
2. General Business

BEGGING IN WELLINGTON

Purpose

1. This report asks Council to consider the findings from the recent exploration of begging project and decide its approach to begging in Wellington. This includes recommendations for dealing with both the underlying issues that contribute to people begging and the impact begging has on the community as a whole

Summary

2. Begging is an issue of concern in Wellington and there has been increasing media attention and community interest in the issue.
3. In 2015 Council commissioned Think Place design consultancy to engage those affected by begging to better understand and move towards a stakeholder aligned approach to addressing the issue.
4. The main finding is that begging is a symptom of deep seated social issues and that for sustainable change to occur, a shift in thinking is required from reactive short-term solutions to longer term support.
5. Complex social issues, such as begging, require interventions and support at multiple levels – a quick and easy fix is not likely to be effective. Sustainable change requires an aligned community and multi-agency approach that focuses on underlying issues.
6. In its community leadership role, Council can advocate for positive changes that will contribute to tackling the social and other issues that underlie begging. This includes improvements in the fields of mental health and community care, drugs and addiction, prisoner discharge, training and employment opportunities and access to appropriate, affordable, sustainable housing.
7. Council can also look at its own role as a service provider and community enabler to identify where it can directly or indirectly impact positively on the social issues that contribute to begging.
8. The report recommends that Council take a clear position on addressing the causes of begging. Council is asked to recognise begging as a national issue, to advocate for Wellington and work with its partners on tackling underlying economic, health and social issues.
9. Although long term improvement is the most likely means of achieving positive change, the report also considers shorter term initiatives and identifies three main approaches for addressing begging in Wellington. These are:
 - Street management initiatives aimed at ensuring that public space can be used and enjoyed safely by everyone.
 - Initiatives aimed at discouraging street begging
 - Legal actions aimed at preventing street begging
10. The three approaches are included in the report, with the first being recommended for Council adoption.

Recommendations

That the Community, Sport and Recreation Committee:

1. Agree that begging is a complex and multi-dimensional national issue.
2. Agree that a coordinated response is required to address the underlying long-term issues identified in Appendix 1 and that:
 - a. Council take a strong leadership role in advocating with Central Government and its agencies
 - b. Actively support the coordination of an aligned multiagency and community response to address issues
 - c. Work with other Local Authorities to ensure a connected national understanding of issues
3. Agree to adopt street management as the preferred approach to dealing with the impact of begging including the options identified in Table 1 at paragraph 32.

Background

11. Begging on the street is a growing issue in Wellington. Its profile was raised as a result of the 2014 national quality of life survey. This is a national benchmark survey giving comparative data across six New Zealand cities. A new survey question was added in 2014. This asked the public “how big a problem” they thought begging was in their city. 33% of respondents across the six areas, said it was either ‘a bit of a problem’ (24%) or a big problem’ (9%). By comparison in Wellington 75% of those surveyed thought it either ‘a bit of a problem’ (53%) or a big problem’ (22%). These figures place Wellington significantly above the national average. In contrast Auckland sits below the national average with 30% of respondents considering begging to be either ‘a bit of a problem’ (21%) or a big problem’ (9%).
12. There has also been, in the last year or so, a small but steady flow of enquiries made via the contact centre about begging. These include calls expressing concern about the welfare of those begging as well as concerns about perceptions of public safety, the impact on retail and reputational damage to the city. A number of Council stakeholders including social services agencies, the police, the inner city residents association, retailers and the wider business community are increasingly interested in the issue. The police also report an increase in the numbers of people approaching them about begging.
13. Rather than jump at “solutions’ to the begging issue, the Council commissioned Think Place to deliver an exploration into begging project. Their approach is based on the principles of co-design and the belief that those closest to the problem have the expertise, insights and motivation to solve it. The Think Place team worked closely with the Council and other partners on the project design and delivery.
14. This was primarily an engagement exercise designed to explore the reasons that motivate people to beg and to better understand different stakeholder perspectives on the issue. The purpose was to provide a holistic picture of begging which will help shape effective, well designed and sustainable partnership approaches to the issue.

See full report Attachment 1.

15. The project focus was Wellington CBD. Fieldwork and stakeholder engagement took place in late 2015. This included:
 - Workshops with key Council partners - police, business and retail, inner city residents, and social services agencies
 - In depth interviews with concerned stakeholders, citizens and those who beg.
 - Intercept interviews with citizens and retailersAn interactive workshop to review the project findings was held in February 2016. This was for stakeholders who had either spoken to Think Place individually or who had participated in one of the earlier workshops. Invitees included citizens, retailers, the street outreach team, Local Hosts, Police and Kiwi Rail. Think Place presented insights from the project with participants having the opportunity to reflect on the findings and to consider how these might influence future plans to address begging in Wellington
16. The project's main finding is that begging is a symptom of complex, long lasting social issues. Those begging can exercise very little control over their situation and are often hobbled by current or prior addictions, a criminal conviction, and a fragile or non-existent informal support network.
17. The project found that at its most basic level, begging is effective. There are currently enough people who feel good about giving to those who beg. And those who beg are mostly getting what they need from it. The interaction continues because the reasons that underlie begging have not been addressed.
18. Initiatives that deal with begging as a symptom are therefore unlikely to be effective. Think Place pointed out that focussing effort on stopping begging transactions alone will not address the underlying issues and that stopping the transaction may simply result in a re-direction of need for disposable income into more harmful activities.
19. Instead the project suggests that to achieve a sustainable impact on begging requires focus on the underlying problems encountered by those who beg. This calls for community wide and multi-agency aligned approaches to tackle deep seated social issues.
20. Issues include central government social policy and funding changes that have impacted on community care arrangements and mental health provision. Associated issues include psychiatric and other hospital discharge arrangements, drug treatment and addiction programmes, prisoner re-integration and employment opportunities.
21. In its community leadership role, the Council has responsibility for advocating on behalf of Wellington. This includes making representations to central government and working in partnership with government departments and other relevant agencies to secure policy changes and service improvements that contribute to positive long term change.
22. The project also found that a lack of purposeful activity contributed to some people spending time on the streets. Purposeful activity might include employment but also engagement in community based and other social activities.
23. The project findings suggest a significant level of public empathy with those who beg. As the report says, begging is a transactional experience that works. People beg because people give. In the light of this, the Council and other agencies might wish to consider how the kindheartednesses and generosity of many Wellingtonians can be harnessed effectively as part of approaches to end begging.
24. Another significant project finding is stakeholder consensus on attitudes towards those who beg from a position of genuine social need and those whose primary focus is anti-social and criminal behaviour. Whilst some citizens appear able to distinguish between

the two, others are confused and unsure about whom they are comfortable giving to. There are also insufficiently robust mechanisms and no framework which can be used by relevant agencies to formulate appropriate responses to the individuals involved. In Wellington, criminal and social issues are entangled to the point where relevant agencies seem unsure of how to respond.

Discussion

25. In response to the Think Place report, Council should consider how it can best influence and work with its partners to achieve necessary change on issues including social policy that contribute to begging activity. In the shorter term, Council and its partners can also work together to ensure public space can be used and enjoyed safely by everyone. This will result in the Council having a robust policy position on begging which will enable it to give clear public messages on its response to begging in Wellington.
26. Council might also look at how existing resources might be used to help enable people who are self-motivated to change behaviours. The project found that some of the people begging did so because they lacked positive social engagement or employment opportunities. There may be merit in Council departments examining how their services and facilities might offer community activities, volunteering opportunities and practical help with budgeting and job seeking.
27. Council's role as a socially responsible employer is also relevant. Council could review how to improve the scope for it to work directly as an employer and contractor as well as with government departments and businesses to encourage and facilitate relevant job creation schemes and pathways to employment. This might include creating a pool of benevolent employers and job brokerage programmes.
28. In addition to asking Council to take an advocacy and service delivery role in response to the underlying causes of begging, this report also asks Council to decide on its main approach to dealing with the impact of begging in Wellington.
29. Think Place presented three principles to keep in mind when designing new solutions to begging. First, begging is a complex multi-dimensional social issue and solving the issue at one level without looking at the whole problem may create new issues or have unintended consequences. Second, complex issues are suited to numerous small scale interventions and a prototyping approach. Third, begging is an issue that crosses several agencies and impacts businesses, visitors and residents, so as often as possible, solutions and interventions should be collaborative. These principles should be kept in mind when considering the three approaches set out below.

Street Management

30. The first approach is for Council to explicitly tolerate begging as part of the cityscape. This is consistent with viewing begging as primarily a social issue. It does not imply that Council approves of criminal behaviour including intimidatory begging and Council would continue as now to advise citizens to contact the police when this is either experienced or witnessed.
31. Alongside this Council would take a clear and aligned approach to street management, public engagement and communications. Central to this would be Council commitment to ensuring that public space can be used and enjoyed safely by everyone. Council would encourage responsible behaviour by all public space users and work to ensure that vulnerable people are treated with respect.

32. Street management is recommended as the preferred approach to addressing the impact of begging in Wellington. Table 1 includes suggested actions that are consistent with this approach. It also builds on existing Council initiatives including the smart city pilot with NEC, the role of local hosts, funding of street outreach, and partnership activity with the police and retailers on city safety and other projects including Eyes On.

Table 1

Theme	1. Issue to be addressed	Objectives	Actions
Engaging with people who beg	2. Ensure that people who beg are not experiencing any undue harm or discrimination.	To maintain and develop open channels of communication between Council and people who beg. To facilitate engagement with and access to support services where possible.	Local hosts and the street outreach team will continue to engage with people who beg, with increased emphasis on making connections to services. Training for Council staff in relation to interactions with people who beg.
Responding to complaints from the public	No strategy for responding to complaints.	3. To provide a clear, consistent and fair response to all complaints.	Council to produce clear and consistent messages for use by the communications team, contact centre and all staff having interactions with the public, including retailers and media.
Managing accessibility on public footway	People who beg and their belongings impeding access on public footways	To keep public footways clear for their primary use.	Advise people who beg of acceptable uses of footways. Escalate and remove items where necessary in accord with relevant legislation.
City safety	Public perceptions of safety.	Deal positively with safety perceptions.	Use Council communications and partner with the police to give clear messages on the different approaches to passive and intimidatory begging. Strongly encourage

			victims and witnesses of intimidatory begging to report this to the police.
Disentangle criminal and social issues.	Lack of suitable mechanisms to distinguish between and aid responses to criminal and social issues.	Develop a framework for the Police, social services and other relevant agencies to deal appropriately with criminal and social issues.	Establish a multi-agency forum to consider this issue.
City pride	Negative views on cityscape.	Build pride and community ownership of the city's streets.	Encourage and engage residents, retailers and other businesses to take care of the public space outside their premises.
Harnessing smart technology	Lack of evidence for good decision making and need to improve mechanisms to provide real-time response.	To provide a mechanism for evidence based planning.	Implement smart technologies developed through the Smart City Living Lab.

33. Another street management option is to regulate begging activity through a licencing system. This option is included for Council discussion, but is not recommended. Licensing involves issuing permits which regulate when and where people can beg. Several US cities have such systems. These are policed robustly. Anyone found begging without a valid permit risks legal action whilst non-compliant permit holders can have their permits revoked. In looking at this option, Council is advised to consider whether it is comfortable with establishing criteria for deciding permit applications and with determining when and where begging is allowed. Council would need to consider the application and assessment process resource implications, and agree effective enforcement arrangements with the Police. An example of licencing begging is included in Appendix 2.

Active discouragement

34. Examples of an active discouragement approach are included for the Committee to discuss. It is not however recommended as the preferred approach.
35. This approach might be described as 'street management plus'. It might involve adoption of the suggested actions in Table 1 at paragraph 32 plus one or more initiatives aimed at discouraging street begging. This might include pilot projects to test effectiveness, trialling 'fail fast, learn fast' methods prior to decisions on making significant budget commitments.
36. A number of cities around the world have experimented with begging discouragement initiatives. The following paragraphs include some possible ideas. Further information on where some of these approaches have been taken is included in Appendix 2.

