

PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER: SHREWSBURY TOWN CENTRE

EVALUATION REPORT: 01.04.2020 – 31.03.2023

OVERVIEW

A Public Spaces Protection Order has been enforced in Shrewsbury Town Centre since 1st August 2017. Shropshire Council are currently seeking views and comments on extending the Order for a further 3 years from August 2023, and/or whether to make any amendments to the existing PSPO. The consultation period runs from 03/04/2023 – 14/05/2023.

The following report provides an analysis of data collated by Shrewsbury Town Council via the multi-agency operational group 'Team Shrewsbury', in relation to the conditions outlined within the PSPO. Data recorded during the 3-year period 1st April 2020 – 31st March 2023 has been reviewed in order to evaluate the impact of the PSPO on reporting trends.

Previous reports have also incorporated relevant data recorded by Shropshire Council and West Mercia Police. Due to department restructures and system changes, comparable data in line with the reporting categories below is unavailable for the review period. However, supporting data will be outlined throughout the report where available.

Data analysis is in line with the geographical boundary covered by the Public Spaces Protection Order.

REPORTING CATEGORIES

Following a review of the existing datasets collated by Shropshire Council and partner agencies in relation to crime and anti-social behaviour, the following reporting categories were established in order to monitor the impact of the order. The categories were introduced as of 1st October 2016 and are aligned with the behaviours the PSPO aims to prohibit. Other categories relevant to wider ASB issues have continued to be recorded by a number of agencies; however, the categories detailed below have been developed to reflect the most problematic issues encountered within the town centre.

Alcohol Litter	Dog Fouling	Excrement/Urinating
Alcohol Related Incidents	Dog Control	Fly tipping/Littering
Aggressive Begging	Damage/Arson	Personal Items Left
Begging	Drug Litter	Graffiti
Nuisance Busking	Drug Misuse	Suspicious Behaviour
Congregation	Drug Dealing	

DATA CONSTRAINTS – LIMITATIONS OF THE REPORT

It is important to note that COVID lockdown restrictions in place during 2020 will have had a significant impact on reporting levels. This limits the ability to accurately report 3-year trends specific to individual incident types.

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In relation to Team Shrewsbury data, an increase in resources during 2022 will also have had an impact on trends, resulting in a higher number of incident reports. The multi-agency group successfully secured Home Office funding in order to employ a number of Town Rangers and Taxi Marshalls, who work alongside Quarry Park security.

There have been significant changes to West Mercia's command and control system during the review period, as well as the software used to extract data. As a result, Police data is unavailable for the period March – June 2020. Data provided from July 2020 onwards will not be directly comparable with information provided to compile previous reports. Of note, West Mercia incident data is provided via keyword searches on all incidents reported in Shrewsbury Town Centre. The keywords are taken from the initial detail of the report made to the Police rather than the entire incident log, which may result in under-reporting.

As of October 2021, ASB incidents are no longer recorded by Shropshire Council. Environmental Health officers continue to deal with noise complaints and breaches of statutory noise nuisance, therefore noise caused by buskers is the only data available relevant to the conditions of the PSPO.

ANALYSIS OF DATA - PSPO CONDITIONS

- a) **No person shall urinate or defecate in a public area not being a facility intended for such use.**

INCIDENT TYPE: URINATING/DEFACATING	01/04/2020 – 31/03/2021	01/04/2021 – 31/03/2022	01/04/2022 – 31/03/2023
Team Shrewsbury	57	113	103
West Mercia Police	n/a	2	0

- b) **No person shall, for any duration of time, leave unattended in a public area any personal effects or belongings or any other material or paraphernalia including anything that may be considered discarded or waste material.**

INCIDENT TYPE	01/04/2020 – 31/03/2021	01/04/2021 – 31/03/2022	01/04/2022 – 31/03/2023
Personal Belongings	18	31	13
Alcohol Litter	115	81	120
Drug Litter	76	124	272
Fly Tipping/Littering	51	128	299
Total	260	364	704

Supporting Data: West Mercia Police

KEYWORD SEARCH – INCIDENT REPORT	01/04/2020 – 31/03/2021	01/04/2021 – 31/03/2022	01/04/2022 – 31/03/2023
Belongings	n/a	10	12
Litter/Rubbish/Vomit	n/a	11	13

