

UNSOCIAL BEHAVIOUR:

As a foreigner it is your responsibility to behave well in the UK. Most of the laws that control behaviour are much the same as they will be in your own country. But the British are very concerned about behaviour in several key areas.

THE MAIN PROBLEM AREAS:

- Noise, especially at night. People, especially people with babies, want peace and quiet!
- Groups of people gathering on streets. Sometimes 'Dispersal Notices' are placed in the street to stop this.
- Begging. This is asking for money and not offering any product or service in return.
- Unlicensed roadside services (selling flowers, cleaning car windscreens, car-washes etc).
- Failure to queue (you must take your place in a line and patiently wait your turn like everybody else).
- Control of animals, especially potentially dangerous dogs (some dogs are totally illegal).
- Drinking on the street. You can drink at home, or in any place like a pub with a license. But nowhere else.
- Fare-dodgers (these are people who get on a bus or train without paying, and with no intention to pay).
- Swearing. Any use of bad words. (Thankfully most foreigners do not do this anyway!)
- Spitting indoors or on the street.
- 'Mugging' (stopping people on the street and demanding money, usually whilst threatening the victim).
- Smoking in any public area. The fines in Britain are now very high!
- 'Littering' (throwing rubbish in the street).
- Stealing (including 'shop-lifting', which is taking any item from a shop, however small, without paying for it).
- Racism (bad words or deeds because of another person's ethnic origins).
- Any rude or sexually inappropriate behaviour. This includes touching women and girls without permission.
- Any threatening behaviour. This can even include wearing a hood to hide your face.
- Carrying any potential weapon. This includes almost any knife. The penalty for carrying a gun is 5 years.
- Urinating (going to the toilet) in the street or anywhere public.
- Riding cycles on footpaths or through red lights at junctions or crossings.
- Abuse of people working for the police, the ambulance service, or the fire brigade.
- Graffiti (painting messages or logos on walls without permission).
- Fishing without permission. The British don't like foreigners taking fish from public parks and eating them!
- 'Fly-posting' (putting notices up in any place where you have no permission, including on street-lamps).

HOW TO REPORT SUCH PROBLEMS:

- In an emergency call 999 or 112. If you are frightened for yourself or for anyone else you should do this.
- In a non-emergency try to resolve the problem politely. Talk!
- If you cannot resolve the situation, especially if you feel a little threatened, call your local council switchboard (see our list of councils) or email them from their website. Tell them the problem and ask for help. Usually there will be a department with special responsibility for the problems you have.

THE PENALTIES FOR PEOPLE WHO DO NOT BEHAVE:

There are 7 main ways in which people who cause these problems can be punished:

- Businesses like pubs or shops have the right to ban (to permanently stop) you from going into them.
- 'Dispersal Notices' on the street can tell groups of people that it is illegal to gather there.
- You may have to pay on-the-spot fines to police officers, community police officers or council officers.
- You may have to go to court. Local courts enforce local laws (called 'by-laws'). You can be fined. Those fines will vary according to the seriousness of the problem and your ability to pay.
- You may receive a 'community service order' from the court. If, for example, you are in trouble for throwing litter on the street, you may have to pick up litter for a whole week. This will be supervised and you will be paid nothing.
- You may receive an ASBO (or Anti-Social Behaviour Order) if you have done something that is anti-social. This is if you have frightened or upset somebody. Usually this means that you cannot go into the same place or person(s) - or even near to them. Or you cannot do the same thing again (like making loud noise).
- If you ignore an ASBO, you can be sent to prison for from 2 to 5 years. So you must take an ASBO very seriously.