



Worcester
CITY COUNCIL



Guide for Busking and Street Entertainment in Worcester City

What is busking?

'Busking' means music, dance, street theatre, performance and art offered live in public spaces for the purposes of entertaining, interacting with members of the public, and receiving voluntary contributions.

Busking helps ensure Worcester's city centre is a vibrant place that shoppers, residents and visitors can all enjoy. However, it is important that the right balance is struck between the needs of performers and the impact on local businesses and residents.

Busking does not require a licence and is welcome on public land ("Busking for charity", please see later in this guidance) however as with all use of public space, there is the expectation that everyone will act reasonably in sharing the space with everyone - shoppers, business and other buskers.

This guide has been drawn up in consultation with:

- The people of Worcester
- The Musicians' Union
- Equity
- The Keep Streets Live Campaign
- Worcester Music Festival
- SLAP Magazine
- Local buskers
- Worcester BID and representatives from local business
- Worcestershire Regulatory Services

The guide gives performers, the public, residents and businesses the knowledge to work together to enhance the experience for all users of the city centre.

It aims to provide a means to promote positive and considerate relationships with all those who share the public space and avoid confrontational situations. This guide covers public land - i.e. our streets and public squares. Shopping centres, churchyards and the areas in and around stations are generally private land and the landowner's permission is required to perform there.



Guidance for Buskers

Introduce yourself

Wherever practical introduce yourself to those around you, let them know what you do and how long you intend to perform for. Encourage people to approach you if they have any issues. This simple step is extremely effective at creating a positive environment in which to perform.

What has the biggest impact on those around you?

Intrusive **noise levels** - that is noise that, whether through excessive volume, long duration or repetition, makes the lives of nearby businesses or residents more difficult.

Engage with the surrounding community

A culture of community can be built effectively and simply if everyone is open to dialogue. By speaking with one another politely and directly we can prevent problems before they start - being open to reasonable compromise and sharing space fairly goes a long way.

Consider your surroundings

Please consider potential economic impacts - the city centre is a vital part of the wider city economy. Please bear in mind that inconsiderate busking can lead to meetings being disrupted, rooms having to be taken out of use, and customers choosing to take their business elsewhere.

Please be aware of your **location** - who and what is around you - don't set up too near other performers, your last pitch or other users of public space. Be sensitive to nearby businesses and residents and choose your pitch carefully. In particular, be aware of your proximity to cashpoints or telephone boxes. It is important to ensure that cashpoint users do not feel overlooked.

Maintain **public safety** and access - make sure that people can move past your performance easily. It is your responsibility to make sure that your crowd is well managed. If at any point there are any access or safety concerns you must stop your performance until the issue is resolved, dispersing your spectators if necessary.

Be aware of the **timing** of your performance - the city centre is home to many hotels and residents, please take extra care with evening performances. **Note:** it is an offence to use a loudspeaker or amplification in the street between 9pm and 8am without City Council consent and generally permissions will only be associated with city centre events. When performing in the evening without amplification, residential amenity must be respected, particularly if it is brought to the attention of the busker.

Be aware of special events in the city, and note that there are places and times when busking might not be appropriate.

A list of events can be found at www.visitworchester.co.uk

About your Performance

- We recommend you work on a rough guideline of two hours' performance time, but it can be less.
- Take regular breaks and move between pitches - we recommend 15 minutes break per 45 minutes of performance and you may need to consider moving your position.
- There are no specific rules on decibel levels or on use of amplification (except after 9.00pm, as stated elsewhere in this guide), however it is expected that your performance is reasonable and has a positive effect on your surroundings rather than a negative one. Evening performances must respect residential amenity.
- A musical busker needs to be heard above the level of background noise, but the volume of a performance should be no higher than it needs to be and the sound produced should not be intrusive into the lives of others living or working nearby.
- Perform simple sound checks to assist you to gauge responses as you go – you should ask your audience, other buskers or nearby businesses to assist where necessary.
- Know your equipment - certain sounds carry more than others, and some sounds have the potential to be more intrusive than others, for example brass instruments, amplifiers, bagpipes and percussion instruments. It may be reasonable to take more breaks and move pitches more often in these circumstances.
- Keep it varied - very similar pieces one after another have the potential to become quite intrusive. Build your repertoire; vary songs, styles and tempos to keep things interesting for your audience!
- If you use backing tracks, please make sure these are not left running when you are not performing. Please think about the positioning of any amplifiers or loudspeakers.
- Consider using brushes, mutes, pads and other accessories to keep volumes reasonable.
- Sound can travel a surprisingly long way, please be aware of this.
- Please don't be offended if someone asks you to make a reasonable change to your performance. Be willing to compromise - if someone is negatively affected by your performance, be open to making reasonable changes such as turning an amplifier down, moving a short distance, or changing the direction you're facing. Excessive volume can cause distortion which many find uncomfortable; turning down the volume can enhance your performance for more people to enjoy.

Collection of Money

No sign should be displayed inviting payment for the performance.