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Total	n/a	21	25
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- c) **No person shall refuse to stop drinking alcohol or hand over any containers (sealed or unsealed) which are believed to contain alcohol, when required to do so by an authorised officer, provided that officer has reason to believe that that person is causing or is likely to cause nuisance, alarm, harassment or distress to any other person.**

INCIDENT TYPE	01/04/2020 – 31/03/2021	01/04/2021 – 31/03/2022	01/04/2022 – 31/03/2023
Alcohol Related Incidents	32	78	362
Alcohol Litter	115	81	120
Total	147	159	482

Supporting Data: West Mercia Police

KEYWORD SEARCH – INCIDENT REPORT	01/04/2020 – 31/03/2021	01/04/2021 – 31/03/2022	01/04/2022 – 31/03/2023
Alcohol/Drinking/Drunk	n/a	267	250

- d) **No person shall refuse to disperse from a public area and not to return to that public area for 48 hours when required to do so by an authorised officer, provided that officer has reason to believe that that person is causing or likely to cause nuisance, alarm, harassment or distress to any other person.**

All reporting categories can be considered relevant to this particular condition. However, it should be recognised that certain issues such as drug misuse, drug dealing, littering and dog fouling will potentially be dealt with via more appropriate and effective primary legislation.

INCIDENT TYPE	01/04/2020 – 31/03/2021	01/04/2021 – 31/03/2022	01/04/2022 – 31/03/2023	TOTAL	3 YR % CHANGE
Alcohol litter	115	81	120	316	4% increase
Alcohol related	32	78	362	472	1031% increase
Aggressive begging	0	0	5	5	-
Begging	2	1	34	37	1600% increase
Nuisance busking	0	0	26	26	-
Congregation	32	169	422	623	1219% increase
Damage/Arson	47	85	150	282	219% increase
Dog control	6	6	18	30	200% increase
Dog fouling	4	52	25	81	525% increase
Drug litter	76	124	272	472	258% increase
Drug misuse	44	63	329	436	648% increase
Drug dealing	15	17	58	90	287% increase
Urinating/Defecating	57	113	103	273	81% increase
Fly tipping/Littering	51	128	299	478	486% increase
Personal items left	18	31	13	62	28% decrease

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Graffiti	14	10	32	56	128% increase
Suspicious behaviour	11	53	139	203	1164% increase
Grand Total	524	1011	2407	3942	359% increase

Supporting Data: West Mercia Police

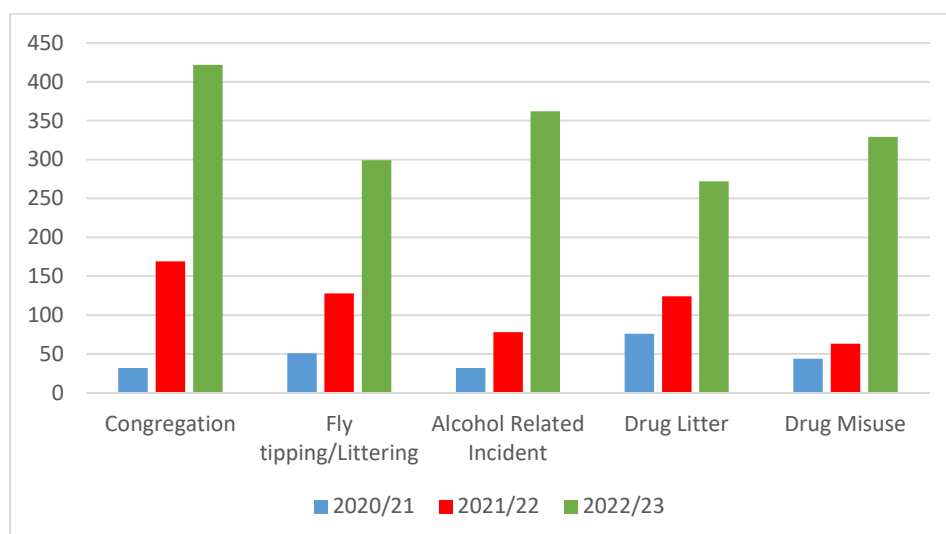
KEYWORD SEARCH – INCIDENT REPORT	01/04/2020 – 31/03/2021	01/04/2021 – 31/03/2022	01/04/2022 – 31/03/2023
Alcohol/Drinking/Drunk	n/a	267	250
Drugs/Cannabis	n/a	124	77
Begging	n/a	8	4
Belongings	n/a	10	12
Busking/Busker	n/a	0	2
Damage	n/a	58	51
Dog	n/a	37	45
Graffiti	n/a	3	1
Litter/Rubbish/Vomit	n/a	11	13
Urinating/Defecating	n/a	2	0
Total	n/a	520	455

