



Nottingham
City Council

Nottingham

Begging Strategy

2018

Shelter

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Nottingham

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1. Foreword – Cllr Toby Neal, Portfolio Holder for Community and Customer Services

1.1 Begging in Nottingham is a growing concern for residents, visitors and businesses with reported incidents increasing significantly this last year. I know I speak for the majority who live and work in Nottingham when I say that street begging should not be happening in the year 2018.

1.2 This strategy will set out an enhanced partnership plan of activity to tackle the criminal offence of begging in Nottingham. We know that just tackling on-street begging transactions will not address the underlying issues associated with begging. Therefore it is important that if we are to achieve long term change on this issue, then we must address the act of begging but also the causes of begging.

1.3 Nottingham City Council and the wider partnership continue to urge Nottinghamshire Police to arrest those who beg; and ensure that those who are arrested are coerced into a mandatory drugs assessment with support workers. It is important that begging arrests increase as this is one of the most effective means to reduce re-offending and address substance misuse.

1.4 The Council continues to invest significantly in local support services, such as Nottingham Framework and the Emmanuel House Support Centre, to help those leading complex lifestyles. This includes the continuation of our successful No Second Night Out initiative to prevent new rough sleepers from further incidences of street homelessness.

1.5 Despite this activity we recognise that we can all do more. That is why the Council have launched a new Active Street Outreach Team to refer individuals that beg directly from the streets and into tailored support. I'm also pleased to share that Nottinghamshire Police have agreed to support the establishment of a new Integrated Offender Management Team that will have a focus on prolific beggars in the city centre.

1.6 In addition we are aware that our local businesses are tired of the reputational damage that persistent street begging can have on Nottingham's retail and entertainment offer. That is why this strategy also sets out how we will look to improve the management of the public realm in the city centre, to further reduce nuisance behaviours associated with those that beg, e.g., reducing fraudulent magazine sales.

1.7 No single agency in Nottingham has all of the tools to stop begging and its associated behaviours; and that is why we have published this strategy. Sustained

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public sector funding reductions and welfare reforms imposed by this Government highlight the need for local partners to now work closer together on this issue, in order to have the biggest positive impact on those with the most complex needs.

1.8 I am thankful for those partners that have proactively contributed towards the development of Nottingham's Begging Strategy and I look forward to reviewing the success of partners' initiatives moving forward.



Cllr Toby Neal,

Portfolio Holder for Community and Customer Services

Nottingham City Council

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2. Begging in Nottingham

2.1 What Do We Mean By Begging?

2.1.1 Begging in a public place is a criminal offence under the Vagrancy Act. The maximum sentence for begging is a fine imposed by the courts at level three on the standard scale, with a maximum fine of £1000. However the courts can impose sanctions that contain positive requirements, e.g., drug rehabilitation requirements, to address the underlying motivations that cause people to beg.

2.1.2 It is important to note that begging is often associated with other behaviours such as rough sleeping, street drinking and homelessness. This document focusses on begging, but acknowledges these broader issues alongside existing partnership strategies and local campaigns.



2.2 What Causes People to Beg?

2.2.1 We know through our street engagement with those that beg in Nottingham that the act of begging is a symptom of a complex set of issues based both at the individual and societal level.

2.2.2 Individuals that beg in Nottingham may have: substance misuse issues, previous criminal convictions, mental or physical health issues, a lack of purposeful activity, are actively being exploited, acting fraudulently and could be sleeping rough. We know that money gained from begging in Nottingham can be used as disposable income for a number of different activities, including financing a drug or alcohol addiction.

2.2.3 We also know that wider societal factors can also play a part in facilitating this offending behaviour. Some examples include the rising cost of living against a backdrop of unfair welfare reforms imposed by this Government, which has resulted in issues such as increased levels of homelessness and use of food banks. Furthermore sustained local government funding reductions have impacted on the level of financial support that public sector services can offer those leading the most complex lifestyles.

