people are less likely to do damage.

Stefan Howat: If we see anybody doing damage, we report it.

The Convener: Thank you very much indeed. I wish you a safe journey home.

11:57

Meeting suspended.

12:03

On resuming—

The Convener: I welcome our final witnesses for today. Dennis Daly is the director in Scotland of Communities that Care and Sarah Gillen is the south Edinburgh co-ordinator. We are grateful for your attendance and your written submission. As I have said to other witnesses, if, after the meeting, you feel that you would like to amplify or expand on certain points, or that you missed certain points, we would be more than happy to hear from you afterwards.

I will kick off with the first question. You will know that the Scottish Executive has stated that the number of communities, organisations and individuals that took part in the consultation process that led to the bill was unprecedented.

What is your opinion of the consultation process and the extent to which you were engaged in it? Did you conduct any consultation on the issues that are highlighted in the bill within your organisation or within your areas of responsibility?

Dennis Daly (Communities that Care): I was well aware of the consultation process through the press and the media and we made a submission to the Scottish Executive. My only slight confusion was that it seemed that submissions were being made to both the Executive and the Parliament—a point that slightly escaped my notice. I have responsibility for five areas in Scotland. I did not undertake any specific consultations in those areas.

Sarah Gillen (Communities that Care): I know that there were opportunities for consultation in south Edinburgh and I saw a consultation document, but I did not write anything because my colleague Dennis Daly was doing that.

The Convener: There are always two separate calls for evidence. The Scottish Executive called for responses to their document. As the parliamentary committee scrutinising the bill, we also issued a call for people's comments to try to inform our scrutiny of the Executive's proposals.

Stewart Stevenson: I do not want to make too much of the legalistic stuff, but it is obviously important that the bill is pinned on a sound understanding of what antisocial behaviour is. The bill incorporates the definition that already exists in legislation on antisocial behaviour orders. It says that someone engages in antisocial behaviour if he or she

"acts in a manner ... or ... pursues a course of conduct that causes or is likely to cause alarm or distress".

Do you feel comfortable with that definition? Is it too all-encompassing, does it miss the target or is it as good as we will get?

Dennis Daly: It might be as good as we will get, but I have anxieties about the reference to causing alarm or distress. If a youngster is kicking a ball against a wall right outside my room and I am trying to do something terribly difficult or profound, such as to think big thoughts, it might be going too far to use the word "distress", but in time irritation can head towards distress. I have some anxieties about the fairly wide nature of the terms that are used. There is a personal element to what is considered alarming or distressing.

I will illustrate by way of a personal anecdote. Youngsters smashed my window and two or three other windows in the area that I was in. I was irritated, angry and slightly afraid, but the old lady who lived round the corner from me was terrified—her son had to come and take her away from her house. What causes alarm and distress is a

personal matter. Although we would all agree that playing loud music at 3 am—which I think one of the earlier witnesses mentioned—is unreasonable, an individual's act can have differing impacts on different people. I am not quite sure how to handle that, but I have some anxieties about how the words that are used in the bill might be interpreted.

Stewart Stevenson: Another part of the bill qualifies the definition by saying that a sheriff can discount behaviour that a person can show was “reasonable in the circumstances”. Does that give you the comfort of believing that the system will end up operating in law in a way that properly reflects individual circumstances?

Dennis Daly: I suppose that that depends on the extent to which one thinks that a sheriff's view of what is reasonable concurs with other people's views of what is reasonable. This morning, we have already heard people saying, “You've got to experience it for yourself”—whatever “it” is. Sheriffs might not experience what many people in our local communities experience regularly. To an extent, the qualification is helpful. It is perhaps inevitable that the issue comes down to a personal judgment, but the sheriff's judgment might well be different from that of people who live in the affected community.

Stewart Stevenson: You are saying that it is important that the sheriff does not underestimate the impact of antisocial behaviour.

Dennis Daly: That is right.

The Convener: Is there an issue about being able to describe properly what is happening? Kicking a ball against a wall is one thing, but kicking a ball against a wall every night of the week or wilfully kicking a ball against a wall after being told not to do it or continuing to do it even after being shouted and bawled at are entirely different offences.

Is one of the issues about how communities experience antisocial behaviour the fact that we do not pull back far enough to see the whole picture? How an individual feels about irritating behaviour is one thing, but part of the problem is the persistent nature of the behaviour. Do we need to have the whole picture, including the fact that a bigger group is involved and the history of the incident—the before and after? How do we get the whole picture to the sheriff who has to make a judgment on whether the behaviour is reasonable?

