PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

HOUSE OF COMMONS
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Public Bill Committee

CRIME AND POLICING BILL

Third Sitting

Tuesday 1 April 2025

(Morning)

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Saturday 5 April 2025

The Committee consisted of the following Members:

Chairs: Sir Roger Gale, † Mark Pritchard, Emma Lewell, Dr Rosena Allin-Khan

† Barros-Curtis, Mr Alex *(Cardiff West)* (Lab)
† Bishop, Matt *(Forest of Dean)* (Lab)
† Burton-Sampson, David *(Southend West and Leigh)* (Lab)
† Cross, Harriet *(Gordon and Buchan)* (Con)
† Davies-Jones, Alex *(Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice)*
† Johnson, Dame Diana *(Minister for Policing, Fire and Crime Prevention)*
† Jones, Louise *(North East Derbyshire)* (Lab)
† Mather, Keir *(Selby)* (Lab)
† Phillips, Jess *(Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department)*
† Platt, Jo *(Leigh and Atherton)* (Lab/Co-op)
† Rankin, Jack *(Windsor)* (Con)
† Robertson, Joe *(Isle of Wight East)* (Con)
Sabine, Anna *(Frome and East Somerset)* (LD)
† Sullivan, Dr Lauren *(Gravesham)* (Lab)
† Taylor, David *(Hemel Hempstead)* (Lab)
† Taylor, Luke *(Sutton and Cheam)* (LD)
† Vickers, Matt *(Stockton West)* (Con)

Robert Cope, Claire Cozens, Adam Evans, *Committee Clerks*

† attended the Committee

Public Bill Committee

Tuesday 1 April 2025

(Morning)

[Mark Pritchard *in the Chair*]

Crime and Policing Bill

9.25 am

The Chair: Good morning, everyone. Before we begin, I have a few preliminary reminders for the Committee. Please will everyone switch electronic devices off or to silent? I am afraid that no food or drinks are permitted in the sittings, except for water, which is provided. Hansard colleagues will be grateful if Members could email their speaking notes to hansardnotes@parliament.uk or pass their written notes to the Hansard colleague in the room, to my left.

We will now begin line-by-line consideration of the Bill. The selection and grouping list for today's sittings is available in the room and on the parliamentary website. It shows how the clauses, schedules and selected amendments have been grouped together for debate. The purpose of grouping is to limit, in so far as that is possible, the repetition of the same points in debate. The amendments appear on the amendment paper in the order in which they relate to the Bill.

A Member who has put their name to the lead amendment in a group is called to speak first or, in the case of a stand part debate, the Minister will be called first. Other Members are then free to indicate that they wish to speak in the debate by bobbing—please do bob, because if you do not, I will not see you. At the end of a debate on a group of amendments, I shall call the Member who moved the lead amendment, or new clause or new schedule, again. Before they sit down, they will need to indicate whether they wish to withdraw the amendment, or to seek a decision. If any Member wishes to press any other amendment in a group to a vote—that includes grouped new clauses and new schedules—the Member needs to let me know.

I remind Members of the rules on the declaration of interests as set out in the code of conduct.

Clause 1

Respect orders

Matt Vickers (Stockton West) (Con): I beg to move amendment 31, in clause 1, page 1, line 13, leave out "18" and insert "16".

This amendment would lower the age to 16 at which a court can impose a respect order on a person to prevent them from engaging in anti-social behaviour.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Pritchard.

We welcome this Bill, the many of the last Government's measures it takes forward, and the opportunity to constructively debate and potentially improve it in the coming weeks.

The clause establishes the legal framework for courts to impose respect orders on individuals aged 18 or older who have engaged, or threatened to engage, in antisocial behaviour, where the court considers it just and convenient to make such an order for the purpose of preventing the respondent from engaging in antisocial behaviour. Antisocial behaviour has serious and far-reaching consequences. It can fracture communities, erode trust among neighbours and make people feel unwelcome or unsafe in their own local areas. For women and girls, it can create a climate of fear, making something as simple as walking home at night a distressing and dangerous experience. It also takes a significant toll on businesses, discouraging customers from visiting high streets and town centres, and ultimately harming local economies and livelihoods. Left unchecked, antisocial behaviour can strip communities of their vibrancy and sense of security, turning once thriving areas into places that people avoid.

We must do everything we can to tackle antisocial behaviour, and the proposed respect orders can be a useful tool. Past Governments have made many and varied efforts to tackle the scourge of antisocial behaviour. Both respect orders and antisocial behaviour orders aim to prevent antisocial behaviour that causes harassment, alarm or distress to others. The Bill defines antisocial behaviour for respect orders, in proposed new section A1 of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, as

"conduct that has caused, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to any person."

That mirrors the definition for ASBOs under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. In some ways, ASBOs were effective in targeting repeat offenders, providing a quicker alternative to prosecution and offering communities reassurance. However, their breach rates—as high as 50%—suggested that they lacked deterrent power, with some offenders even seeing them as a badge of honour.

The civil injunctions introduced by the 2014 Act also target antisocial behaviour. They use a similar definition, but have a broader scope, including, for example, conduct capable of causing nuisance or annoyance in housing contexts. Civil injunctions have been more successful than ASBOs in reducing breaches, likely due to their more tailored restrictions and integrated support options. Unlike ASBOs, which often acted as punitive measures, injunctions take a preventive approach by aiming to stop antisocial behaviour before it escalates. They also incorporate positive requirements, such as attending rehabilitation programmes, which help individuals address the root causes of their behaviour rather than simply penalising them.

Many would argue that that shift towards early intervention and rehabilitation contributed to the greater effectiveness of civil injunctions in managing antisocial behaviour. Antisocial behaviour can be committed by young teenage offenders, and while some cases are minor, others can have a serious impact on communities and make lives a misery for residents, denied peace in their own homes and communities. Just look at Witham library in Newland Street, which has reportedly hired a private security guard owing to a rising number of incidents, which have been blamed on local teenagers. Now, Essex county council is considering stepping up its response by issuing bodycams to librarians to deter antisocial behaviour further.

I draw attention to proposed new section A1(3), which requires that prohibitions and requirements avoid interference with the respondent's work or education.

Will the Minister outline how courts are expected to strike a balance between preventing antisocial behaviour and ensuring that individuals can continue their employment or studies? What factors will be taken into account when determining the appropriate restrictions, and how will the courts ensure that any conditions imposed remain proportionate and effective in addressing antisocial behaviour while safeguarding access to work and education?

Proposed new section A1(8) of the 2014 Act, alongside proposed new section 1A(9) introduced by schedule 1, provides that an application for a respect order may be treated as an application for a housing injunction and vice versa. That appears to be a sensible addition to allow the court flexibility. However, it would be useful for the Minister to clarify whether the Government expect one of the tools to be used more frequently than the other. Additionally, will the "harassment, alarm or distress" threshold allow the orders to be applied sufficiently broadly among housing providers?

Proposed new section B1 sets out the relevant authorities that can make applications for respect orders to the High Court or county court. Those include local authorities, housing providers, the chief officer of police for a police force area, or the chief constable of British Transport police and several other appropriate bodies. It is encouraging to see housing providers recognised as registered authorities, in particular when it comes to addressing antisocial behaviour.

The Chair: Order. Forgive me for interrupting, shadow Minister. To be clear, we are talking about amendment 31, rather than the clause as a whole.

Matt Vickers: Can we deal with them as one, or—

The Chair: We will deal with clause stand part later; we are talking about the amendment at this point. That is to save us the repetition, the point that I made earlier. Thank you, shadow Minister.

Matt Vickers: Opposition amendment 31 would lower to 16 the age at which a court can impose a respect order on a person to prevent them from engaging in antisocial behaviour.

Harriet Cross (Gordon and Buchan) (Con): Last Thursday, in the evidence session, we heard that a large number of under-18s engage in antisocial behaviour. Does the shadow Minister agree with me and some of the witnesses we heard from that, without the age being reduced to 16, the measure will have less impact, given where a lot of the antisocial behaviour in our communities is coming from?

Matt Vickers: My hon. Friend is entirely right. When you speak to some of the people who are at the sharp end of this antisocial behaviour, many of them will tell you that it is inflicted by those under 18. We heard witnesses' concerns about where the line should be drawn. Obviously, there is a balance with respect to criminalising young people, but there is a point at which there have to be real consequences, and communities need to know that there are consequences, for those youngsters who engage in this behaviour.

Dr Lauren Sullivan (Gravesham) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Pritchard.

Over the past 14 or 15 years, young people have not had diversionary activities. Youth centres across the country have closed in their tens of thousands. Will the shadow Minister reflect on the fact that young people need diversionary activity, so that they are not lured into antisocial behaviour?

Matt Vickers: With a lot of these things, we need that diversionary activity and to find meaningful things for youngsters to spend their time doing. It is a big, complex mix, and we will probably address this again when we talk about knife crime. It is a big part of what we do, but there have to be sanctions for young people as well. It is not just about the young people committing antisocial behaviour; it is about the communities and the other young people that might have the antisocial behaviour—which often leads to crime—inflicted on them. It is about putting that ladder in there so that people know that, as their behaviour gets worse, the consequences and sanctions get bigger.

This is not just about punishment; but is about intervention, responsibility and, ultimately, protecting both young people and the communities in which they live. At 16, young people can work, pay taxes and make important life decisions. They are entrusted with responsibilities, and it is only right that they are also held accountable for their actions. If an individual is engaging in persistent antisocial behaviour, the courts must have the tools to intervene early, before those patterns escalate into more serious criminality.

Mr Alex Barros-Curtis (Cardiff West) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Pritchard. Will the shadow Minister clarify whether it is the Conservative party's position that we should criminalise 16-year-olds but not give them the vote?

Matt Vickers: Interestingly, the Government seem to think—

Jack Rankin (Windsor) (Con): Say yes, Matt!

Matt Vickers: Well, yes. The Government seem to think that we should not criminalise 16-year-olds but they should have the right to vote. I think it is the other way around: responsibilities come after people show their part in the world. I think we should be voting at 18, which allows people to become informed and knowledgeable about the process and the world around them.

If you go back to families in my constituency, some of the antisocial behaviour that they are suffering at the hands of 16-year-olds has real consequences for them, and there should be real consequences for those who inflict it upon them.

