An integrated approach to reduce begging in Westminster
Begging not only blights London’s landscape. Visitors to London cited aggressive begging as the number one reason that they would not return to the capital.

The chaotic lifestyles of beggars are frequently linked to homelessness, drug addiction, petty crime and street drinking. Begging is degrading for the individual concerned and intimidates members of the public.

It is time to take a stance against begging. As begging trailblazers and in line with Westminster’s Civic Renewal Programme to regenerate the heart of London, this is exactly what the City Council intends to do.

To effectively tackle the problem of begging in Westminster, a three stage approach has been adopted. We will:

• Employ an enforcement campaign to ensure beggars are removed from the streets.

• Provide assistance to enable beggars to change their disordered lifestyle.

• Carry out a communications campaign to deter the public from giving directly to beggars.

Effective partnership is key to the success of our fight against begging. By engaging with the Metropolitan Police, Social Services, the Environment and Leisure Department and voluntary organisations we will ensure that beggars are removed from the streets, enforced against and given access to appropriate help or support.

By tackling begging, Westminster residents, businesses, tourists and those working in the City will all benefit. The message will be made loud and clear.

Begging in Westminster will not be tolerated.

“Begging on the streets is a scar on the face of central London… That’s why, working with the police, we aim to prevent begging.”

Councillor Simon Milton
Leader of Westminster City Council
Annual State of the City Speech, March 2004
## AIM

To create a cleaner and safer environment for the general public across Westminster by taking effective action to reduce begging.

## OBJECTIVE

Through an effective partnership with the Metropolitan Police Service and other stakeholders we aim to:

- Reduce begging around cash points.
- Undertake proactive interventions against those persons deemed to be prolific beggars.
- Work with housing providers to discourage people from begging within the City.
- Discourage the public from giving to beggars.
- Undermine the drug market in Westminster by reducing the number of drug users.
- Ensure that support and treatment is available to those beggars who are prepared to accept help and change their lifestyle.

## HOW

We will aim to tackle begging through:

- Enforcement
- Intervention
- Positive communication
- Partnership work

## TARGETS

We will target beggars who operate at or from the following places:

- Cash points
- Symbolic locations
- Hostels and property managed or owned by the Westminster Housing Partnership.

## WESTMINSTER'S BEGGING ENFORCEMENT INITIATIVE

Begging is one of the most visible signs of a ‘street culture’ problem and members of the public often find begging intimidating. We therefore need to address the problem of begging and its underlying causes. Research found that 77% of people arrested and tested for drugs tested positive for Class A drugs.

There are benefits for everyone in helping those who beg because of drug use to access effective treatment. Not only does it help the drug addicts, but it also assists the local community and those intimidated by begging.

To tackle begging we will develop initiatives to address the immediate and underlying problems, including effective drug and alcohol treatment, better use of enforcement powers and ‘alternative giving’ schemes for members of the public. Specifically:

1. We will audit and profile the people begging in Westminster to better inform our activity.
2. We will seek to reduce begging outside cash points and other sites in the city where members of the public are most likely to be intimidated by beggars.
3. With Westminster Police, the Crown Prosecution Service and other agencies, we will seek to implement a robust legal intervention programme for all those who are arrested more than twice and charged with begging in the City.
4. We will continue to implement the ‘Killing with Kindness’ campaign with the London Borough of Camden and other partners. We will also implement an alternative giving programme in the City during 2004.
5. We will work with housing providers to introduce Acceptable Behaviour Contracts and Agreements and support access to appropriate treatment services that will address begging.
6. We will support the further development of the Westminster Criminal Justice Intervention Programme, in partnership with the Drug and Alcohol Action Team. This targets persistent drug using offenders and offers supported pathways into treatment and out of crime.

\(^1\)Killing with Kindness campaign evaluation report, Feb 2004. Not all of those arrested were tested for drugs.