Dennis Daly: Somehow or another the community needs to communicate that. I am not quite sure how best that could be done. Before I came into my present job, I worked for nine years in community safety in greater Easterhouse. Although people used to tell me a lot about gang fights, and I believed them, what they were telling me felt like a statistical thing about group disorders and the police having to deal with them.

My attitude began to change one night after I drove into the middle of a gang fight—youngsters from one side of the road were fighting youngsters from the other side. It was about midnight and I was not usually out and about in the area then. I began to sympathise with local people far more. They saw that sort of behaviour all the time whereas, as an outsider, I was only sitting in on meetings, taking notes, gathering statistics and what not.

I was in the role that the sheriff or the outsider might be in. People tell you things and you believe them, but what they say is only in your head. If you are emotionally involved and you have experienced things for yourself, you react very differently.

The Convener: And so, in the midst of the bigger picture, you begin to understand a community's feeling of having to find the individual who committed an offence, just as a police officer has to do. You begin to see the gaps in the legislation.

I wonder whether, at one level, there is an issue about naming the problem, as people have done in campaigns for stalking laws and further legislation on domestic abuse. Naming the problem explains to the courts exactly what has happened, otherwise the court is simply told that there has been a breach of the peace, which could be almost anything. Would that suggestion help the communities you are talking about?

Dennis Daly: I think that it would help. Perhaps there could be a mechanism whereby a community view could reach the sheriff who makes the decision after an incident. That might happen at the moment; I am not sure. Typically, the courts see an offender, the victim and their families. The community dimension needs to be taken into account as well. I am not sure how best that could be done, but it would be useful if it could.

Stewart Stevenson: Are you aware of the changes introduced by the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2003 in the previous session? From memory, I think that the changes apply only in cases that involve more serious offences. Victims have the right to submit a statement to the court after guilt or innocence is determined and before sentence is passed. Would a similar sort of approach be of value in these circumstances?

Dennis Daly: Yes, but the difficulty with that suggestion is how to reach agreement on a community view. The view of the offender and the victim are well defined. How does one get a community view on a problem? How does a community communicate to the legal system what individual people in the area feel as a whole about the problem? If there were a means of doing that,

it would be helpful. Perspective and context are always important; sometimes they can get lost.

The Convener: To achieve such a view, would group disorder and other issues around antisocial behaviour have to be treated differently? It would not be possible to go into a community and take a vote on an incident. Should the police be made responsible for recording the volume of calls on an issue and listening more carefully to them?

Dennis Daly: Perhaps local councillors could do that, as they have plenty of opportunities to hear complaints in their surgeries. Local councillors might be in a position to give the community dimension to the offence, whatever it is.

The Convener: Thank you.

Donald Gorrie: We should accept that there has to be a twin-track approach to the problem of antisocial behaviour. The first approach is to make the necessary changes to the legal system and to enforce them. The second approach is what Communities that Care describes as

"a wider long term community-led implementation of the "prevention science" approach",

which is obviously the organisation's area of skill. You gave us an interesting example of how that works in south Edinburgh and how it could be developed in future. What should we be asking the Executive to do in addition to any changes that it might make to the legal system to assist in that specific example and more generally?

12:15

Dennis Daly: The words "early intervention" mean different things to different people. For us, "early" means early in the life of the child. In some instances, it can even mean pre-natal—before the child is born. Family support at that stage is crucial.

I will give members a couple of examples, using data from the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration. Last October, in Glasgow, a survey was done to find out what was known about persistent young offenders. The typical age was about 15 or 16. For me, one of the interesting findings was that two thirds of young offenders aged 15 had first come to the attention of the panel and the authorities at large at around the age of eight—not as offenders but as victims. They were young people in need of care and attention. There were problems in the house and with the family.

No one is saying that we do not need to deal with the problems of today's 15-year-olds. We accept that the problems have to be dealt with and that some aspects of the bill may be helpful. However, we have to go back further. Evidence from the earlier witnesses was interesting. There

was talk of a loss of values. Parents and families do not know where youngsters are. A range of views came out quite informally and conversationally, and they reflected a common experience. Mr Gorrie is right—I wrote all the big words in the submission—but we are trying to distil some of that common sense into a systematic approach to dealing with crime and drugs. We have borrowed from the American model and considered risk factors. I know that it all sounds terribly scientific and academic, but it comes down to practical common sense.

