

Exeter City Council Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee

Issue to be considered by Customer Focus Committee: ***Address public concern about the impact of anti-social behaviour in the City Centre; its causes and possible solutions.***

Organisation providing evidence: Exeter City Community Trust

Officer providing evidence: [REDACTED] / [REDACTED]

Date: 05.09.2025

Causes of ASB within Exeter City Centre	• Lack of safe space for young people • Lack of awareness of what current opportunities there are for YP, especially those aged 15-18. • There aren't enough 'trusted adults' for YP to engage with. • YP aren't consulted when decisions are being made that will impact them, at all levels.
Solutions to ASB within Exeter City Centre	• Development of an interactive map that signposts provisions for young people in Devon. • Training for 'trusted adults', especially those who work in education. • Better signposting for YP to find support, especially around mental health. • Giving young people more of a voice in decision making. Currently working with safer Devon to develop a youth panel.
Work, activity, projects and initiatives currently undertaken by my organisation	• Peer Action Collective (PAC) is a national project that we have been part of for the last 2 years. We have a team of YP acting as peer researchers, conducting interviews and focus groups to better understand the issues YP face and ways that we can overcome these barriers. We have recently finished our second round of research and social action, and are in the process of finishing our research report. • Change Our Path is a youth mentoring programme which supports young people aged 10 – 16 who are involved in crime and ASB. This mentoring programme aims to provide structure, support

	and guidance as well as improving physical and mental health.
Any other information you may feel is of use to Customer Strategic Scrutiny Committee	We are currently working to secure funding to provide safe spaces for young people to come during the hours of 6pm – 9pm in areas of high crime and ASB in Exeter.

The information provided above, will be included a presentation at the next Customer Strategic Scrutiny Committee on 25 September 2025. You are invited to attend to present the evidence you have provided above and to answer questions from Councillors.

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Exeter City Council Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee

Issue to be considered by Customer Focus Committee: ***Address public concern about the impact of anti-social behaviour in the City Centre; its causes and possible solutions.***

Organisation providing evidence: Devon Public Health

Officer providing evidence: Advanced Public Health Practitioner/ LDIS Coordinator

Date: 22.09.25

Since January 25 there have been 39 reports to the [Devon Local Drug Information System](#) (LDIS).

Of these 39 reports, 27 are in relation to Spice use with all these linked to incidents occurring in the Exeter City Centre area. These incidents have involved Non-fatal overdoses requiring medical assistance and in some case Naloxone has been administered.

In response to the increase in reports to the LDIS, Devon Public Health convened a multi-agency Incident Management Team meeting in May (08.05.25) to review available intelligence and reports around Spice/synthetic cannabinoid use in Exeter.

At the time there were particular concerns in relation to reports of high strength batches, possible contamination with Nitazines and secondary exposure. The meeting agreed next steps and actions in relation to harm minimisation.

Organisations were asked to utilise the Police drug testing pathway if they came into possession of SPICE samples. A number of Spice samples have now been tested by the university of Bath with no forensic evidence of adulterants found. On balance of available intelligence and risk, a decision was made by the IMT to not publish a Drug Alert via the LDIS at this time (this is reviewed each meeting); instead the focus is on harm reduction activities, which have included improving harm minimisation messaging, improving access to Naloxone and Police activities.

Further meetings were held on the 11.06.25, 26.08.25 and a follow up meeting is planned for the 7.10.25.

Participants at meetings include:

Exeter City Council
Devon Public Health (Chair)
Devon and Cornwall Police
HMP Exeter
OXLEYS (HMP Exeter)
WayThrough (Together Drug and Alcohol Service)

Co-Lab
Clock Tower Surgery
Inclusion Health Devon
Exeter Business Against Crime
In Exeter
BCHA,
Sanctuary Supported Living,
HomeGroup,
St Petrocs

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Evidence on City Centre Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) – CoLab Exeter (Sep 2025)

Public concern about the scale and impact of ASB in Exeter City Centre; understanding causes and possible solutions.

CoLab view in summary

ASB in Exeter City Centre stems from unmet needs around housing, health, and belonging. Solutions lie in balanced approaches—combining consistent enforcement with investment in spaces, relationships, and community-led initiatives that help people build stability and connection.