“In many cases individuals begging are not homeless; and the money raised by begging is likely to be spent on drugs”.

**Nottingham
Framework**

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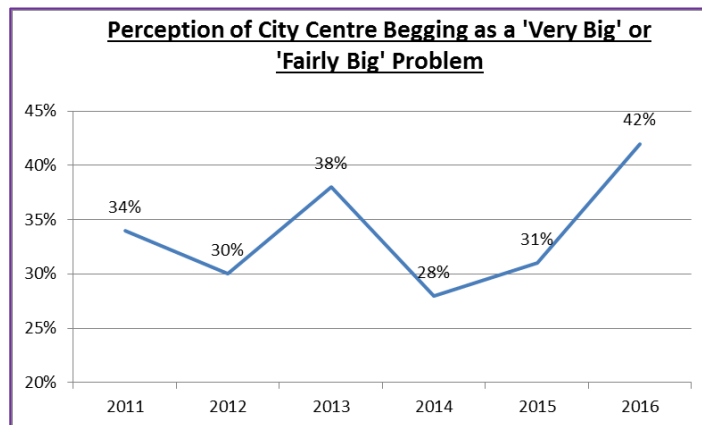
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2.3 Levels of Begging in Nottingham?

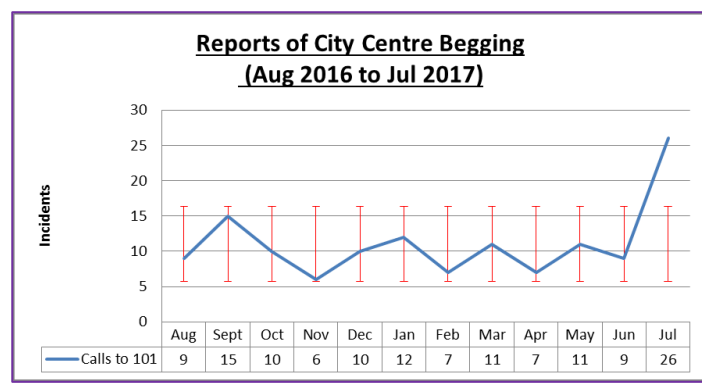
2.3.1 In Nottingham, residents' perceptions of begging as a problem in the city centre have increased. The Council's Respect Survey for 2016¹ identified that 42% of respondents believed begging was a fairly or very big problem in the city centre. This was a significant increase over the previous year's (2015) scores (See Graph Below).

Perceptions of Begging As a Problem
(Scores of Respondents in Nottingham)²



2.3.2 The number of calls made to Nottinghamshire Police regarding begging in the city centre increased during the summer of 2017 (See Graph Below).

Number of Calls Made to Nottinghamshire Police On Begging
(Nottingham City Centre 2016/17)³



¹ Nottingham City Council's Respect Survey 2016. <http://www.nottinghamcdp.com/respect-survey/>

² Nottingham City Council's Respect Survey 2016. <http://www.nottinghamcdp.com/respect-survey/>

³ Community Protection, Tasking and Intelligence Team. Nottingham City Council.

2.3.3 This increase was caused by reports of groups between three and six individuals begging together, which was previously a rare occurrence. There was also an increase of individuals begging in sleeping bags, suggesting that they were either rough sleepers or posing as such. There also was more aggressive begging being reported.

2.3.4 A large number of recent reports relating to individuals begging have been linked to the use or possession of novel psychoactive substances, more commonly known as 'mamba' or 'spice'.



