

**WORKING TOGETHER:** Children could benefit from learning the 'four R's'

# Joining forces with police at primary stage

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**S** ECTIONS of the media, and indeed some politicians from all parties, would have you believe that crime committed by young people is of pandemic proportions, with hooded youths carrying knives in every town and city.

Politicians and the media must stress that the overwhelming majority of youngsters are decent citizens and are a credit to our society.

In fact young people are more likely to be the victims of crime and anti-social behaviour than any other age group.

Nonetheless, we cannot be under any illusions: a very small but significant proportion of people from every age group carry out criminal acts and anti-social behaviour and effective action must be taken at the earliest of opportunities in order to have the optimum impact.

The reasons why a minority of children commit crime and anti-social behaviour are complex but begin during the formative years. A lack of respect and role model is often cited as one factor and it is this I wish to offer a potentially helpful strategy.

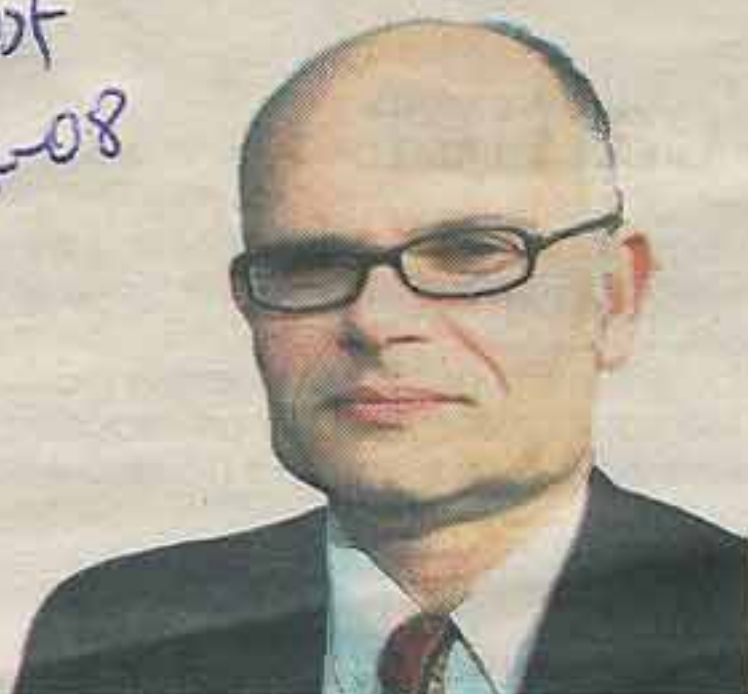
When a child enters our education system he or she should begin to be taught the lessons required to become a good citizen in the same way that he or she is taught to read and write.

Instead of the three 'R's we should be teaching children the four 'R's; reading, writing, arithmetic and respect.

The majority of parents adequately teach respect in the home and they should be applauded for doing so. However, there are parents who fail to do so and it presents a problem if it remains unchallenged.

When it comes to crime and anti social behaviour the ultimate figure of respect is, or ought to be, a police officer. Police should play a role in a child's development through schools, building and nurturing better relationships between youngsters and law enforcers.

Through closer and continuous interaction between police officers and children, many barriers can be broken down at an early age, which can help foster a greater mutual understanding and respect for law and order. The end result will be that young people will grow up with a greater appreciation of the role of police in society and, in turn, the small minority of people with a propensity to commit criminal or inappropriate behaviour will be further reduced.



**Richard Robinson**

**How do we stop the minority of our youngsters who indulge in anti-social behaviour? A Broxtowe borough councillor argues that schools should be teaching a fourth 'R' ...**

In essence I am advocating a scheme of co-operation, mutual respect, education and empowering young people to be part of the solution to the problem.

This is by no means a miracle cure. Indeed it is only one solution to a very complex issue that requires the adoption of several strategies over a long-term period to achieve success and even then the problem will still exist, though I sincerely believe it will not be an issue at its current magnitude.

How do I know this? Previously I was a member of the Nottinghamshire Police Authority and I championed a project in Kimberley, implementing my strategy of building closer relationships between the police and youngsters.

All involved enthusiastically welcomed the idea, with teachers and support staff soon recognising the intrinsic value. The pilot project in Nottingham saw improved behaviour over a short period of time. A longer-term project, throughout a child's primary education (perhaps extending into secondary education), would reap greater rewards.

This Government has met its pledge of being tough on crime but it has some way to go in order to fulfil its promise of being tough on the causes of crime. Through discussion, cooperation and intervention at the primary stage of our children's education, with schools and police forces acting in partnership with one another, we can and will make significant strides forward and prevent some from causing damage to the society in which we live.

**THIS IS**

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