One of our risk factors is poor parental supervision and discipline. It does not take a profound genius to work out that, if young people are not being properly disciplined and do not have clear standards, and if their parents do not know where they are or whom they are with, many of them will become involved in crime. Our theory, which we are putting into practice, is that we have to go right back to the beginning. We should not be thinking of the child at the age of eight or 15; we should be giving a lot more support at community level. I do not mean that in a negative way. We should not be saying, "You are the family from hell so you need a lot of support." It is more that we should be assessing all the factors at community level and then doing something about them at an early stage.

I am sorry if I am going on a bit. We are not saying that people are starting in the wrong place by saying that we are where we are today and lots of 15-year-olds are causing problems. However, another interesting statistic from the annual report of the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration, which came out yesterday, is that around 27,000 referrals to panels were on non-offence grounds as opposed to 14,000 referrals that were on offence grounds. A very small overlap involved both non-offence and offence grounds. Therefore, we can see that the number of children who come to the attention of the authorities because they need care, support and help is almost double the number of children who come to the attention of authorities because they have got into crime.

The Convener: Is that partly because people regard the hearings system as being more productive in dealing with vulnerable youngsters? Youngsters may have been referred because of welfare issues. I have heard anecdotal evidence that the police do not pursue referrals because they do not see any great purpose in them.

Dennis Daly: I am not an expert; I have simply quoted a couple of statistics from the data. They seemed relevant, in that problems can be traced back to the family and the home in the child's very early years. I worry that, even if the bill proceeds exactly as it is, we may be back here again in 15 years' time, still asking, "What are we going to do

about antisocial behaviour?"—or whatever it is called then. We have to do two things: we have to deal with today's problems but we also have to address issues in our communities.

Instead of talking about the theory, I will ask Sarah Gillen to say a word or two about what has been going on in south Edinburgh.

Sarah Gillen: That is one of the programmes that we have put in place. We developed an action plan that contained more than 90 recommendations, which involved people who live and/or work in south Edinburgh. We were very keen to proceed with the Incredible Years parent and children videotape series and we decided to go ahead with it for a couple of reasons. First, Communities that Care had significant evaluated evidence that showed that the programme worked. Secondly, there was a desire among workers in the area who had heard about the programme for it to be implemented in south Edinburgh.

Communities that Care in south Edinburgh was lucky in that, because I had a small operating budget, I was able to fund four workers and to buy the materials and the books from the States, with the result that four workers took the training. As Dennis Daly said in his submission, two of those workers started to facilitate the programme late last year. Communities that Care in south Edinburgh tries to embrace a multi-agency philosophy in every piece of work that it does and, to an extent, it has succeeded in doing that. The workers whom we invited to take the training came from the voluntary sector and the statutory sector. We need to do more work of that kind, because it means that people come to the table with different skills, disciplines and ideas, which can all blend together well.

In south Edinburgh, the first of the courses was at the nursery at Craigour Park Primary School, where the head teacher is highly supportive of the programme. Karen Dahlgren, who comes from a social work background at Gilmerton child and family centre, and Sarah Chalk, who is a teacher on a secondment to Children 1st—which, as everyone knows, is a children's charity—are the two workers who started to provide the course. They come from different disciplines and backgrounds.

When Dennis Daly and I went along to speak to the parents on the programme, I had a delightful day because, after spending years getting the research done, consulting endless people and building the action plan—all of which was necessary—I was finally seeing the fruits of our labour. Among the parents who made comments to Dennis Daly and me was a young lady in whose voice the relief was evident, because she had had concerns about her child's behaviour and the programme had significantly helped her. That was

echoed by just about all the parents in the group, one of whom even came up and personally thanked me for funding the programme. That was wonderful for me and for what I am trying to achieve as a co-ordinator for Communities that Care. The woman concerned said to me that she hoped and wished that more programmes could be made available for parents in south Edinburgh and Edinburgh in general.

Donald Gorrie: As I understand it, the parents who are involved in the programme are volunteers. You have shown that the programme can be very helpful for parents who have problems but want to address them, but what about the parents who seem to have opted out, for whatever reason? Do you think that a similar course would work for conscripts rather than volunteers?

Sarah Gillen: I would say so. Although I am no expert and have not taken the programme, the people who facilitated the training have said that the programme is highly adaptable and can meet a variety of parental and family needs. Another parenting programme is going on in south Edinburgh—the Family Caring Trust's five-to-15 programme, which is also run in a multi-agency fashion. On one of the occasions on which that programme was run, the parents who came along were very vulnerable and had significant difficulties, and they all said that it helped them considerably.