The Chair: Order. I hope Members will forgive me for saying this, but can we try not to use the word "you"? I have heard three different speakers say "you". All speeches need to come through the Chair, and there is a reason for that—those are the courtesies of the House. Forgive me for saying that, but I think it will help the whole Committee.

Matt Vickers: I am on a mission: there will not be another infringement, Mr Pritchard.

Antisocial behaviour can devastate communities, causing distress and insecurity for residents. We cannot stand by and allow that to continue unchecked. Lowering the age to 16 would mean that we can address these issues sooner and ensure that young people receive the support and guidance—and, potentially, sanctions and deterrents—they need to change course.

Respect orders are not simply punitive measures. They come with conditions that promote rehabilitation, and provide access to education, counselling and the opportunity to turn things around. As the Minister will know, this is as much about deterrence as it is about enforcement. When young people know that there are consequences for their actions, they are less likely to engage in behaviour that harms others. By making the amendment, we would strengthen our communities, support young people and ensure that respect for others remains at the heart of society. During the evidence sessions, we heard the views of witnesses about the 16 to 18 age bracket, and I would welcome further explanation from Ministers on why 18 has been chosen as the minimum age.

The Minister for Policing, Fire and Crime Prevention (Dame Diana Johnson): Good morning, Mr Pritchard; it is a pleasure to serve under you today.

The Bill will start to implement our safer streets mission alongside our commitment to the 13,000 additional police officers and police community support officers in our communities. Before I respond to amendment 31, it may assist the Committee if I say a little about why we are introducing respect orders. My doing so now may obviate the need for a separate debate on clause stand part.

I am grateful to the shadow Minister for setting out the history of successive Governments' attempts to deal with antisocial behaviour. Tackling antisocial behaviour is a top priority for this Government and a key part of our safer streets mission. Last year, over a third of people experienced or witnessed some form of ASB, and there were 1 million police-recorded incidents. Existing powers in the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 do not always go far enough to tackle antisocial behaviour. That is why we committed in our manifesto to introduce the respect order to crack down on those making our neighbourhoods, town centres and communities feel unsafe and unwelcoming.

The respect order partially replaces the existing civil injunctions power for persons aged 18 or over. It enables civil courts to make respect orders on application from a relevant authority in respect of individuals who have engaged in ASB. Authorities that can apply include the police, local authorities and registered housing providers, among others. Respect orders will contain prohibitive conditions set by the court to stop offenders engaging in a particular behaviour. They can also include rehabilitative positive requirements, such as attending an anger management course, to help to tackle the root cause of offending.

I mentioned that the existing ASB powers do not always go far enough. Breach of a respect order, in contrast to the power it replaces, will be a criminal offence and therefore arrestable. That is not the case for the current civil injunction, which may include a power of arrest only in certain circumstances, where it is specified by the court or where there has been the use or threat of violence or significant risk of harm. I have heard from one local authority of a civil injunction that was breached over 100 times, with the police unable to take quick action to stop breaches because they had to reapply to the courts to arrest the offender. That is not acceptable and the respect order will fix it.

As a criminal offence, breach of a respect order will be heard in the criminal courts. This will allow judges to issue a wider range of sentences—including community orders, fines and up to two years' imprisonment—than they can currently for civil injunctions. This is an important change. Community sentences enable judges to make ASB offenders repay, often visibly, their debt to their community.

I assure the Committee that there are safeguards in place to ensure that the orders are used appropriately. These are not unilateral powers for the police and local authorities; the terms of an order must be agreed by the courts. For a respect order to be issued, two tests must be met. First, the court must be satisfied on the balance of probabilities that the respondent has engaged in or threatened to engage in ASB. ASB is defined as

"conduct that has caused, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress".

That is a well-established definition. Secondly, the court must be satisfied that issuing a respect order is just and convenient—again, an established test for the courts.

As a further safeguard, we are introducing a new requirement for relevant authorities to carry out a risk assessment checklist prior to applying for a respect order. This will help to ensure proportionate use. We will pilot respect orders to ensure that they are as effective as possible before rolling them out across England and Wales. More details on the pilots and their location will be provided in due course. New part A1 of the 2014 Act, inserted by clause 1, also makes provision for interim respect orders, for the variation and discharge of orders, and for special measures for witnesses in proceedings—for example, to enable them to give evidence from behind a screen.

Amendment 31 would reduce the age at which an offender can receive a respect order from 18 to 16, as the shadow Minister, the hon. Member for Stockton West, outlined. As I have indicated, the respect order is intended as a powerful deterrent for addressing the most harmful adult perpetrators of ASB. Unlike the equivalent current power—the civil injunction—breach of a respect order is a criminal offence with criminal sanctions, and the Government do not believe that it is right to criminalise children unnecessarily, which is why we committed in our manifesto to introduce respect orders for adults only. However, we know that in some cases tough measures, including behavioural orders, can be useful for dealing with younger offenders.

I absolutely agree with the shadow Minister that there should be consequences for the actions that cause distress and harm to local communities if they are committed by, for example, a 16-year-old. Stakeholders have told us that the current civil injunction can be a very useful tool for this cohort. It enables youth courts to impose behavioural requirements on younger offenders, but without resulting in criminalisation. That is why we

have retained that element of the existing civil injunction and renamed it the youth injunction. This will enable youth courts to continue to make orders against younger offenders—aged 10, when criminal responsibility kicks in, to 18—where the court deems it necessary. I am content that this provision covers the need for powers to deal with youth ASB. On that basis, I invite the shadow Minister to withdraw the amendment.

9.45 am

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The Committee divided: Ayes 4, Noes 11.

Division No. 1]

AYES

Cross, Harriet	Robertson, Joe
Rankin, Jack	Vickers, Matt

NOES

Barros-Curtis, Mr Alex	Mather, Keir
Bishop, Matt	Phillips, Jess
Burton-Sampson, David	Platt, Jo
Davies-Jones, Alex	Sullivan, Dr Lauren
Johnson, rh Dame Diana	Taylor, David
Jones, Louise	

Question accordingly negatived.

Matt Vickers: I beg to move amendment 33, in clause 1, page 2, line 29, at end insert—

"(9) If a court makes a respect order against a person (P) more than once, then P is liable to a fine not exceeding level 3 on the standard scale."

This amendment means that if a person gets more than one Respect Order, they are liable for a fine.

The Chair: With this it will be convenient to discuss amendment 32, in clause 1, page 8, line 2, at end insert—

"(4) A person who commits further offences under this section is liable—

(a) on summary conviction, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding the general limit in a magistrates' court or a fine (or both);

(b) on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a period not exceeding 5 years or a fine (or both)."

This amendment sets out the penalties for repeated breaches of a respect order with a prison sentence of up to 5 years.

Matt Vickers: Amendment 33 would impose a financial penalty on those who receive multiple respect orders. This is about fairness, accountability and ensuring that our justice system is taken seriously.

A respect order is not a punishment; it is an opportunity. It gives individuals a chance to correct their behaviour and change course before more serious consequences arise, but what happens when someone repeatedly ignores that chance? What message do we send if the courts impose an order only for it to be disregarded time and again, with no further repercussions? The amendment would ensure that those who continue to defy the law will face meaningful consequences.

Antisocial behaviour has real victims. It disrupts neighbourhoods, damages businesses and makes people feel unsafe in their own communities. We cannot allow repeat offenders to believe they can break these orders without consequence. A fine is a clear, tangible penalty that reinforces the message that respect orders must be obeyed. We already have fines in place for many other public order offences. They are nothing new. The amendment would bring respect orders in line with other legal measures, ensuring that persistent offenders face escalating consequences.

Crucially, funds from the fines could be reinvested in tackling the very issues that led to the order in the first place, helping communities affected by antisocial behaviour. This is a common-sense amendment. It would give our justice system the tools that it needs to properly enforce respect orders.

Joe Robertson (Isle of Wight East) (Con): Does my hon. Friend agree that without this amendment the power of a respect order would be greatly diminished? As we have seen with antisocial behaviour orders and convictions for relatively minor offences, repeat offending is the problem. Without the weight of this amendment sitting behind respect orders, they are sufficiently diminished in value as a stand-alone.

Matt Vickers: We saw what happened with ASBOs: people started wearing them as a badge of honour. This amendment could strengthen respect orders, providing real sanctions and consequences for people who fail to engage with what is on offer and with the opportunity to change their behaviour. It is the right thing to do not only by the people who commit offences and need setting in a new direction but for the communities who suffer at their hands. Those communities want to see that there are real consequences for them, and that such people do not think that they are above the law and can get away with anything. It is entirely right to strengthen respect orders further.

David Burton-Sampson (Southend West and Leigh) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Pritchard. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the fact that breaches of respect orders will result in a criminal offence that is triable either way is enough of a deterrent? The consequences of breaches will be much greater than they are now.

Matt Vickers: We need to give the justice system and agencies all the powers that they can have, because at the end of the day, it is their discretion that will determine which of these things are applied. If someone breaches an order more than once, and they are subject to several respect orders, which is what the amendment relates to, there should be a stepladder of consequences. We should give the agencies and the Ministry of Justice all the tools and powers that they can use to deter people from committing another offence or indeed being subject to yet another respect order.

This is a common-sense amendment. It gives our justice system the tools that it needs to enforce respect orders properly, protects communities from persistent offenders and upholds the principle that the law must be respected.

Dame Diana Johnson: Amendment 33 would make a person who has been given more than one respect order liable for a fine of up to £1,000. It is unlikely that a person would be given more than one respect order. An

[Dame Diana Johnson]

order may be given for a specified period of time or may state that it has effect until further notice. In practice, if changes are needed to a respect order after it has been approved, the applicant would return to court for the order to be varied if, for example, it was considered necessary to include additional requirements or prohibitions, or to extend the period for which a prohibition or requirement has effect. However, a person may be given a separate order where they have engaged in antisocial behaviour that meets the legal test for use of another ASB power—for example, a housing injunction or a criminal behaviour order. Respect orders are preventive orders. They seek to prevent further antisocial behaviour by helping to address the root causes of the person's behaviour.

