

I would like to offer my thoughts and experiences with regard to anti-social behaviour in Jersey's public places. Like many residents of St Helier, our family does not have a garden or access to a private outside area, so nearby Springfield Stadium is where I take my four-year old daughter to play, run, explore, ride her bike, etc. I have been using the park since she was a baby in a pram and have often encountered anti-social behaviour; from littering, to abusive language, vandalism and even begging.

Parks have always been frequented by youths; it's where groups of young people can meet and relax and socialise; it's the place where you hang out with your friends, perhaps where you have your first kiss or illicit cigarette or swig of cider, unfortunately it can be also where some might have a first taste of drugs or sniff glue, or experience bullying. As a teenager growing up in the UK in the 1980's, I have fond memories of days and evenings hanging out in the local park; the different 'tribes' of teenagers – breakdancers practising their moves, local mods posing by their scooters or the Goths sulking by the swings. Occasionally, there might have been the odd scuffle but usually all ended in a haphazard but friendly game of football. We would never, however, have vandalised our 'oasis' or left it looking like a rubbish tip, mainly for fear of getting banned by the Park Keeper. Neither would we have shouted abuse at other users of the park.

I digress. What I'm trying to make clear is that I haven't got 'it in' for the young people who use the park. It's great to see those who use the pitch for a kick about, or sitting on the grass in the sunshine. A lot of families from nearby flats and bedsits use the playgrounds and grass areas, and it's important for them to be able to continue to do so, safely and happily. We must admit it is generally groups of young people who cause the problems. Let's be honest, you don't come across the Good Companions on a day-trip out to wreck the children's play area?

This is what I have experienced: walking with my daughter, then a toddler, through a group of young boys to the children's play area; a bin had been knocked over, with it's contents all about. Without saying anything, I picked up the bin and continued walking, only to hear it being kicked over again. I went back and picked it and as I walked off to join my daughter, an empty can was thrown, just missing us. I have been asked for money by a group of teenage girls (of course I refused, but the mother in me thought "oh, maybe they need to phone home?"); I have been asked for cigarettes and sworn at when I've said I no. I've seen an older boy bending one of the saplings until it was nearly at breaking point – I told him not to; I've picked up litter and bottles just feet from the bins; I've stopped my daughter walking over broken glass on the pathways and treading in dog poo on the grass; us mothers have despaired at the continuous and infuriating destruction of the two play areas – gravel under the roundabout to stop it going round, the little picnic table seats kicked in two, slats removed from the fence making it easy for toddlers to escape in to the Stadium car park, the huge dent on the top of the metal tunnel on the climbing frame that has clearly been jumped on from above, the obscene graffiti on the older children's play area, the cigarette ends and litter on the ground. It would be nice to see both very shabby and neglected playgrounds treated to a much-needed over make-over, but what's the point investing any funds, if it only gets wrecked again and again? It has the potential to be a nice little area and the maintenance staff probably do the best they can to keep it in a reasonable condition.

What can be done? A security guard/park-keeper to patrol the grounds, particularly in the evenings and at weekends? Would the installation of visible CCTV cameras deter would-be vandals? Could a spokesperson visit schools in the area to point out and educate our young people about the impact adverse behaviour can affect their own community? Does the lack

of private garden space for many town dwellers leave children with a little respect or care for out-door living – for all our ‘green’ credentials and environmental initiatives, something as simple as not throwing litter on the ground seems to be unknown behaviour for some people – as well as taking pride and care in their surroundings. On a family holiday in Brittany this Summer, we visited many (tidy!) small town parks and never experienced any type of anti-social behaviour – local teenagers seem to congregate quite happily and peacefully in these public areas, sharing the space with families, without confrontation or abuse, just enjoying being outdoors!

I hope this (rather long) email is of some help to your panel? Thank you for the opportunity to put our thoughts forward, I just hope they are noted and acted upon.

Kind regards

Mrs Andrea Le Blancq