Cathie Craigie: I noticed from your written submission to the committee that Communities that Care

"accepts that there may be a need to strengthen and use the criminal justice system to address the needs and deeds of a small minority of young people and their families."

I would like to hear a wee bit more about that. What are your views on the proposal to extend the use of antisocial behaviour orders to under-16s? Is that what you meant when you made that statement on strengthening the criminal justice system?

Dennis Daly: That statement was not sidelining the bill, but saying that the bill will do what it will do. I have a personal opinion on the extension of ASBOs to 12 to 15-year-olds, although I would not present it as the organisation's view: I have an anxiety about using ASBOs with children as young as that. Much of the work that we do tries to engage with the community and get it involved—many local residents sit down and help to develop and implement the action plan—and, if young people tend to get labelled at an early age, there is a danger that sections of the community will be turned off the whole exercise. That worries me a bit. I am not keen on the extension of ASBOs to 12 to 15-year-olds, possibly because of the nature of how we engage with communities when people as young as that are causing problems. I do not

doubt that they are causing problems, but I am not sure that ASBOs are the answer.

Cathie Craigie: Earlier on, you talked about the fact that, after taking statistics for years, you saw at first hand the impact of a gang fight between two groups of youths and said how that had given you an example of what it is like to live in that circumstance. What about the people and police who tell me, as an elected representative, that a group of young people—or it could be one young person—under 16 is causing significant problems in their community and that there is nothing that can be done to pull them in? If something could be done so that such young people could engage with the support that is on offer, perhaps it would save them from having criminal records further down the line. Do you understand why there is a push for the extension of ASBOs?

Dennis Daly: I understand it, but I am worried about the extent to which we are likely to be able to enforce any such order by the time the youngster has reached 12 and has developed attitudes to officialdom. Earlier, I gave the example of my window getting broken. I chased the youngsters who broke it and grabbed one of them, who said, "It wasn't me; it was one of the others." He was under 16, and I had to ask myself why that youngster was out, 3 miles from his home, on a wet November night, breaking people's windows and whether his family knew or cared about where he was. An ASBO is not an easy solution by the time a youngster reaches 14 or 15—it is not easy at any age. We should start to support the family when the youngster is born. We could all be better parents: we all do our best, but we all need support to do the parenting job better.

For me, the jury is out on the extension of ASBOs. I think that you asked earlier whether I had a particularly strong view on it. I can see an argument that, if ASBOs were extended, we might steer one or two youngsters back on to the straight and narrow, but if you ask me whether I think it will have a major impact on getting youngsters who are drifting into trouble to come back, my answer is that I seriously doubt that it will.

Cathie Craigie: We disagree on that, then.

Patrick Harvie: I see nothing in your submission about the dispersal of groups. Can I assume that you are familiar with the provisions on that?

Dennis Daly: Yes.

Patrick Harvie: Will you outline your attitude to the measure? Do you think that it would be used? Would it work or fail, and why?

12:30

Dennis Daly: I do not have a personal view. My answer is almost the same as my previous

answer. If areas where youngsters were gathering and causing problems were designated, those youngsters could sometimes be moved on, which might be effective.

If you ask whether I think that that will have a major impact, the answer is no. The young people from Dumfries and the witnesses before them talked about why young people gather. The experience that I have had in my current and previous jobs is that young people say, "There is nothing for us to do and nobody makes anything available for us." When asked what they want to do, by and large, they say that they want to hang out in their own place. There is nothing wrong with that, but officialdom tends to find that difficult, because it wants a staffed community centre, and youngsters tend to want their own place to do their own thing.

I have no strong view on the matter. Some communities could benefit from the ability to move youngsters on in one or two of the known-suspect areas where problems occur regularly. However, it is inevitable that those youngsters will move on elsewhere and that another designation will be needed for another area. The power might be helpful on a few occasions, but it will not have a major impact.

Patrick Harvie: I gather that the power would not be high on your list of priorities, but some people have argued that designating an area represents a statement that the problem there must stop. Others have suggested that designation could make matters worse, by undermining relationships between young people and the police. Does either of those arguments hold water?

