

# BUSKING IN ALTRINCHAM

GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

2022



TRAFFORD  
COUNCIL



## Foreword

Trafford Council recognises that busking can make a valuable contribution towards the cultural life of a town, and can also make the streets more attractive, vibrant and entertaining for visitors, businesses and residents. This guide aims to provide advice and guidance to maximise the enjoyment of live performances and to promote good relations between business owners, residents, visitors and street performers.

Trafford Council has undertaken a consultation and over 460 responses were submitted. Having considered the responses and comments we have amended this guide which aims to balance the interests of all legitimate parties so that the public can enjoy their time in the town centre, musicians and artists can perform live and businesses can carry out their activities without undue disturbance.

We have also consulted with the Business Improvement District, the Musicians Union and Keep Streets Live.

We are 'piloting' the use of this guide for a period of 6 months and we will then review its effectiveness before making any longer term decisions.

If you would like to comment on this guide, please email [safer.communities@trafford.gov.uk](mailto:safer.communities@trafford.gov.uk)

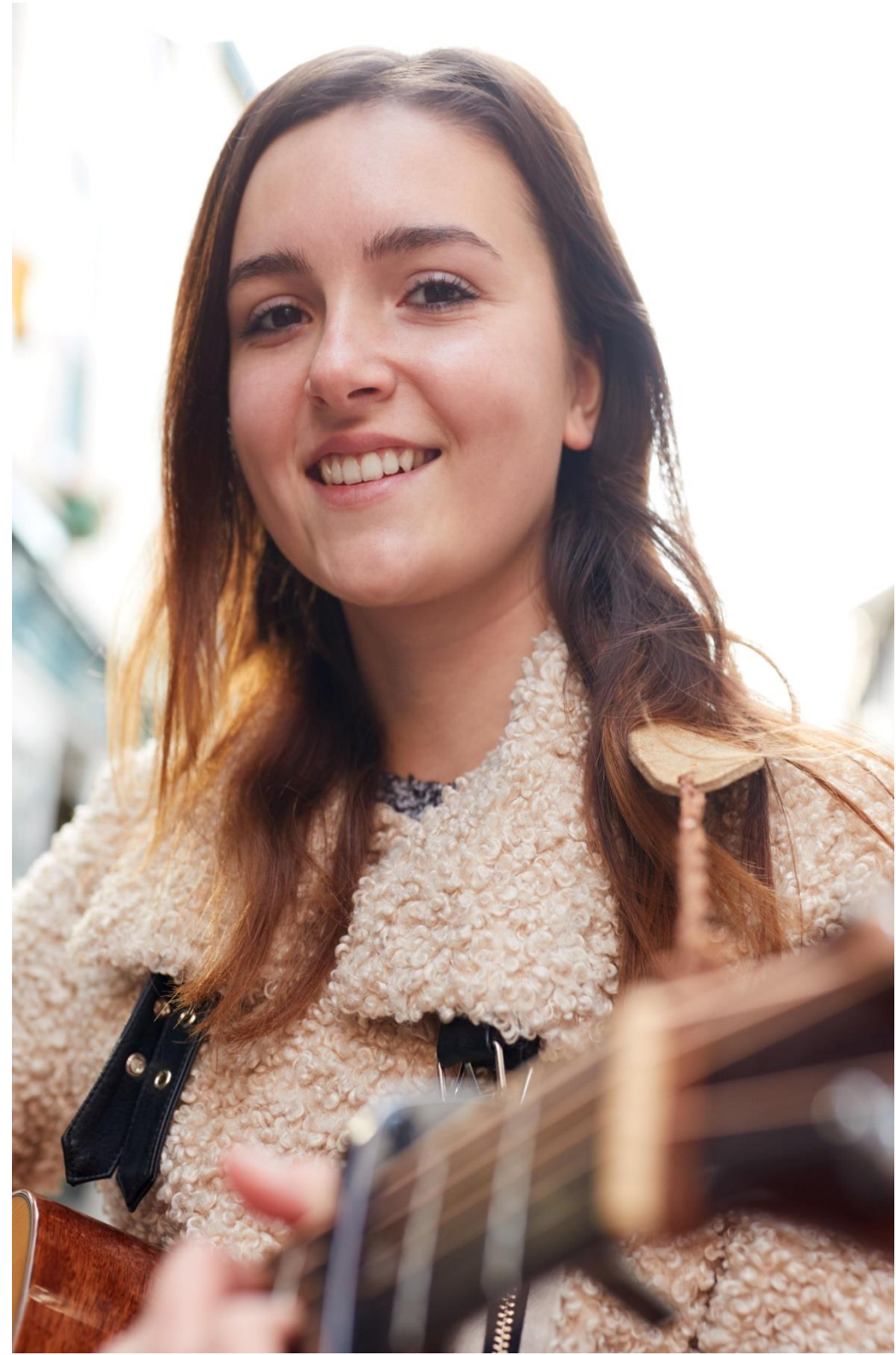
Cllr Graham Whitham  
Executive Member

## What is busking?

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

## Aims of this guide:

- To give clarity around what is reasonable in relation to busking in Altrincham.
- To promote a positive relationship between buskers and those who share public spaces with them.
- To give people confidence that most disputes can be resolved amicably through community consideration and negotiation.
- To find a balance between the value that live street performances add to our town centre, whilst respecting the rights of people who live and work there.





