



Public Space Protection Order Public (PSPO) Consultation 2018

### Background

From 15 August to 24 September 2018 there were 228 online responses submitted, but not all respondents answered every question.

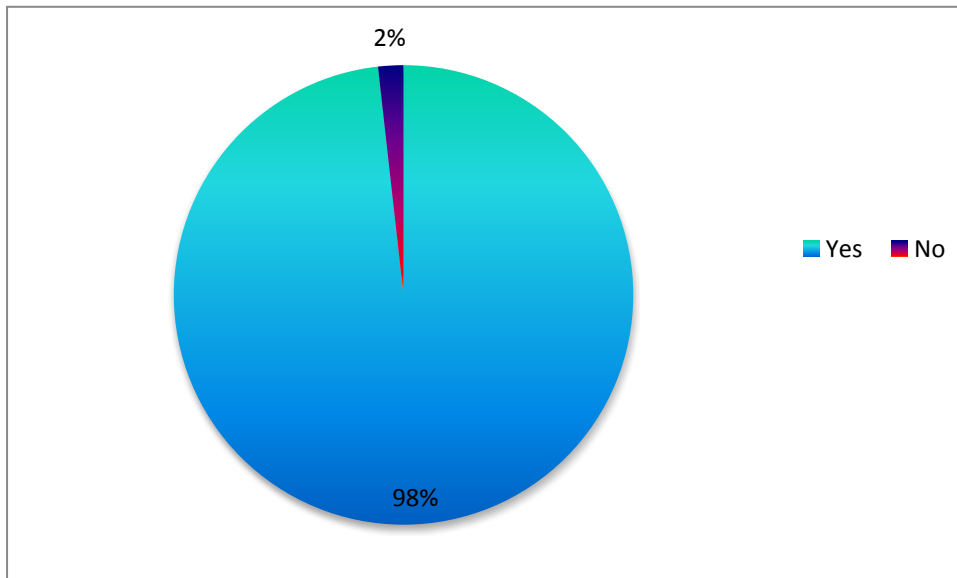
### Headline findings

- Respondents aged 60+ were more concerned about begging and its effects than younger respondents
  - There was only one respondent aged under 20
- 63 per cent considered begging to be a problem in and around Newcastle town centre
  - 72 per cent of respondents aged 60+ considered it a problem
- 43 per cent said that beggars discouraged them from visiting and shopping in the town centre
  - 51 per cent of respondents aged 60+ said it did discourage them
- 62 per cent agreed that the council should introduce a new requirement to address aggressive and persistent begging and associated Anti-Social Behaviour
  - 73 per cent of respondents aged 60+ agreed
- 43 per cent said that they thought additional controls were required / other locations where specific controls need to be set.
  - Subways were considered particularly bad areas
- Significant numbers of objections to the proposals on the basis that the council should be providing help to vulnerable people rather than persecuting them.

**Q1) Do you live or work in Newcastle-under-Lyme or visit it regularly?**

98 per cent of the 225 respondents who answered this question said that they did, with the remaining 2 per cent (four respondents) saying that they did not.

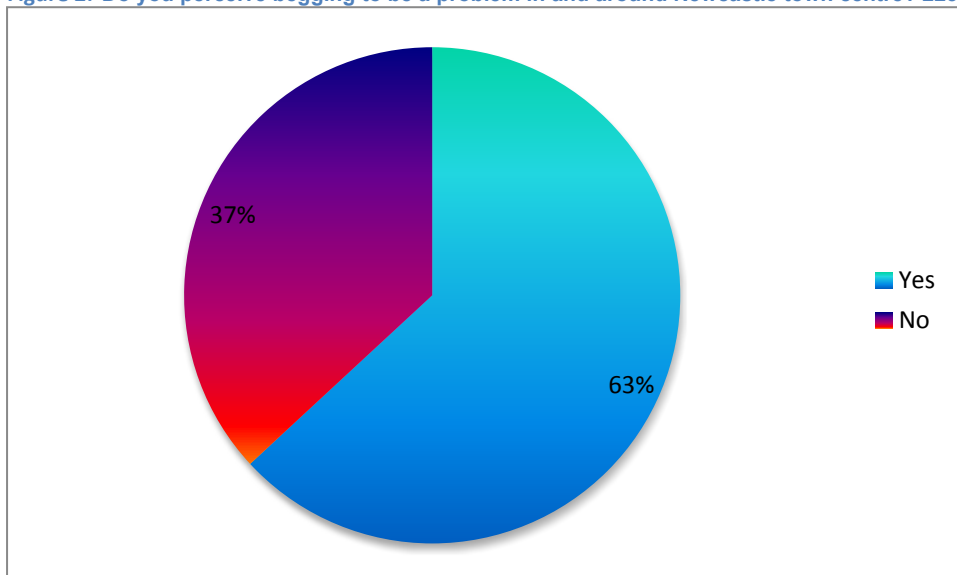
Figure 1: Do you live or work in Newcastle-under-Lyme or visit it regularly? 225 responses