Dennis Daly: Designation might deal with gang fights. The greater Easterhouse area always had known boundaries. People from Wellhouse would fight people from Barlanark not in a field miles away but at the dividing line between the communities. The ability to designate gathering points near such a dividing line could well have an impact, but that would depend on whether we call gang fights antisocial behaviour.

Sometimes, the gathering of different groups in proximity is an almost inevitable forerunner to gang fights. I can see one or two situations in which the dispersal of groups might be helpful. If a single group were simply gathering in one place where gathering was banned, that group would move to another place. However, in relation to group disorder and gang fights, I can see some merit in the power.

Scott Barrie: In answer to Donald Gorrie, you touched on practical examples of parenting work that your project has undertaken. What are your views on compulsory parenting orders for that

minority of parents who have been unwilling to parent their children acceptably and who have already been offered other support?

Dennis Daly: If those parents had declined parenting support since their children were very young, and if they had had every opportunity voluntarily to take up parenting classes or to have parenting support, and their youngsters were now 12 or 14, there would be more logic to insisting on a parenting order.

At the moment, few suitable parenting classes are available. South Edinburgh has some. We work in Leith, where some classes take place, but provision is not widespread. I hope that such classes will become more widespread and will be community led from the beginning. I acknowledge that some people will be unclubbable no matter what is offered but, with the right encouragement, some people might become involved in such classes, if they took place at suitable times and resources were put into them. If that were the case, the number of unclubbable people might be reduced. If so, I would feel more comfortable with saying later, "You've had plenty of opportunity to get involved and you have not taken that opportunity. Now we will make involvement compulsory."

Scott Barrie: In your opinion, is the key factor that the resources have to have been offered and declined before we can go for a compulsory measure?

Dennis Daly: That would make a lot more sense. Sarah Gillen's parenting classes are for parents of children aged two to seven. Through health visitors and some other projects, we are putting in place family support before the youngster is even born. Those of us who have children will know that, at the age of a year or 18 months, a youngster can tell a tone of voice—if you say, "No," they understand what you mean. A youngster who hears only, "Yes," is being brought up differently from one who hears, "No," all the time. Our view is that the process needs to start early but that there would be a lot more logic to compulsory measures if voluntary participation had been offered over a sustained period and declined.

Sarah Gillen: In south Edinburgh, we are trying to offer parents choices. For example, we have the pram-to-primary programme, the Webster-Stratton programme, the five-to-15 programme, the mellow parenting programme and what is known as SPIN training. Those programmes are for parents with varying needs. For example, the pram-to-primary programme is for Mr and Ms Average who need only a bit of assistance whereas the mellow parenting programme is for parents who have significant challenges and needs. The more that parenting programmes are offered to everybody,

the more they will be accepted as the norm and people will think that everyone who has a baby, rather than only parents who have problems, should take parenting classes.

The Convener: Would you agree that some families and communities have their own way of supporting new parents? Might it overload the system if every parent with anxieties or a guilt complex went off to a parenting class? It might be more appropriate for people to take such classes at the stage at which they needed them. My fear would be that the voluntary attendees would trample over the folk who are quite vulnerable and do not have family support and so on.

Sarah Gillen: That is why I said that a variety of choices need to be offered. I am not a mother, so I cannot speak from personal experience, but I know that some parents struggle in the early stages of having a baby while other parents appreciate having more help when their children are teenagers. However, there have to be more choices. Such courses are becoming more and more acceptable. My colleagues who provide the parenting programmes tell me that they now have waiting lists for their programmes.

Dennis Daly: I would be a wee bit worried about waiting until a need was identified. In a way, that would be to continue in the vein that we have been in for a long time in that we would be waiting until the youngster is causing problems, having difficulties or embarking on their criminal career before we intervened. That is all very well, but the point is that we all need to be better parents and we should concentrate on parenting.

There are other models. For people who are not keen on having health visitors or social workers involved, we have a community mothers programme that involves other people in the community in supporting new young mothers. That has advantages in certain cases in which people, for all sorts of reasons, might not want officialdom to be involved too much.

The Convener: I would resist the professionalisation of things that are not rocket science. People in supportive families will learn the skills we are talking about, as will people who go to local clubs with family and friends to learn tips for being a good mother. Rather than having to track resources through a formal process, the same end can be achieved informally.

Dennis Daly: The evidence from the United States and here is that there are effective parenting programmes. The youngsters of parents who have been on courses and comparable groups have been followed over 10 or 15 years. Plenty of evidence shows that the children of parents who have been on courses end up with far fewer problems and commit fewer offences than

other children. I am not opposed to informal support, but there is a need for much wider availability of voluntary support for parents—that is evidenced by statistics that I gave earlier. Large numbers of families have problems and large numbers of youngsters are referred as a result of problems in families.