37. As noted above the project findings suggest a significant level of public empathy with those who beg. It might therefore seem surprising that Council's now defunct alternative giving campaign was unsuccessful. And it has been suggested by some that consideration be given to rebranding and relaunching the campaign with perhaps a more targeted communication strategy. It is significant however that Think Place's project findings suggest that the campaign's lack of success may be because members of the public prefer to give direct to the people with who they have empathy rather than to charities. A repeat of or remodelled Alternative Giving Campaign is therefore unlikely to yield more positive results.
38. In view of the project findings on the prevalence of drug and other addictions amongst those who beg it might be that greater public awareness of how some of the money they give is used could result in significantly fewer people giving money. Council may wish to consider introducing a sustained communications and educational campaign, similar to those running in several UK cities, which link begging and drugs and aim to deter the public from giving. Although there is no striking evidence to suggest their success in reducing begging, there may be merit in further examining the UK experience of 'kindness can kill' campaigns, and the capacity in New Zealand for linking such initiatives to increased drug treatment provision.
39. Another idea that has been suggested as a short term response to begging is vouchers. Typically, this involves the public buying tear off voucher books which offer free services and retail products. These might include such things as a night's accommodation, non-alcoholic drinks or basic groceries. Members of the public minded to give cash to people begging are encouraged instead to give vouchers. The effectiveness of vouchers as either a solution or deterrent to begging is unproven. And it can be argued that this might help increase rather than reduce incidences of begging. Vouchers do not decrease the need for disposable income and it has been suggested that in cities with voucher systems, some recipients trade them for cash or simply see them as additional income.
40. There may also be merit in taking a more assertive approach to street begging which links access to services to greater individual responsibility. It would clearly signal Council disapproval of street begging whilst linking this to a 'helping hand' approach that offers practical support for those wishing to engage seriously with social services agencies and other relevant agencies. This would involve an evolution in the role of street outreach workers and empowering the Council's Local Hosts to take a harder line. There would however be no legal imperative for compliance.

Legal enforcement

41. Another suggestion is to tackle begging through the legal system and police enforcement. Information on legal enforcement is included here for Committee discussion. It is not however recommended for further consideration.
42. One legal enforcement option is to introduce a by-law banning begging. This would treat begging as primarily a criminal rather than a social issue. Council would need to be comfortable with fining/penalising those who beg and have a clear communications strategy for managing the issue. Robust enforcement arrangements would need to be in place, with police budgets and priorities aligned. There is however no compelling evidence from cities with such bans to suggest that this is an effective means of ending or significantly reducing begging. Furthermore, Think Place's report suggests that banning begging in one area does not stop begging occurring elsewhere and may push people into criminal activity and other harmful behaviour.

43. Passive begging is not illegal in New Zealand. Passive begging includes quietly sitting with a sign or asking for money. Threatening and intimidatory behaviour however is illegal and victims or witnesses are encouraged by Council to contact the Police. Auckland and Hamilton have public safety by-laws which cover intimidatory begging but it is difficult to see the added value this makes to dealing with behaviour that is already illegal under national law.
44. Alternatively, Council could turn the by-law debate on its head and consider the possibility of introducing a by-law that bans citizens from giving to people who beg. Arguably such an approach would minimise the number of financial and other transactions between the public and those who beg. But it might not resonate well with an emphatic Wellington public, or harness that empathy for community engagement in positive change initiatives.
45. Another possible way forward is to combine criminal and social approaches. In Hamilton enforcement of a by-law on safety in public places has been linked to access to housing through the Peoples Project. Whilst this is primarily a homelessness initiative it may point to a potential approach in Wellington. It should be noted again however that the Hamilton's by-law does not cover passive begging.

Next Actions

46. This report recommends that Council take a clear position on begging which recognises it as a complex and multi-dimensional national issue. It recommends that a coordinated response is required to address the underlying long-term issues identified in Appendix 1.
47. The report also recommends that Council agrees to adopt street management as the preferred approach to dealing with the impact of begging. This means tolerating begging as part of the cityscape consistent with viewing begging as primarily a social issue. It does not imply that Council approves of criminal behaviour including intimidatory behaviour and Council would continue as now to advise citizens to contact the police when this is either experienced or witnessed.
48. Next actions will be for Council to:
49. Take a strong leadership role in advocating with Central Government and its agencies
50. Actively support the coordination of an aligned multiagency and community response to address issues
51. Work with other Local Authorities to ensure a connected national understanding of issues
52. Take a clear and aligned approach to 'street management' by implementing the actions in Table 1 paragraph 32. Further developments will be considered as part of Council's impending scoping work on reviewing the Footpath Management policy.
53. Further actions are:
54. Continue supporting the Te Mahana strategy which contributes to the development of a housing first model tackling homelessness and associated health and social issues. Whilst not all people who beg are homeless, the project findings suggest that the chaotic lifestyles of many street homeless people are akin to numbers of people who beg.
55. Through Te Mahana and street outreach continue to support homeless people and those who beg through a strongly coordinated case managed wrap around service.

However sustained success depends on having appropriate and agile community and health services, employment projects and preventative programmes in place.

56. In response to the project findings that lack of positive social engagement or employment opportunities drove begging behaviour consider options that would enable people who are self-motivated to change behaviour. This could be with partners, through funding/philanthropic projects and/or through Council's own services.

Attachments

Attachment 1.	ThinkPlace project report on begging in Wellington	Page 17
Attachment 2.	Examples of other cities initiatives in response to begging	Page 51

Author	Simon Tendeter, Team Leader, Community & City Partnership
Authoriser	Greg Orchard, Chief Operating Officer

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Consultation and Engagement

The exploration into begging project was carried out using co-design principles with key stakeholders involved in agreeing the project intent and throughout the project. The project involved people who beg, residents, retailers, visitors to Wellington, the Police and social services agencies. This included in depth and intercept interviews stakeholder workshops. There has also been discussion with government departments, police and other stakeholders on the report recommendations.

Treaty of Waitangi considerations

The project does not have any direct Treaty implications. However Maori are over represented amongst those who beg. This was a factor taken into consideration throughout the project and discussed with the Council's Treaty Relations team.

Financial implications

The report recommendations have no significant financial implications and any costs arising from them will be met from existing budgets. Funding for the options and alternative approaches covered from paragraph 33 to 45 could have significant financial implications and are not covered by the LTP or Annual Plan. These options are included for discussion but not recommended.

Policy and legislative implications

N/A

Risks / legal

This is N/A unless Council supports one or more of the options covered from paragraph 33 to 45. In this event risk assessments would be required and legal implications need to be considered.

Climate Change impact and considerations

N/A

Communications Plan

This report and recommendations have been discussed with the Council's Communication team. An initial approach to media management is in place and a communication plan will be developed as part of implementation.

BEGGING IN WELLINGTON

An exploration into
our community's issue

March 2016

Acknowledgments

- Appreciations to Matthew Mawkes and Stephanie MacIntyre for help finding participants and generously offering a space for interviews.
- Thank you to the late Tamahou Wanoa, for gently and expertly supporting us through the interviews. Tama you will be missed.
- Thank you to Joanne Chell and Ngāti Kahungunu ki Pōneke for hosting the Street Outreach workshop and providing kai.
- Thanks also to Steve Flude and Tric Malcolm, Wellington City Missioner, for their early ideas and support for this important project.
- We would also like to thank all those who participated in interviews and work sessions, and to everyone who shared their opinions, thoughts and stories with us in formal and informal ways.

**Prepared for Wellington City Council
by ThinkPlace Authors:**

Mondy Jera, Ben McCarthy and Jess Lunnon

Contact

*Simon Tendeter, Wellington City Council Communities and City Partnerships Team Leader/Alternate Emergency Welfare Manager
Simon.Tendeter@wcc.govt.nz*

Contents

1-3

Introduction

4-15

Understanding
different perspectives

16-23

Making sense
of what we heard

24-29

Creating meaningful
change

30

Conclusion

Why begging?

Begging is not a new phenomenon, but with this project we aim to shed new light on this persistent issue and re-energise the city's thinking on this topic.

Introduction

Begging on the street is a growing issue in Wellington. The 2014 Quality of Life Survey indicated that a significant number of people living in Wellington were more likely than other cities to view begging on the street as a 'big problem' or 'bit of a problem'.

Wellington City Council (WCC) has received an increase in begging complaints from Wellingtonians. There is also a growing sense of frustration about begging from retailers and businesses. Social service agencies and Police are also concerned with this trend.

WCC has attempted to quantify the scale of the issue by counting the numbers of those begging on the streets. A recent count conducted by Local Hosts on 20 February 2016, yielded the following: from 9.55am to 2.36pm on the 20th of February, 10 people were counted and from 6.30pm that evening until 1.45am, 12 were counted. A similar number was recorded in the evening of the previous week; 13 people were counted as begging between the hours of 4.45pm and 12.50am.

However, the comments made by community members who participated in the making of this document, along with the Quality of Life Survey findings, point to the issue being of more concern than the numbers may reveal.

There are many theories as to why begging is apparently increasing (e.g. economic hard times, drift from other cities, tolerance by Wellingtonians), but the reasons behind *why* people beg in Wellington have not been fully explored or documented. It is an issue that has taken a long time to become prevalent but is now becoming 'normalised' in the city's landscape. This normalisation concerns many stakeholders.

At present, there is no singular point of contact to get information about begging. The existing data is not held in one place and there is little alignment about what should or could be done to decrease begging across the sector.

Purpose of this work

The aim of this work is to create more understanding about begging by documenting and illustrating the experiences of various Wellington stakeholders: those who beg, those who are impacted by begging, and those who are working to help those who beg.

It is our hope that this document contributes to the existing body of knowledge on the topic and that the readers can consider this persistent issue in a new way.

Begging is a social issue in its own right, but it is often intertwined with other issues, such as homelessness. This document focuses on begging, but we acknowledge that the complex issues people are experiencing can be extremely difficult to disentangle.

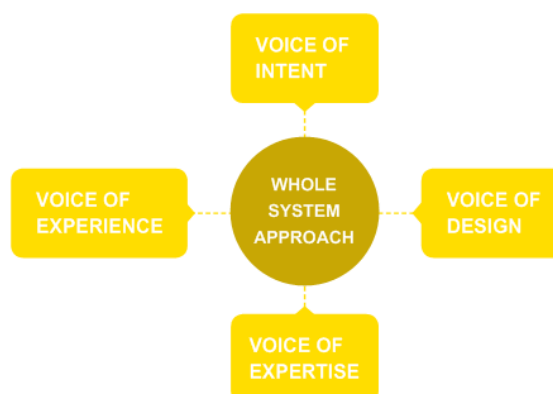
This document may begin a renewed conversation and act as a 'thought piece' which provides a focal point for strategies going forward. The information contained within the document widens the conversation to many players in the community. We believe that for change to occur, begging should be recognised as a complex community dynamic that includes a range of people, offering a range of solutions across the sector. No one organisation can tackle it alone.

This document does not make pointed recommendations, but rather it is meant to provide a platform for deeper understanding, demonstrate some empathy for the key players involved, and open up the space for innovative solutions to be conceptualised and tested going forward.

Design framework

Four Voices Model

© ThinkPlace Limited 2016



Begging is not simply an issue for the people who beg; it is a community interaction involving more than one party.

Our approach is to take our Four Voices Model and develop a narrative which illustrates where we could look to create change.

Voice of Intent

The voice of intent sets direction, exercises authority and takes accountability for key decision making during the co-design activity.

Wellington City Council is the driver of this work.

Voice of Experience

Those involved in the interaction of begging, those choosing to give or not give, and those living life and working in proximity to this interaction.

Those who beg, citizens, residents and visitors who see or interact with people begging, retailers and businesses who have a physical proximity to the places where people beg.

