



# Busking in Bristol

## Setting the scene

Busking is welcomed in Bristol. It is recognised that busking can add colour and vibrancy to our public spaces and can provide enjoyment for residents, visitors and businesses. We welcome that buskers and street entertainment can enliven our city's streets.

However, occasionally some performances can be intrusive and disruptive to those who live, work and busk in the city. These guidelines have been written and agreed by representatives of the busking community, Bristol City Council officers, the Broadmead Business Improvement District (Broadmead BID) and the Police to ensure that there is mutual respect, consideration and cooperation in resolving any issues. Buskers are expected to adhere to these guiding principles

It is in everyone's interest to have a positive relationship with all users of public spaces and these guidelines aim to support this objective.

## **Buskers and Street Performers Guidelines.**

1. Street performance and busking should only be for a maximum of 90 minutes in any one place. Performers must move after this time period. There is a culture of swapping 'pitches' and moving around the city. One pitch must not be dominated by one performance artist
2. Entertainers should not set up in front of doorways and fire exits and avoid obscuring shop window displays. If you are unsure, ask the business or building owner's permission first
3. Be mindful of the volume you are playing at and the context you are playing in. Your volume should be just above the ambient street noise without being intrusive. Look around you before you set up to make sure there are no other buskers nearby who may be drowned out by your equipment. Causing a statutory noise nuisance, by for example using loud amplification or loud acoustic instruments, may also result in prosecution under the Environmental Protection Act. 1990.
4. You are encouraged to take breaks at regular intervals and to take care not to repeat material on the same pitch. Repeating a limited number of songs or performance pieces is one of the main causes of complaints. Moving to another 'pitch' after finishing your repertoire will make complaints less likely. If you are taking a long break move your equipment away to enable someone else to busk on that pitch. Do not hog the pitch by leaving your busking gear



there. If you are on a short break turn off your equipment and do not attempt to collect money. This will make it clear you are on a break.

5. If your performance obstructs the highway, or a large crowd gathers that obstructs the highway, you are likely to upset people. Please try and ensure this does not happen. You may also be in danger of committing an offence under the Highway's Act, 1980.
6. Performers should be mindful of street traders and others who use the public space under licence to perform their day to day living. This includes Big Issue sellers.
7. Where fire and chemicals are used as part of your performance please clean the space when you have finished.
8. If you want to sell, expose or offer for sale any article, including CDs, in a street in Bristol then you require a street trading licence or street trading consent. You may be committing an offence under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 if you do not. There are also a number of streets in Bristol including Broadmead where street trading is prohibited. Further details and an online application form can be found on the council's website at <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/licences-permits/street-trading>. Any query please email [licensing@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@bristol.gov.uk).
9. You can display CDs for people to take but it must be emphasised that any donations received for a CD is made on a voluntary basis so that the product or service is an extension of the busking act itself and people are not obliged to make any contribution. For example, in some circumstances a member of the public may request a CD without making a donation. This should be made clear with an appropriate sign. Suggested wording could be :  
*'In order to comply with street trading legislation these CDs are not being offered for sale, any contribution you make is voluntary and at your discretion. Suggested contribution £x'*
10. Entertainers should not ask for money (including bottling or hatting) but can accept donations
11. You must be engaged in a performance as sitting holding an instrument is not busking and will be treated as begging. You may be committing an offence under the Vagrancy Act. If you are taking a break, get up, move away, and do not attempt to collect money. Make it clear you are on a break.
12. Busking close to a cashpoint is prohibited as this is likely to cause a nuisance. You may be dealt with under the ASB, Crime and Policing Act 2014 if you do.



13. Performance times in Bristol are strictly 10:00 - 23:00 hrs

14. If you are approached by anyone to discuss any issue please be courteous. Similarly we ask members of the public to wait for a gap in the performance before approaching a performer.

15. Think about whether you need public liability insurance, particularly if you involve members of the public in your act or uses potentially dangerous materials

### **Specific performance issues**

Most local buskers and street performers are aware of these guidelines and will adhere to them. Should you feel that a performer is not complying with these guidelines, here are some suggested methods of resolving conflict.

These suggestions do not deal with the busker's style or quality.

- During a gap in the performance ask the busker if he or she is aware of these guidelines, if not present a copy. If they are aware and you don't feel the performance is complying with the guidelines, kindly ask the performer to re-evaluate their performance in light of your observations
- If this intervention does not result in a positive outcome, please **call Bristol City Council on 0117 9222500 Opt 3**. Where possible, an officer will attend to assess the performance. If the officer's opinion is that the performance is not unreasonable, then no action will be taken.
- If the officer feels that the performance is unreasonable, and also affecting the quality of life of those in the area, normally a verbal warning will be given to the performer.
- If however either a previous verbal warning has been given or the officer determines that it is necessary, a written warning may be served on the performer.
- If the performer fails to adhere to the conditions of this, or a previous written warning, subject to there being sufficient evidence the council will serve a Community Protection Notice under the provisions of the Antisocial Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. Failure to abide with the formal notice will result in legal action under the above Act.



- If you are regularly bothered by the same busker please complete an **online report complaint form** and download of diary to keep a record of the issues.  
<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/pests-pollution-noise-food/noise>  
Please return the diary with a photograph of the busker so that follow up action can be taken?

### Useful Contact Details

Bristol City Council citizens' service telephone 0117 922 2500

Bristol City Council Neighbourhood Enforcement Team

Email: [neighbourhood.enforcement@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:neighbourhood.enforcement@bristol.gov.uk)

Useful Web sites

<http://www.busker.me.uk/legal.htm>

<http://www.broadmeadbristolbid.co.uk/>

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/>