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“I know that begging makes both visitors and residents feel afraid. My officers are committed to dealing with low level crimes and anti-social behaviour. It is through tackling these crimes and arresting those responsible that we send a clear message out – crime and anti-social behaviour is not tolerated in Westminster.”

Commander Chris Allison, Head of Policing in Westminster
Audit and profile

We will audit and profile the people begging in Westminster to better inform our activity.

Between January and December 2003 the Metropolitan Police made a total of 1,315 arrests for begging in Westminster. Analysis of the data showed that 570 different people were arrested for the offence, 298 were arrested once while 52 were arrested five times or more.

Whilst this data has provided baseline begging information for Westminster, it will be complemented by further monthly audits carried out in association with the Metropolitan Police. Audit results will then be compared to police arrest data to both profile and determine whether enforcement is affecting begging activity within the City.

"We will mount repeat operations and the information gathered from audits will help provide the evidence required to pursue Anti-Social Behaviour Orders against persistent beggars."

Councillor Simon Milton, March 2004
Cashpoint begging

We will seek to reduce begging outside cash points and other sites in the City where members of the public are most likely to be intimidated by beggars.

In association with banks and the Metropolitan Police, we aim to reduce begging at cash points and symbolic locations by:

• Pre-setting CCTV cameras in the West End to ensure that cash points are continuously monitored, enabling rapid enforcement against begging.

• Agreed partnership work with the Metropolitan Police to respond to calls from the CCTV control room to enforce against beggars in these locations.

• The creation of a photograph album of beggars that repeatedly offend to aid recognition and enforcement.

"Home Office research tells us that 54% of the public will no longer use a cash point machine if there is somebody begging next to it."

Councillor Simon Milton
Leader of Westminster City Council
Annual State of the City Speech March 2004
Objective statistical analysis shows that many people who beg spend the money on hard drugs. Westminster is committed to offering support and treatment, in partnership with a range of organisations, to ensure that those beggars who are prepared to seek treatment and change their lives, are able to do so. However, if people who beg are not prepared to seek help, we will take action. We will make use of the full range of anti-social behaviour legislation and enforcement protocols drawn up with the Metropolitan Police and the Crown Prosecution Service.

Where appropriate, we will apply to the courts for Anti-Social Behaviour Orders against those who persistently break the law. Many of those affected may need to access support services within Westminster and therefore we do not seek to prohibit these people from coming to the City. We only ask that they behave responsibly when they are here. We also have a responsibility to other local authorities and so, to avoid displacing begging to other areas, we will ask the courts to extend the order to include all of England and Wales.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Action</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual is seen begging, arrested, given access to necessary service(s) and asked to stop begging in Westminster</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual is seen begging a second time, arrested, given access to necessary service(s) and asked to stop begging in Westminster</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual is seen begging a third time, arrested, given access to necessary service(s) and given a warning letter asking them to stop begging in Westminster</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual is seen begging a fourth time, arrested, and charged with being a public nuisance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual is seen begging a fifth time, arrested and post conviction Anti-Social Behaviour Order proceedings are started</td>
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"Effective enforcement is key. There must be a consistent message that sanctions against anti-social behaviour are extremely serious and that breach of them will lead to unwelcome consequences for the perpetrators."


[1] Looking for change: the role and impact of begging on the lives of people who beg, Luton University and the Rough Sleepers Unit, 2001
Communication

We will continue to implement the ‘Killing with Kindness’ public information campaign with the London Borough of Camden and other partners. We will also implement an alternative giving programme in the City during 2004.

Killing with Kindness is the strapline of the communications campaign run by Westminster, in partnership with the London Borough of Camden, Thames Reach Bondway, the West End Drugs Partnership, the Government Office for London, the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit, the Metropolitan Police and local businesses. The campaign was designed to raise public awareness about how money given to beggars is spent and to consequently deter the public from giving to beggars. It confirmed to the public that giving to beggars is counter productive and provided clear statistical evidence that the majority of those arrested for persistent begging were users of crack cocaine and heroin.