Harriet Cross: Respect orders are indeed meant to be preventive, and everyone on the Committee wants them to work, but part of prevention is deterrence. Knowing that it will hit them in their pocket if they get a respect order is a huge deterrent for people who otherwise, as the shadow Minister said, wear these things as a badge of honour. It is not that people will receive multiple respect orders at the same time; they may receive them sequentially. They may have had one in the past, but it has lapsed or they have served it—whatever word is used—and then, down the line, they get another one and then another. A fine would ensure that respect orders have a direct financial impact on them, to prevent them from getting into a cycle of receiving one after another.

Dame Diana Johnson: As my hon. Friend the Member for Southend West and Leigh pointed out, respect orders deter people from carrying on with their behaviour because a breach can lead to arrest, being brought before a criminal court and, potentially, imprisonment. My expectation is that, if there is a need to make changes to a respect order, the requirements will be changed and the prohibitions will be extended on the respect order that has already been issued, so I am not sure that I take the point about multiple respect orders. What we all want is that, when a respect order is issued, the individual will comply with it and no further steps are necessary by anybody because they will have stopped the antisocial behaviour and dealt with their underlying problems. Simply fining someone for receiving further orders would be a punitive measure and unlikely to help that individual change their behaviour.

Amendment 32 would increase the maximum prison term available for repeated breaches of respect orders to five years. Currently, the maximum sentence for breaching a respect order is up to two years' imprisonment upon conviction in the Crown court. We believe that is the appropriate level of sanction, and it is in line with the current civil injunction that it replaces.

As I said, respect orders take a fundamentally preventive approach, and it is appropriate that the sentence reflects that. If the offender abides by the terms of the order, there will be no further sanctions. However, it is right that custodial sentences are still available for those who continue to cause havoc to our communities. Other powers, such as criminal behaviour orders, are available on conviction for any criminal offence in any criminal court, and they carry a longer sentence of up to five years' imprisonment. In the light of that, I hope that the shadow Minister will be content to withdraw his amendment.

Matt Vickers: I thank the Minister for her response. As we know, a small number of people are responsible for the vast majority of crimes. It is right that we put these ladders in place for the communities out there who are frustrated because they do not think the system has consequences for the same young people who are offending again and again, and creating lots of havoc on our streets. We would like to press the amendment to a Division.

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The Committee divided: Ayes 4, Noes 12.

Division No. 2]

AYES

Cross, Harriet	Robertson, Joe
Rankin, Jack	Vickers, Matt

NOES

Barros-Curtis, Mr Alex	Mather, Keir
Bishop, Matt	Phillips, Jess
Burton-Sampson, David	Platt, Jo
Davies-Jones, Alex	Sullivan, Dr Lauren
Johnson, rh Dame Diana	Taylor, David
Jones, Louise	Taylor, Luke

Question accordingly negatived.

The Chair: I call the shadow Minister to move amendment 30.

Matt Vickers: Amendment 32 sets out proposed penalties for repeated breaches of a respect order, with a prison sentence of up to five years. It would strengthen the enforcement of respect orders by introducing clear and proportionate penalties.

The Chair: Order. It may have been a slip of the tongue, but we are meant to be discussing amendment 30. The shadow Minister mentioned amendment 32, which we will vote on later. I just want to make sure he is speaking to the right amendment.

Matt Vickers: Thank you, Mr Pritchard.

I beg to move amendment 30, in clause 1, page 2, line 30, leave out from "behaviour" to the end of line 31 and insert

"has the same meaning as under section 2 of this Act."

This amendment would give "anti-social behaviour" in clause 1 the same definition as in section 2 of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

The 2014 definition of antisocial behaviour, as outlined in the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, provides a crucial framework for tackling the real, everyday issues that affect communities across the country. It recognises that antisocial behaviour is about not just criminal activity but the negative impact that certain behaviours have on the lives of ordinary people. By encompassing actions that cause harassment, alarm or distress, the definition offers a broad, flexible approach that allows authorities to respond effectively to a wide range of disruptive activities.

The definition also strikes a vital balance between protecting individual freedoms and ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the wider community. It does not overreach, but rather targets conduct that directly harms or threatens public peace, whether it be noise disturbances, vandalism or other forms of nuisance. That makes it a vital tool for local police forces, housing authorities and community groups to act swiftly and proportionately. Rather than offering an overtly wide-ranging definition, it draws a clear connection between antisocial behaviour and housing-related issues. The definition acknowledges the complex nature of the problems. It ensures that disruptive behaviour in homes, whether public or private, is tackled with the same urgency as antisocial behaviour and actions in public spaces.

10 am

Dame Diana Johnson: Amendment 30 would expand the legal definition of antisocial behaviour for respect orders, which is currently drafted as behaviour

"that has caused, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to any person."

The amendment seeks to include housing-related definitions of antisocial behaviour, including causing "nuisance or annoyance", as in section 2 of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. The test for nuisance and annoyance is a lower level of behaviour than that causing harassment, alarm or distress. That is appropriate in a housing context where a victim cannot easily escape from ASB that is occurring in the area where they live. We know that ASB can have devastating consequences in such situations, undermining the victim's safety and security in their home. That is why we have retained the test for the new housing injunction in clause 2.

The respect order goes further than the civil injunction, as I have set out, in making a breach a criminal offence and enabling a wider range of sentencing options. It is appropriate that the legal test should be behaviour that is causing, or likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress. It is also important to be mindful that the respect order sits alongside a suite of powers available to the police and local authorities to tackle ASB, which are designed to apply to the different scenarios and harm types that the amendment aims to capture. I hope I have assured the shadow Minister of our reasoning in setting the bar for a respect order at the level of harassment, alarm or distress, and that he will be content to withdraw his amendment.

Matt Vickers: I thank the Minister for her response, but I would like to press the amendment to a Division.

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The Committee divided: Ayes 4, Noes 12.

Division No. 3]

AYES

Cross, Harriet	Robertson, Joe
Rankin, Jack	Vickers, Matt

NOES

Barros-Curtis, Mr Alex	Johnson, rh Dame Diana
Bishop, Matt	Jones, Louise
Burton-Sampson, David	Mather, Keir
Davies-Jones, Alex	Phillips, Jess
Platt, Jo	Taylor, David
Sullivan, Dr Lauren	Taylor, Luke

Question accordingly negatived.

Matt Vickers: I beg to move amendment 34, in clause 1, page 4, line 18, at end insert—

"D1 Power to move person down list for social housing

A respect order may have the effect of moving any application the respondent may have for social housing to the end of the waiting list."

This amendment would mean that a person who receives a respect order would move to the bottom of the waiting list for social housing, if applicable.

Amendment 34 would mean that a person who receives a respect order would move to the bottom of the waiting list for social housing, if applicable. This is a crucial measure that can play an essential role in ensuring that the allocation of social housing is fair, responsible and aligned with the values of respect and community responsibility. The key benefit of the provision is that it provides an additional incentive for individuals to behave in a way that upholds community standards.

David Burton-Sampson: On that point, does the shadow Minister not believe that everybody has the right to decent housing?

Matt Vickers: I do. At the moment there are huge challenges around housing. People who live in social housing want to live next to someone who treats them with the dignity and respect that they deserve. That is fair on the people who might be their neighbours and fair on the other people in that list. There is a list for a reason, and the people who misbehave should feel the consequences of doing so.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Jess Phillips): As a constituency Member of Parliament, the shadow Minister will have handled cases where people want their neighbours to move because of the neighbours' antisocial behaviour. Would he be willing to tell his constituents that those neighbours cannot move because they are at the bottom of the list?

Matt Vickers: We are talking more broadly about the powers—

Jack Rankin: Say yes.

Matt Vickers: Well, I will give the Ministers the reasons for it. We are talking more broadly about the powers and sanctions given to help us to tackle antisocial people who create havoc on some estates and cause absolute uproar. No one wants such people to move in next to them. Does the Minister want the empty house next door to be occupied by someone who is committing antisocial behaviour and failing to comply with the responsibility of being a civilised member of society?

Jess Phillips: So where are they going to live?

Matt Vickers: They are not going to jump the queue ahead of law-abiding citizens who do the right thing. That is what the queue is about, and there is a queue because there is not space.

Jess Phillips: What evidence is there that they jump the queue?

Matt Vickers: We are saying that they will not get ahead of others. They will join the back of the queue; they will be put down the list. The people who behave, who are responsible, who are fair, and who play by the rules will carry on in their place while others are moved down the list for misbehaving.

Luke Taylor (Sutton and Cheam) (LD): The shadow Minister talks about the victims of antisocial behaviour and the offenders. I completely agree with his desire to provide an incentive for those are offending, but offenders often live with their families and children, who are often equally the victims of the antisocial behaviour. Does he agree that to punish offenders' children and partners in a way that makes their housing situation more precarious and denies them a good home and an aspirational move to a better area, is an inappropriate punishment for an individual and becomes, effectively, a group punishment?

Matt Vickers: In my part of the world, the antisocial behaviour is more often wreaked by young people. Parents should be responsible for those young people, and there should be consequences so that people help their families to fall in line and behave. I think this is the right thing to do. Those on a housing list who play by the rules should carry on, while those who misbehave, who do not play by the rules and cause absolute hell for other people, should be pushed to the bottom of the list. I stand by that.

Luke Taylor: I am not sure that the shadow Minister understands the severity of the difficulties that families find themselves in. I have a certain sympathy with wanting to sound like there is a serious consequence for families and individuals who are breaching orders, but this amendment is an extreme measure that would lead to misery for whole families. It seems an overreaction and an extreme punishment for a whole family to suffer in that circumstance.

Matt Vickers: There are decisions to make about the extremity of the consequences and sanctions, but there is a choice. Is it about the victims who suffer sleepless nights and all this havoc, whose windows have gone through, who are abused and are petrified to live in their own home, or are we on the side of the families who wreak this behaviour and the young people who terrorise others? There is a choice there.

Joe Robertson: Government Members' interventions suggest that they may have misread and misunderstood the amendment. They seem to think it means that someone with a respect order would be removed from the housing list. That is not what the amendment says; it is about prioritisation within the waiting list. These waiting lists are based on a set of a criteria that lead to a prioritisation. It seems to me uncontroversial—although it is possible to disagree with it, of course—to add another criterion to compiling a housing waiting list: does someone have a respect order? The amendment is not a mandatory provision. It states:

"A respect order may have the effect of moving any application"

down the list. The provision is discretionary, which addresses the point made by the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam. It may be that an overriding need of the family would mean that the power would not be used. There is nothing mandatory about this. It is entirely consistent with how waiting lists are compiled.

