

Please note this response is submitted from the Community Relations & Housing Unit at Durham University. We do not aim to represent every diverse viewpoint on this matter across the University, and Colleges, but rather this response is centred around our experiences in multi-agency working in the city through the Unit. This therefore leaves open the possibility that you may also receive comments from elsewhere in the University (by email or to the online questionnaire).

To whom it may concern,

Re: Consultation on PSPO for nuisance begging in Durham City (May 2024)

As an institution deeply embedded in the Durham community, Durham University understands the importance of creating a safe and inclusive environment for all residents, visitors, and students alike.

Community Relations & Housing Unit has a proven track record of working in close partnership with key stakeholders around the area to ensure up to date knowledge of the safety concerns in Durham city. This includes our active participation in a number of groups organised by the County Council and the Durham Constabulary such as Durham City Safety Group and Durham City Operational Group, as well as being a recognised partner supporting the city's 'Night Hub', which provides a fantastic support service for our students, and other members of the public, where they do not feel safe on a night out.

Given our extensive involvement and first-hand knowledge of concerns surrounding anti-social behaviour and its impact on the community, we recognise the need for targeted measures to tackle nuisance begging and have carefully considered diverse opinions on the proposed measures.

With an estimated 5000 students residing in the proposed PSPO boundary and thousands more traversing through it daily, their safety and well-being are of paramount importance to us. In our work with partners around Durham City we have heard many examples where well-intentioned support from our students was being offered to the individuals whom this PSPO may affect. However, in some cases this support has led to unintended consequences including anti-social behaviours by the individuals concerned.

At the same time, we believe it is imperative to carefully consider the needs of vulnerable individuals including those who are genuinely homeless and may require support. We fully support the provision of effective services in Durham for people who are rough sleeping, including a dedicated Rough Sleeper team. Additionally, we encourage collaboration with community organisations and charities to provide essential services to those in need.

In addition to supporting these measures we are keen to do our part to contribute to initiatives aimed at fostering a safer and more supportive environment in Durham city. Our Student Community Wardens are working on a programme of activities aimed at educating our students about effective ways to support individuals experiencing homelessness and related challenges. Through this we seek to promote informed and compassionate responses to the complex issues of poverty, homelessness, and social exclusion.

In conclusion, Durham University reiterates its commitment to working together with Durham County Council and Durham Constabulary in addressing the issue of anti-social behaviour in Durham City. We commend the efforts of these public bodies in their dedication to ensuring the safety and well-being of all residents, visitors, and students within the community.

We believe the DCC and Durham Constabulary possess invaluable insight into the challenges faced by the city which puts them in an ideal position to drive this forward. Their expertise and experience are crucial in developing effective strategies to address anti-social behaviour while upholding the rights and dignity of all individuals involved.

As a key stakeholder in Durham community Durham University stands ready to support and contribute to the implementation of evidence-based solutions that prioritise the safety and inclusivity in the city.

Daria Murphy

Community Liaison Manager

PVC Colleges & Student Experience Office, Palatine Centre, Durham University,
Stockton Road, Durham, DH1 3LE