Voice of Expertise

The holders of in-depth knowledge on the topic.

Social service agencies e.g. Downtown Community Ministry, The Night Shelter, Soup Kitchen, Ngāti Kahungunu ki Pōneke, various advocacy services and health services and other stakeholders who have direct contact or interaction with begging. This includes security personnel, Police, Local Hosts and the Street Outreach Team.

Voice of Design

The brokers, facilitators, and sense-makers.

The team tasked with gathering, making sense of, and illustrating the stories of all other voices.

The process and method undertaken

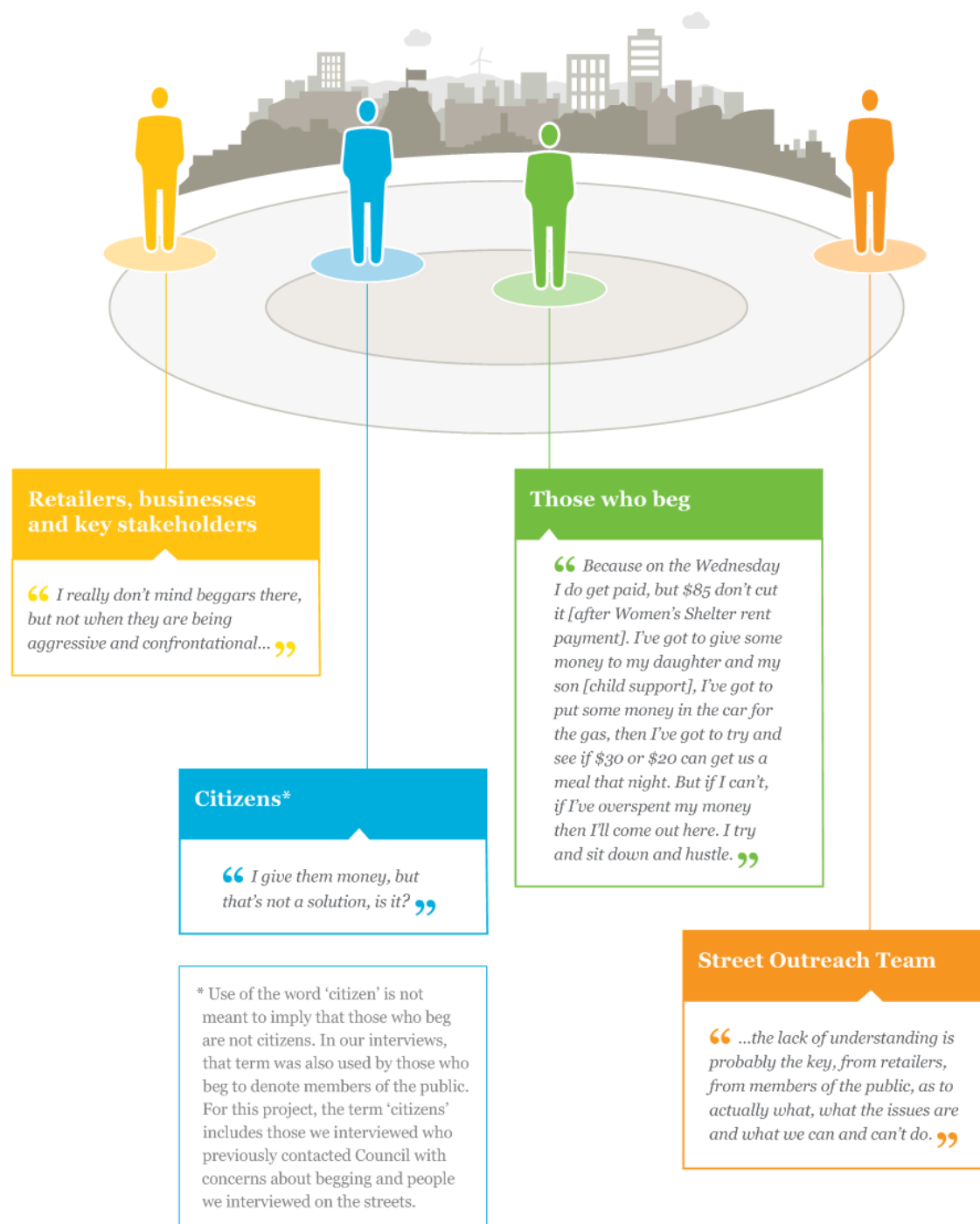


1

Understanding different perspectives

This section presents the themes that were woven through our conversations. The section ends with a summary of the key messages for each of the various stakeholder groups.

Who we listened to



We asked people to describe begging in one word or a short phrase

Reconnection *Unfortunate* *Disappointment* *Cityscape*
Habits *Nobody Cares* *Persistent* *Derogatory* *Broken*
Ruin *Failure* *Sucks* *Lonely* *Desperation* *Fantastic*
Beneficial *Embarrassment* *Necessity* *Entrepreneurial*
Motivational *Horrificing* *Significant Reputational Risk*
Necessary for Survival *Social Issue* *Distasteful* *Unsafe*
Intimidation *Increasing* *Sharing is Caring* *Community*
Hard *Unnecessary* *Hustle* *Sad* *Humbled* *Hardship*
Impossible *Charismatic* *Increasing*

Key:

Those Who Beg

Citizens

Retailers, Businesses and Key Stakeholders

Street Outreach Team

What we heard from those who beg

■ People beg for different reasons. Some who beg are simply short of disposable income once rent, power, debt, petrol, child support and other bills are paid. For others, there are drug or alcohol addictions, cigarette habits and/or co-existing mental health issues which mean they need supplementary income that exceeds what the benefit can provide.



"I have been struggling ever since I was a kid 'cause my mum passed away in 1991. I have been moving into foster homes and stuff and I have been on the street since I was 14 years old..."

■ Begging is social for some, and for others it is seen as a purposeful job with their begging site being compared to an office.

■ Often, the person's life trajectory was fraught with difficulty and begging was a symptom of a slow decline. For instance, having grown up with abusive families, moving in and out of CYF caregiver arrangements, juvenile offending, prison, drug addiction, isolation from networks, unemployment, etc.

"I'm broke. I have got, you know, I have got three debts. I have got to go and pawn off just to pay for all the, pay for food in my cupboard or paying a bill."

"But a lot of the people like myself and other people have all got other addictions to either alcohol or drugs and to be straight up, that's where the money goes... so it covers the drug costs."

"Because on the Wednesday I do get paid, but \$85 don't cut it [after Women's Shelter rent payment]. I've got to give some money to my daughter and my son [child support], I've got to put some money in the car for the gas, then I've got to try and see if \$30 or \$20 can get us a meal that night. But if I can't, if I've overspent my money then I'll come out here. I try and sit down and hustle."

"But at the end of the day it's just my habit, 'cause I smoke, that's all I'm doing it for and 'cause I ain't got much to get food, so yeah... That's how I see it, everybody's just doing it for a habit."

"Well sometimes if I'm hanging out here [DCM] and there's nothing happening I just go sit out along the street. Sometimes I get sick of holding the sign because people just go past just looking at it. So, then I use my mouth and say 'Excuse me, any spare change?'. Sometimes they'll say 'no' then it's alright, or it's not about the food and money. I just want their company, just someone to talk to, you know."

■ People who beg generally enjoy it when someone takes the time to sit down, empathise with them and get to know their personal story. The Locals Hosts provide this role in a formal capacity, as do the Street Outreach team (although the people interviewed were much less aware of the Street Outreach Team's role).

"It's better for my wairua to be out here, talking to the people."

"I guess it is hard for us to tell people the truth because our families are like memories. We don't have families anymore, we only have memories."

■ Begging methods included sitting with a sign, asking outright for money, selling art or other goods, and impromptu busking. Many have a dollar figure in mind before beginning their day. When the desired amount is reached, they stop.

Some use strategies so as not to 'overwork' a particular spot. Others shift so they do not irritate shop owners or overstay their welcome. Some leave a spot to allow others to get money once their quota is reached.

"You don't want to be too greedy. If you're going to be greedy then there's not enough. If you're going to be greedy, the next time you sit down there, you're not going to get the same thing."



■ The amount made from a day's begging anecdotally ranges from about \$20-40. Most said they get about \$60-80 per week. There are occasional 'big drops' of \$50 or \$100 notes, but this is rare. Some described waiting to get the day's quota as boring, and others as easy.

“As I said before, a lot of people come from Auckland to Wellington because they know that Wellingtonians are more generous and that sort of stuff.”

Friday and Saturday nights are the best times to beg. Wellingtonians who have been out drinking on Courtenay Place and Cuba Street tend to give more money, but are also more inclined to be verbally abusive at that time.



“And Wellington people are the most generous people around. I haven't met any in any city that's more generous than Wellington people and I have no idea why.”

■ Wellington may be perceived as a good place to beg. Those who beg told us that Wellington, compared to other cities, is kinder and more tolerant of begging and of street people in general. There are mixed opinions about the social services in Wellington, with some saying there is good support and others needing more help.

There also seems to be a drift from both Auckland and Christchurch. We heard that some people came from Christchurch because of the trauma caused by the earthquakes and some drifted down from Auckland because of the restrictive laws and high population. It could also be due to the relatively transient nature of this group.

■ We spoke to some who wanted to get a job, but felt either trapped by their past criminal convictions or just did not have opportunities for change. It does not appear that the Clean Slate Act is either known or is working for them. Those who want jobs also struggle with the impacts from past or current drug dependencies, traumatic and/or neglectful upbringings and lack of work skills and training. Work and Income do not seem to be effective at getting people from the street community into paid work.

“...and then some people walk past and look at me and go, ‘Well get a job’, and I say, ‘Well how can I get a job if I haven't got any qualifications, any education or you fellas just won't help me?’”

“Cause you know, lack of experience, criminal history, you know being in jail, it's hard to find a job if you've been in jail.”

“You know, you never go hungry down here [Wellington], I found that out, yeah, got the Soup Kitchen and DCM actually got me back on my feet... I reckon Wellington community has got the softest heart yeah, I reckon.”

“But the thing is that you already get punished for your crimes. You come down here to get a job and you get punished again...you know it's always on your record, your permanent record for the rest of your life.”

“I mean, I've had, I got brung up in a bad, bad environment – all that sort of stuff... At one stage, I was against it [begging], and I didn't think of it as my way of getting an income. But instead of turning to crime I've had to suck a few eggs and yeah, and ask, and put a sign out and ask, you know... I'm quite disgusted in what I do and that, aye, begging and that. It's pretty sort of low in life, you know.”



"...and they said to me, 'why are you begging?' I said, 'Look, you understand this. I have a criminal record and no one wants to hire me. Who wants to hire me? I have a criminal record and they turned around and says 'oh' and walked away...I'm never going to them [Work and Income] for help. Reason why I don't want to go there is they muck you around too much..."

■ Stopping begging is not easy and they do not want to be forced to quit. Those we spoke with usually said they would not stop if begging were to become illegal. Some said they would need to resort to crime to replace the begging income.

"But at the end of the day, it's not against the law to ask for help. And if the Council wants to put in a by-law against us, well then they are going against our human rights."

"I don't know why, but the Police asked us to move along. We weren't allowed to ask for money anymore, not on the streets of Wellington anyway and...I left Wellington because of that and went to Porirua. I had given up asking people for money, I thought I would just rob people instead."

"I don't know if the Council's going to put in a by-law or whatever they're going to do. I don't know if begging's breaking the law, we're not doing anything wrong."

There were a couple of reports that sometimes the police prevent them from begging in Wellington. They were apprehensive that the Council might pass a by-law to outlaw begging. They suggested that such a by-law would be unfair and would push them into crime.

