

Public spaces protection order

Purpose	Designed to stop individuals or groups committing anti-social behaviour in a public space
Who can make a PSPO	Councils issue a public spaces protection order (PSPO) after consultation with the police, Police and Crime Commissioner and other relevant bodies.
Test	Behaviour being restricted has to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be having, or be likely to have, a detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the locality; • be persistent or continuing nature; and • be unreasonable.
Details	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restrictions and requirements set by the council. • These can be blanket restrictions or requirements or can be targeted against certain behaviours by certain groups at certain times. • Can restrict access to public spaces (including certain types of highway) where that route is being used to commit anti-social behaviour. • Can be enforced by a police officer, police community support officers and council officers.
Penalty on breach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breach is a criminal offence. • Enforcement officers can issue a fixed penalty notice of up to £100 if appropriate. • A fine of up to level 3 on prosecution.
Appeals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anyone who lives in, or regularly works in or visits the area can appeal a PSPO in the High Court within six weeks of issue. • Further appeal is available each time the PSPO is varied by the council.
Important changes/differences	More than one restriction can be added to the same PSPO, meaning that a single PSPO can deal with a wider range of behaviours than the orders it replaces.

Purpose

Public spaces protection orders (PSPOs) are intended to deal with a particular nuisance or problem in a particular area that is detrimental to the local community's quality of life, by imposing conditions on the use of that area which apply to everyone. They are designed to ensure the law-abiding majority can use and enjoy public spaces, safe from anti-social behaviour.

Who can make a PSPO?

Councils will be responsible for making the new PSPO although enforcement powers will be much broader.

Test

The test is designed to be broad and focus on the impact anti-social behaviour is having on victims and communities. A PSPO can be made by the council if they are satisfied on reasonable grounds that the activities carried out, or likely to be carried out, in a public space:

- have had, or are likely to have, a detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the locality;
- is, or is likely to be, persistent or continuing in nature;
- is, or is likely to be, unreasonable; and
- justifies the restrictions imposed.

Where can it apply? The council can make a PSPO on any public space within its own area. The definition of public space is wide and includes any place to which the public or any section of the public has access, on payment or otherwise, as of right or by virtue of express or implied permission, for example a shopping centre.

Working with partners: Before making a PSPO, the council must consult with the local police. This should be done formally through the chief officer of police and the Police and Crime Commissioner, but details could be agreed by working level leads. This is an opportunity for the police and council to share information about the area and the problems being caused as well as discuss the practicalities of enforcement. In addition, the owner or occupier of the land should be consulted. This should include the County Council (if the PSPO application is not being led by them) where they are the Highway Authority.

The council must also consult whatever community representatives they think appropriate. This could relate to a specific group, for instance the residents association, or an individual or group of individuals, for instance, regular users of a park or specific activities such as busking or other types of street entertainment. Before the PSPO is made, the council also has to publish the draft order in accordance with regulations published by the Secretary of State.

What to include in a PSPO? The PSPO can be drafted from scratch based on the individual issues being faced in a particular public space. A single PSPO can also include multiple restrictions and requirements in one order. It can prohibit certain activities, such as the drinking of alcohol, as well as placing requirements on individuals carrying out certain activities, for instance making sure that people walking their dogs keep them on a lead. However, activities are not limited to those covered by the orders being replaced and so the new PSPO can be used more flexibly to deal with local issues.

When deciding what to include, the council should consider scope. The PSPO is designed to make public spaces more welcoming to the majority of law abiding people and communities and not simply restrict access. Restrictions or requirements can be targeted at specific people, designed to apply only at certain times or apply only in certain circumstances.