Matt Vickers: My hon. Friend makes a very valid point. The fact that housing authorities are made a relevant authority by the Bill is really powerful. We should give all these agencies—the housing associations, the police and the justice system—all the tools, the carrots and the sticks, that they need to manage and induce the correct behaviour. This measure would do that.

Jess Phillips: How does the shadow Minister not see that, if my neighbour is an absolute nightmare who engages in antisocial behaviour, I would not report them or want them to get a respect order if I thought that would make it less likely that they could move? I would want them to move, so I would not want them to be at the bottom of the social housing waiting list.

Matt Vickers: We have some really good people working in housing authorities across the country who will use all the powers we give them in a meaningful, proportionate and sensible way to get the best possible outcomes for their tenants and communities. This power would be one string on that bow. As we have said, using it would not be mandatory; it would be an option available to them.

I am glad that the Government have said that housing authorities should be a relevant authority that should be able to bring forward orders, including respect orders. That is a really powerful thing, and we should give them all the powers they need and let them get on with the job that they are qualified to do—working hard to deliver for those communities.

Dr Sullivan: To take a slightly different tack, does the shadow Minister recognise that some landlords, social landlords and councils evict tenants who exhibit the kind of antisocial behaviour he describes, which is an absolute travesty and a blight on some communities, but that if they get a respect order and these people are placed at the bottom of the list, they will not be able to be evicted. That will hamper some of our councils from moving tenants on and addressing the various issues he has raised.

Matt Vickers: As I have said, this is not a mandatory measure. It is something that housing authorities and local enforcement agencies would be able to use at their discretion, looking at all of the facts surrounding the case, to try to get the best possible outcome for communities and tenants, many of whom are suffering sleepless nights and are miserable in their own home as a result of the behaviour of some awful people. It is right that there are consequences for these people and that we empower the agencies to deal with them as they see fit.

Jess Phillips: Have any particular social housing providers or local authorities requested the amendment from the shadow Minister?

Matt Vickers: As yet, they have not—I do not know. The Minister is very good at these questions, is she not? She does not like the "name a business" questions, but

I suppose we can play it both ways. The reality is that I speak to housing associations that are deeply frustrated about their lack of powers and ability to tackle some of these issues. We would give them and other agencies this power as an option; its use would not be mandatory or stipulated. It is a very sensible thing to do. We should support and empower the authorities and agencies in every way we can.

Jess Phillips: The shadow Minister is right; I am very good at those questions. He made a good point about how we need to trust the experts, and I wondered where this amendment had come from if the experts are not the ones calling for it. I have tabled a lot of Opposition amendments in my time, and I was usually working with a team of experts.

Matt Vickers: How many housing authorities did we invite to the evidence session?

Jack Rankin: She was not there.

Matt Vickers: We did not invite any to the evidence session. I think the amendment would be welcomed, but I am sure we will hear from the relevant agencies and authorities in due course.

Jess Phillips: When tabling amendments to Government Bills in opposition, I never relied only on evidence given in evidence sessions. I believe the shadow Minister has an email address where those people could have lobbied him—it happens to us all the time. Have any housing or antisocial behaviour experts got in touch with him and said this is an appropriate action?

Matt Vickers: I am sure they will be in touch and can ask them that question, but I think empowering these organisations in this way is really powerful and will really help them to deal with some of the horrific antisocial behaviour their tenants are subjected to.

Harriet Cross: On this amendment and amendment 31, on reducing the age threshold to 16, we heard from the experts and people who gave evidence that we should reduce it to 16 because that is where most of the criminality of the antisocial behaviour comes from. By that same argument, because we are not hearing from housing authorities or experts does not necessarily mean that this is not a good amendment.

10.15 am

As we say, the measure we propose is not binding: it is a "may" power, giving people the option to use it as a deterrent against antisocial behaviour. That is what the public want, and what communities who are being terrorised by antisocial behaviour and whose lives are being made a misery want. They want to know that there is some sort of justice, some way that they can see perpetrators actually impacted themselves—not just by being given a piece of paper, which they can stick on the wall and say, "I have a respect order now,", but something that is actually going to make people think twice before getting involved in antisocial behaviour and terrorising communities.

Matt Vickers: Some of the real experts in this Bill are the people on housing lists, feeling that they are waiting to get a house while others are getting ahead of them in the queue. This is an essential measure.

David Taylor (Hemel Hempstead) (Lab): I have listened intently to the remarks, and I must say it is astounding to hear the shadow Minister suddenly become a champion for social housing. The problems due to antisocial behaviour in my constituency are, first, that families are stuck next to a problem family and cannot move because the Conservative party sold off so much council housing in my constituency and, crucially, did not replace it with new council housing stock; and secondly, my housing associations do not have enough resources from the local police, because the Conservative party slashed police numbers.

Matt Vickers: Police numbers are at a record level. There are more police on the streets of the UK than ever before. There is more funding going into the police than ever before. We toughened up sentencing for some of the worst offences. I am sure the hon. Member has lots of views on social housing, but in terms of this amendment, I think the right thing to do is to empower the agencies and ensure that some of the frustrated people in his constituency who want to move house can move ahead of those committing antisocial behaviour.

Matt Bishop (Forest of Dean) (Lab): I will just draw the Committee's attention to the fact that one of my other former roles was as a tenancy enforcement caseworker for a social housing company. I can assure the Committee that I would not be asking for this amendment. I think it would have a detrimental effect, and would actually cause more antisocial behaviour further down the line.

Matt Vickers: I thank the hon. Member for his evidence.

The amendment is a crucial measure that could play an essential role in ensuring that the allocation of social housing is fair, responsible, and aligned with the values of respect and community responsibility. The key benefit is that it provides an additional incentive for individuals to behave in a way that upholds community standards. When someone is found to have caused disruption or engaged in antisocial behaviour that harms others, placing them at the bottom of the waiting list for social housing serves as a tangible consequence of their actions. It encourages personal responsibility and reinforces the idea that those who choose to respect the rules and the people around them should be rewarded, while those who engage in disruptive behaviour should face appropriate consequences.

Moreover, this approach supports the integrity of the social housing system. Social housing is in high demand, and it is vital that we prioritise those who are not only in need, but demonstrate a commitment to being good tenants and positive members of the community. By introducing this measure, we would ensure that social housing was allocated in a manner that rewards responsible behaviour, thus safeguarding the quality of life for everyone in the community. Importantly, it would allow local authorities to manage the housing waiting list in a way that aligns with the broader objectives of social housing policy, promoting both fairness and the values

[Matt Vickers]

that underpin our society. It is a sensible, measured approach that encourages respect for others and the community as a whole.

Dame Diana Johnson: Well, Mr Pritchard, that was a lively exchange. Clearly the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham Yardley, has had her three Weetabix this morning.

We all recognise how devastating antisocial behaviour where you live can be, and I fully understand and appreciate the passion the debate on amendment 34 has prompted this morning. As the shadow Minister pointed out, amendment 34 would enable local authorities or housing providers to move a person who receives a respect order to the bottom of the waiting list for social housing. It is for local authorities to decide who should qualify for social housing. It might be helpful for hon. Members to know that many councils already consider antisocial behaviour or other criminal behaviour before allocating a social home. They may either decide that a person with a history of antisocial behaviour does not qualify to go on the housing register, or accept the person on to the register but award them lower priority.

I note what the Liberal Democrat spokesperson, the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam, said about the effect that this amendment could have on other family members not associated with the antisocial behaviour. We need to consider the potential consequences of removing access to social housing. The respect order is intended to tackle the most harmful adult perpetrators of ASB, but also aims to prevent further ASB from occurring and help people to address the root causes of their behaviour. That is why respect orders may contain positive as well as prohibitive requirements.

Luke Taylor: To pick up the point on the root cause of antisocial behaviour, does the right hon. Lady agree that being in unsuitable housing, and then being trapped in unsuitable housing through a measure like this, may well make antisocial behaviour even worse, leading to further reactions and disruption within communities?

Dame Diana Johnson: The hon. Gentleman has made his point; I am not sure that I will respond to it. However, the point he made earlier about the need to ensure that innocent people are not caught up in this is one that I am willing to accept.

We do not want to create further issues for individuals who have respect orders by removing access to social housing entirely, which may increase the risk of reoffending and reduce the likelihood of rehabilitation. I hope that, as I have explained that there is already the power for local authorities to choose to take into account the antisocial behaviour or criminal records of potential tenants, the shadow Minister will be willing to withdraw the amendment.

Matt Vickers: I thank the Minister for her response. I am glad that we provoked a bit of passion and got people engaged in the debate. I would like to press the amendment to a vote.

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The Committee divided: Ayes 4, Noes 12.

Division No. 4]

AYES

Cross, Harriet	Robertson, Joe
Rankin, Jack	Vickers, Matt

NOES

Barros-Curtis, Mr Alex	Mather, Keir
Bishop, Matt	Phillips, Jess
Burton-Sampson, David	Platt, Jo
Davies-Jones, Alex	Sullivan, Dr Lauren
Johnson, rh Dame Diana	Taylor, David
Jones, Louise	Taylor, Luke

Question accordingly negatived.

Amendment proposed: 32, in clause 1, page 8, line 2, at end insert—

"(4) A person who commits further offences under this section is liable—

(a) on summary conviction, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding the general limit in a magistrates' court or a fine (or both);

(b) on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a period not exceeding 5 years or a fine (or both)."—*(Matt Vickers.)*

This amendment sets out the penalties for repeated breaches of a respect order with a prison sentence of up to 5 years.

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The Committee divided: Ayes 4, Noes 12.

Division No. 5]

AYES

Cross, Harriet	Robertson, Joe
Rankin, Jack	Vickers, Matt

NOES

Barros-Curtis, Mr Alex	Mather, Keir
Bishop, Matt	Phillips, Jess
Burton-Sampson, David	Platt, Jo
Davies-Jones, Alex	Sullivan, Dr Lauren
Johnson, rh Dame Diana	Taylor, David
Jones, Louise	Taylor, Luke

Question accordingly negatived.