*"I'd turn around and go, 'oh do you have a job for me? If not, f*** off. Yeah I would just keep doing it until they offered me a job, because if someone said that to me, I'd turn around and say, 'well why should I stop begging? You know, give me a good reason why?'"*

■ People who beg can sometimes see themselves as 'guardians' of the streets. For example, they sit outside closed shops at night as security, they generate business for shops when people go in and buy them food or drinks, and they protect and mentor younger streeties. Further, those who beg do not like it when others begging are rude to people and leave messes in front of shops. They generally reported having respect and empathy for the shop owners.

"I can understand the shop owners and proprietors and restaurant owners and all that. I can understand them trying to move people sitting outside their shops with things and that sort of stuff and that. But, where else do you go? I mean, the popular streets are Lambton Quay and Cuba Street."

"The shopkeeper doesn't mind because I'm making them happy by the people walking past. Well they stop and they walk in there to make, to give them money to buy something and then they buy me something."

What we heard from citizens

■ Some citizens said that begging is effective – those who beg make money, so people simply continue to do it.

“ They wouldn’t beg if it wasn’t working. ”

“ Why do they do it? Because they can. It works. No one is moving them on, no one is asking them to shift. ”

■ There was a distinction made between begging and busking. Begging is seen as negative and busking as positive. Some said that busking is better because at least people are trying to entertain others and they are ‘working’ for their money.

“ Take buskers, they are doing something to make people happy. To me, beggars are lazy. ”

“ Be a busker instead. It makes the city vibrant. ”

“ I’m fine with busking – people are doing something, they’re trying to entertain people. ”

■ There was a mixed view on the prevalence of begging in relation to other cities and countries. Some think it is worse here, while others think we have a relatively small problem. However, all agreed that it was an increasing problem in Wellington and they feared the worst if it continues rising at the current rate. Some worried that begging in the city is now normalised.

“ There are so many beggars in Wellington, but I only saw one beggar when I went to Nairobi. ”

Regardless of the prevalence, most citizens said that begging does not reflect positively on Wellington’s image or on our community.

“ I’m annoyed and angry-this is a social sore. The ‘cool little capital’ thing doesn’t fit very well with me. ”

“ It’s not good for the community as a whole. ”

■ Citizens generally believed that people begging on the streets have had a rough life and/or a dependency of some kind. Citizens were also concerned about untreated or unsupported persons with mental health issues and the prevalence of young people begging. They generally had a good grasp of the complex lives of those who end up begging.

“ They look miserable and depressed. They are young, sad creatures. There is no evidence that these people are just spending their money on drugs and alcohol. I don’t like it when people say that. ”

■ In spite of most wanting to help, people did not generally want to give to something like an alternative giving campaign – they did not believe it was an effective approach as it did not immediately help someone in need. They wondered where that money would be going and how it would actually help.

People generally agreed that giving money was not helping anyone in the long-term, but they sometimes did it because they did not know what else to do. Dropping money or food to someone was a low-effort, speedy practice.

“ I give them money, but that’s not a solution, is it? ”

“ I wouldn’t give money to that [alternative giving campaign]. I wouldn’t know where the money is actually going. ”

“ I prefer to give on my own, if and when I want. ”



“Some of them write on their signs, ‘Looking for Work, Can’t Find a Job’, but maybe some of them just need education, need to know how to work or look for work. Maybe they’ve just had a shitty turn.”

■ Citizens perceive some begging as 'genuine' and some as 'opportunistic', but find it hard to differentiate between the two. People generally want to help people who they believe are in need (the deserving), but they are annoyed with those who they feel are just trying to get money (the undeserving).

“ I am disappointed in this country. Can't people get help? This is what I pay my taxes for. ”

“ We have a socialist welfare system, but it isn't working. ”

“We're an advanced society, we need to figure out a way to help. Begging is a symptom of a wider problem, a general movement. Government policies are probably to blame.”

“ I can't tell what their needs really are. I'm confused about what the issues really are. ”

“ For those just making easy money, it kind of takes away from those who really need it. ”

“ I object to others who use it as an easy out and for those who are capable. ”

■ There seemed to be a level of naivety, hoping for the best from people in the worst situation. Some empathetic citizens stop to talk to those who beg, find out what they need, ask if they are okay and go and get them food. Some have even offered jobs to those who beg.

However, citizens who see people who have cigarettes, mobile phones, iPads, nice shoes or clothes, very quickly lose empathy and wonder how those who beg can afford those things. Empathy also ends when those who beg seem ungrateful, aggressive or are actively using alcohol or drugs.

“ I've tried to put myself in their position. There's a lot of help in New Zealand. I feel sorry for them in some ways, but then I saw one pull out an iPad and start typing. ”

“ I wouldn't give them money because I see them smoking. ”

■ The citizens we spoke to had a low understanding of the realities of getting by on a benefit. They were unaware of how low the benefit can be and of benefit breaks, such as stand-down periods. However, because there is a social support system in New Zealand, they expressed frustration and wondered why the social safety net was not supporting people who are begging. Most believed that the government should be taking care of these people, and some questioned how their tax money was being used in this regard.

What we heard from retailers, businesses and other key stakeholders

■ This group felt that begging can be 'annoying and manipulative', particularly when people who beg target vulnerable citizens or sit near ATMs. There was a distinction made between passively and aggressively begging – just sitting with a sign versus actively asking for money or stand over tactics. This group was more concerned with the impact of aggressive begging, however, there was general agreement that all begging was an image issue for Wellington.

“I always get complaints from members of the public about beggars being out, especially in front of [premises], and members of the public feel intimidated by a lot of them, especially if they're in large groups...”

“I really don't mind beggars there, but not when they are being aggressive and confrontational...”

■ There are worries that people who beg may encroach on shared public spaces, making the people feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

“Even in the city you should have your own personal space.”

“It detracts from the usability of public spaces, particularly as you move into the city, it cuts down on the usage of them, and people won't go in to shop, particular shops if there's beggars out there.”

■ We heard a lot of concerns from this group about the negative image that begging has on Wellington in general. They are worried about the impact this might have on business and the retail environment. Interestingly, some who beg also agree that begging is not a good look for shoppers and they have some empathy for retailers.

“It's a bad look for Wellington.”

Whilst some saw busking as adding some vibrancy to the city and creating a positive image, some felt it detracted, especially when those who beg 'sort of busk', but they are not very good.

“Is there a crossover between begging and busking? Because I see some incredibly bad singers and stuff like that, you know, maybe they're just doing that in hope that somebody will see it as busking and not begging.”

■ It is not easy to disentangle begging from other types of offensive behaviour happening around Wellington. We heard that this group is concerned that there is a criminal 'underbelly' to some of the begging activity. In particular there are reports by retailers that some people begging are also involved in criminal activity such as shoplifting and on-selling items, pooling their money and maybe even using heavy-handed tactics with other people begging.

We heard there could also be begging 'gangs' in the city, although at present it appears that no one really knows with certainty just exactly how begging and crime are related, which makes it hard for retailers to know just how

concerned to be about the issue of begging in general. There was also concern that nighttime begging activity could be quite different to daytime activity, and that may not have been reflected in this report.

■ There were mixed opinions about whether begging directly impacts negatively upon businesses – some businesses seem to be more affected than others. For example convenience stores may have more interactions with those who beg. For others, it may be less about the direct impacts and more about the image and the perceived lack of safety by customers.

For others, there are a whole host of anti-social behaviours that plague their business environments, with begging just one of them. Other concerning anti-social issues include public urination and defecation, spitting, graffiti, vandalism, aggressive youth, public intoxication, homelessness and loitering.

■ Some retailers are trying workarounds to solve the problem. Various strategies are being employed to get people who are begging to move along: ringing Council or Local Hosts, directly asking them to move on, handing out food, managing the physical space outside shops with signage, using sprinklers and water hoses, calling police, using the 'EyesOn Wellington' service.

“If they get really aggressive, I just then, I call the police.”

On the one hand, there is urgency to remove begging from the CBD but there is also some understanding that begging is a complex social issue.

What we heard from members of the Street Outreach Team

■ This group was frustrated that people are sometimes being paroled directly from prison to the Wellington Night Shelter (this can happen from other cities directly to Wellington). Social services have a disconnection from Corrections and there are not good interim housing options for parolees. Sometimes people beg directly from prison release due to lack of other supportive options.

■ Their view is that costs of living are rising, but incomes and benefits are not. Begging provides a source of disposable income. Many beneficiaries have no extra cash and no savings, so begging fills the gaps, which can sometimes be used to cover emergency expenses. Also, not everyone in need is receiving a formal benefit of any kind.

They said that giving cash directly to those who beg does not solve the issue, but it may be the only thing that people feel they can reasonably and easily do to help. Also people may have money to give, but not time. There is an effective dynamic happening – if someone asks, someone will give.

■ This group noted that those who beg have a lack purposeful activity. Because of the complex nature of their circumstances, people who beg have many barriers to engaging in meaningful activity in society.

“ Sometimes it’s a case of, they are sitting there so may as well put out a sign and make some money. ”

■ Begging represents a great loss of pride and mana – begging is seen as the lowest and the last resort. It is especially concerning for Māori who are begging because they are often disconnected from their culture, whakapapa and whānau.

This group expressed concern about the vulnerability of those who beg; they are usually dealing with co-existing, complex problems; they are battling with mental health issues and addictions.

■ There’s a perception of Wellington as generous, so people flock to the resources of the city. Wellington may be more politically left-leaning, more aware of burdened social systems, and of the complex environment in which social services work.

The team told us that there is a strong begging and streetie community. There is a connectivity with people who beg – there are strategic spots where there are more chances for social interaction. Aggressive newbies are dealt to by the street community. They get sorted out or moved on. The begging community provides the informal support that they may not be able to get through their families.

“ It’s hard to get out of the [begging] routine once in it. ”

■ People who beg need positive connection to others and to the wider society in addition to the basics of income, food and shelter. Seeing people who beg as human and learning not to judge them is important – knowing their stories and taking the time to interact with them and making a connection to those who may be lonely is an essential part of helping them.

■ People who work with those who beg noticed that they are not thinking about long-term objectives, but they are just surviving day-to-day. Focus should go towards interventions that help before someone gets to the point that they need to beg; begging should not be the way people normally get income.

Because begging is not illegal, police or security agents have limited power to act unless someone is being physically intimidating, trespassing or otherwise breaking a law. This limited power causes frustration for some who might expect there to be police enforcement of this issue.

“...the lack of understanding is probably the key, from retailers, from members of the public, as to actually what, what the issues are and what we can and can’t do. ”

Key messages from what we heard

Those who beg

- The people we spoke to were begging for disposable income to help pay bills, support habits or addictions, or because they did not have other forms of positive social engagement or employment opportunities.
- We were struck by the extent of difficulty that people begging were experiencing; they grew up in harsh circumstances and poverty, they battled addictions and co-existing mental health issues and they were disconnected from their whānau. Those who had been incarcerated could not get jobs, thus keeping them in a poverty cycle.
- People begging were aware of their impact on society. They understood that begging in front of shops and ATMs may be unpleasant or feel unsafe for some customers and shop owners. Some were agreeable to being moved on, whilst others felt entitled to sit where they wanted. Some felt they had a role to play with shops – they believed they attracted customers and/or acted as security.
- People who beg admired Wellingtonians – they believed them to be kind, caring and generous.

Citizens

- Citizens were concerned that begging was increasing and it was not a good look for Wellington. Some also felt unsafe because of begging.
- Those we spoke with were generally empathetic towards begging; they saw it as a failure of our social welfare system.
- Empathy ends when people see those who beg using phones or iPads, smoking, or wearing nice clothes or shoes.
- People would like to give, but prefer to give to those in 'genuine need' instead of the 'opportunists'. They have a hard time distinguishing between the two.