Supporting Data: Shropshire Council

NOISE COMPLAINT	01/04/2020 – 31/03/2021	01/04/2021 – 31/03/2022	01/04/2022 – 31/03/2023
Busking	8	15	18

KEY FINDINGS

The graph below identifies the top 5 incident types generating the highest number of reports during the review period.



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In comparison to the previous 3 years, congregation and fly tipping/littering have replaced damage/arson and alcohol litter within the top 5 incident types.

As outlined previously, several factors limit the accuracy of 3-year trends, however some headline figures are provided below.

- **Begging** has recorded the greatest increase since 2020/21; however, numbers recorded remain significantly lower in comparison to other incident types.
- **Congregation** recorded a significant increase during the review period, and also recorded the highest number of incidents in both 2021/22 and 2022/23.
- **Personal Items Left** is the only incident type to record a decrease since 2020/21. During the review period Team Shrewsbury added an additional category to the dataset; 'Personal Items – Removed' however these figures have not been included within the report due to data quality issues and a lack of comparable figures.

PROPOSED ADDITIONAL CONDITIONS

The following additions to the current PSPO have been proposed in order to tackle ongoing issues linked to Anti-Social Behaviour in Shrewsbury Town Centre:

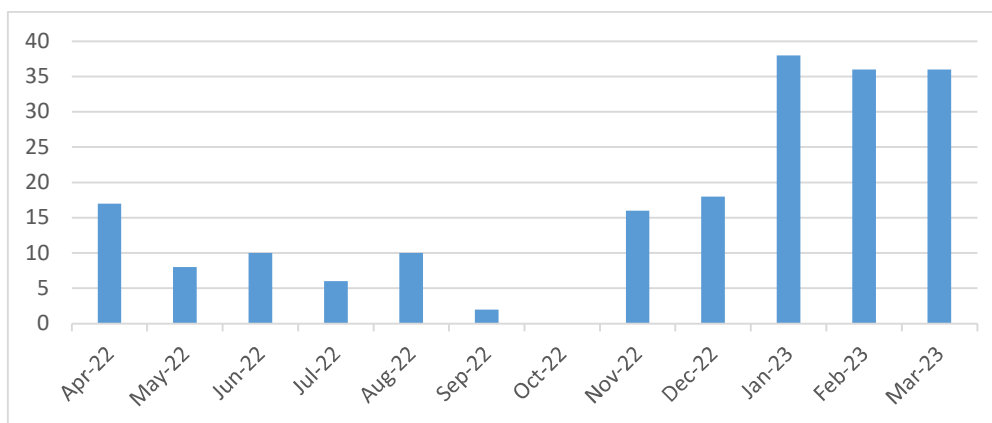
1. To include a wider enabling provision to require a person to stop sitting or lying within the area if causing anti-social behaviour i.e. - 'No person, who is sitting or lying on any footpath or pedestrian area or in any fire escape, stairway or other entrance or exit to any premises within the protected area, shall refuse to move when required to do so by an authorised officer, provided that officer has reason to believe that that person is causing or likely to cause nuisance, alarm, harassment or distress to any other person or in order to prevent public disorder.'
2. To include a wider enabling provision to require a person to leave a public toilet if causing antisocial behaviour namely - 'No person shall refuse to leave a public toilet when required to do so by an authorised officer, provided that officer has reason to believe that that person is causing or likely to cause nuisance, alarm, harassment or distress to any other person or in order to prevent public disorder.'
3. To include a wider enabling provision to require a person to stop using a sound amplifier if causing anti-social behaviour namely - "No person shall refuse to stop using a device intended to amplify sound when required to do so by an authorised officer, provided that officer has reason to believe that that person is causing or likely to cause nuisance, alarm, harassment or distress to any other person or in order to prevent public disorder.'