**Q2) Do you perceive begging to be a problem in and around Newcastle town centre?**

Approaching two-thirds of respondents (63 per cent) thought that begging was a problem, with, therefore, a little over one-third (37 per cent) saying that it was not.

Figure 2: Do you perceive begging to be a problem in and around Newcastle town centre? 225 responses



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Respondents were then given the opportunity to add further comments, and 58 did so. It is safe to say that opinion was very much divided, indeed polarised with the comments. There were 26 comments left that were broadly in agreement that begging was a problem, with the following themes most commonly mentioned:

- Subways are scary areas
  - Impossible to go to the subways by Morrisons or Holy Trinity Catholic Church without being accosted
  - Especially for disabled / elderly / children
- They are not genuine – why can we not help the real homeless people and evict all those who beg but don't need to?
- Litter is left by beggars but they are never fined for it

...but there were also 26 comments expressing real disagreement, with these themes:

- These poor people need help not victimisation
- How can you fine people who have nothing? How will they pay?
- I'm ashamed to pay Council Tax to a council who even contemplates being so cruel to vulnerable people
- It's down to the Government and Staffordshire County Council making such cutbacks that there is no help for these vulnerable people

...and six comments that suggested it was not beggars who were the main problem in the town centre, summarised here:

- Chuggers are far worse
  - Always being asked to sponsor a child and that puts me off more than begging
- Virgin Media van is inconvenient to get round
- The religious preachers can be hateful and off-putting

It may be of interest to see that the oldest respondents – those aged 60 and above – were by far the most likely to say that it was a problem. Almost three-quarters of respondents from this age group thought it was a problem, yet in the other age groups it was only a minority who thought that it was.

**Table 1: Do you perceive begging to be a problem in and around Newcastle town centre? By age group**

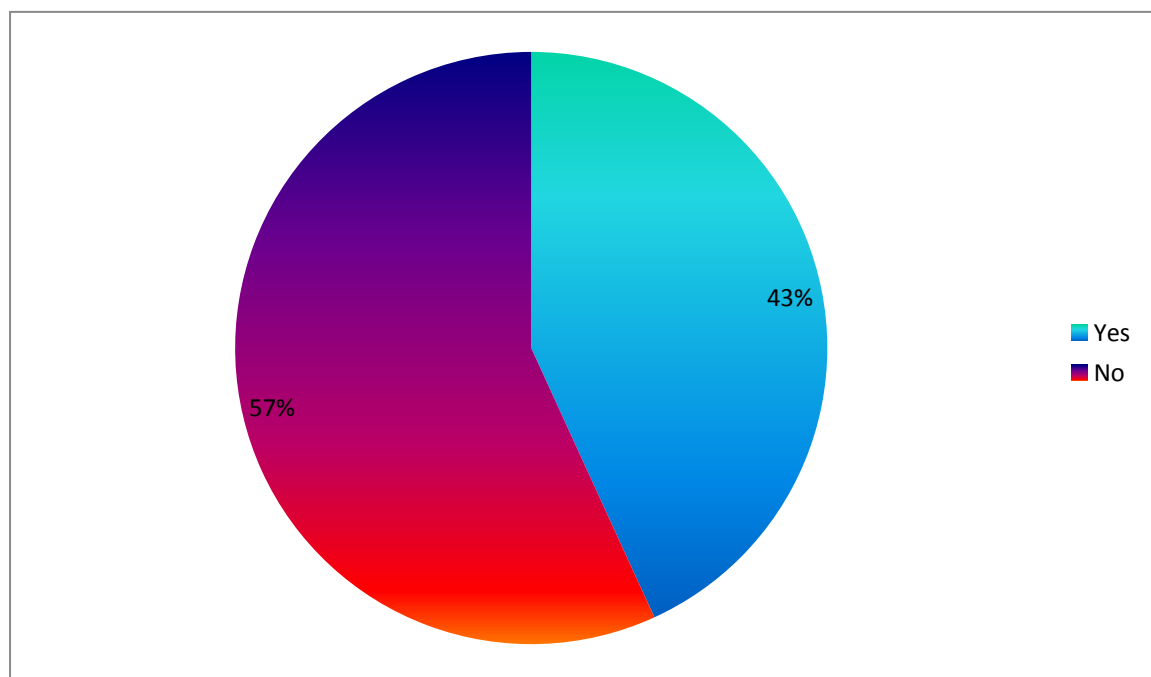
<b>Age of respondents</b>	<b>Yes (were discouraged)</b>	<b>No (were not discouraged)</b>
<b>0-19 (note – only one respondent)</b>	100 per cent	0 per cent
<b>20-39</b>	41 per cent	59 per cent
<b>40-59</b>	41 per cent	59 per cent
<b>60+</b>	72 per cent	28 per cent