Key Causes

- Lack of safe spaces/activities: boredom and loneliness often drive negative behaviours.
- Housing insecurity: high eviction rates, short-term funding, and limited supported accommodation leave people unstable and unsupported.
- Health challenges: substance misuse (including Spice), poor mental health, and absence of dual-diagnosis services.
- Environmental factors: no public toilets, small city footprint concentrates issues in certain areas.
- Systemic issues: short-term project funding, inconsistent support and enforcement.

Possible Solutions

- Infrastructure & environment: public toilets in hotspots; design-out identified ASB hotspots; improve aesthetics/cleanliness.
- Community-led approaches: day centre pilots, peer-led projects, diversionary activities, restorative justice, and role models.
- Consistent enforcement: fair application of dispersals, staff training, balanced zero tolerance where appropriate.
- Integrated support: multi-agency planning (mapping individuals, shared recovery/housing plans), outreach, and out-of-hours provision.
- Housing stability: reduce evictions, build skills to sustain tenancies, ensure safe/secure accommodation.

CoLab's Contribution

- Welcome Team: frontline engagement with street-attached people, providing access to services and support.
- Visible presence: challenge substance use/ASB at CoLab, communicate regularly with city partners (St Petrocks, St Sidwells, Community Safety Team).
- Community projects: creative groups and peer-led initiatives offering routine, purpose, and diversion from ASB.

Exeter City Council Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee

Issue to be considered by Customer Focus Committee: ***Address public concern about the impact of anti-social behaviour in the City Centre; its causes and possible solutions.***

Organisation providing evidence: St Petrock's Exeter

Officer providing evidence: [REDACTED] – Head of Client Services

Date: 08.09.25

Causes of ASB within Exeter City Centre	It is important to note at the outset that ASB is distinct from criminal activity. ASB is behaviour which causes or is likely to cause harassment alarm and / or distress to others. The court can impose a number of ASB disposals such as a CBO (Criminal Behaviour Order) Crime is doing something forbidden by law. That can include theft – including shoplifting, violence, fraud or selling drugs. 1) Public Defecation / urination: lack of free toilets in city centre, especially after 7pm. 2) Litter / Rubbish: No rubbish bins in some areas of city centre. 3) Encampments: Rough sleeping is not a crime and causes are complex, but lack of available and appropriate supported accommodation is a significant factor in the presence of encampments. 4) Begging: This article share a useful overview of some of the causes and challenges: Is legal action the right way to tackle begging? 5) Street drinking / drug taking: - Night-time economy and social venues are all heavily focussed on alcohol. Much of the problematic alcohol use is evening / weekend. - For those who are 'street attached' and have accommodation; there are strict rules not to drink alcohol or use illegal substances within the building – so in trying to avoid becoming homeless they seek to use outdoors in public spaces. - For those who are homeless; usually people do not have any issues with use when they first become homeless but can be drawn into problematic use as a means to try and cope with the dangers of rough sleeping, not having any accommodation options, or due to trauma and other health issues. - For some who struggle with addiction issues; their use can be a barrier to being accepted for accommodation, leading to feelings of despair and rejection – which in turns risks increasing their use. There are no inpatient detox or rehab facilities in the immediate local area. - Spice: Exeter has had a particular issue with an illegal drug called 'Spice' which can be smoked like a cigarette or in a vape. There is a Public Health led task group looking into this as a
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	distinct issue which StP attend alongside other homelessness and support agencies.
Solutions to ASB within Exeter City Centre	1) Toilets: use of event type urinals in the city centre night time economy: Portable Urinal Hire Long Loo Queues Solution WC Portables How it works - PEEQUAL and/or the reopening of a centrally located free to use public toilet. 2) City centre + InExeter cleansing team already do a great job. Increase bin provision, including recycling bins. Continue to raise awareness amongst students and city visitors. 3) See InExeter/Police attachment – StP are part of the support services response. 4) Exeter no longer has a Big Issue office or dedicated officer – but its Big Issue sellers continue to work hard and are popular with the public. Agencies supporting someone identified as begging will create an action plan to explore if they lack income [such as UC], budgeting skills or are experiencing financial exploitation or other pressures which are leading them to beg. There are powers such as dispersals and CBO's that can be used if someone is aggressively begging. 5) Alongside the ASB Sub group work led by Nathan [police] and Nicola [InExeter], Exeter also has PSPO / dispersal enforcement powers, ECC Community Safety Team, EBAC and ECC CCTV – all working in partnership alongside ongoing offers of support services from multiple agencies in the city. The communication between all these groups is strong.
Work, activity, projects and initiatives currently undertaken by my organisation	1) St Petrocks Centre offers access to toilets and showers during our opening hours for those experiencing homelessness. 2) StP staff and clients do a daily litter pick in the vicinity of the Centre and liaise with neighbouring businesses if there are any concerns around litter. 3) StP staff will work in partnership with other agencies to try and refer people to accommodation where available and to encourage people to try and keep their rough sleeping site safe and tidy. 4) In partnership with other agencies we support people we know who are begging to access needed support and/or resolve financial difficulties that lead them into this activity. 5) StP will exclude from our services those who are drinking alcohol or using illegal drugs in the vicinity of the StP Centre. This will lead to exclusion review and multi-agency meetings, following up with action and support plans to help the person address the behaviour. If they are not someone we work with, then we will share information and support other agencies to try and reduce issues being caused. We attend regular ASB meetings led by InExeter for businesses on Cathedral Green and South St. We provide support and/or advice to business owners in Exeter who experience ASB from people who are rough sleeping or are 'street attached'
Any other information you may feel is of use to	• People experiencing homelessness are much more likely to be victims of ASB and violence than perpetrators, and the risk is significantly higher for women who are