Retailers, businesses and key stakeholders

- This group was concerned about the negative image that begging portrays. They also felt that begging may make shoppers and visitors feel unsafe or annoyed.
- Begging is bothersome and sometimes comes with other anti-social issues such as public urination, spitting, intoxication and leaving rubbish in a begging spot.
- There was concern that people begging may sometimes be wrapped up in criminal activity such as stealing and on-selling items. Retailers may see more of these issues in their daily business. It makes it difficult to disentangle begging from other offensive and criminal activity.
- In lieu of laws against begging, this group may use workarounds such as the Eyes On Wellington App, putting up physical barriers, asking people begging to move on and contacting Police when issues escalate beyond their ability to cope.

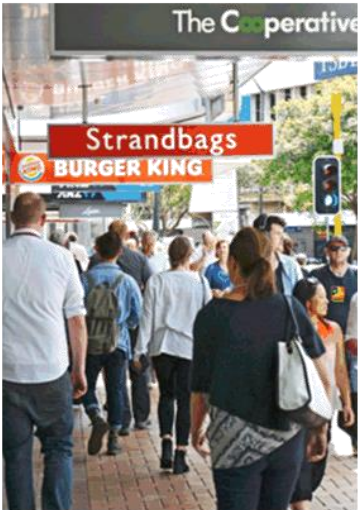
Street Outreach Team

- There was concern expressed that begging is a shameful experience and is harmful to mana.
- People who beg tend to be short-term thinkers who are just surviving day-to-day, making it hard to change their behaviour.
- People who beg are poor, with lack of affordable housing options, lack of job opportunities and few options for engagement in a more positive side of life.
- This group felt that people who beg are vulnerable and we need to ensure that their human rights are not violated.

2

Making sense of what we heard

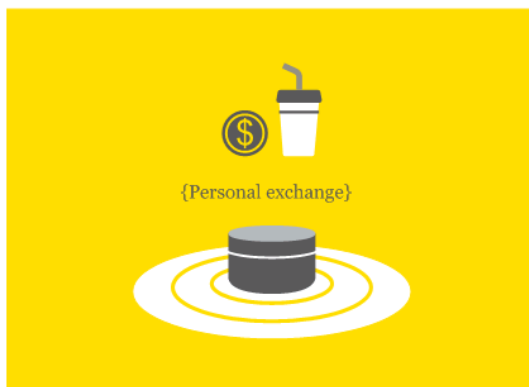
The following section goes deeper into the experience of begging with visually illustrated snapshots. The snapshots demonstrate that while begging is an activity that we see on the streets, there are complex factors that influence the reasons why people beg. The visuals may be useful as a way to impart empathy and to use as a tool to help unravel this complex issue.



Begging is currently an effective transaction

Begging is a complex, multi-faceted problem. Focusing only at the transactional level (asking and giving), ignores the underlying factors that need to be addressed in order to alleviate this issue for the community.

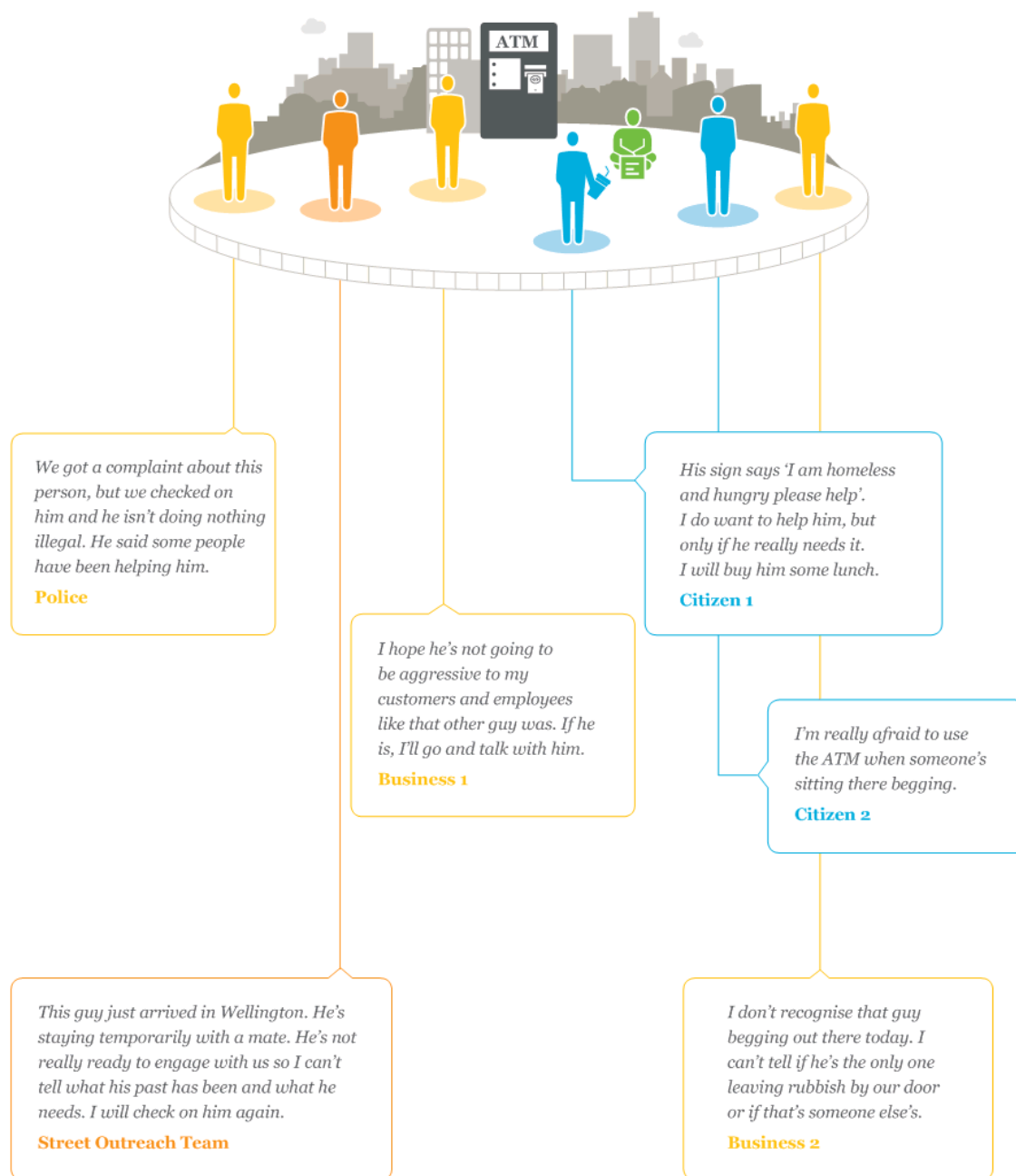
At its most basic level, begging is effective – there are currently enough people who feel good about giving to those who beg (giving is an effective, time-saving, low-effort form of charity that makes them feel good), and those who beg are mostly getting what they need from it (some extra income and food). Therefore, the interaction continues because the reasons that underlie the begging have not been addressed; begging is a symptom.



Given that this dynamic is working relatively well for both parties, one begins to see why alternative forms of giving or an outright ban may not provide the total solution to end begging. Those who beg still need their income, and those who give still need low-effort, expedient forms of donating money that deliver confidence that donations will be used thoughtfully. Alternative forms of giving and banning are mainly aimed at adjusting to the needs of the giver, but do not address the needs of the person begging.

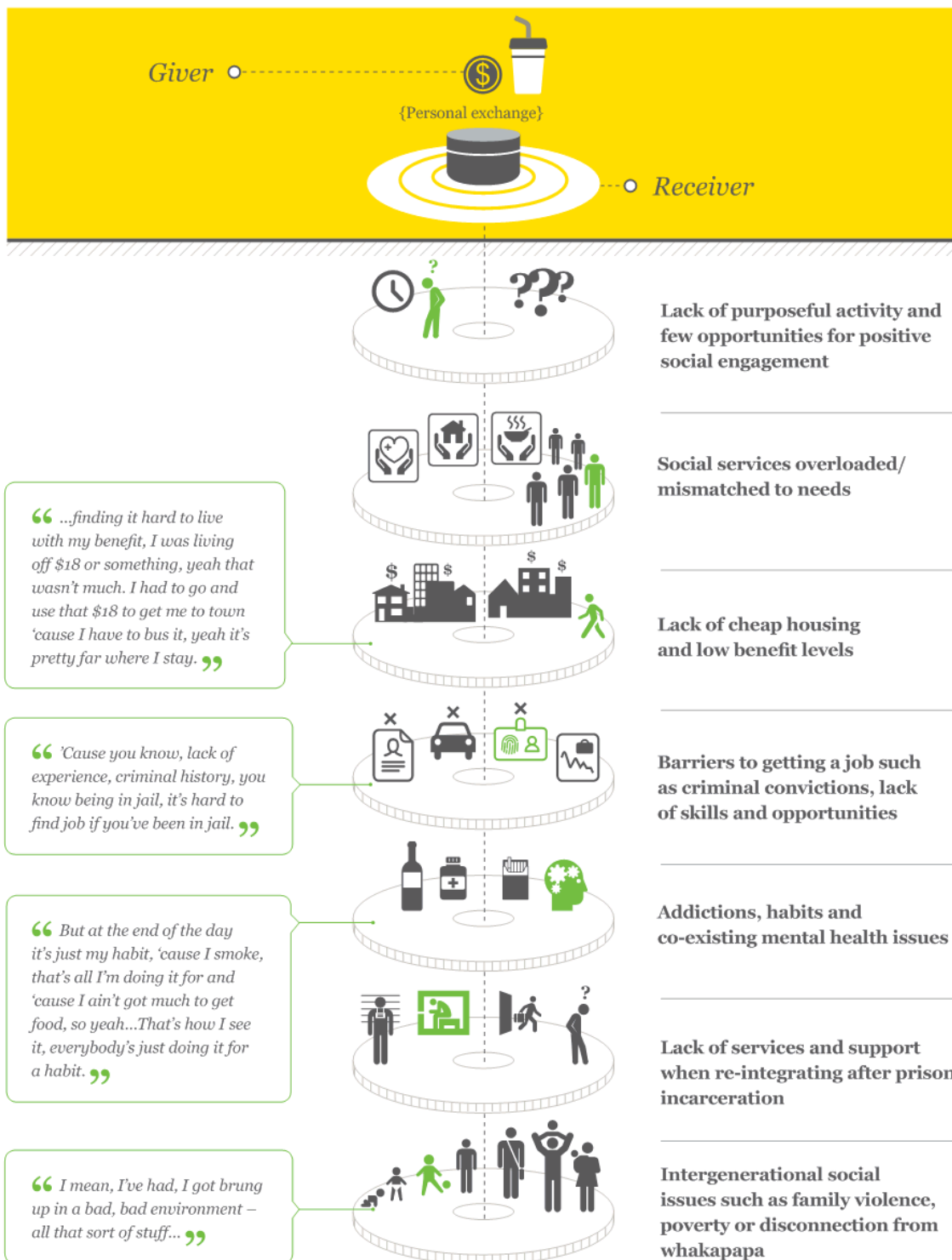
The view from both sides (askers and givers) is that money is needed now. But this masks the reasons that contributed to the need for begging in the first place. For sustainable change to occur, a shift in thinking is required from short-term solutions to longer term supports. Complex social issues, such as begging, require interventions and support at multiple levels – a quick and easy fix is not likely to be effective. So, removing begging at the transactional level only means that the complex issues are still there and will persist. Various types of well-matched interventions will be required.