2.4 Who Are the Offenders?

2.4.1 The Community Protection (CP) Police Street Engagement Team are currently monitoring around forty individuals who are known to beg and commit various criminal offences in the city. Through our on-street engagements with those that beg we found that⁴:

- 90% were male;
- The most common age range for those begging was between 26 and 45;
- The majority of individuals begging were UK nationals;
- A small number of those that begged had no recourse to public funds;
- In April 2016 only 15% of those witnessed begging were confirmed as sleeping rough, this increased to 40% by June 2017. It is believed that in many of these cases these individuals did not have a local connection to Nottingham, did not engage to pick up an offer of accommodation or were excluded from supported accommodation;
- 60% were identified as in some form of accommodation;
- A significant majority have a previous conviction(s), alcohol/drugs issue(s) and/or mental health issue(s);
- A number of prolific begging offenders will not voluntarily enter treatment; and
- Begging has been linked to serious organised crime.

⁴ Begging Performance Report, Community Protection Tasking and Intelligence Team (July 2017)

2.5 Where Do Begging Offences Take Place?

2.5.1 Nottingham city centre accounted for 59% of all begging anti-social behaviour incidents in Nottingham⁵. Through our street engagement we have identified the top locations where individuals present themselves to beg in Nottingham (**See Table Below**).

Locations With the Highest Incidences of Reported Begging

(June 2017)

Location (Street)	Witnessed Begging Incidents
Exchange Walk	25
Clumber Street	12
Maypole Yard	12
Angel Row	10
Carrington Street	9
Station Street	8
St James's Street	7

2.5.2 The highest volume locations for begging are in areas either predominantly commercial or are major thoroughfares for residents and visitors to the city. It is believed that by begging in these locations individuals can maximise the money they receive from the public.

2.5.3 It has also been noted recently that begging is not exclusive to the city centre. There have been recent reports of those that beg in the city centre being issued with a Dispersal Order, who then continue their begging activities in the city's neighbourhoods.

2.6 How Are Begging Offenders Managed in Nottingham?

2.6.1 Between January to September 2017 Nottinghamshire Police only made 14 arrests for begging in a public place in Nottingham⁶, which is equivalent to just over one arrest per month. Between January and May 2017 no arrests for begging in a public place were made, despite over 1000 incidences of

"The majority of people we come across begging in Nottingham are not homeless".

**Nottingham Street
Outreach Team**

⁵ Community Protection, Tasking and Intelligence Team

⁶ Weekly Nottingham Begging Log, Nottinghamshire Police and Nottingham City Council.

begging being witnessed by the Council and its Police Team during this period⁷. A full breakdown of arrests made alongside the number of separate begging incidences reported by the Council can be found in the table below:

Comparing the Number of Begging Arrests Alongside Reported Incidences of Begging in Nottingham⁸

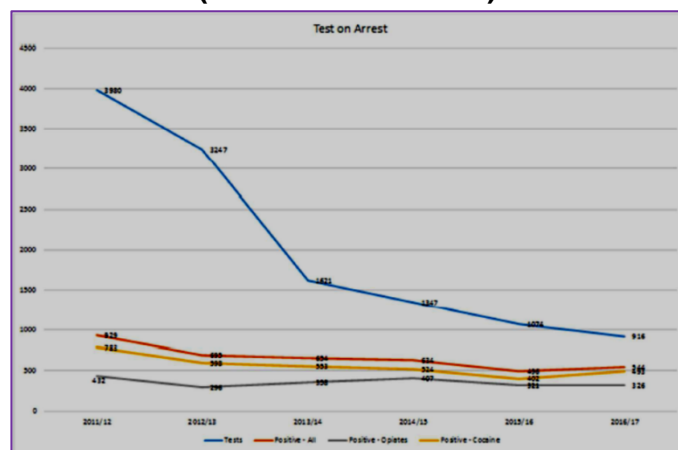
(January to September 2017)

Month (2017)	Witnessed Begging Incidences By Council and Community Protection Police Team	Number of Arrests by Nottinghamshire Police for 'Begging in a Public Place' in Nottingham
Jan	95	0
Feb	300	0
Mar	144	0
Apr	158	0
May	340	0
Jun	309	2
July	367	10
Aug	462	2
Sep	209	0
TOTAL	2384	14

2.6.2 The number of drug tests taking place in the Nottingham Bridewell Custody Suite for all offences (including begging) has reduced significantly since 2013/14 (See Graph Below).