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

Dame Diana Johnson: As we have talked at length about the respect orders, I will not say anything further at this stage.

Matt Vickers: It is encouraging to see housing providers recognised as registered authorities in proposed new section B1 of the 2014 Act, particularly when it comes to addressing antisocial behaviour, which continues to plague many residents in housing communities. Registered housing providers, including housing associations and local authority landlords, serve as the backbone of the social housing sector, ensuring that tenants have access to safe, stable and well-managed homes. Their role extends beyond simply providing houses; they are legally and morally responsible for fostering strong, liveable communities where residents feel secure and supported. As designated authorities with specific legal powers,

these providers are uniquely positioned to tackle antisocial behaviour head-on. This responsibility is crucial in preventing communities from becoming blighted by persistent nuisance and intimidation or criminal activity.

Rather than leaving tenants to endure these issues alone, or to rely solely on already overstretched police and council services, housing providers have the tools to intervene directly, whether through tenancy enforcement, mediation or legal action. By taking a proactive stance against antisocial behaviour, registered housing providers help maintain the quality of life for all residents, ensuring that social housing remains a place not just to live, but to thrive. Their ability to act swiftly and decisively is vital in upholding community standards and reinforcing the fundamental principle that everyone deserves to live in a safe and respectful environment.

Response times can still lag, and not all providers have the resources or the will to tackle complex cases effectively. Victims of persistent antisocial behaviour often face a daunting process: logging multiple complaints, gathering evidence and navigating bureaucracy. How will the Government ensure that all housing providers have the capacity to utilise these powers effectively?

The Environment Agency is listed as a relevant authority with the power to issue a respect order. Could the Minister clarify the specific role that the agency will play in enforcing these orders? Under what circumstances would the Environment Agency be expected to exercise this power, and what specific outcomes do the Government seek to achieve by including it? Could the Minister provide a concrete example of how the Environment Agency might use a respect order in practice? Proposed new section C1 of the 2014 Act sets out that the respect order

"may have the effect of excluding the respondent from the place where the respondent normally lives"

and that a condition the court considers is that

"the anti-social behaviour in which the respondent has engaged or threatens to engage consists of or includes the use or threatened use of violence against other persons, or…there is a significant risk of harm to other persons from the respondent."

What implications could that have for respondents who have been issued with an order? Where will they live? What role will their local authority have in supporting them?

10.30 am

Proposed new sections E1 and F1 address the procedure for applying for a respect order without the respondent being informed beforehand. That allows a relevant authority, such as the police or a local authority, to apply for a respect order without informing the respondent. That is likely in urgent or sensitive cases where notification could exacerbate the situation. A judicial process through the courts keeps oversight. Can the Minister confirm the circumstances that would justify making an application without notice under proposed new section E1? Does that include imminent risk of harm, or witness intimidation? What safeguards are in place to prevent abuse of without-notice applications? What does "just" mean in proposed new section F1 when deciding to issue an interim order? The court must consider it "just" to issue an interim order. What factors might weigh most heavily on courts?

Proposed new section G1 sets out that a respect order can be changed, or varied, and cancelled, or discharged, if either the original applicant or the respondent—the person subject to the order—requests it. The dual eligibility ensures that both parties can seek adjustments based on new circumstances. What constitutes

"an additional prohibition or requirement"

under the proposed new section? Can the Minister cite examples—having a curfew, or extending a ban from the area and so on—and confirm whether there are limits to what can be added? How does the new section ensure fairness when adding new requirements? What evidence is required to support an application to vary or discharge a respect order under the new section? What is the burden of proof? What objectives or outcomes should exist?

Proposed new section H1 outlines the process that a supervisor must follow when a respondent fails to comply with an activity requirement imposed by a respect order. What constitutes a "reasonable excuse" under the new section? How do court supervisors determine what qualifies as reasonable? Is the supervisor required to consult the respondent or other parties? How does the supervisor deliver a warning "by hand" under the new section? There are practical methods and challenges in ensuring delivery, such as in-person meetings, so why twelve months? How has that sought to balance rehabilitation with enforcement? Could it be more effective?

Proposed new section I1 defines the consequences of breaching a respect order, including specific rules for activity requirements. Penalties for breaching a respect order include, on summary conviction, up to the general limit and/or a fine, and, on conviction on indictment, up to two years' imprisonment and/or a fine. That allows for flexibility in sentencing based on the severity of the breach. Courts cannot issue a conditional discharge—a lenient penalty where no punishment is imposed—unless further offences occur. That provision ensures that breaches are treated seriously.

Tougher sentences play a crucial role in deterring crime by increasing the consequences for criminal behaviour, making potential offenders think twice before breaking the law. A strong and consistent sentencing framework reinforces the principle that crime does not pay, providing justice for victims and reassurance to the public. By imposing stricter punishments, particularly for repeat offenders and serious crimes, the justice system can remove dangerous individuals from society and reduce reoffending rates. Additionally, harsher sentences serve as a clear message that law and order will be upheld, fostering a sense of security and confidence in the legal system. Why does proposed new section I1 exempt the first breach of an activity requirement from prosecution?

Proposed new section J1 establishes the obligation and scope of a risk assessment prior to applying for a respect order. How is harassment or distress under this new section interpreted in the risk assessment? What types of "alternative means" are considered under this new section? How will specific alternatives—for example, counselling or community support—be identified and exhausted? What checks and balances will be put in place to ensure consistency? What guidance will be published so that authorities making applications are aware? Will be there be consistency across authorities and regions?

Proposed new section K1 outlines the obligations of an applicant to inform relevant parties when applying for a respect order, varying an existing order or seeking its discharge. Who might qualify as

"a person the applicant considers appropriate"

under the new section? How does an applicant determine appropriateness—for example, local residents, other authorities and victims—and are there further legal guidelines for this discretion?

As Members have mentioned, antisocial behaviour has a profound impact on entire communities, creating an environment of fear, distress and instability. Persistent issues such as vandalism, drug abuse, public disorder and intimidation erode trust among residents, making people feel unsafe in their neighbourhoods. Local businesses may suffer as customers avoid certain areas, property values can decline, and families may choose to move elsewhere, leading to community breakdown.

David Taylor: It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Pritchard. In Hemel Hempstead, antisocial behaviour is regularly at the top of my inbox. Ahead of joining the Committee, I carried out information-gathering exercises in addition to my regular surgery and casework, including a recent public event alongside the police and the Police Federation. I found that hundreds of people are unable to go about their daily lives because of antisocial behaviour. A rot was allowed to set in by the Conservatives when they were in government, with crime doubling in my constituency between 2014 and 2024. A retired police officer locally has pinpointed the fact that the cuts that were made to neighbourhood policing during that time is having a massive and detrimental effect on policing in Hemel Hempstead.

I have spoken before about a family who live locally who have suffered from terrible antisocial behaviour, and I will refer to them again today. This family, who have a boy, have been harassed for more than two years, including verbal abuse, trespassing, damage to property and their neighbours generally causing them distress. What is really disturbing is that the child does not feel comfortable going out to play in their local neighbourhood because of the impact that the abuse from those terrible neighbours has had on his mental health. The family have recorded these incidents on their Ring doorbell device, and the recordings have been submitted to the police and local authority. However, despite multiple reports to the council, the police and other agencies, no resolution has been reached. They are currently unable to move away to another area because of the lack of social housing, which I mentioned earlier. It is not okay that the son is fearful of going outside, and that the anxiety is so bad that he cannot sleep alone. I have met the family and have had to console them as they have broken down in tears owing to the stress. It is unacceptable.

In reading the Bill, I have been applying a simple test: what will each clause mean for Hemel Hempstead residents? I strongly believe that clause 1 will have a considerable impact on residents. Why? First, unlike previous measures, respect orders come with criminal penalties for breaches, which paves the way for the police to immediately act when individuals are in breach. It will help to ensure that residents such as the family I referenced will not suffer prolonged harm from persistent offenders, and that authorities have the tools to act decisively.

Secondly, residents have informed me that when antisocial behaviour injunctions and other parts of enforcement measures have been applied, they were too slow to be enforced, so lacked any real deterrent. In contrast, the measures introduced in clause 1 simplify the legal framework, providing enforceable rules that local authorities, housing providers and the police can use. Further, one of the problems reported to me by the family is that the neighbours' drug use is the driver of much of the antisocial behaviour.

Jo Platt (Leigh and Atherton) (Lab/Co-op): I thank my hon. Friend for giving way; he is very kind. In my constituency, ASB is conducted by people who have alcohol and drug problems. Does he agree that the fact that the new respect orders have positive requirements, such as attending drug or alcohol support services, will get to the root of the problem?

David Taylor: My hon. Friend makes an important point. I have spoken about members of my family who have suffered drug abuse; sometimes that did lead to antisocial behaviour and they suffered the penalties of it. It is right that we need to look at dealing with some of the root causes.

This issue is a scourge in my community and it has been for many years. I recall another couple who came up to me at a community event just before Christmas. They said that they lived on a completely normal street but then, at one point, a house on the street turned into a drug den, where there was a drug dealer. They told me, "It is striking. This is just a normal street and all of a sudden, we are dealing with people coming at all hours of the day, leaving drugs and paraphernalia all over the place. There is swearing and antisocial behaviour." A neighbour went out to confront the people coming to buy the drugs, and one of them turned on the neighbour and drove at him with their vehicle—that is how bad some of these offences are.

I therefore welcome that the new respect orders allow courts to impose restrictions and positive obligations, which my hon. Friend referenced. As a result, offenders can be required not just to stop harmful behaviour but to engage in programmes of drug rehabilitation, which I hope will get to the root cause of this problem.

The overarching issue with antisocial behaviour in Hemel Hempstead is that it has been ignored in the past, with one resident telling me that authorities do not really think it is that bad. The new respect orders send a strong message that such behaviour will have real consequences, therefore restoring trust in policing and the justice system. I have made the case several times that Hemel would very much welcome being included in the pilot for the new respect orders, should the Bill pass, and I reiterate that today. I thank the Government for taking seriously the plight of antisocial behaviour, as demonstrated by clause 1, and I hope that we can work together to ensure that it is enforceable as quickly as possible, and to bring about real change for residents across our country and in my Hemel Hempstead.