One view of the transaction*

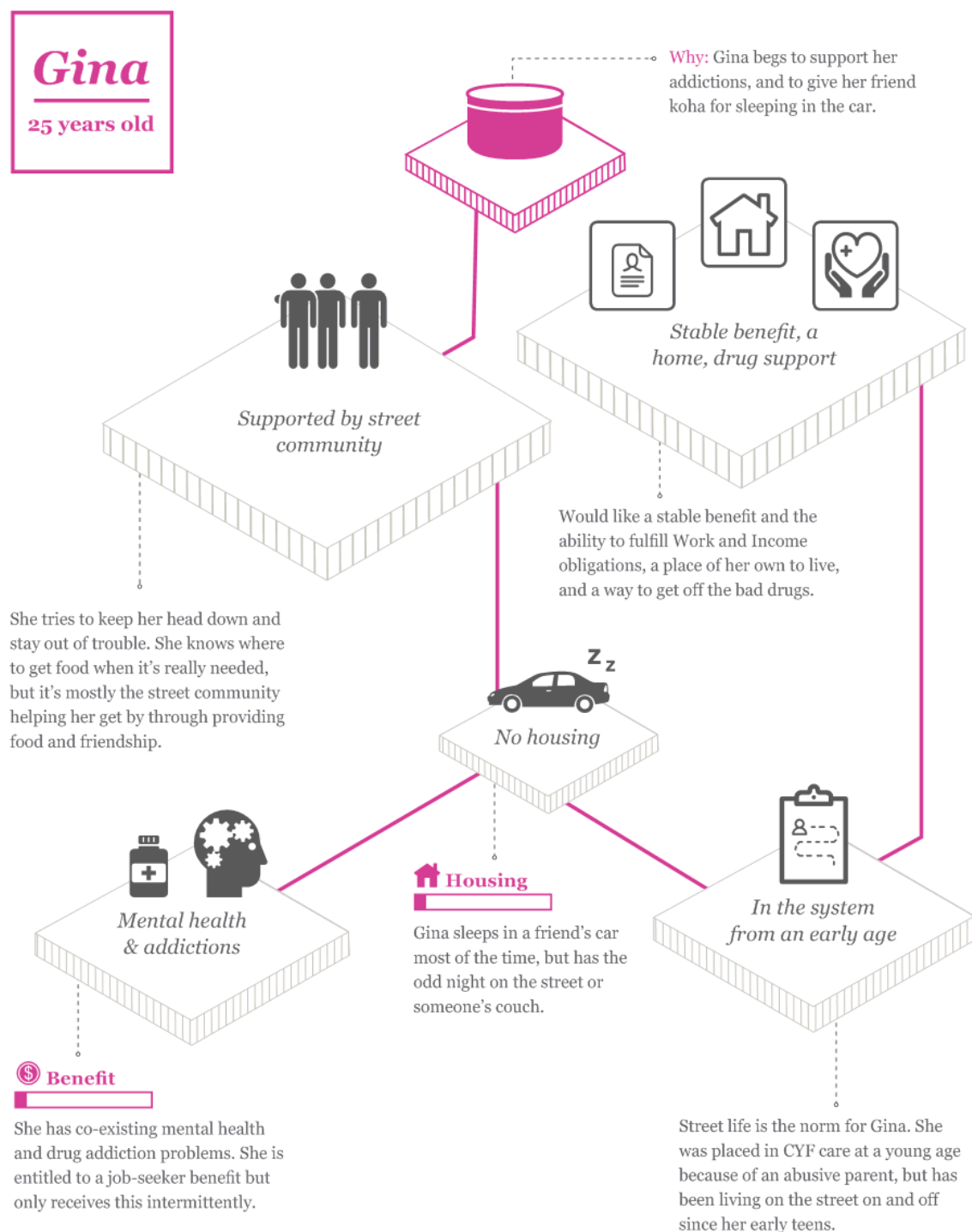


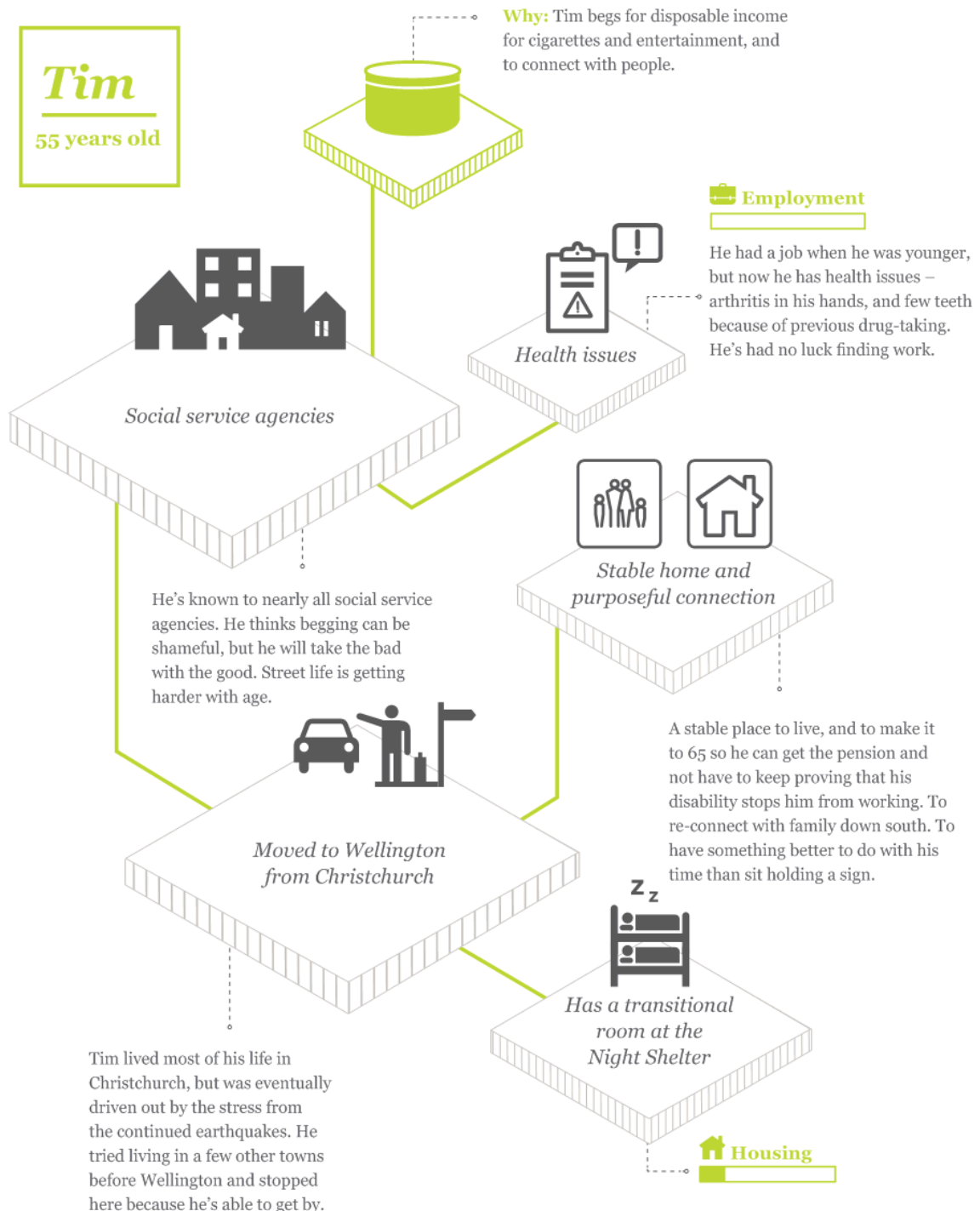
* All quotes on this page are hypothetical and used to illustrate a point.

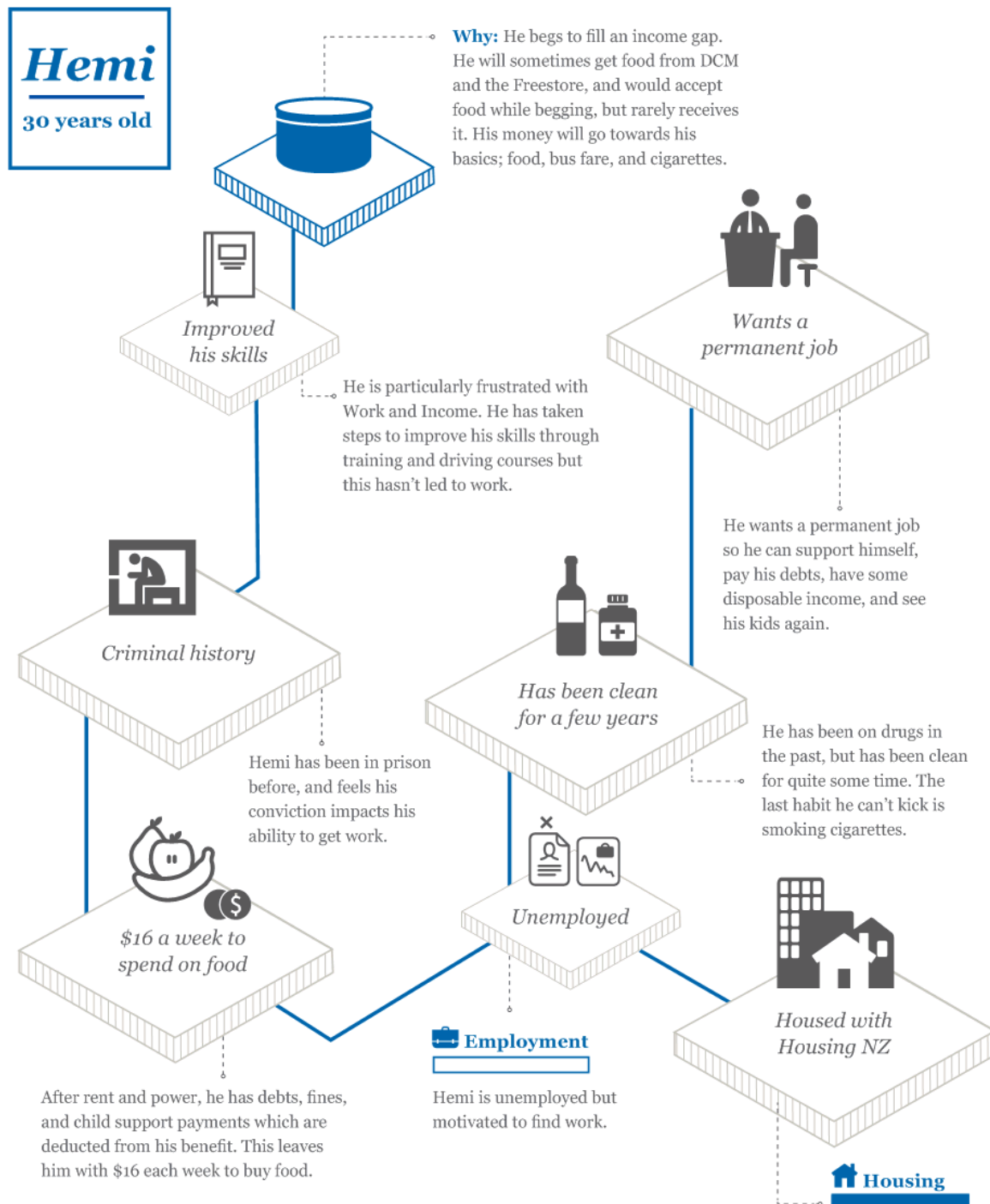
Begging is a symptom



Why do people beg?







3

Creating meaningful change

This final section offers some principles for designing future solutions, outlines what all the players may need, and concludes with some How Might We questions that are a starting point to stimulate thinking. We included ideas that came directly from the workshop participants.

Principles for designing future solutions

This project has demonstrated that begging is a complex phenomenon and it is a dynamic transaction that involves a community of players. Sustainable solutions will need supportive policies and key agencies working in alignment.

Working principles for designing sustainable solutions

In order to create meaningful, long-term change that meets the needs of all involved, we thought about some principles to keep in mind when designing new solutions.

Understand all the levers

Begging is a complex, multidimensional social issue. Solving an issue at one level without looking at the whole problem may create new issues or have unintended consequences. For example, banning begging from the CBD does not stop begging occurring elsewhere and indeed may channel the need for disposable income into petty crime or other harmful activity. Ensure if one lever is activated, there are plans to react to other potential levers.