The campaign was originally run in 2003 and evaluation demonstrated its success. It is being followed up with a further hard-hitting campaign involving both Westminster and Camden. The campaign will be borough wide and through it we hope to engage with a number of businesses to ensure maximum marketing opportunities.

In addition to deterring the public from giving directly to beggars, we will be establishing a diverted giving scheme. The proceeds of this will be targeted to help individuals who lead chaotic lifestyles.

“Setting up a diverted giving scheme in Westminster would appear to be pushing at an open door – the public clearly support it.”

Westminster City Council, Streets of London: a study of street culture in Westminster, October 2001
Using this approach we aim to:

- Improve partnership working and communication with housing providers to send a clear message that begging will not be tolerated.

- Ensure that housing providers, working in partnership with Westminster City Council, utilise all available powers to tackle anti-social behaviour.

- Ensure that they provide residents with access to appropriate support and treatment to address substance misuse problems. We want housing providers to actively seek ways to discourage their tenants from begging on Westminster’s streets.

Housing providers play a vital role in our strategy to reduce rough sleeping and hostels offer vital services to support this particularly vulnerable group. While many of the people who beg in Westminster are not homeless and often live outside of the City, there is evidence that some Westminster residents are engaged in begging. It is not acceptable for people residing in Westminster accommodation to beg on the City’s streets.

We will work in partnership with housing providers and act assertively to tackle begging amongst their residents. Specifically we will work together to draw up Acceptable Behaviour Contracts and Agreements with residents involved in begging. If they persist we will seek Anti-Social Behaviour Orders and if these are breached then offenders will probably lose their tenancy.

“We need to get beggars off the streets. We have put in place a range of initiatives designed to help people off the streets and into more permanent accommodation.”

Councillor Angela Harvey – Cabinet Member for Housing. Westminster City Council
Drug and alcohol treatment

We will support the further development of the Westminster Criminal Justice Intervention Programme in partnership with the Drug and Alcohol Action Team.

This targets persistent drug using offenders and offers supported pathways into treatment and out of crime.

Individuals who beg invariably spend the money on hard drugs, as objective statistical analysis has shown. Data from the last Killing with Kindness Campaign in 2003 showed that 77% of those individuals arrested for begging tested positive for class A drugs.

Whilst enforcement action against prolific beggars is necessary, assistance and treatment will be made available, through arrest referral, for those who beg to feed their dependency but want to change their lives.

When arrested for a trigger offence such as begging, an individual is linked to an arrest referral drugs worker at the custody suite or court. This acts as an entrance point to the Criminal Justice Intervention Programme (CJIP), which aims to direct drug using offenders into treatment and away from crime.

From September, Westminster’s CJIP has been targeting persistent begging offenders in an attempt to engage with them and provide access to the treatment and relevant support services that they need. To support this, all persistent beggars are being given a card with details of a 24 hours a day, seven days a week hotline number, which can be called to give access, support, advice and information to those concerned about drugs.

Studies in the United Kingdom have found that many beggars are often drug users. A study by the Rough Sleepers Unit and Luton University identified that “86% of people begging reported currently using drugs” (including heroin, cannabis, crack and cocaine).