Overall Levels of 'Test on Arrest' at the Nottingham Bridewell Custody Suite

(2011/12 to 2016/17)⁹



⁷ Weekly Nottingham Begging Log, Nottinghamshire Police and Nottingham City Council.

⁸ Weekly Nottingham Begging Log, Nottinghamshire Police and Nottingham City Council.

⁹ Crime and Drugs Partnership, Nottingham City Council.

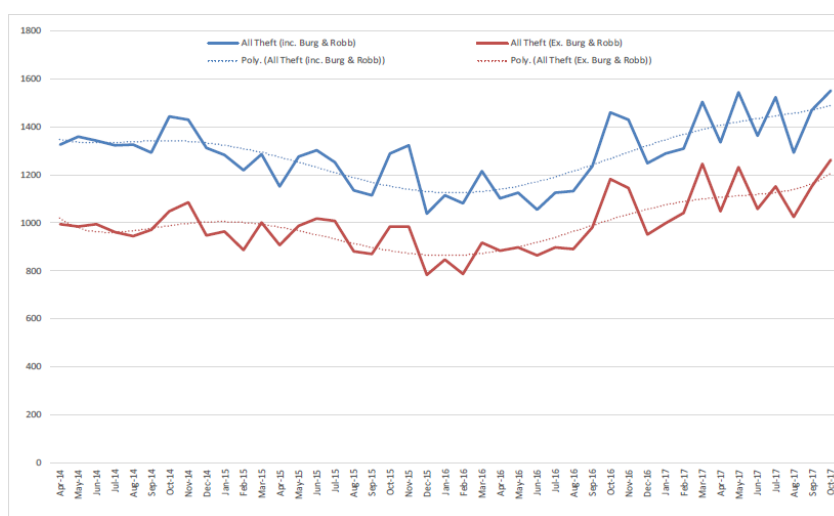
2.6.3 It is believed that the reduction in arrests and custody suite drugs tests is due to Nottinghamshire Police’s interpretation of the Necessity Test¹⁰ prior to arresting. This means that fewer individuals leading complex lifestyles in Nottingham are now having a required drugs test and mandatory drugs assessment to address their substance misuse issues.

2.6.4 In addition since 2015 the focus of integrated offender management¹¹ (IOM), a local cross-agency response for dealing with persistent offenders, has moved away from managing those who commit acquisitive crime (including those that beg) towards offenders of higher risk crimes such as weapons offending. This has taken local police and probation teams’ resource away from monitoring and supporting those that commit begging offences in Nottingham.

2.6.5 These changes in offender management are reflected in the increasing levels of acquisitive crime reported in Nottingham. Since March 2016 reported levels of burglary, shop theft and vehicle crime (all acquisitive crime) have all increased¹² (See Graph Below).

Total Number of Reported Acquisitive Crimes in Nottingham¹³

(Apr 2014 to Oct 2017)



¹⁰ Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) – Code G. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/117583/pace-code-g-2012.pdf
¹¹ Integrated Offender Management Guidance. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/integrated-offender-management-iom>
¹² Nottingham Acquisitive Crime Performance, Nottingham Crime and Drugs Partnership.
¹³ Performance Report, December 2017. Crime and Drugs Partnership.

2.7 What Are Local Organisations Doing to Help Those Genuinely In Need?

2.7.1 This year the Council and local charities are now working more closely than ever before to help those in genuine need back into a life of self-sufficiency. This has never been more important as the issue of begging, rough sleeping and homelessness continue to increase both nationally and locally.

2.7.2 Recently the Council committed to protect spending of over £35million for the next nine years to improve current responses to homelessness. This funding also prepares the Council for the upcoming extended homelessness prevention duties, ensuring further protections are in place for Nottingham's residents at risk of homelessness.