## Advice to Street Performers:

- Consider your pitch to minimise disturbance to businesses. For example, there are training rooms at the main pedestrian intersection on George Street. If you are busking during the daytime at this location, and training is in progress, this may cause a disturbance, so be prepared to relocate if asked.
- Some parts of Altrincham are privately owned, so if you want to perform there then you will need to request the permission of the management.
- Consider the volume of your act. Whilst it needs to be audible above the ambient noise, excessive noise is likely to be a source of annoyance. **You should not amplify instruments unnecessarily, and you should only use a battery powered amp if this is required.** Certain instruments like drums which can be very noisy are far more likely to attract complaints, so it is not recommended that acts with loud drums perform in the centre of the shopping area.
- Please don't cause any kind of obstruction, including paths, roads and entrances to premises or services, such as cash machines.







- Consider what time you want to perform and where you will be located. It is worth checking what is nearby so that you don't disturb occupants of residential properties.
- We would ask that you don't perform in one location for over two hours. This is because there are not many locations in Altrincham where people want to busk, and therefore the same businesses, and premises tend to be affected. This will also give other performers a chance to use the space.
- Please try to leave a 'fallow period' by not immediately busking after a previous performer. A gap of an hour is recommended, however we appreciate performers won't always be aware of when the last busker left.
- Consider some of our other vibrant town centres as a location to busk also!
- You should not perform in a way which could be considered dangerous or inappropriate or in a way likely to cause alarm, distress or offence.
- Please do not use any street furniture as part of your act. This includes not putting up posters or adverts on street furniture.
- You should also comply with any reasonable instruction given in relation to your act by council staff or the police.



## Considerations for a pitch location:

**There are no fixed pitch locations within Altrincham and as such this is a guide of things to consider when choosing a location.**

- Think about how much space your equipment will take up so that you don't cause an obstruction for the public.
- Make sure there is plenty of space for people to walk past or around you and allow for Social Distancing.
- If there is another busker nearby, please set up at least 100 metres away as it could be very noisy for businesses in between otherwise.
- Be aware of the time of day and nature of the space you intend to perform in. There is an increase in residential property in the town centre and if you are busking in the morning or at night, it could disturb residents.
- It is good practice to introduce yourself to those in the immediate vicinity and then if there is a problem, you may be able to agree a solution, such as the best time to busk if another pre-arranged event is taking place.
- Please consider varying the location where you perform so different parts of the town are exposed to a variety of musicians and acts.







- Think about your act in advance, we ask that you don't perform the same song or piece of music repeatedly. Try to vary what you perform to keep it interesting.
- Due to the changing nature of Covid restrictions and guidance, many shops and businesses have now been advised to maintain open front doors for ventilation reasons so be understanding as this may temporarily impact what retailers and customers deem to be acceptable volume levels.
- Understand people in neighbouring shops and business cannot simply walk away, so consider the impact your performance has on them.
- If you are busking in order to collect money for charity, you'll need to apply for a street collections licence.
- If you want to sell something while busking, such as CDs, you'll need to apply for street trading consent.