Jack Rankin: It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Pritchard. As members of the Committee have said, antisocial behaviour really is one of the scourges of our communities right across the country. Although it might often be described as low-level, compared with more serious crimes, it is deleterious to community cohesion, and it clearly has significant effects on people's mental health.

I was looking at some YouGov statistics earlier: 28% of people in the country at some point felt unsafe where they live because of antisocial behaviour; 14% said that antisocial behaviour where they live has affected their mental health; and 15% have said that they have

been scared at some points to visit their local shop. That is reflected in my surgeries, as I am sure it is in the surgeries of Members across the House.

Last month, I went to Eton town council. Eton is a prosperous place, as people might recognise, but even for Eton as a town, there were two primary issues that the council brought up with me relating to antisocial behaviour. That included from the night-time economy, whether that is shop windows being smashed, indecent exposure or laughing gas. We also have problems with BB guns being shot at swans—indeed, youths not too far in the past killed a swan. What we find, in many instances, is that an incredibly small number of individuals create havoc for a whole town, so I welcome clause 1 and the powers that respect orders will give the authorities. The clause can give them more teeth to get at the repeat offenders who are causing this kind of damage across our town.

I know it is not necessarily appropriate at this point for me to speak to the amendments, but I would like to say two sentences on amendment 31, if you would allow me, Mr Pritchard. I think this behaviour is often done by 16 to 17-year-olds, so it is a bit of a shame that that has been put to one side.

The Chair: Order. I think the hon. Gentleman was seeking advice, so may I kindly offer it? Please stick to the particular issue in the clause.

Jack Rankin: On the more substantive point, there were some missed opportunities to toughen the clause up a bit. The perception of respect orders is that they could become ASBO mark 2. I recognise that they are a little tougher than past measures, but there is bit of a missed opportunity.

David Burton-Sampson: As other Members have said, antisocial behaviour is out of control. Around 35% of respondents to the crime survey for England and Wales in March 2024 said they had witnessed or experienced antisocial behaviour in their area. We must remember that a significant amount of antisocial behaviour goes unreported, so the reports that we get are probably a misrepresentation of the level of antisocial behaviour that is actually out there. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Hemel Hempstead that it is an indictment of the previous Government's record that action was not taken on this issue, but I am glad that the hon. Member for Windsor welcomes the respect orders and can see that this Government are starting to take control of antisocial behaviour.

10.45 am

In my constituency of Southend West and Leigh there is intimidation in the town centres. There are people drinking and taking drugs on the street, and that comes up regularly in my surgeries, as I am sure it does for many Members across the Committee. Civil injunctions serve a purpose, but they do not have the teeth—the robust enforcement—and therefore they are a weaker deterrent and more time consuming for police to attempt to enforce. Respect orders are a good tool to start getting control of antisocial behaviour, especially persistent antisocial behaviour, with the deterrent of being a criminal offence triable either way. I am pleased that my deputy chief constable for Essex police, Andy Prophet, who is also the National Police Chiefs' Council lead for ASB, is fully supportive of respect orders and has stated that they will help to crack down on those who persistently make our streets and public spaces unsafe.

Prevention is important, especially for our young people. I see this measure working in collaboration with the Government's work on things such as youth hubs and looking at forms of early intervention with young people who potentially are about to spiral. We should not criminalise young people; we should be figuring out and addressing the root cause of the issues that are pushing them into antisocial behaviour. I fully support the respect orders; they are a real positive move forward, and I look forward to seeing their implementation.

Joe Robertson: It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Pritchard. Like every Member in the Committee and across the House, my constituency struggles with antisocial behaviour, particularly but not exclusively in towns. Individual instances of antisocial behaviour often are referred to—perhaps correctly—as low-level crime, but the problem is the combination of those activities, the hyper-prolific nature of antisocial behaviour, whereby a few individuals cause a huge amount of the problems, and the knock-on effect for the rest of the people living in those neighbourhoods, who are law-abiding citizens trying to go about their daily lives. Antisocial behaviour also feeds into the fear of crime, which is relevant—not just the level of crime, but fear of it among a given population.

In the town of Sandown in my constituency on the Isle of Wight, antisocial behaviour feeds into a major regeneration issue, as the state of some key buildings, which have been left to deteriorate, attracts antisocial behaviour. That is not to say that there is any justification for criminality or antisocial behaviour, but it would be false to assume that the physical environment in which people live does not have an effect, particularly on younger people who may be struggling to fill their time, as they look for work or further education opportunities.

I welcome the new respect orders, in line with most of the things that have been said today, because of the beefing up of the current rules and the attempt to add weight to the deterrent available to law enforcement. However, as the measure includes criminal sanctions for an offence that can be tried and heard in the Crown court, the Government have to be alive to the potential—indeed, the almost certainty—that it will increase the workload of the courts. It is all very well for Members such as the hon. Member for Southend West and Leigh to talk about the previous Government not having done enough, but to assume that words, even good words, in a Bill will solve everything on their own, I suggest might be a little simplistic. The Government will have to do more.

David Taylor: The hon. Member is being a bit unfair. The Bill is not being presented in isolation. As a Government, we are also recruiting 13,000 new officers, a starting point to getting neighbourhood policing back in a fit and proper state. Does he not welcome that move?

Matt Vickers *rose—*

Joe Robertson: I give way to my hon. Friend.

Matt Vickers: Recruiting 13,000 police officers sounds really good, but about a third of them will be special constables and about a third redeployed from other

[Matt Vickers]

parts of the police force. When someone rings 999, because they want that emergency response service, they may wait even longer, because the response police officers will have been moved into neighbourhoods.

Dame Diana Johnson: Rubbish!

Matt Vickers: The Government are redeploying them, so they are taking them from somewhere. We would welcome any information about where the Government will or will not redeploy them from, but this is important. The Government cannot say 13,000 more are arriving, when it is about 3,000 more.

Joe Robertson: My hon. Friend makes a good point. To respond to the hon. Member for Hemel Hempstead, we can debate policing all he likes—indeed, the previous Government increased police numbers—but the point I was making was about the courts, because we are talking about increasing the burden on Crown courts. I am not making a point against him or the hon. Member for Southend West and Leigh, but I am sure they would both agree that the Government have to address the pressure on the court system. I support this provision, but although Bills such as this are well intended, they will add pressure to the prison population and the court systems if the Government do not make further provision.

Matt Bishop: Perhaps the hon. Member can offer some thoughts as to why we might have huge backlogs in the court system.

Joe Robertson: I am slightly surprised that such an uncontroversial point is being met with such incredulity and that I am being asked to provide the hon. Member's Government with solutions. He has to get used to the fact that his Government are in power now. They will have to find their own solutions.

Matt Vickers: I would never seek to defend anything that any Government have ever done—people do get things wrong—but the previous Government were right to toughen up sentences for the worst and most violent offences. It was right that we put people away for longer. It was right that we did not release people during the pandemic, or at anything like the levels that some other countries did. It was right, therefore, that the Government had the biggest prison-building programme since the Victorian era. It is right that we put those people in prison. It is right that in another Bill Committee I have been saying for weeks that foreign national offenders should be removed without the need for a 12-month prison sentence in the meantime. We have got to where we have got to for lots of reasons. I think tougher sentences were a good thing, and that it was right that we did not release people early and that we built more prison places than have been built since the Victorian era.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

The Chair: Order. We need to warm up, because it is cold, so people bobbing up and down is fantastic, but may we stick to what we are supposed to be debating, however excitable the other things make us?

Joe Robertson: Thank you for that advice, Mr Pritchard. I am too generous in giving way, but the shadow Minister put it much better than I could myself.

Matt Bishop *rose—*

Joe Robertson: I am willing to give way again, in the spirit of generosity.

Matt Bishop: I thank the hon. Member for giving way. To clarify, I did not ask for solutions; our Government have the solutions.

Joe Robertson: I think we will have to leave the debate about which Government have the solutions to another day, but I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention.

I repeat my point, which I do not think is controversial and would hope is accepted: the Labour party will have to pay extra attention to court backlogs when provisions such as this, which I support, are introduced.

Dame Diana Johnson: We have had a wide-ranging debate on clause 1, moving from the specifics of the respect order through to policing numbers. I am very proud that we will have 13,000 additional police officers and PCSOs by the end of this Parliament. I have to say that the idea that there was the largest prison-building scheme since the Victorian times under the previous Conservative Government is utter bunkum—they built 500 places. That is why we are in the position we are in at the moment. I know that the hon. Member for Isle of Wight East is a new Member, but those of us who have been in the House a little while remember what 14 years of Conservative government have delivered for this country. That is why this Government are determined to start to deal with some of the problems around antisocial behaviour, crime and the fact that we do not have enough prison places.

Getting back to clause 1 of this important Bill, I am pleased that there is acceptance across the House of the need for respect orders and a general welcoming of them. The shadow Minister asked some very detailed questions, which I will come to in a moment, but I want to comment on the speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Hemel Hempstead. The horrific case in his constituency of a child who cannot go out to play and the stress that antisocial behaviour puts on the family is clearly totally unacceptable. That is why respect orders will play their part, along with the housing civil injunctions, in tackling some of these problems.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leigh and Atherton made an important point about individuals with addiction problems and how it is absolutely vital that respect orders deal with the requirements to get to grips with antisocial behaviour and whether an addiction issue is driving it. I was pleased that the hon. Member for Windsor talked about the antisocial behaviour that occurs even in some of the more prosperous areas of the country—he talked about Eton. My hon. Friend the Member for Southend West and Leigh made an important point about prevention, the work around youth hubs and the prevention partnerships that we will be introducing.

At the very start of the debate on the amendments, the shadow Minister asked whether respect orders would interfere with individuals' work commitments. I can reassure him that it will be for the court, which is

judicially independent, to set the conditions of a respect order. Courts are well practised in navigating types of circumstances, such as where a person works or lives, and we expect the courts to consider those issues when making respect orders. For example, a court is unlikely to prevent the respondent from entering a defined area if they need to access it to attend work.

The shadow Minister asked how the Environment Agency will use respect orders. The Environment Agency can play a role, particularly where an environmental ASB offence is committed, for example vandalism of local open spaces or parks, or things like that.

The shadow Minister was particularly concerned about without-notice applications for respect orders. We know that courts can issue without-notice respect orders when the matter is urgent—the shadow Minister referred to that. Courts are familiar with doing that and have done it for a very long time with civil injunctions.