Donald Gorrie: In the light of what you have said, if a young teenager is in trouble, should the children's panel have the power to impose an electronic tag on them? If it does so, what should be in the package of measures that goes with the tag?

Dennis Daly: My answer to that is similar to the answers that I gave earlier. I can see situations in which tagging would be helpful for young people, but tagging alone is a negative thing. Young people would be told, "Don't go there," or "Be in before 6 o'clock." If no positive measures are put in place to trace back problems to their root and to ask why a youngster is causing problems and what can be done to take a step back and stop such problems from happening, tagging will have a limited impact. Support should be strengthened in parallel with the negative approach of saying, "Don't do this and don't do that."

Donald Gorrie: From your experience, do you think that some young people would think that being tagged was a reward and a sign that they were a macho, leading person?

Dennis Daly: That is entirely possible. Some young people and some communities could see a tag as a badge—the young person could be seen as having the tee-shirt and the badge. However, the irritation of being confined to barracks between, say, 8 o'clock at night and 6 o'clock the following morning would probably outweigh the status that would be conferred. If the person does not have anybody to whom they can show off their status when they want to do so, such a badge would become less of a status symbol.

Donald Gorrie: Thank you. That is helpful.

The Convener: Given that electronic tagging would happen only in extreme circumstances, just as the dispersal of groups would happen only in extreme circumstances, and you can think of extreme circumstances in which tagging would be justified, this is almost a version of what we discussed earlier. It is a way of saying, "No," and saying that there is a place for sanctioning and good parenting. The issue relates to setting boundaries if nobody else is setting boundaries and saying, "If you do this, there will be a consequence." That a community might want to have such a sanction available in the system is understandable.

Dennis Daly: That is true. I return to the issue of early intervention. There are difficulties for young

people if they have not had boundaries set for them through much of their lives. Police often find youngsters who are under 16 in the streets, take them back home and find that nobody is at home and that there is nobody who cares. If a youngster has not been subject to boundaries and standards over a period of time, having the community implement such boundaries and standards when a youngster is 14 or 15 might help the community, but it is difficult to believe that a youngster who has gone down one road for 14 or 15 years will suddenly change and go down another road. I suspect that it would simply be too late for many youngsters.

The Convener: Saying that an approach might not work because things are so bad almost sounds like a counsel of despair. It is legitimate to ask whether anything can be done at a later stage and whether we should try to do things if things have not been sorted out early. I am talking about intervention happening a bit earlier. The police say that they wait until people are 16—or 18, if people are involved in the hearings system—because that is when they can do something. Rather than saying that nothing else can be expected, there would be a genuine attempt to intervene. Tagging is not as good as early intervention, but it is on the same spectrum.

12:45

Dennis Daly: It is a question of resources. We would have to beef up the resources for early intervention, although that would be an act of political courage or faith. The impact of what is being done with youngsters today—with babies and with two to three-year-olds—will not be felt for another 10 years, when they reach what is the peak offending age. If more resources were shifted to that early stage, the problems at the age of 14 or 15 would, in time, reduce. I would not wish to present a recipe of despair and say that nothing can be done once somebody has reached the age of 15; I would simply say that there is a limit to what can be done.

According to the statistics, and even according to the police's view about young people who have reached the age of 16 and have been put in secure units and suchlike, about two thirds of them reoffend within two years of coming out of that accommodation. There is a benefit to communities from people being out of circulation for a while, which is often not recognised. That provides some relief to the community. However, on the question of addressing in the long term the problems that some young people cause, all the evidence is that any impact that can be achieved on people aged 14 and upwards is pretty limited.

The Convener: You say in your submission that you understand the need to address the problem.

If we are listening to our communities, we hear that they are becoming fragmented and are spiralling downwards, despite the investment that is being made in them. People are moving out because they are in despair, community champions are moving out and our capacity to regenerate those communities is thereby reduced. Although we accept that it is reasonable, wise and practical to invest at the very early stages, we have to hold these communities together if we are to reap the benefit in 10 years' time.

Dennis Daly: I know that there are not a lot of resources available—we have to consider what it means if the police are not getting more resources to implement these measures. The emphasis seems to be very much on what we do here and now with today's youngsters. I agree with that, but the feeling of our organisation is that if we do not make the investment early on, in parallel, we will be back here in 15 years' time with exactly the same questions and issues.

