

Government defeated as peers vote to reform Clause 1

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Peers in the House of Lords have voted down a government proposal to hand police new powers to clamp down on "annoying" behaviour.

The vote was welcomed by the Reform Clause 1 campaign group which has received cross-party parliamentary support and includes a coalition of religious, and secular civil liberty campaigners, including The Christian institute, Peter Tatchell Foundation, and the National Secular Society.

Ministers want to replace anti-social behaviour orders in England and Wales with injunctions to prevent nuisance and annoyance (Ipnas).

Under the Government proposals courts could impose injunctions on anyone engaging, or threatening to engage, in "conduct capable of causing nuisance or annoyance to any person".

Campaigners argue that the law is drafted too broadly and poses a serious threat to free expression.

The Home Office has said the new injunctions would never be imposed in an unreasonable way, but peers voted by a significant majority of 128 votes, in favour of an amendment from crossbench peer Lord Dear to raise the threshold of what can be considered "annoying". Under the amendment, annoying behaviour would need to cause "harassment, alarm or distress" before an injunction could be imposed in anything other than a social housing context.

Stephen Evans, campaigns manager at the National Secular Society, said: "Clause 1 clearly failed to strike a reasonable balance between protecting the public from anti-social behaviour and protecting essential freedoms.

"We congratulate peers for amending this carelessly drafted legislation and hope MPs will now support these amendments when the legislation returns to the House of Commons".

[Read the full debate at Hansard](#)

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