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Datasets covering the previous 12-month period (01 April 2022 – 31 March 2023) have been reviewed to assist in identifying current levels of anti-social behaviour linked to the issues outlined above, and in order to establish a baseline moving forward.

Keywords have been used to extract relevant incidents from the data collected by Team Shrewsbury:

- 197 incident reports contained the word ‘toilet’ in the location field; this represents 8% of all reports. The highest number of incidents referred to drug related issues. See below for a breakdown per month.



- In relation to busking incidents, only 1 report contained the word ‘amplifier’ within the incident detail (January 2023). However, 26 nuisance busking incidents were recorded in total during 2022/23; and of note, no reports had been logged the 2 years previous. 18 reports were also recorded by Shropshire Council in relation to busking, and 2 were logged by West Mercia Police. Of the 18 reports to Shropshire Council, 11 referred to the use of an amplifier/amplified sound.

Team Shrewsbury have added an additional reporting category to capture individuals sitting or lying within an area, and data will be recorded from 1st April 2023.

Keyword searches conducted on incident reports recorded by West Mercia Police indicate potential data that could be considered in order to monitor the proposed additional categories. However, further incident detail would be required in order to establish whether reports refer to anti-social behaviour, and specifically relate to the conditions detailed within the PSPO. See below for keyword search findings for the period 1st April 2022 – 31st March 2023.

Keyword	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Totals
Asleep	2	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	2	1	1	0	10
Bed	11	6	2	9	8	12	4	3	3	4	10	3	75
Blocked	0	2	0	0	1	2	0	2	2	0	0	0	9
Blocking	4	2	1	3	2	4	5	3	1	0	1	0	26
Camped	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Collapsed	0	1	2	0	3	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	9
Doorway	2	1	0	0	0	4	3	4	1	2	1	0	18
Lay	35	13	9	8	18	9	15	13	17	21	7	19	184
Obstructed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Obstructing	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

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Sat	16	11	6	7	16	11	4	10	6	5	9	7	108
Sitting	2	2	5	0	2	1	1	1	2	1	2	2	21
Sleeping	3	2	1	2	1	2	7	5	3	1	0	3	30
Slumped	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	4

A more detailed search of OIS incidents covering the period 05/02/2022 – 27/02/2023 identified 91 individuals lying/sitting in the street or in doorways, causing nuisance. 32 reports were made by members of the public, and particularly businesses in the town centre.

In addition, during the period 18/08/2022 – 04/04/2023, 180 individuals were identified sitting or lying on the floor. This information has been collated via officer observations linked to an ASB Risk Management Plan for the town centre. Of note, incidents have been more routinely recorded as of February 2023 and figures will be more accurate moving forward.

If the recommended conditions are added to the PSPO, it is important that West Mercia Police clearly define the most appropriate datasets in order to monitor relevant incidents causing ASB. This data will need to be shared with Shropshire Council on a monthly basis in a consistent format for monitoring purposes, and to assist in evaluating the impact of the PSPO.

CONCLUSION

All incident types have continued to generate reports during the last 3 years. However, it is noted that aggressive begging, nuisance busking, dog control and begging have recorded significantly lower levels in comparison to the remaining categories. Of note, incidents of aggressive begging and nuisance busking were only recorded during 2022/23.

Regarding the proposed additions to the PSPO, further incident detail is required in order to effectively capture ASB caused by a sound amplifier. In terms of enforcement, Shropshire Council Environmental Protection officers investigate whether noise amounts to a Statutory Nuisance as defined in Section 79 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. However, there is a high threshold for noise to be classed as a nuisance in law, and therefore may not be the most appropriate powers to deal with noise caused by buskers.

Moving forward, if the proposed additional conditions are added to the existing PSPO, robust datasets will need to be established in order to monitor relevant incident levels and the impact of the Order in Shrewsbury Town Centre. As issues are likely to be displaced, it will also be important to monitor emerging hotspot locations outside the existing boundary of the PSPO.