The whole way of working that we have developed arose from research that the Joseph Rowntree Foundation commissioned 10 years ago, when exactly the same debate was taking place. In the early 1990s, people were debating whether there should be short, sharp shock treatment, and whether youngsters should be taken away in their early teens and put in units. The origins of the work that we do lie in the work of somebody who trawled around the world and concluded that, although there is no quick fix or easy answer, the most effective long-term solution that had been found was to invest early.

We are not arguing against dealing with the problems now. However, if that is all that is done and there is a headlong dash to implement, for example, powers to disperse young people, ASBOs and tagging, which is my anxiety, we will end up ignoring the risk factors and the causes of the problem, which leaves us in a never-ending cycle.

The Convener: I suspect that we could end up having a very long argument about that. The social justice milestones, addressing problems at an early stage and making a good start are big issues, and there is a recognition that we have to do all of that. My community would suggest that there has been entirely the opposite of a headlong dash. The problems that are developing in communities that are crumbling because people are voting with their feet and leaving have been a long time coming. We have to address the problem from both sides.

Cathie Craigie: Dennis, you are obviously getting the impression that the emphasis is on dealing with the immediate problems and that other measures might not be getting taken. Given that you are somebody who is working in the field,

what will people who are not working in the field be thinking? It would be wrong to think that the Antisocial Behaviour etc (Scotland) Bill will stop all the other good work that is going on. We have been to the Inch and met people there, including a young mother who was on a Communities that Care programme. The people there were telling us that the things that are being done now should be continued but that other things have to happen too. I hope that you accept that what the bill proposes will not stop all the early intervention work and support programmes that are taking place.

Dennis Daly: I accept that. Even if the bill had not been introduced, we would continue to argue for more investment and resources at an early stage. I agree that measures are being taken at the early stages, but they are not enough.

Cathie Craigie: Do you understand that although people who live out in the communities that are affected—including my constituents—see money going into projects, their lives are still made a misery by a small minority who engage in antisocial behaviour? Those people say that the system is not working—they agree with you. If it takes a crime measure to stop that behaviour by the small minority of young people and other people, we will have to go down that road.

Dennis Daly: I do not disagree. I am more familiar with the peripheral housing estates around Glasgow, which were established in the mid-1950s. A point was made about that earlier. Bar the first few years of their existence, those estates have been on a downward spiral for 30 or 40 years, in which the population, the building fabric and the community spirit have declined. One could go on with that list. I tried to say in our submission that a twin-track approach is needed that deals with the problems of the day and recognises that we will not turn round a decline of 30 or 40 years in two or three years.

The Convener: Some communities have not been in decline for 40 or 50 years. We met communities from areas in which people were desperate to stay 20 years ago. They identified the problem as starting 10, 15 or 20 years ago. Those areas have had much investment. I can think of areas in my community that are receiving much investment now. If we do not sort out the other problem—a private landlord issue is a concern in one area—we would be as well not putting in that money, because the two elements will work against each other.

Dennis Daly: Much of the most obvious investment in the Glasgow peripheral estates is in the housing. The housing fabric has been transformed in the past five or 10 years, but we still have serious persistent problems of youngsters leaving school without qualifications, of

drug abuse and of crime. Changing the building fabric and investing in other aspects are all well and good, but in greater Easterhouse, for example, the population has declined. The population there in 1971 was double that in the 1991 census. People have voted with their feet and gone elsewhere. I cannot talk about the convener's community, but the communities in which I work have declined for 20 or 30 years.

Mary Scanlon: The bill proposes community reparation orders, which could be served on offenders who are aged from 12 to 21. What are your views on those orders? A community service order can specify activities for 80 to 240 hours, but on the new reparation order, that figure can be from 10 to 100 hours. Would that be more appropriate for lower-level antisocial behaviour?

Dennis Daly: My answer is in line with my other responses. A period of 10 hours is a reasonable time for minor antisocial behaviour and for younger people. Such orders may well have an effect. I am not against the measure, but I am not convinced that it will have a major impact.

Mary Scanlon: Do community service orders work? Are they helpful?

Dennis Daly: To be honest, I do not know. I am not sufficiently versed in the subject to give an opinion.