2.7.3 The Council pledged a further £106,000 in funding to support additional winter measures during 2017/18 to accommodate those in the greatest immediate need. This funding has allowed a further 32 beds, on top of the previous 20 beds, to provide immediate shelter for those with a local connection to Nottingham during the winter period.

2.7.4 In addition the Council approved the extension of the 'No Second Night Out' (NSNO) service, a vital lifeline for those who are rough sleeping, to help them move away from the streets and into secure accommodation. This outreach service is already reconnecting a number of rough sleepers into winter measures accommodation and supporting reconnection where support can be sought.

2.7.5 Local partners also launched the 'Help Out Nottingham' website in December to help raise public awareness of local support services available for those leading complex lifestyles. This website simplified ways for members of the public to donate and volunteer to those genuinely in need in Nottingham.

2.7.6 The Council continues to reduce its reliance on unsustainable bed and breakfasts for those who are homeless, by working with local community housing associations, to convert properties up for sale on the private rented market, back into temporary accommodation for those who are homeless.

2.7.7 Finally the Council also introduced the Nottingham Wellbeing Hub making it easier for individuals leading complex lifestyles to self-refer, straight from the streets, into a range of support services all under one roof. The Hub is based within the city centre and its services include help with employment, health, addiction and housing.

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2.8 Begging Individual Case Studies

2.8.1 To highlight some of the current issues associated with local begging activity a series of case studies have been provided below:

Case Study One

Man A and Woman A - Live in Rented Housing



This couple were known by the Nottingham Street Engagement Team to live in rented housing outside of Nottingham. The couple would walk into the city centre to beg for cash to fund their drug and alcohol addiction.

When in the city centre the man would act as a lookout for his partner who would place herself in positions to beg, sitting in shop doorways during the evening and early hours. The man would sit in nearby bus shelters and would walk around looking for the presence of uniformed officers to alert his partner to avoid potential arrest.

Whilst begging, cash obtained from the public would be collected and taken away by the man at frequent intervals. The man was known to buy alcohol regularly and share this with his partner who would also continue to drink alcohol whilst begging.

Once the woman received a Criminal Behaviour Order (CBO) for aggressive begging, her partner reversed their roles and became the beggar whilst the woman became the lookout.

The man would sit on the pavement **playing a penny whistle in an attempt to receive money from the public**. When begging the man placed numerous bags and a container of cash on the pavement; and a dog was often let loose off its lead, running around passers-by.

The man often begged in places where the pavement was narrowed, e.g., next to a bus shelter. **Those walking by were bottlenecked** and frequent users of the bus shelter also complained about the woman's daily presence within the shelter consuming large amounts of alcohol.

Complaints from passers-by and staff of nearby restaurants were made to Nottinghamshire Police on several occasions.

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Case Study Two

Man B - No Fixed Abode



This man was a regular prolific beggar in Nottingham city centre approaching members of the public for cash. These incidences occurred on city centre streets, but also in Nottingham Train Station and the Nottingham Express Transit (NET) network.

The man also slept in doorways of city centre businesses after **being evicted from accommodation and disengaging with outreach services**. The man would often **refuse to move when business staff or customers needed access** to workplaces or shops.

Uniformed officers from Nottinghamshire Police were frequently called to remove him, only to be verbally abused and threatened by him. This behaviour led to numerous complaints being made to the police by members of the public and staff of the affected businesses.

Both the British Transport Police and NET officials received complaints about his behaviour exhibited on their property, particularly his **rough sleeping on tram platforms, begging on the trams and abusive, threatening behaviour towards railway station and tram staff**. This resulted in Community Protection obtaining an emergency Civil Injunction to protect staff from his threatening and abusive behaviour.

Efforts to engage with the man by Nottingham City Council staff and Framework's Outreach Team continued to be made for him to address his substance misuse. **All offers of help and support were refused by him, often aggressively** and on occasions the man would openly stated he did not want to be accommodated and **admitted to begging to support his Class A drug use**.