Selling Merchandise or Services

If you wish to sell in the normal way on the public highway you will need street trading consent. Costs can vary depending on the location and size of the pitch. Contact Worcestershire Regulatory Services (details in "Useful Contacts" section) Alternatively if you have merchandise or services available as a part of your busking act, (e.g. CDs, caricatures) you can offer these for free whilst asking for a voluntary donation. You may have a suggested donation amount, but it should be clear that any donation is voluntary - test purchases may be made. Suitable wording for a sign might be:

"These CDs are not being offered for sale, any contribution you make for them is voluntary. Suggested contribution £xx.xx"

Busking for Charity

Any activity on the public highway involving a collection for (or donation of proceeds to) charity requires a charity street collection permit. These are free and available from Worcestershire Regulatory Services (details in "Useful Contacts" section). Once you have your permit, you are free to busk for charity on any public land within the times and areas specified on your permit. Buskers for charity are still expected to operate within this guidance.

Public Liability Insurance

We recommend that all performers have suitable Public Liability Insurance. This is offered by insurance brokers or is included as part of membership of the MU and Equity, information is available on their websites.

Animals, Signs and Equipment

No animal should be used as part of the entertainment. Signs and equipment should be small and minimal and must move with the busker.

Community

A culture of sharing and swapping pitches with other buskers is strongly encouraged. Cooperation is a great way of building community on the streets, and regular changeovers are part of creating a vibrant busking atmosphere. If there is a busker performing on a pitch you wish to play on, wait for a suitable break in their performance then politely ask them what time they are playing until, and if they would be willing to share or swap pitches when they finish.

If you are 'sitting' on a pitch (i.e. not performing) and another busker comes along, wishing to play on it, work together as suggested in this guidance to reach mutual agreement.



Guidance for the public

Resolving Issues

We aim to help everyone to solve problems quickly and easily on the street – in a mutually respectful manner. Effective enforcement powers are available as a last resort to deal with any individual persistently causing a negative impact by acting unreasonably. If you are approached by the Police please note, respect and comply with their advice and guidance.

Step 1

If it is safe and practical you should approach the busker directly. Please wait for a suitable interval in their activity, politely state what your issue is and attempt to come to a fair and amicable compromise. Feel free to draw their attention to this guidance.

Step 2

If a compromise cannot be reached then please call 01905 731612 or email info@worcesterbid.com. Where possible, a City Ambassador will attend that day to attempt to find a fair resolution and ensure the people involved are aware of this guidance.

Step 3

If the issue continues, Council officers will assess the situation to determine any impacts and suggest potential solutions. If the busker will not respond to reasonable requests to resolve the concerns of those around them, they will be formally issued with the guidance and given advice on how to busk more considerately.

Step 4

If further issues are raised and the Council believes a busker is continuing to act unreasonably, we will collect and assess evidence from the affected people and issue a formal warning letter to the busker when appropriate. The letter will outline the negative impacts and the steps that must be taken to secure an improvement. Without formal statements from those affected, we cannot take this enforcement action. Buskers will be given an opportunity to apply to a dispute resolution panel for advice, arbitration or mediation

Step 5

If there is no resolution at this stage, as a last resort, legal action may be taken. Breach of legal notices served may lead to fixed penalty notices, prosecution and confiscation of equipment.

Please note: Polite interactions are much more likely to produce positive outcomes. If you wish to speak with a busker, please wait for a suitable interval in their act.

Dispute Resolution Panel

At Step 4 in the Resolving Issues process, a busker will be given the opportunity to ask for advice, arbitration and mediation in an attempt to resolve the dispute. Musicians' Union and Equity members are also able to ask for formal representation in this process. The panel will strive to deliver proportionate, fair and effective resolutions to disputes brought before them by:

- Taking a holistic and fair-minded view to any dispute brought before them
- Balancing the rights of a busker to make a living with the rights of residents, businesses, visitors and other users of public space to continue their day-to-day activities free from unreasonable impact
- Meeting (either online or in person) as soon as is reasonably practicable and endeavouring to communicate its resolutions no later than one working day following the panel meeting

Useful Contacts

- Worcester City Council www.worcester.gov.uk - For all enquiries about this guidance please call **01905 722233** (Mon-Fri 9.00am – 5.00pm) or email economy@worcester.gov.uk which will be picked up the next working day.
- Worcester BID www.worcesterbid.com – A non-for-profit organisation dedicated to improving the trading conditions for the businesses who contribute a BID levy. Email info@worcesterbid.com or call **01905 731612**
- Worcestershire Regulatory Services www.worcsregservices.gov.uk - Responsible for the administration regulation and enforcement of the Licensing service on behalf of Worcester City Council. Call **01905 822799** or email wrsenquiries@worcsregservices.gov.uk
- Keep Streets Live Campaign www.keepstreetslive.com - A non-profit organisation which advocates for public spaces that are open to informal offerings of art and music. Email contact@keepstreetslive.com
- Musicians Union www.musiciansunion.org.uk - The MU was established in 1893 and represents over 30,000 musicians in all genres including buskers.
- Equity www.equity.org.uk - Equity was founded in 1930 and is the Trade Union for performing artists including actors, entertainers, variety artists and musicians.