Start small and be biased towards action

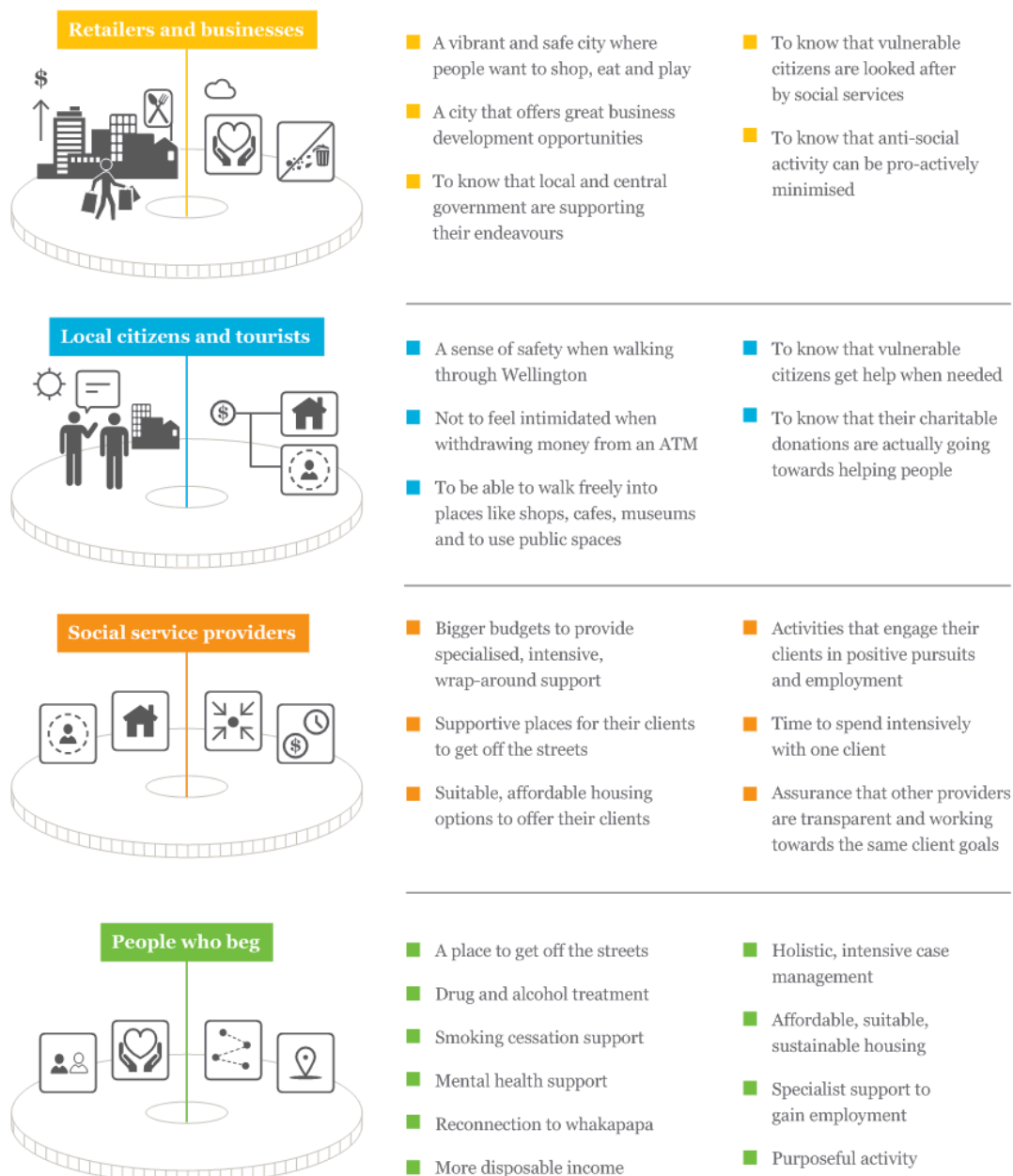
Complex issues require numerous, small-scale interventions. Take a prototyping approach – test ideas on a small scale as cheaply and quickly as possible. Evolve and tweak as you go to create momentum. Demonstrating cost-effective action is important for the whole community.

Work together

As often as possible, solutions and interventions should be collaborative. Begging is an issue that crosses several agencies and impacts businesses, visitors and residents. The agency list is broad and may include: Work and Income, Police, Corrections, retail and business advocacy groups, resident groups, transport agencies, DHB, mental health agencies, local Iwi, gambling support, drug and alcohol services, social housing providers, homeless advocacy groups, Women's Refuge, Downtown Community Ministry, Wellington City Mission, free food outlets and the Wellington Night Shelter.

Envisioning the community's needs

Given the principles outlined on the previous page, and taking into account the stories we have heard from all stakeholders, we believe that successful change needs to be holistic and cater to everyone's needs concurrently.



In order to generate new ideas, it is helpful to begin with open-ended, high-level focusing questions. The following questions were created with the help of the participants at our final stakeholder workshop.

How might we...

**Redirect the goodwill
of givers into more
constructive solutions?**



**Incentivise
employers to hire
those that beg?**

**Increase assistance
without just giving
a handout?**

**Ensure people get
the mental health
treatment and
addiction support
that they really
need, for as long as
they need it?**

**Determine what is
or isn't 'acceptable
begging'?**



Emerging ideas

At the final stakeholder workshop, the group had a chance to practice generating ideas that they think will help address the issue. The next phase should involve more robust idea generation, prototyping and piloting new initiatives on a small scale.



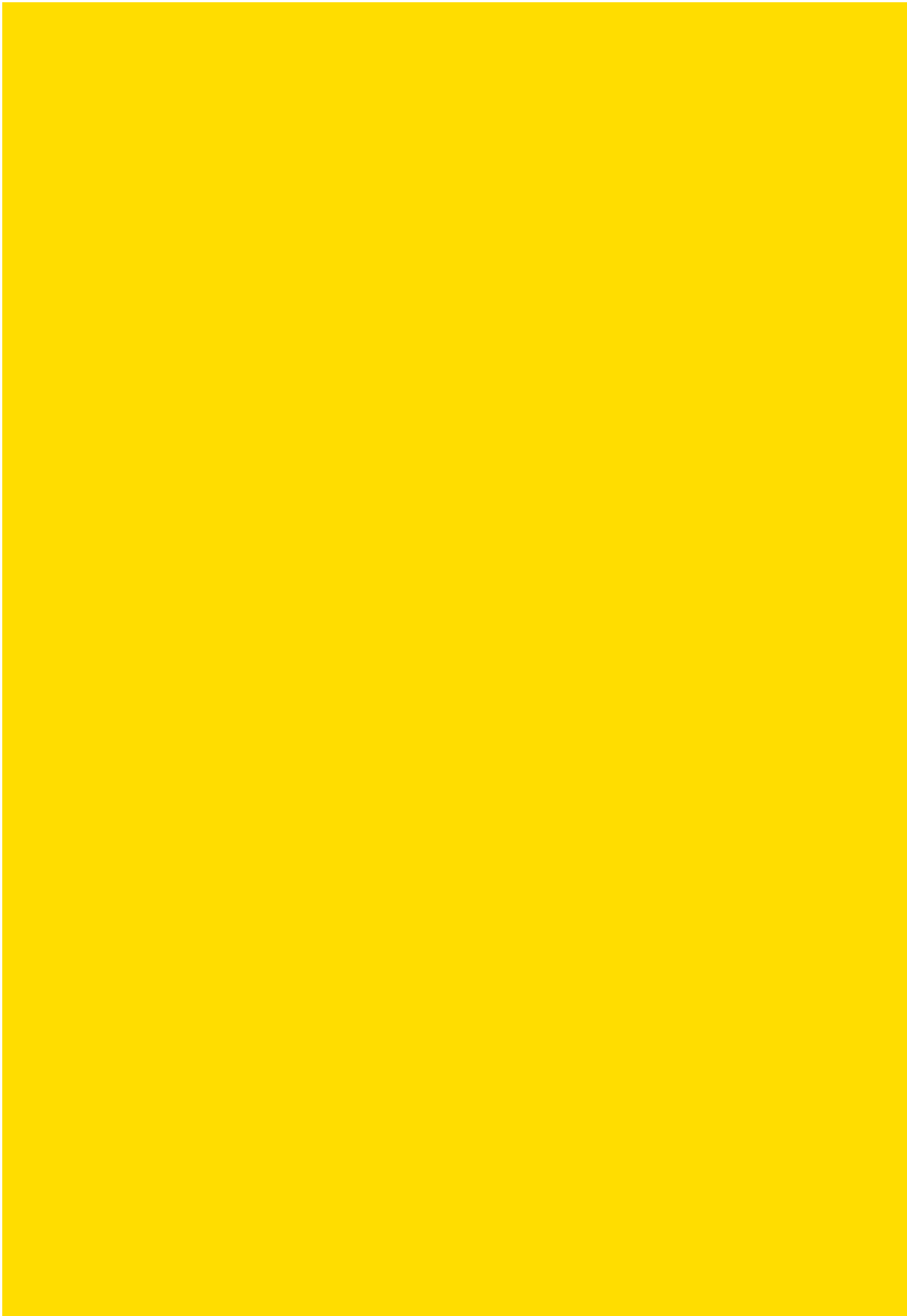
Conclusion

This document has re-enforced that there are many stakeholders across Wellington who are concerned about begging. Concerns include feelings of a general reduced sense of safety; negative image issues for our city; questions about whether begging is intertwined with criminal activity; and confusion about why people in our society need to beg when we have a social welfare system. The comments reflect a mix of compassion and annoyance.

For those who beg, we have demonstrated that their circumstances are complex and intertwined with other issues of vulnerability such as, lack of suitable housing options; chronic unemployment; lack of positive and purposeful activity; drug, alcohol and cigarette addictions; mental health issues; and criminal convictions. The people we spoke to all came from difficult or abusive childhoods and were usually disconnected from their whānau.

We have discovered that begging is currently an effective transaction – there are people asking and people giving. But we have also pointed out that focusing efforts to stop the transaction alone will not address the underlying issues that led to begging in the first place. Stopping the transaction may simply mean a re-direction of need for disposable income into more harmful activities. Sustainable change can only be maximised if the complexity of begging is addressed at multiple levels.

This report has begun the conversation with key people in Wellington, including people who beg. The next task will be to continue the efforts with multiple stakeholders across the sector, with an aligned agenda and a common purpose.



Appendix 2

This appendix provides brief examples of some measures other cities around the world are utilising to address the issue of begging.

Legal options

1. A number of cities have put regulatory measures in place in an attempt to stop begging. In many cities it is common for aggressive begging to be against the law.
2. The National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty in the US reports a 25% increase on begging bans, city-wide, from 2011-2014. During the same timeframe there has been a 20% increase on banning begging in particular locations.¹

England and Wales

3. It is against the law to beg in England and Wales, under the Vagrancy Act of 1824. There are, however, varying levels of enforcement. Anti-social behaviour orders were introduced as another means of addressing begging, and were replaced last year with Injunction to Prevent Nuisance and Annoyance. "The primary aim of the legislature was the introduction of a more effective and flexible legal framework providing at the same time more protection to local communities and victims of anti-social behaviour."²
4. In late 2014, The Guardian reported that the number of people across England and Wales that were prosecuted under the Vagrancy Act were up 70%.³ The article claims the increase is due to an inflation in the number of people who beg, as opposed to enforcement changes, though that is disputed by some providers.
5. Begging is also illegal in Victoria, Australia under the Summary Offences Act 1966. The Police in Melbourne often run operations that they claim target "aggressive and professional beggars".