Customer Strategic Scrutiny Committee	homeless. Many will sleep in the city centre directly under the ECC CCTV cameras because this offers a degree of safety. There have been recent violent attacks on people sleeping rough in the City Centre. • March 2026: The DCC end of all funding to homeless supported housing and floating / prevention services, alongside uncertainty around Government [MHCLG] RSI [Rough Sleeper Initiative] funding in Exeter is already having an impact in terms of staffing uncertainties. If the funding cuts result in a reduction in any services, accommodation or support, then any solutions to ASB will become more difficult to implement. ASB will be likely to increase due to increased numbers of people being homeless and the loss of structured support and activities. • Criminal Justice system: Court backlogs, overcrowded prisons, Probation privatisation and then ‘Reset’ [reduction in supervision of offenders] have contributed to the current conditions. Exeter having a CatB remand prison, for example, means that many releases from court happen without any advance plans in place for that person. I would suggest that closer liaison with magistrates and judges could be beneficial. • Lack of affordable or appropriate housing: - Significant underinvestment in social housing for past 20 years, particularly social rented properties. - LHA [Housing benefit] rates being frozen means that there is a lack of affordable private rented accommodation. Local housing allowance (LHA) rates freeze Crisis UK - Student accommodation is preferred by developers for new builds, but the existing blocks are anecdotally cited as not fully occupied and there is no evidence to confirm that purpose built student accommodation increases HMO housing stock for non-students. This also reduces sites available for housing development, as well as artificially inflating land prices making social housing harder to deliver. - Exeter is not able to significantly increase its social housing stock due to the geographical constraints of the city area and despite robust building programs there are frequently only one or two under 55 1-bed lets advertised each week. - Homelessness Legislation in England does not guarantee emergency accommodation for all. The increase in local authority temporary accommodation costs is national news and in Exeter, despite immense efforts, the Housing Solutions team are under huge demand to find placements to comply with legal duties. - Supported housing is under funding pressure as stated above and there are not enough supported housing bedspaces available and no ‘direct access’ accommodation. Previously Exeter had ‘Safe Sleep’ but
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	this closed during Covid. StP chairs the weekly 'Access to Accommodation' housing panel where those who are rough sleeping are referred to housing providers but some weeks all places are full with waiting lists. It is worth acknowledging that all cities experience the ASB issues listed above. Exeter as a city with a small centre and geographical footprint can be perceived as having more issues than other places due to the constraints of the built environment, but there is nothing to suggest our experience is different to other cities of a similar size. In conclusion – there is strong and effective partnership working across the city that is something to be proud of, too many agencies and individuals to name. The efforts of [redacted] [City Centre Inspector], [redacted] [CEO, InExeter] and [redacted] [EBAC Coordinator] are to be highly commended in terms of their leadership, dedication and understanding of the causes, challenges and determination to find solutions to ASB in our city centre.
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