

Press release: New guidance on the use of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014

New guidance on the use of anti-social behaviour powers will help police and councils continue to take appropriate action against nuisance behaviours while ensuring the most vulnerable, including the homeless, are not disproportionately targeted.

The guidance will:

- make sure powers are used as intended – to tackle behaviour which is genuinely anti-social
- help to prevent instances of rough sleepers, buskers or small groups gathering to chat in town centres – without causing a nuisance – being unfairly targeted

Published today (Sunday 24 December), the [revised statutory guidance](#) on the use of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 will give police, local authorities and other front-line workers greater clarity on how best to use powers such as Public Spaces Protection Orders.

It follows feedback from charities and other groups who raised concerns that the orders were being used to disproportionately target certain groups in some areas rather than focusing on behaviour that is genuinely anti-social and causing others distress or alarm.

Particular concerns were raised around the use of the orders against the homeless, buskers, dog walkers and, in some cases, people simply gathering together in small groups in town centres who were not engaged in anti-social behaviour.

Minister for Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability Victoria Atkins said:

Anti-social behaviour harms communities and can severely impact people's way of life, which is why this government introduced powers to make it quicker and easier to take action against the perpetrators of anti-social behaviour.

We know that these powers are being used to very good effect by the police and local councils across England and Wales, and we are very keen to encourage their continued use. But we are also clear that the powers should be used proportionately to tackle anti-social behaviour, and not to target specific groups or the most vulnerable in our communities.

The revised guidance published today will empower local agencies by providing even greater clarity on where and when these powers

should be applied, helping them to keep our public spaces, communities and families safe.

The guidance puts greater emphasis on the need to ensure the powers are used to target specific nuisance behaviours and are not applied in a blanket way against specific groups or behaviour that is not in itself anti-social. It reminds councils that powers should not, for example, target normal everyday behaviour that is not having a detrimental effect on the community's quality of life, such as standing in groups in a town centre.

The government wants to ensure that there is transparency and accountability in the use of the powers and has actively worked with a number of organisations including charities working to help the homeless in developing the refreshed guidance.

Elements of the guidance include:

- focusing on specific and actual problems rather than blanket bans of behaviour that are not in themselves anti-social – such as rough sleeping
- reiterating that before making a Public Spaces Protection Order councils must consult the police and community representatives to ensure specific groups have the opportunity to comment, including:
 - the local residents association
 - regular park users
 - those involved in activities such as busking
- highlighting how the Civil Injunction and the Criminal Behaviour Order can be used to tackle gang activity
- underlining the importance of local consultation, accountability and transparency in decision making

This latest action builds on the work government is already doing to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping including:

- spending over £1 billion until 2020 to address the issue
- implementing the Homelessness Reduction Act which will make sure more people get the help they need to prevent them from becoming homeless in the first place
- £28 million of funding to pilot the Housing First approach for entrenched rough sleepers in the West Midlands Combined Authority, Greater Manchester, and the Liverpool City Region
- investing £9 billion by March 2021 to build new affordable homes
- a £20 million scheme to support homeless people and those at risk of homelessness to secure homes in the private rented sector

The government has also confirmed today the membership of the Rough Sleeping and Homelessness Reduction Taskforce led by Communities Secretary Sajid Javid, which brings together ministers from key departments to provide a cross-government approach to preventing rough sleeping and homelessness.