

POLICE:NOW
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Tackling aggressive begging in Leytonstone

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Case Study | PC Libby Naylor, Metropolitan Police Service, 2019 National Graduate Leadership Programme

Alumni

The Problem: “The Leytonstone transport hub and the surrounding areas were hotspots for aggressive begging. Transport For London and British Transport Police received multiple complaints daily re begging in the underpass of the tube station. Regular patrols identified 10 regular beggars in one centralised location. All had factors of vulnerability aside from housing.

There were 91 calls made to police regarding the aggressive begging in the area between 2018-2019. However, begging is not included on MPS analysis tools so primary data was not readily available. There are no national figures for numbers of active Street beggars.

A number of stakeholders were affected. Local businesses felt that beggars approaching customers deterred custom but didn't want to waste police time. Private security guards saw beggars arguing with the public but stated that the public tended to be empathic and did not wish to make complaints.

The approach: "A multi-agency approach was adopted. Four weeks of partnership patrols were conducted by local council ASB Teams, Park Guard (security firm), local police, BTP, CGL (drug and alcohol support), assisted by CCTV, following a three-stage approach:

Phase 1: engagement and support. Support packs were designed and distributed, collating contact information for local support agencies.

Phase 2: verbal warnings/encouraging beggars to leave area.

Phase 3: enforcement - community protection warnings issued.

To resolve the gap in intelligence, I created a database accessible to partner agencies, containing information about warnings issued, areas frequented, and key workers contact information. Numerous warnings and notices had previously been issued but not documented. The database enabled streamlined recording.

We ran more patrols in the area which increased police and council staff visibility especially at peak times. Activity was recorded to support a publicity campaign to improve public confidence in the Police's ability to reduce ASB.

- Surveys into the environmental architecture revealed positive features making areas more attractive for begging e.g. Vegetation providing cover from view, consequently covered area of bushes were cut back using community payback schemes. Additionally, local businesses were made responsible guardians and requested to take action to reduce ASB made possible by their premises. If they failed to comply, they were issued a Community Protection Warning.

Transport For London staff, council workers and private security were given guidance on dealing with beggars to increase capable guardianship.

The impact: "The operation saw a **60% decrease** in begging.

- 25 individuals were engaged with
- 13 Community Protection Warnings were issued and recorded, avoiding duplication
- 4 support packs distributed
- 4 arrests for breach of orders relating to aggressive begging
- 1 arrest for inciting prostitution for gain and theft. Received bail conditions not to contact victims, or attend care homes
- 3 rough sleepers housed
- 3 referrals to support agencies for vulnerable persons
- Contact maintained with partner agencies/key workers. Two individuals housed by the operation reported to be engaging much more readily with drug and alcohol rehabilitation services.
- Engagement provided intelligence regarding sexual exploitation.
- Local businesses have advised the area has improved since the operation started. Neighbourhood officers tackled wider environmental issues, improving public perception of the area. "





Feedback on the Operation:

Line Manager Feedback:

'Operation Cadge has been instrumental in changing the views of officers locally in how we tackle Street Begging in partnership with the Local Authority. The view was often that we could do little with them, but this has looked at engagement and enforcement. Now, officers with much more experience see this as a lead for the OCU.'

MPS Newsletter:

'As a result of Op Cadge, which targets homelessness and aggressive begging, Leytonstone Safer Neighbourhood Team received information that a prolific beggar was sexually exploiting two vulnerable female adults who were living in a care home. The officers arranged an urgent safeguarding meeting with partner agencies and were able to get the most vulnerable victim, who suffers from a multitude of mental health issues, moved to a different care home three days later. The following day, the suspect was arrested on suspicion of inciting prostitution for gain and theft'