The shadow Minister also asked about the burden of proof required for the courts to approve a respect order and how much police will work with communities to ensure that repeated reporting and gathering of evidence has the desired effect. The court must be satisfied that, on the balance of probabilities, the respondent has engaged in, or threatened to engage in, conduct that has or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress. The court must also be satisfied that it is just and convenient to grant the respect order for the purposes of preventing the respondent from engaging in antisocial behaviour. That is the same legal test as for the current injunction.

I was pleased that the shadow Minister welcomed the fact that housing bodies will be able to seek orders from the courts; I think that is welcome across the House. Police are just one of the number of agencies, including councils and housing authorities, that can apply for respect orders. It is expected that a multi-agency approach will be taken when applying for respect orders. We are also introducing mandatory checklists for the relevant agency to complete prior to applying for a respect order, to ensure proportionate use.

11 am

The shadow Minister asked various questions about details of the court procedure for respect orders. It is important to note that, generally, directions are made by the courts, which are judicially independent. They determine the parameters of what information and evidence they will require. The shadow Minister asked what evidence will be required for varying or discharging a respect order. Courts will need to be satisfied that there is sufficient evidence to seek to vary or discharge an order. That evidence will need to prove that there is the need for that variation. That will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The shadow Minister asked whether a respect order legal test will be sufficient for housing providers. As we discussed in an earlier debate, the legal test is broad and flexible so as to enable respect orders for a range of ASB, which we know will take many forms. In addition, the civil injunction, which pertains specifically to housing-related ASB, will be retained; it will be called the housing injunction. Both the respect order and the housing injunction will be available for social housing providers to apply for. He also asked why only the second failure to comply with the positive requirement will be a seen as a breach, and not the first. The reason is that we want to give people a second chance. If they commit a breach in the first instance, they will be given the opportunity to carry on, but the second breach will be determined to be an actual breach.

I was also asked about the circumstances in which can courts make applications without notice for respect orders. We believe that that would only happen in urgent cases. The court wants to see evidence for why the application has been made without notice. An example of where the court could allow that is where there is evidence that the defendant might react badly to being served. On court delays and backlogs in the Crown court, it is correct that we are taking breaches of respect orders out of the civil court and into the criminal court. We expect, however, that the vast majority of breaches will be heard in the magistrates court, where we know there is more capacity. A small minority of respect order breaches will be heard in the Crown court, where we know there are delays, but steps are being taken to deal with that.

Finally, accompanying statutory guidance will be provided for the various agencies involved in making and applying for respect orders. That will be drafted in consultation with the relevant experts and practitioners. I hope that I have covered all the issues that the shadow Minister raised, but if there is anything I have missed, I am very happy to set that out in writing to him and put a copy in the Library.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 1 accordingly ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 2

YOUTH INJUNCTIONS AND HOUSING INJUNCTIONS

Dame Diana Johnson: I beg to move amendment 6, in clause 2, page 10, line 36, leave out

"Schedule 1 amends Part 1 of"

and insert

"Part 1 of Schedule 1 amends".

This amendment is consequential on Amendment 24.

The Chair: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following:

Government amendments 7 and 8.

Clause stand part.

Government amendments 24 to 28.

Schedule 1.

Dame Diana Johnson: Clause 2 introduces schedule 1, which makes consequential amendments to part 1 of the 2014 Act to provide for youth and housing injunctions. The purpose of the amendments in this group is to retain the existing civil injunction for cases that will not be covered by the respect order, namely those of offenders under 18 and housing-related nuisance ASB. Although in some cases powers are needed to address the behaviour of younger offenders, the Government do not want to unnecessarily criminalise children, as I said previously. Practitioners have told us that the existing injunction can be a useful power for addressing persistent ASB committed by under-18s and so it will remain in place for that cohort, operating in the same way as the civil injunction, although it will be renamed the "youth injunction".

Harriet Cross: For clarity, will the threshold at which a youth injunction is given be at the same sort of level as for a respect order, but with the age element added in, or will there be a different threshold for the level of antisocial behaviour, or the sort of disruption caused?

Dame Diana Johnson: We are retaining the existing provisions for civil injunctions. As I set out previously, the balance of probabilities, the test and the categorisation of the antisocial behaviour will all remain the same. We are just renaming it a "youth injunction" because we are focusing the respect order on the persistent antisocial behaviour of adults over 18. The youth injunction remains exactly as it is in law now.

I am conscious of the profound problems that housing-related nuisance ASB can cause, as we have heard again in this debate. The housing injunction therefore retains the lower legal threshold of

"conduct capable of causing nuisance or annoyance"

in a housing context—as previously discussed. Again, we heard from practitioners that the existing power is effective and proportionate for housing-related ASB, and the housing injunction therefore retains the effect of the current power in that context.

Government amendments 6 to 8 and 24 to 28 make further technical and consequential amendments to existing antisocial behaviour legislation as a result of the introduction of respect orders. In relation to the 2014 Act, that means ensuring that definitions of antisocial behaviour are captured accurately elsewhere, under the existing powers, to account for the new respect orders and injunctions in part 1 of the Act. Consequential amendments are also needed to the Housing Acts 1985 and 1988 so that the breach of a respect order, a youth injunction or a housing injunction continues to be a ground for possession under those Housing Acts, as is the case with the current civil injunction.

We know that taking possession of a property is an important tool for landlords to use to provide swift relief to victims when antisocial behaviour or criminality has already been proven by another court. It is therefore right to retain that tool with the new respect order. In addition, amendment 28 amends the Localism Act 2011 to ensure that landlords can refuse to surrender and grant tenancies on the basis that a tenant, or a person residing with the tenant, has been issued with a respect order.

Finally, amendment 28 also amends the Police Reform Act 2002 to ensure that constables in uniform can continue to require a person engaging in antisocial behaviour to give their name and address. I commend the provisions to the Committee.

Matt Vickers: Clause 2 amends the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 to provide for the granting of youth and housing injunctions; I thank the Minister for outlining that. Clause 2 will limit powers under section 1 of the 2014 Act so that injunctions can be granted only to individuals aged 10 to 17. Will the Minister confirm the rationale behind that age restriction?

The clause also introduces a new type of injunction for adults aged 18 and over, specifically aimed at preventing behaviour that causes nuisance or annoyance related to housing. It shifts the approach to tackling community-specific antisocial conduct, rather than broader public disorder. How do the Government justify treating adult antisocial behaviour differently depending on whether it is housing-related or not? Is the Minister concerned that limiting injunctions for housing-related issues to adults might create enforcement gaps? What mechanisms are in place to ensure that local authorities and housing providers have the necessary resources to enforce housing-related injunctions effectively? Realising that Ministers are keen to hear exactly who wants what measures in the Bill, can she name any housing associations who specifically asked for this measure?

Dame Diana Johnson: A number of the points that the shadow Minister has raised were discussed earlier. We have set out very clearly why we believe that the respect orders should only apply to adults, because we are talking about the most serious antisocial behaviour. We believe that children and young people up to the age of 18 should not be caught by a respect order because of the criminalisation attached—if it is breached, they can be immediately arrested and brought before the criminal courts. That is why we have retained what is working well with the civil injunctions and renamed them the youth injunction and the housing injunction. On the latter, again, we heard very passionate contributions about how antisocial behaviour where people live, next to their home, and caused by neighbours, can absolutely destroy people's lives, causing stress, distress and mental health issues, as well as sometimes breaking up families. That is why the threshold for the housing injunction is lower than that for the respect order, but for the threshold we are using what is already on the statute books and I think it is right that it is at that lower level.

On the question about whether any social housing authority has supported the plans for housing injunctions, there is a genuine view in the sector that this is a positive step to enable them to deal with the antisocial behaviour that housing authorities often have to deal with. I am very conscious that the antisocial behaviour charity Resolve has much welcomed the work that has gone into the Bill on both the respect orders and the civil injunctions. Resolve would say that there is a general view that this is a positive way forward. The approach that seems sensible is using what works well now, and keeping that—as I have said, that is why the housing and youth injunctions are doing that and are adapting it—while bringing in this tougher response through the respect order, and getting that on the statute books to deal with people who persistently engage in antisocial behaviour, to try to get to the root cause of what they are doing. I hope that deals with the questions posed by the shadow Minister.

Amendment 6 agreed to.

Amendments made: 7, in clause 2, page 10, line 37, leave out "(injunctions)".

This amendment is consequential on Amendment 6.

Amendment 8, in clause 2, page 11, line 2, at end insert—

"(1A) Part 2 of Schedule 1 contains consequential amendments of other Acts."—*(Dame Diana Johnson.)*

This amendment is consequential on Amendment 28.

Clause 2, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Schedule 1

AMENDMENTS OF THE ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR, CRIME AND POLICING ACT 2014

Amendments made: 24, in schedule 1, page 148, line 4, leave out paragraph 1 and insert—

"PART 1

AMENDMENTS OF THE ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR, CRIME AND POLICING ACT 2014

1 The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 is amended as set out in this Part."

This amendment, which is consequential on Amendment 28, makes the existing text of Schedule 1 become Part 1 of that Schedule.

Amendment 25, in schedule 1, page 150, line 4, leave out from "for" to end of line 5 and insert

"'section 1' substitute 'this Part'."

This amendment ensures that the definition in section 2(1)(b) of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, as amended by the Bill, applies to applications for youth injunctions as well as applications for housing injunctions.

Amendment 26, in schedule 1, page 152, line 37, at end insert—

"(za) in the words before paragraph (a), for 'section 1' substitute 'this Part';".

This amendment ensures that the consultation requirement under section 14(3) of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, as amended by the Bill, applies to applications to vary or discharge housing injunctions as well as youth injunctions.

Amendment 27, in schedule 1, page 153, line 33, at end insert—

"19A In section 101 (the community remedy document), in subsection (9), for the definition of 'anti-social behaviour' substitute—

'"anti-social behaviour" means—

(a) conduct that has caused, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to any person, or

(b) housing-related anti-social conduct as defined by section 2 (ignoring subsection (2) of that section);'.

19B (1) Section 102 (anti-social behaviour etc: out-of-court disposals) is amended as follows.