Looking for change: the role and impact of begging on the lives of people who beg. 2001
### Trailblazing initiatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Killing with Kindness</th>
<th>Diverted Giving</th>
<th>Acceptable Behaviour Contracts and Agreements</th>
<th>Tackling repeat offenders</th>
<th>Tackling cash point begging and symbolic locations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inputs</strong></td>
<td>• Westminster and Camden Trailblazing Managers&lt;br&gt;• Communications department&lt;br&gt;• Partnership working (police, rail companies, TFL, GLA)</td>
<td>• Westminster and Camden Trailblazing Managers&lt;br&gt;• Communications department</td>
<td>• Rough Sleeping Manager&lt;br&gt;• Housing providers&lt;br&gt;• Communications department</td>
<td>• Westminster and Camden Trailblazing Managers&lt;br&gt;• Analyst&lt;br&gt;• Safer Streets Team&lt;br&gt;• ASB Unit&lt;br&gt;• CPS</td>
<td>• West End CCTV Manager&lt;br&gt;• All Westminster Council departments&lt;br&gt;• Police&lt;br&gt;• CPS&lt;br&gt;• ASB Unit</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Outputs</strong></td>
<td>• Killing with Kindness campaign&lt;br&gt;• Communications strategy</td>
<td>• Strategy&lt;br&gt;• Communications campaign&lt;br&gt;• Targeted collection points</td>
<td>• Collaboration with housing providers to deploy ABCs &amp; ABAs&lt;br&gt;• Communications strategy</td>
<td>• Develop data collection&lt;br&gt;• Mapping and analysis capacity&lt;br&gt;• Develop ASBOs tracking system for beggars</td>
<td>• Immediate identification of beggars at ATMs by CCTV staff&lt;br&gt;• Westminster personnel to report observed begging incidents&lt;br&gt;• Prompt police response</td>
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<td><strong>Outcomes</strong></td>
<td>• Reduced public donation to beggars&lt;br&gt;• Making begging unprofitable&lt;br&gt;• Communicating how money can better help the disadvantaged</td>
<td>Targeted direction of public donations to support:&lt;br&gt;• Local RSU initiatives&lt;br&gt;• DAAT initiatives&lt;br&gt;• Voluntary service initiatives</td>
<td>Improved behaviour and increased awareness of civic responsibility by tenants</td>
<td>• Improved behaviour and increased awareness of civic responsibility by those arrested for begging&lt;br&gt;• Deter and reduce repeat offending patterns</td>
<td>Reduction of begging at all identified sites in Westminster</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tactics</strong></td>
<td>• Posters displayed in shops, transport termini, banks, restaurants, licensed premises&lt;br&gt;• Press releases and media interviews</td>
<td>Collection points in strategic locations</td>
<td>Requirement that individuals:&lt;br&gt;• Sign ABCs &amp; ABAs&lt;br&gt;• Refrain from begging and engaging in anti-social behaviour&lt;br&gt;• Consider tenancy termination where ASBOs are breached</td>
<td>• Identification of repeat offenders through ASBOs case tracking system&lt;br&gt;• Post conviction ASBO applications</td>
<td>• Cameras pre-set for 10 min sweeps at ATMs and high profile locations&lt;br&gt;• Positive arrest and charge policy&lt;br&gt;• Post conviction ASBO applications</td>
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Trailblazing analysis

Various methods will be used to measure the success of the trailblazing campaign and the initiatives put in place to tackle begging.

These will include:

- Monthly counts to ascertain whether the number of beggars in Westminster has been reduced.
- Annual, independent surveys carried out by MORI to confirm whether the diverted giving scheme is successful and to gauge residents’ fear of cash point begging.
- Feedback from people who live, work and visit Westminster via City Surveys to determine whether begging still impacts on their lives.
- Analysis of begging arrests to determine whether individuals arrested for begging are continuing to offend.
- Publicising the amount of money collected through the diverted giving scheme and how it is spent on a quarterly basis.

Westminster City Council is determined to end begging in the City. Begging reduces the quality of life for residents, it undermines local businesses, dissuades tourists from coming into the heart of the capital and negatively impacts on the lives of the many people who work in Westminster.

Through enforcement, assistance and effective communication we are confident that begging in Westminster can be reduced.

“We must be explicit about the fact that the public, when they give to those who beg, are often funding serious drug habits...Giving money to those who beg is not a benign act without consequences - it contributes to lives being lost.”

Jeremy Swain, Chief Executive of Thames Reach Bondway