### ***Q3) Do beggars discourage you from visiting and shopping in the town centre?***

Again, the 227 responses were mixed here, with just over two-fifths (43 per cent) of respondents saying that they were discouraged and so nearly three-fifths (57 per cent) saying that they were not.

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Figure 2: Do beggars discourage you from visiting, and shopping in, the town centre? 227 respondents



However, it may be of interest to know that the oldest respondents to this survey were, again, far more concerned than younger respondents, with slightly more than half (51 per cent) saying they were discouraged. In the other age groups it was only a minority who said that they were discouraged.

Table 2: Do beggars discourage you from visiting and shopping in the Town Centre? By broad age group.

Age of respondents	Yes (were discouraged)	No (were not discouraged)
0-19 (note – only one respondent)	100 per cent	0 per cent
20-39	44 per cent	56 per cent
40-59	36 per cent	64 per cent
60+	51 per cent	49 per cent

Further comments were invited and several were left – evenly split between those in agreement and those in disagreement. Those comments contained the following messages:

- It's sickening to see them target pensioners and women with children
- Subways are no-go areas
  - Especially the sunken roundabout subways
    - Uncomfortable for families
    - Public urination
    - Constant drinking and littering
- Begging is getting worse
- I keep being asked for money and cigarettes by people who clearly have enough money to drink
- Not a day goes by when I'm not asked for money
  - I don't enjoy coming into Newcastle anymore

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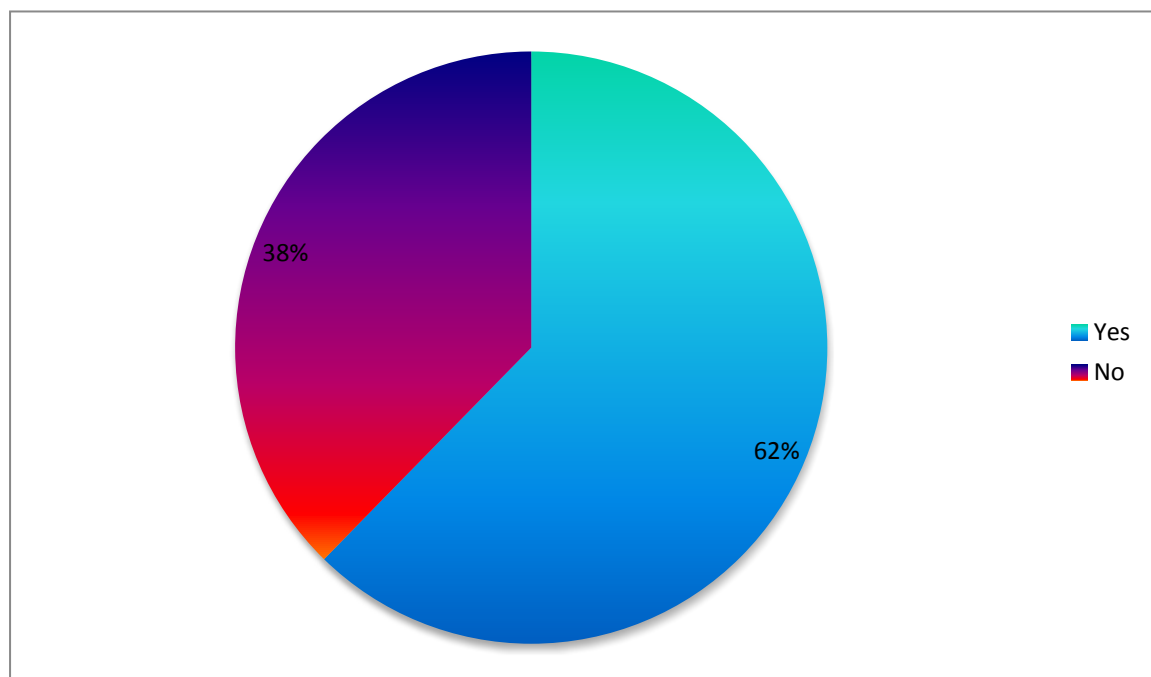
The comments suggesting that begging was not a problem contained the following themes:

- I'm more put off by parking charges
  - Lack of decent shops is what discourages me
  - Chuggers put me off
- It's easy to ignore beggars
  - I've only once been harassed
- Fining them will make them resort to crime
  - How will they be able to pay?
- They are members of the community as much as us and need help
- Lack of support from the council is awful
  - They must be given somewhere to live and food to eat.

***Q4) Do you agree that the Borough Council should introduce a new requirement to address aggressive and persistent begging and associated Anti-Social Behaviour?***

Just over three-fifths (62 per cent) of the 223 respondents agreed that this should be introduced, meaning therefore almost two-fifths (38 per cent) said it should not.

**Table 3: Do you agree that the Borough Council should introduce a new requirement to address aggressive and persistent begging and associated anti-social behaviour? 223 respondents**



**Table 4: Do you agree that the Borough Council should introduce a new requirement to address aggressive and persistent begging and associated Anti-Social Behaviour? By broad age group.**

Age of respondents	Yes (were discouraged)	No (were not discouraged)
<b>0-19 (note – only one respondent)</b>	100 per cent	0 per cent
<b>20-39</b>	60 per cent	40 per cent
<b>40-59</b>	56 per cent	44 per cent
<b>60+</b>	73 per cent	27 per cent

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Once more, the comments left showed quite a polarisation of opinion. There were some comments left that were very much in favour, but even more that were very much in disagreement. The main themes of the comments that agreed with introduction were as follows:

- Yes, but don't wait until it's persistent and aggressive, begging is a crime so stop it sooner
- So many hide in subways
- Ban them all from the town centre
- Most or not genuine
- Same old faces
  - Many have cars and drive in from other areas
  - Nothing to stop them at the moment.

There were several comments left that were opposed, with the key themes being:

- Prevent homelessness from happening first
- Don't punish the vulnerable
  - Their only crime is being poor
  - Offer support, not stigmatisation
    - Prevent people from getting in that position
  - They are your residents and deserve your help
    - Other councils provide more help
- The way this is worded makes it sound like you've made your mind up and are just seeking confirmation
  - The question suggests aggression occurs when it's not proven
- Fining them will make them turn to crime – how does this help anyone?
- No one chooses to be on the street in the cold

There were other comments left that were not necessarily in favour or opposed:

- It's difficult to answer without knowing what 'persistent' means. One occasion? 10? After warnings? How many warnings?
- Is non-aggressive begging OK then?
  - Persistent not the same as aggressive
- Please have this for chuggers as well
- The fines just won't get paid if the proposals are accepted or not
  - I've read that none of the Fixed Penalty Notices given out have yet been paid
- Who will enforce the fines? Will Council staff have to act as police officers?
  - Unless you have absolute proof you can't criminalise anyone in this way

### *Q5) Are there any additional controls you think are required, or any other locations where specific controls need to be set?*

43 per cent said that they thought that there were, and their comments are summarised here:

- Subways (by far the most common answer)
- Advertising boards blocking pavements
- Cotton Mill pub and Sainsbury's
- Heywood's subway and the sunken roundabout

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- Kidsgrove, Wolstanton, Chesterton and Silverdale all have similar problems, why are they not included?
- Natwest Bank and Boots Pharmacy
- Queen Elizabeth Park and Aldi
- Roundabout at the top of London Road to Morrisons has groups who are intimidating
- Work with the Lyme Trust as it's their residents in the sunken roundabouts and parks

#### *Age of respondents*

Respondents were asked which broad age group they belonged to and 220 told us. Almost half were aged between 40 and 59, with around one-quarter (27 per cent) aged 20 to 39 and the same (27 per cent) aged 60+. Only one respondent, less than one per cent, was aged under 20.