(2) In subsection (1), in paragraph (c), for 'an injunction under section 1' substitute 'a respect order under section A1 or an injunction under Part 1'.

(3) In subsection (6), for the definition of 'anti-social behaviour' substitute—

'"anti-social behaviour" means—

(a) conduct that has caused, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to any person, or

(b) housing-related anti-social conduct, as defined by section 2 (ignoring subsection (2) of that section);'."

This amendment inserts into Schedule 1 provision making amendments to the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 that are consequential on the amendments made to that Act by clause 1 and by the other provisions of Schedule 1.

Amendment 28, in schedule 1, page 153, line 38, at end insert—

"PART 2

CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS OF OTHER ACTS

Housing Act 1985

21 (1) Section 84A of the Housing Act 1985 (absolute ground for possession for anti-social behaviour) is amended as follows.

(2) In subsection (4)—

(a) for 'section 1' substitute 'Part 1';

(b) after '2014' insert 'or a respect order'.

(3) In subsection (9), for the definition of 'relevant proceedings', substitute—

'"relevant proceedings" means—

(a) proceedings for an offence under section I1 of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014,

(b) proceedings under Schedule 2 to that Act, or

(c) proceedings for contempt of court;

"respect order" means an order under section A1 of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014;'.

22 In Schedule 3 to that Act (grounds for withholding consent to assignment by way of exchange), in Ground 2A, in the definition of 'relevant order', for 'an injunction under section 1 of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014' substitute—

'a respect order under section A1 of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014;

an injunction under Part 1 of that Act;'

Housing Act 1988

23 (1) In Part 1 of Schedule 2 to the Housing Act 1988 (grounds on which court must order possession of dwelling-houses let on assured tenancies), Ground 7A is amended as follows.

(2) In condition 2, in the words before paragraph (a)—

(a) for 'section 1' substitute 'Part 1';

(b) after '2014' insert 'or a respect order'.

(3) In the list of definitions for the purposes of Ground 7A, for the definition of 'relevant proceedings' substitute—

'"relevant proceedings" means—

(a) proceedings for an offence under section I1 of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014,

(b) proceedings under Schedule 2 to that Act, or

(c) proceedings for contempt of court;

"respect order" means an order under section A1 of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014;'.

Police Reform Act 2002

24 In section 50 of the Police Reform Act 2002 (persons engaging in anti-social behaviour), for subsection (1A) substitute—

'(1A) In subsection (1) "anti-social behaviour" means—

(a) conduct that has caused, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to any person, or

(b) housing-related anti-social conduct, as defined by section 2 of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 (ignoring subsection (2) of that section).'

Localism Act 2011

25 In Schedule 14 to the Localism Act 2011 (grounds on which landlord may refuse to surrender and grant tenancies under section 158), in paragraph 6(4), in the definition of 'relevant order'—

(a) after paragraph (e) insert—

'(ea) a respect order under section A1 of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014,';

(b) in paragraph (f), for 'section 1 of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014' substitute 'Part 1 of that Act'."—*(Dame Diana Johnson.)*

This amendment inserts into Schedule 1 a new Part 2 containing amendments of Acts other than the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 in consequence of the amendments made to that Act by clause 1 and by the other provisions of Schedule 1 (which would by virtue of Amendment 24 become Part 1 of that Schedule).

Schedule 1, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 3

MAXIMUM PERIOD FOR CERTAIN DIRECTIONS, NOTICES AND ORDERS

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

11.15 am

Dame Diana Johnson: Clause 3 provides for extensions to the maximum timeframes for dispersal directions and closure orders under the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, and I will address each of these in turn.

The clause extends the maximum period for which a dispersal order can be in place from 48 to 72 hours and introduces a mandatory review at 48 hours. We know that the dispersal power is an effective tool that police can use in a range of situations to move on individuals who are committing, or who are likely to commit, antisocial behaviour. Despite that, feedback from police and from police and crime commissioners has highlighted operational challenges in implementing this power.

Under current legislation, the police can issue a dispersal order to require a person to leave an area for a maximum of only 48 hours. That makes no allowance or and allows no extensions for weekends or bank holidays, when incidents of antisocial behaviour are often high. The 48-hour window also allows little time for relevant authorities to identify the root causes of the issue in order to implement longer-term solutions. Extending the timeframe of the dispersal power to up to 72 hours will ensure that police can effectively cover these problem periods, such as bank holidays. It will also give local agencies more time to come together to develop long-term solutions to tackle antisocial behaviour.

Harriet Cross: Although I completely agree with the need to extend the power, why was 72 hours chosen? Was there work or analysis behind that figure?

Dame Diana Johnson: I am very pleased to hear that the shadow Minister supports the 72-hour limit, because it was in the Criminal Justice Bill that her Government brought forward and that, because of the general election, never got on to the statute books. Work was done with stakeholders on what would be required. Clearly we do not want to extend it too far, but 72 hours seemed to be the best period of time to take into account what I was just saying about weekends and bank holidays in particular.

Let me move on to closure orders. The clause extends the timeframe that the relevant agencies, after issuing a closure notice, can apply to a magistrates court for a closure order from 48 hours to 72 hours. Again, that is based on feedback from practitioners who have noted operational challenges in applying for a closure order. The 48-hour window is not always enough time to prepare evidence and serve it to the courts, particularly on weekends or bank holidays. The closure order is an important power that agencies can use to provide immediate respite to the local community, so we must ensure that it is practicable and viable for practitioners to use.

Extending the timeframe to 72 hours will allow practitioners adequate time to gather evidence and inform interested parties. It also allows respondents more time to seek legal advice, in turn reducing the number of cases adjourned by the courts. In short, the provisions will help to address operational challenges, allowing local agencies to tackle antisocial behaviour more efficiently and effectively.

Matt Vickers: Clause 3 sets out the maximum period for certain directions, notices and orders. On exclusion directions, the Bill amends section 35 of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 whereby a police officer could direct a person to leave a specified area for up to 48 hours. The Bill extends this to 72 hours. If an exclusion period exceeds 48 hours, a police inspector must review the direction as soon as possible after the 48-hour mark to ensure its necessity.

Closure notices allow the police to shut down premises that cause nuisance or disorder, and could previously last 24 hours before requiring further action. The Bill extends that to 48 hours. The maximum period for an initial closure notice before a magistrates court order will be required has been extended from 48 to 72 hours. Those efforts will give greater flexibility for police and officers will have more time to manage antisocial behaviour without requiring immediate escalation to the courts. That will allow for a stronger deterrent, meaning that longer exclusion periods and closure notices could have a greater impact in preventing repeated antisocial behaviour.

In 2023, the previous Government ran a consultation on proposals to strengthen powers available to address antisocial behaviour under the 2014 Act. It is true that the Government have opted to reintroduce some of these provisions into the Crime and Policing Bill. However, I would be grateful for an understanding of why certain measures have not been taken forward. For example, provisions to remove the need for authorisation by a senior police officer for a dispersal order have not been reintroduced. Although a Member could argue that a mandatory review by an inspector for exclusion periods of over 48 hours ensures accountability, why was the decision made to require an inspector's review for exclusion directions only after 48 hours, rather than immediately on extending them?

The Bill also removes provisions to grant senior police officers the power to make public space protection orders, meaning that it arguably becomes harder in certain instances to control disorder. In November 2024, an extraordinary and unprecedented legal order was enacted, imposing a complete closure on an entire housing estate of 376 properties. That sweeping measure was introduced as a direct response to escalating concerns over severe and persistent antisocial behaviour and rampant drug dealing that had reached intolerable levels. The closure order strictly prohibited non-residents from gathering or loitering in key communal areas, including stairwells, landings, bridges and spaces near bin chutes, as well as within open areas adjacent to residential properties. The decision was driven by an urgent need to restore safety and security for the law-abiding residents, whose daily lives had been severely disrupted by the ongoing disturbances. Authorities deemed that intervention necessary to curb the relentless activities of those engaged in criminal behaviour and to ensure that the estate could once again become a liveable and peaceful environment for its rightful occupants.

The Bill has notably failed to carry forward provisions to lower the minimum age for issuing a community protection notice to 10 years old. Why has that decision been made? As the Minister will be well aware, antisocial behaviour is frequently perpetrated by individuals under the age of 18, often causing significant disruption and distress within communities. Local residents, businesses and authorities alike have long struggled with the challenges posed by persistent youth-related disorder. Given that reality, is the Minister fully confident that the removal of this provision will not inadvertently weaken the

ability of law enforcement and local councils to tackle antisocial behaviour committed by teenagers? Without appropriate measures in place, there is a real risk that communities will continue to bear the brunt of unchecked disorder and that would undermine efforts to create safer and more harmonious neighbourhoods. What safeguards are in place to prevent these extended powers from being misused or disproportionately applied to certain groups or businesses? What role will local authorities and community organisations play in reviewing the effectiveness of these measures?

Dame Diana Johnson: The shadow Minister asked a number of questions about measures that were in the Criminal Justice Bill and are not in the Crime and Policing Bill. Clearly, what we are referring to was, and it is the same, as I understand it. We carefully considered the merits of all the measures that were in the Criminal Justice Bill on a case-by-case basis, and we reintroduced the ones that we thought had clear operational benefits, would help to cut crime and antisocial behaviour and would rebuild confidence in the criminal justice system.

The shadow Minister asked about the requirement for dispersal orders to be authorised by an inspector. The Criminal Justice Bill included a measure to remove the current requirement for an inspector to authorise a dispersal order. When considering that measure and what it would deliver, we were concerned that restricting people's freedom of movement is a serious matter and that it is important that the dispersal order is used proportionately and reasonably. Ensuring that that power is authorised by an officer of at least the rank of inspector provides an additional safeguard and ensures that the power is used only to stop activities that are causing antisocial behaviour.

The Criminal Justice Bill sought to reduce the age that someone can receive a community protection notice from 16 to 10. We take the view that the breach of a CPN is a criminal offence and this Government, as I have said a number of times, do not wish to risk funnelling children into the criminal justice system unnecessarily by lowering the age at which someone can receive a CPN to 10 years of age. As we have discussed, the civil injunction will remain in place to be used against those under the age of 16—

11.25 am

The Chair adjourned the Committee without Question put (Standing Order No. 88).

Adjourned till this day at Two o'clock.