

Street begging support survey

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What are the concerns and issues with people begging?

A number of residents, businesses and visitors have raised concerns with the council about the extent of begging, mostly in the city centre. Complaints have been presented to the council over a long period of time regarding anti-social behaviour associated with begging such as aggressive and nuisance behaviour, noise, rowdiness, harassment and intimidation.

2. What is a public spaces protection order (PSPO)?

Public spaces protection orders (PSPOs) are intended to provide a means of preventing individuals or groups committing anti-social behaviour in a public space where the behaviour is having, or likely to have, a detrimental affect on the quality of life of those in the locality, be persistent or continuing in nature, and be unreasonable.

The restrictions and requirements included in a PSPO may be comprehensive or targeted on specific behaviours, such as begging, by particular groups, and/or at specified times.

Orders can be enforced by a police officer, a police community support officer and designated council officers. Breaching a PSPO is an offence which can be dealt with through prosecution or by the issue of a fixed penalty notice (a fine).

3. Do police already have these powers?

Begging is already an offence under the Vagrancy Act 1824 but existing legislation does not provide an effective deterrent. The council and police will continue to direct people who are engaging in these activities towards support where this is appropriate, while the PSPO will provide the power to carry out enforcement procedures.

4. What additional powers will the police have?

PSPOs provide a power of confiscation and disposal of substances as per the current street drinking and new psychoactive substances orders across the city, plus a police power of arrest should an individual fail to comply with directions. Failure to comply can lead to prosecution or the issuing of a fixed penalty notice. These discretionary powers will allow authorised officers to take positive action where appropriate and prevent disorder. The alcohol, drug consumption or begging must be associated with anti-social or disorderly behaviour, or the belief that such behaviour may occur, for the powers to be used.

5. Will there be signs all around the city alerting people to the new citywide PSPO?

Yes. The intention is that signs will be located in areas that suffer from the highest impact, in addition to main roads into the city.

6. Will there be any extra policing to enforce the PSPO?

No. Safer neighbourhood teams will continue to patrol and respond to incidents as part of their community response.

7. Are there time restrictions on a PSPO?

The PSPO will be in force all hours of the day, every day. The PSPO will last for up to three years and can be extended following a review.

8. What are the benefits of a citywide PSPO?

If there is enough support for a begging PSPO, it would be used as part of an on-going process of support and engagement with people committing anti-social behaviour who may have complex needs. This will ensure that only where individuals or groups committing behaviour that is having, or is likely to have, a detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the locality, being persistent in nature and is unreasonable, would enforcement action be taken.

Where engagement with local support services fails, enforcement action may be taken as deemed necessary. This approach balances the needs of the individual (principally substance misuse and physical and mental health concerns) with the need to tackle anti-social behaviour, respond effectively to complaints from the public and take action against illegal activities.

The intention is that this would lead to a safer and more welcoming environment for residents, businesses, visitors and people working in the city.

9. What support services are in place for people who beg?

People beg for a variety of reasons and those that beg in Leicester are not necessarily always street homeless.

- a) The homeless outreach team operates Monday to Friday from 6am to 9pm, offering street-based advice and referrals to other agencies including the single access and referral service for temporary accommodation. Leicester's services have an excellent multi-agency working practice to support this vulnerable group. The homeless outreach team carries out outreach with Inclusion Healthcare (the city's homeless healthcare providers) and also the homeless mental health team.
- b) The Y Support Project, The Bridge and the Anchor Centre provide breakfast and offer assistance in a number of areas. This includes

referrals to services that can offer direct support in tenancies, help applying for benefits and advice when problems arise, and life skills such as cooking and paying bills. The Y Support Project and the Anchor Centre also have showers and washing facilities for clothes. Clothes can be available for those in desperate need, toiletries and occasionally bedding, where donations allow.

- c) Leicester's charities offer free food for the homeless and/or vulnerably housed. Most evenings of the week a hot meal, sandwiches or soup are provided by different charitable organisations, ensuring that nobody needs to go hungry in our city. The specific information about where and when these take place is given to those begging on the streets whenever possible.

10. Where can I find further information about support?

- One Roof Leicester – www.oneroof.org.uk
- Community of Grace – www.communityofgrace.co.uk
- The Y Support Project- www.leicester.gov.uk/your-community/housing/homelessness/temporary-accommodation/the-y-support-project
- Bridge Leicester - www.oneroof.org.uk/service-directory/support-services/the-bridge
- Emmaus Leicestershire and Rutland - www.emmaus.org.uk/leicestershire_rutland
- SHARP - www.leicestershelter.org.uk
- Action Homeless – www.actionhomeless.org.uk