

British adults 'fear youngsters'

Britain is in danger of becoming a nation fearful of its young people, a report has claimed.

It says British adults are less likely than those in Europe to intervene when teenagers commit anti-social behaviour.

The Institute for Public Policy Research blamed changes in the family, communities and the economy for the "increased risk of youth crime".

Children's charity Barnardo's echoed the claims, saying youngsters have been "demonised" by the media.

The report says 65% of Germans, 52% of Spanish and 50% of Italians would be willing to intervene if they saw a group of 14-year-old boys vandalising a bus shelter, compared with just 34% of Britons.

The IPPR also said teenagers needed structured activities like drama and sports clubs. Julia Margot, from the IPPR, told the BBC Radio Five Live: "In Britain, as opposed to countries like Spain and Italy, adults are less likely to socialise with children in the evenings.

"So we don't have this culture of children hanging out and playing out in the town square where adults are also socialising and drinking.

"We don't have a culture where adults go out to pubs and bars and bring children with them, and so there is a problem about adults being less used to having children around."

Britons were also three times more likely to cite young people "hanging around" as a problem than they were to complain about noisy neighbours.

Pam Hibbert, principle policy officer for Barnardo's, said public perceptions created by the media and politicians had bred fear amongst the nation's adults.

She said: "We have become fearful of all children.

"We know, for example, young crime in itself has remained fairly static in the last 10 years - it is a minority that cause problems and retaliate.

"The demonisation of children and young people in some sections of the media and when politicians refer to youngsters as yobs - that breeds the actual fear."

The report "Freedom's Orphans: Raising Youth in a Changing World" will be published next month.

BBC News Report 22 October 2006

A real life Birmingham story!

A member of the Cathedral staff was recently walking through the churchyard and a group of young person asked for a light for a cigarette. The staff member did not smoke and had no light but stopped to talk. In the five or so minute conversation that followed over 50 people walked passed this group of young people many of whom were smoking cigarettes. One of the young people continued to ask for a light but with no response. The majority of adults failed to even acknowledge the young people choosing instead to walk on apparently ignoring them.