The Convener: In the policy memorandum that accompanies the bill, the Scottish Executive said that it was aware of a variety of concerns about equal opportunities, such as the concern that children with special needs could be subject to ASBOs because of their behaviour. However, the Executive gave evidence to the committee that it was confident that the bill would not discriminate against any groups. Do you have any views on the bill and equal opportunities?

Dennis Daly: Not as such. The only point that I would make—it is of interest in the work that we do and it is relevant—is that many mental health problems that young people have can be traced back to the same factors that we deal with. Equal opportunities covers a variety of aspects, including disability, health and many others—an autistic child was mentioned earlier. There is some interest in the fact that many of the predictors or factors that are driving crime are exactly the same as the factors that lead young people into mental health problems.

That point is not specific to your question, which I again feel I do not have enough experience and knowledge to answer. However, particularly in relation to mental health, which has a close connection with young people offending, many of the reasons for young people getting involved are exactly the same as the ones that we mentioned earlier: family conflict, parental supervision and the availability of drugs and suchlike.

The Convener: Perhaps a system that picks up on those youngsters fairly quickly and tries to challenge their behaviour may bring those issues and difficulties into the open. In my experience, problems that young people are wrestling with are often buried in families. Their families are not dealing with the problem and the system is too hands-off for those young people. Would it be a positive development if it was brought out into the open that a vulnerable young person might be out in the community getting caught up in inappropriate behaviour and might be being manipulated by others in the group?

Dennis Daly: I think that that would be positive.

I mentioned resources a moment ago. Although I have been talking about much earlier interventions, I note that it was reported in the press this week that even at the level of the children's hearings system it is taking up to a year for young people who have been referred to psychiatrists or psychologists to get an appointment—a young person goes to a children's panel and a problem is identified, but a year elapses before they get to a source of support. We could argue night and day about resources but, although resources and support are there, to my way of thinking there must be insufficient support if such situations arise. There are wider aspects of the children's hearings system that I am not knowledgeable about, but the issue reported in the press is relevant. If the problems that a youngster has are identified and nothing happens for a year, what will happen in that community for that year?

The Convener: I will ask a question as an add-on to the equal opportunities issue. People often say that they feel that because they live in particular communities their concerns are not taken as seriously as they would be if the same things were happening in another community. The attitude seems to be, "Well, it is a difficult area that is in decline and a lot of folk are not working." People within those communities feel that they are under siege and that the police do not prioritise their needs. They believe that if someone who does not have someone outside their door every night and lives in a relatively well-off area contacts the police, the police will attend more quickly. Do you feel that some communities are perhaps devalued and not listened to properly?

Dennis Daly: That perception is widespread: communities believe that to be the case. No doubt the police and others would bring forward statistics that show that they respond as quickly in a deprived area as they do in an affluent area. One of my hobby-horses is that many of the deprived areas are subject to lots of short-term projects. There is a project on this for two or three years and then a project on that for two or three years. People come and go.

Essentially, where the problems are greatest—the less affluent areas—the resources that are applied are affected. The prestige jobs, the big jobs and the permanent jobs tend to be located in city centres. The voluntary sector runs a project here and a project there for three or four years. That adds to the feeling people have that projects and support tend to be tinkering around the edges of major problems.

The Convener: At the simple level of taking seriously a complaint by a mother with two children, does the police response differ according to the area where the complaint is made? Do the police say that in some areas there is a big picture to consider, that there is a history of gang fights and that the situation is complicated and difficult to police? That mother might be making a straightforward and simple complaint that something is happening outside her door and she wants it to stop. Do you think that the policing response can sometimes be determined by more than the individual incident?

Dennis Daly: I would guess that it could be. I could not back that up with chapter and verse, but if the police have been called to the same place night after night, it would be against human nature for them not eventually to say that there is a more urgent case elsewhere. That is part of a downward spiral. If an area gets a label and a name, people do not have the same expectations of response because they have not had a response previously. That can lead others not to respond.

The Convener: And people have borne consequences of the lack of response, because they have put their head above the parapet to complain but nothing appears to have happened. Therefore, they are disempowered from doing that in the future.

Dennis Daly: That is a major problem. In my previous job, people used to come to me regularly with reports and I would say that it was a matter for the police. I would say, “Why do you not report it to the police?” but they would respond, “I am not going near the police.” It would be all right if I reported it for them, but they did not want to report it themselves.

The Convener: Thank you very much. We are grateful to you for your attendance and for your written submissions. If you want to make further points, we would be delighted to hear from you.

13:00

Meeting continued in private until 13:05.

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