Following a series of offences the man appeared at Nottingham Magistrates' Court and pleaded guilty to a public order offence, a separate racially aggravated public order offence and four charges of begging in a public place, all relating to offending at Nottingham Station and in the city centre.

The man received a twelve month Community Order, with a twelve month Drug Rehabilitation Requirement and a **ten-day Rehabilitation Activity Requirement to address his substance misuse and lifestyle**.

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Case Study Three

Man C - Supported Accommodation



This man for many years had been **sitting within doorways and on pavements adjacent to cash machines begging in the city centre**. He would often be seen **walking around the city centre carrying a dog** and asking people for their cash.

The man would often **refuse offers of help and support from officers**. After finally accepting hostel accommodation secured for him, he would **often prefer to sleep rough in the city centre within shop doorways, which encouraged further begging activity**.

When questioned as to this behaviour and preference the man **often reacted aggressively towards those tasked in helping and supporting him**, particularly in mid-2017 when found rough sleeping on Station Street.

Overtime, the man amassed a **total of ten previous convictions for begging as well as numerous drug related convictions**. In late 2017 the man appeared at the Nottingham Magistrates' Court and was found guilty of using threatening words or behaviour towards two uniformed and accredited officers. The man received an 18 month Conditional Discharge and a **two year Criminal Behaviour Order (CBO) that prohibited his begging activity in Nottingham city centre,**.

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3. Developing the Strategy

3.1 The initiatives in this strategy have been developed with a broad range of partners. Organisations that have contributed to the development of this strategy include:

- Nottingham City Council;
- British Transport Police;
- Framework Nottingham;
- Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue;
- Nottingham's Business Improvement District;
- East Midlands Crown Prosecution Service;
- Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire and Rutland Community Rehabilitation Company (DLNR CRC);
- UK Border Agency;
- Nottinghamshire Police; and
- Nottingham City Homes.

3.2 This strategy complements Nottingham City Council's Homelessness Prevention Strategy, Nottingham's Cold Weather Provision Plan, Nottingham's Health and Wellbeing Strategy and follows closely the wider programme of activity concerning those behaviours associated with begging.

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4. Delivering the Strategy

4.1 Vision

“To improve the quality of the city centre environment and experience for residents, visitors and businesses through the effective management of begging”.

4.2 Core Values

The vision will be underpinned by three core values:

- **Shelter** – Everyone is offered a roof over their heads;
- **Support** – Increase the signposting to alcohol, drugs and mental health services through visible active outreach, to encourage a lifestyle change, with the specific treatment they require; and
- **Enforce** – To prevent begging, increase Nottinghamshire Police-led coercive entry into substance misuse treatment and encourage closer working with the UK Border Agency on repatriation.

4.3 Key Actions

1. Shelter

- Everyone with a local connection to Nottingham will be offered a roof over their heads, and those without will be offered support and reconnection to their area of origin;
- Nottingham City Council will continue to deliver the ‘No Second Night Out’ initiative to ensure that any individuals new to street homelessness are immediately supported away from rough sleeping;
- The Council will develop and deliver an annual Cold Weather Provision Plan to ensure additional services and accommodation options are available during the winter months;
- The Council will continue to invest in preventing all homelessness and providing appropriate assessment advice, support and accommodation to homeless individuals to reduce rough sleeping amongst those that beg;
- The Council will continue to deliver a housing strategy that aims to increase the availability of suitable and affordable accommodation, including bringing more empty homes back into use; and

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- Nottingham Housing Aid continues to be the front door for all residents who present as homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, simplifying referral processes and targeting support where it is most needed.