Melbourne, Australia

6. In 'Operation Minta', Melbourne Police work with Salvation Army officers to identify repeat offenders/people who beg regularly. The project requires the cooperation of the city council, police, the courts and the Salvation Army. The operation sees those who beg arrested but also assessed, and, if eligible for a Salvation Army diversion program, they are given physical and mental health checks and helped with housing. The diversion from fines or prosecution is offered but participants must continue with the programme.
7. Youth Projects, a service that provides health, outreach, community and employment, education and training services to individuals experiencing disadvantage, unemployment, homelessness and alcohol and other drug issues, says it has had increasing reports from clients who are being fined for begging. Some of the reports claim that their money has been taken by police as "proceeds of crime" and put into charity boxes. There is criticism of the plan, with a clinic for homeless people in Melbourne saying the city's homelessness problem is heightened by police issuing fines for people begging for money.
8. Opponents of criminalized begging state that when individuals are trying to get into employment or otherwise improve their situation from begging, fines can prevent people from moving forward. It is reported that most of the people targeted for begging are either 'repeat offenders' or those that display intimidation or aggression while begging.

¹ <https://nextcity.org/daily/entry/10-facts-homelessness-2014>

² <http://www.criminallawandjustice.co.uk/features/Replacing-ASBO-IPNA>

³ <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/nov/30/begging-prosecutions-increase-england-wales>

Hamilton, New Zealand

9. Hamilton has the Safety in Public Places Bylaw 2014 in which begging in a public place in a manner that is likely to cause harassment, alarm, or distress to any reasonable person, or causes an unreasonable interference with the peace, comfort or convenience of any person is listed as a prohibited activity.
10. The following conduct is an offence under the bylaw:
 - Nuisance
 - Behaviour in a public place that poses a threat to public safety
 - Offensive behaviour
 - Failing to comply with any lawful notice or direction given under this bylaw
 - Obstructing or hindering any authorised officer in performing any duty or power conferred by this bylaw.
11. Authorised officers are empowered under the Local Government Act 2002 to enforce this bylaw in the event of a breach.

Auckland, New Zealand

12. Auckland's Public Safety and Nuisance Bylaw 2013, Part 2: Public Safety, Nuisance, General Behaviour and Street Naming and Numbering, as a clause which states that a person must not use a public place to beg in a manner that may intimidate or cause a nuisance to any person.
13. Like Hamilton, the Council may use its powers under the Local Government Act 2002 to enforce the bylaw.

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

14. Atlanta has had a law prohibiting unwanted monetary solicitation, or panhandling, since 2012.
15. Penalties for violating this law include community service, monetary fines and/or imprisonment. It is against the law to solicit money in the following places:
16. Within 15 feet of:
 - an automated teller machine (ATM)
 - a parking lot pay box
 - the entrance or exit of a building
 - a line for entry to an event venue, business or other building
 - a bus, rail or subway station
 - a taxi stand

It is also against the Atlanta law to solicit money by:

- Blocking the path or passage of the person solicited
- Following alongside the person solicited so that they cannot get away from the solicitor
- Using profane or abusive language during the solicitation or following refusal
- Continuing to bother a person after they have refused the solicitation verbally or by gesture
- Making any statement or gesture which could be perceived as a threat
- Touching the person solicited

Florida, USA

17. In 2010, Oakland Park passed, and since revoked, an ordinance that finds anyone who responds to a beggar with money or any "article of value", or buys flowers or a newspaper from someone on the street would face a fine of \$50 to \$100 and as many as 90 days in jail.
18. Also in Florida, this time Orlando, a lesser but similar type of punishment happened in April 2011 when a group of activists lost a court battle against the city to overturn its 2006 laws that restrict sharing food with groups of more than 25 people. The ordinance requires those who do these "large" charitable food sharings in parks within two miles of City Hall to obtain a permit and limits each group to two permits per park for a year. Food sharing is considered to be a form of speech, but the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the ordinance still provides ample areas for groups to practice their first amendment rights because they can still share food elsewhere in the city.
19. The law was not enforced during the legal battle, but after the lawsuit against the city failed, Orlando began cracking down on those who chose to defy the ordinance, resulting in multiple arrests of activists from Food Not Bombs.
20. Food sharing prohibitions are far from a new development and are not only found in Orlando. In 2010, National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty released a report on the growing popularity of these ordinances.
21. While bans on public begging have passed with little resistance, ordinances restricting organizations and individuals from sharing food with the needy have raised significant opposition.
22. Other American cities have passed or attempted to pass laws on the following activities in public⁴:
 - Loitering and vagrancy laws
 - Sitting down or lying down
23. Though these laws may not directly state they are targeting begging, they certainly can be used to thwart people from asking for soliciting money from others.

Discouragement

Alternative giving

24. Many believe that by assisting people who beg with money or goods perpetuates the begging cycle – ie, if it works, people will continue to do it. Alternative giving campaigns ask that those who would give money or goods to someone begging, they instead put their money towards established social service providers so that services can be maximised for those in need. Many cities that have regulatory measures in place also run alternative giving campaigns.
25. Edmonton in Alberta, Canada provides a Have a Heart – Give Smart campaign that is "one part of a larger and more integrated approach to address panhandling" and encourages people to donate to social services. The website makes available a pocket guide with information of how to reach providers in the city⁵, as well as educational brochures offering advice for dealing with those who beg.⁶
26. Denver, Colorado, USA's Better Way to Give campaign began in 2007 and is led by Denver's Road Home, an organisation fighting homelessness in Denver. Although not explicitly about combatting begging, Better Way to Give is included as an action against

⁴ <https://nextcity.org/daily/entry/10-facts-homelessness-2014>

⁵ <http://www.edmontonpolice.ca/~media/EPS%20External/Files/Brochures/211%20Pocket%20Guide.ashx>

⁶ <http://www.edmontonpolice.ca/~media/EPS%20External/Files/Media/PanhandlingBrochure.ashx>

homelessness, with the campaign providing an alternative to giving to panhandlers. The webpage does not differentiate between issues arising from homelessness as opposed to why people beg.

27. Since its inception the program has raised more than \$200,000 for Denver's Road Home. Denver's Road Home website states that recent studies estimate the people of Denver give more than \$4 million a year to panhandlers. It also states that many panhandlers aren't homeless, and that most of the homeless don't panhandle. All donations, including those through the donation meters, go through the Mile High United Way, and no donations go to the city of Denver.
28. Businesses, community groups and individuals are invited to sponsor a donation meter for \$1,000 a year. The donation smart meters accept Visa, MasterCard and Discover credit cards in increments of one-dollar to one-hundred dollars as well as spare change. Note that begging is illegal in Denver, and the city says it averages about 300 citations a year since the law was established in 2000. Approximately two-thirds of those violations involved aggressive behavior, rather than violating the time and place limits.

Kindness can kill

29. Popular in English cities are Your Kindness Can Kill campaigns focussed on the harm of giving money directly to people who beg. The campaign hopes to show people that their kindness – ie wanting to give money to people who beg – actually perpetuates the problem by enabling the person begging to continue a life on the streets, and potentially using the money to buy substances to feed an addiction, which may in turn kill them. The campaign is very clear in its messaging that people who beg are very likely to use the change given to feed a drug or alcohol addiction.
30. Critics of the campaign are uncomfortable with some of the assumptions made with this type of campaign. There does not appear to be scepticism about the claim that many people who beg spend that money to feed an addiction, but there is scepticism about the lack of separation between people experiencing homelessness and people who beg, and concerns that this campaign perpetuates a stereotype that all people who beg and people who are experiencing homelessness are one and the same. The campaign takes a blunt approach to a complex issue.
31. The campaign began in 2003 by a London-based homeless charity called Thames Reach. The campaign has since been adopted in many other parts of England.⁷

Voucher system

32. Utilising a voucher system is an alternative giving campaign that allows givers to provide vouchers to those in need. The vouchers are usually for food or transport and are an alternative to giving out cash.
33. Flagstaff, Arizona, USA has implemented such a system. Vouchers are for food in local stores and one restaurant. The vouchers may not be used to purchase anything containing alcohol.
34. Another program, in Memphis, Tennessee, has been using vouchers for about 14 years, according to the Memphis Union Mission. About 100 coupons get used at the mission each month, each good for a meal and a night's shelter. The group sells them to the public in packs of four for a suggested \$20 donation.
35. Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA runs a similar programme called Real Change, and since its launch in 2005, organisers claim success as the number of people begging has decreased. They have found that the voucher program has decreased panhandling

⁷ <http://www.thamesreach.org.uk/news-and-views/campaigns/giving-to-beggars/>

because many panhandlers aren't actually seeking help for homelessness. So, as more residents offer only the vouchers instead of cash, the incentive to panhandle is reduced.

Street management

36. Those wishing to solicit money for personal gain/beg/panhandle in the city of Greensboro, North Carolina, USA will need to obtain a 'privilege license' from the City. It requires a criminal background check (free of charge) by the police.
37. The background check takes up to seven days to complete. Those wishing to obtain a licence must have two forms of identifications – one of which must be a North Carolina driver's licence. The other can be a birth certificate, military identification card or a social security card.
38. Panhandler Licenses are valid until the end of each fiscal year and the whole application process, including the background check, must be repeated each year to reapply for the license.

Other initiatives

39. Many cities that have regulatory measures in place also have ways to redirect money that would be given to people who beg to social service providers. For example, in addition to its regulatory options explained in this paper, Atlanta also has an alternative giving scheme - "Giving Meters".⁸
40. In addition to making begging illegal, Atlanta has launched a campaign called Give Change that Makes Sense. It is a combined effort of the City of Atlanta, Police and the private sector. The three-pronged campaign utilises education strategies, increased enforcement and re-directed giving to social service providers. The strategy was created to address aggressive begging throughout the city of Atlanta. It was launched by the Central Atlanta Progress, Atlanta Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Mayor's office, the Atlanta Police Department and other public certified law enforcement jurisdictions with full participation of the private sector. The goal of the campaign is to convince people that giving money to people who beg is not the most effective form of charity, and to make those who beg aware that their actions are against the law.
41. The strategy calls for:
 - Stepped-up enforcement/interaction/intervention – At the public level (police and other sworn police jurisdictions) and private level (private business security, hired off-duty police and the Downtown Ambassador Force).
 - Education/supply-demand management – Urging visitors, conventioners, residents, students, and employees, through tailored information campaigns, that giving to panhandlers is counterproductive; and further, to educate the panhandlers that it is against the law to verbally solicit money in the "Downtown Tourist Triangle" and after dark throughout the city, as defined by the existing commercial solicitation ordinance.
 - Directed giving/homeless services – Coordination of convenient avenues where those who wish to give can do so efficiently by giving those in need directions to service providers who can assist.
42. Parts of the EU have reported higher numbers of begging, particularly with migrants from eastern European countries. Sweden has developed a reform package to combat vulnerability and begging. The three reform areas focus on:

⁸ <http://www.atlantadowntown.com/initiatives/stop-panhandling/redirect-giving>

- increased cooperation within the European Union, especially with Romania and Bulgaria
- clearer rules in Sweden
- close cooperation with civil society organisations.

43. The ultimate goal, according to Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality, is that no one will have to beg.⁹

44. Important measures in the package include:

- Within the framework of the cooperation agreement with Romania, continue work on development of welfare, children's rights and gender equality.
- Play an active role towards the European Commission in tackling the issue and promote EU efforts on Roma inclusion.
- Support Romania via the Cohesion Fund, the Social Fund and the Regional Development Fund.
- A government assignment to the Police to propose measures to stop violence against vulnerable EU citizens staying temporarily in Sweden. The assignment report is to be presented by 30 November.
- Supplementary terms of reference to the inquiry into trafficking in human beings about protection provided by criminal law against exploitation of vulnerable people who have come to Sweden.
- Better management of unlawful settlements on public and private land. An inquiry will analyse how landowners' possibilities to obtain help with measures in the event of prohibited settlements can be improved.
- Better cooperation and regular meetings with civil society organisations working with vulnerable EU citizens.

Macaela Flanagan

March 2016.

⁹ <http://www.government.se/press-releases/2015/08/combating-vulnerability-and-begging--no-one-should-have-to-beg/>