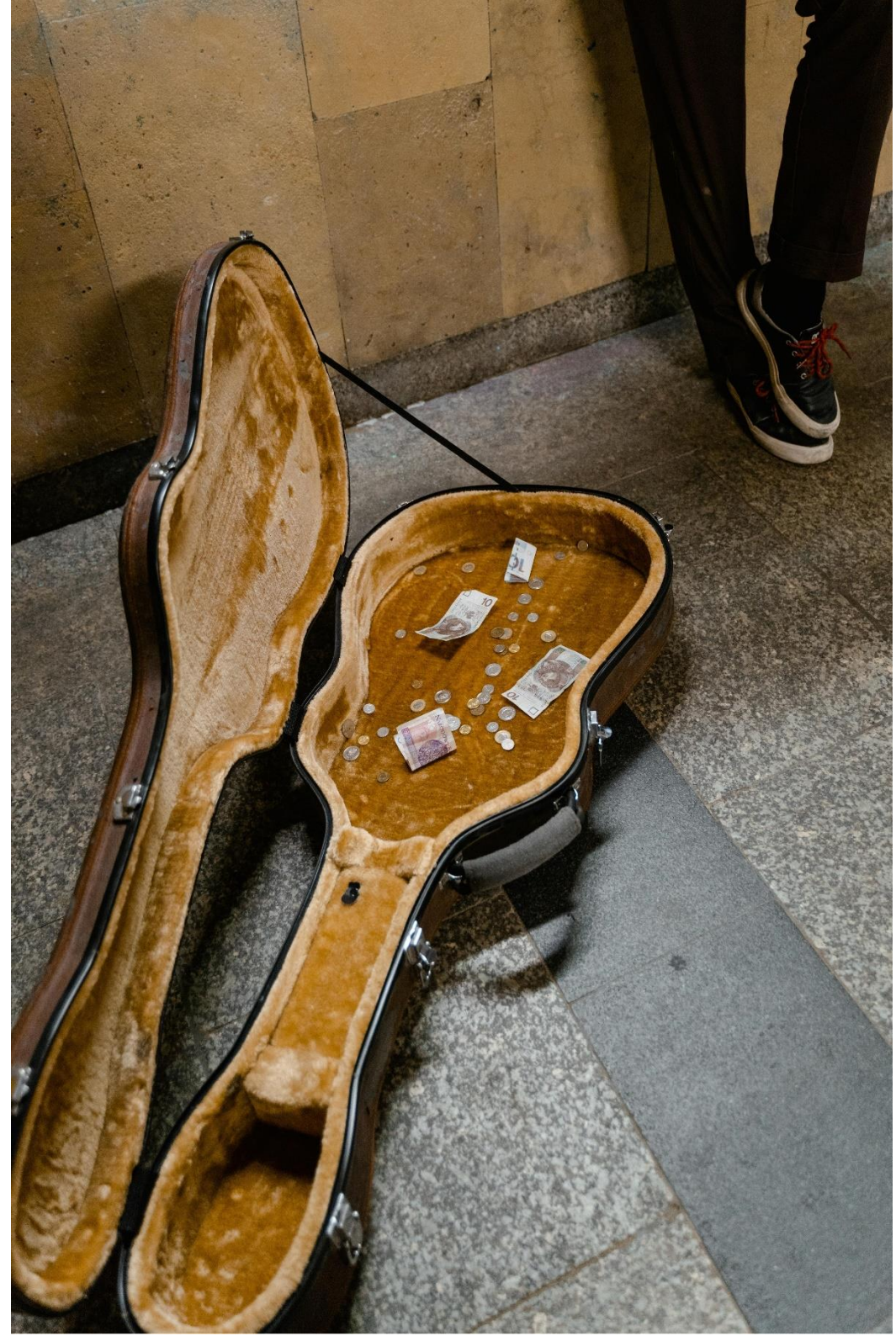


## Acceptable noise levels:

There is no precise decibel guidance in relation to what would likely contribute to a negative impact, this is open to interpretation but a Busker needs to be heard above the level of ambient street noise if their performance is to be effective, but not intrusively so.

## Considerations for businesses/residents:

- Should you wish to raise an issue with a busker please wait for an appropriate moment in their set to make yourself known.
- Speak calmly and politely to explain your issue.
- Try to offer a reasonable solution.
- Consider consulting other businesses first to gauge others opinions.
- Please remember that we have over 400 responses to our online consultation and the majority of people are supportive of busking in the town centre.







- Please understand that most buskers will be unaware they are causing you an issue and it may be helpful to draw the Buskers attention to this guide.
- Whenever possible, talking politely to the Busker should be the starting point in resolving any issues.

## Process for resolving disputes

If there is a disagreement between the buskers and the residents or businesses of Altrincham, the starting point should be to have a reasonable discussion. Explaining why the act is a problem may help buskers to understand what works and what doesn't. For example, if residents are disturbed due to the volume of the act, then this should be communicated. Likewise, if a business is running an event such as a training course, it may be possible for the busker to re-locate and return at a more convenient time.

It should be remembered that the area is a public space and buskers are ***not prohibited in law*** from performing so long as they are not doing so in a way which causes a detriment to the quality of life of the local community.



### **Step 1**

Discuss the issue reasonably and try to negotiate a resolution. Explain your reasons and be polite to each other.

### **Step 2**

Refer to this guide which gives examples of what is reasonable. The other person may not know about this guide, and this document may help to resolve the issue by referring to the relevant section.

### **Step 3**

If no agreement can be reached, please contact Trafford Council on 0161 912 2000 during office hours. If the dispute is noise related Trafford Council offers a free app that can be used to record and submit your complaint. This can be downloaded onto a smartphone by searching for 'The Noise App' on most app stores. It is free of charge. You can find out more at: [www.thenoiseapp.com](http://www.thenoiseapp.com)

### **Step 4**

In serious cases, where behaviour is a statutory nuisance or where it is having a *detrimental effect of a persistent or continuing nature* on those in the locality, or where performers are being unreasonably harassed by members of the public, or local residents/businesses, the Council may be able to use its powers to take action against those responsible.

We will always endeavour to be reasonable and proportionate balancing the rights of local businesses, residents, buskers and shoppers/visitors.







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