2. Support

- Nottingham City Council will launch a new Active Street Outreach Team to refer those that beg on the streets into tailored support. This team will work closely with the existing Nottingham Street Drinking and Begging Case Conference Group;
- Nottinghamshire Police will look to share increased information with partners, including the Council, on those drug tested on arrest at Bridewell Custody Suite;
- The Council will offer training to the Magistrates' Association raising awareness of begging and local initiatives to support the use of positive requirements during sentencing;
- The DLNR CRC will continue to provide a tailored package of support for low-to-medium risk offenders subject to statutory supervision to include referral to housing and welfare service, 1-1 tailored intervention and supporting pathways in partner services;
- Partners will continue to support the repatriation of economic migrants who beg back to their country of origin where they have no recourse to public funds;
- Raise further money for our local charities through a refreshed 'diverted giving' communications campaign, to include easier methods for members of the public to donate;
- Closer partnerships will be encouraged between locally commissioned services and housing providers to ensure residents have access to the right support and treatment;
- The Crown Prosecution Service will review new community impact statements, highlighting the concerns of Nottingham's residents and businesses about the impact begging has in Nottingham; for use in Criminal Behaviour Order (CBO) prosecutions brought before local courts; and
- The Council will continue to update its 'AskLion' website to ensure that all current support services are listed, updated and readily available to the public.

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3. Enforce

- Nottinghamshire Police will establish a new Integrated Offender Management (IOM) Team to address high volume, lower risk crime in Nottingham city centre, to cover approximately forty offenders that will include prolific beggars;
- Nottinghamshire Police will continue to arrest those committing begging offences and conduct substance misuse testing in all cases where the Necessity Test has been met; and support an increase in the coercive entry of begging offenders into substance misuse treatment;
- Nottinghamshire Police will increase the use of dispersal powers pursuant to Section 35 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 to tackle begging activity, and arrest for breach where appropriate;
- Nottinghamshire Police will provide a monthly analysis to the Council on the number of begging offenders arrested and tested, including numbers and reasons of those refused arrest at the Bridewell Custody Suite and reasons stated;
- Nottinghamshire Police will improve response times for begging related incidents reported to the Nottinghamshire Police non-emergency 101 telephone number;
- Nottinghamshire Police to increase awareness of the Necessity Test for arresting as outlined in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 amongst all Police Officers, including Custody Staff;
- British Transport Police to continue using the Withdrawal of Implied Permission Scheme to exclude persistent beggars from entering Nottingham Train Station;
- Strengthen existing partnership arrangements with the Crown Prosecution Service, National Probation Service, Nottingham City Homes and the DLNR CRC to develop a more cohesive approach to the prosecution of begging related offences in Nottingham;
- Nottinghamshire Police will continue to seek those individuals where begging may be linked to serious organised crime;
- The Council and Nottinghamshire Police will increase the number of applications for Criminal Behaviour Orders on Nottingham's most prolific beggars, to help increase the number of positive requirements;
- The Council will consult on the introduction of a new City Centre Public Space Protection Order to improve the management of public spaces in the city centre;
- Work with local housing providers to reduce the number of residents engaging in begging, through the development and implementation of Acceptable Behaviour Contracts; and

- Continue to support the roll out of the E-CINS case management system to share relevant intelligence on individuals that beg with more agencies in both the city and across the county.

5. Governance and Accountability

5.1 The Nottingham Crime and Drugs Partnership (CDP) Board will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Nottingham Begging Strategy and will take regular reports on its progress, consider any risks and agree appropriate responses.

6. Measuring Success

6.1 We will assess the progress of the Nottingham Begging Strategy against a set of performance indicators, supplemented with detailed analysis from our frontline engagement teams. The CDP Board will actively monitor and review the following indicators on begging activity:

- Review annually residents' perceptions of begging across Nottingham as identified in Nottingham's Respect Survey;
- Monitor the number of reported incidences of begging made to Nottinghamshire Police;
- Monitor data on the number of begging offenders arrested and drugs tested on arrest;
- Monitor the number of begging offenders entering substance misuse treatment in Nottingham; and
- Monitor the number of beggars identified as rough sleepers and who are resettled into accommodation.

“Giving to people who beg is not a benign act. It can have fatal consequences”. – Thames Reach (Charity)