

Lewisham Islamic Centre

Poor & Homeless information, Policy and procedure

Version: 2.0

Policy owner: Lewisham Islamic Centre

Date of approval: 01/11/14

Effective from: 01/11/14

Next review: 25/12/20

Revision history

| Version | Date | Description of Revision | Version | Date | Description of Revision |
|---------|----------|--------------------------------------|---------|------|-------------------------|
| 1.0 | 01/11/14 | Policy finalized | | | |
| 2.0 | 26/12/19 | Layout changed & useful info updated | | | |
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The latest version of this policy will always be on the intranet.

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Poor & Homeless information, Policy and procedure

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1.0 Introduction

Lewisham Islamic Centre (LIC) is not only a place of worship, but also the centre of our community: a setting where all are welcome to join in with the variety of activities we have to offer. **LIC** receives visitors on a daily basis which means we must ensure we are able and ready to resolve any issues which might occur. One factor that is reoccurring at **LIC** is the numerous cases of poor and homeless individuals who seek help in one way or another from the Centre. This means that all **LIC** staff must have an understanding of the situation at hand and be aware of what actions they must take when a difficult case arises.

2.0 Important information for all employees of Lewisham Islamic Centre

- 2.1. Staff members at the **LIC** should not, in any circumstance, give money belonging to the Centre to a person or people begging on the premises.
- 2.2. Overwhelming evidence shows that people who beg on the streets of England do so in order to buy hard drugs, particularly crack cocaine and heroin, and super-strength alcoholic beers and ciders. These highly addictive drugs cause an extreme deterioration in people's health and even death. This evidence comes from a number of sources.
 - Firstly, outreach teams including the London Street Rescue service that is out and about on the streets of the capital working with London's homeless 365 days of the year; they estimate that 80 per cent of people begging do so to support a drug habit.
 - Secondly, when the Metropolitan Police did some drug testing of people arrested for begging, the figures indicated that between 70 and 80 per cent tested positive for Class A drugs; most recently, in a police crackdown in Birmingham on begging in autumn 2013, every single one of the 40 people arrested failed a drug test. Of course, not all people that come to Lewisham Islamic Centre to beg for money are drug addicts or alcoholics, but we certainly must take into consideration the statistics and studies above.

- 2.3. People who attend the **Centre** to beg for money do not need money to stay at a hostel or any other accommodation if they are homeless therefore that is not a valid excuse to give them money belonging to the **Centre**. The hostel accommodation set aside for London's homeless men and women does not require payment in order to 'book in'. Hostel rent is covered through Housing Benefit, which hostel workers can help the new resident to claim once they have moved into the hostel. There are around 3,000 bed-spaces of hostel accommodation in London, which can be accessed via the street outreach teams that work in the central London boroughs. Outreach teams are active at night, and often during the day, seven days a week. In the last decade, 20,000 people have been helped off the streets.
- 2.4. Giving to people who beg is not a benign act without consequences. Organisations that have worked with people on the street for many years have seen many lives damaged by hard drugs and alcohol misuse. Studies have even indicated that organisations have lost people through overdoses in situations where a significant portion of the money they spent on drugs came from members of the public giving loose change.
- 2.5. Staff members need to understand that engaging with needy people on the street is very different to giving them money from the **Centre**. Perhaps buy them food or a cup of tea outside but within the **Centre** the rules need to be followed accordingly to ensure that we do not in any way effect the one who is in need in a negative way nor impact the **Centre** as being a safe place.
- 2.6. Sources show that there is no need to beg on the streets in 2014. It is an urban myth that if you have no address, you cannot claim benefits; this simply isn't true. Meanwhile, there are many day centres where homeless people can get food, clothing and support. Assessment centres in London now offer support to people who are new to the streets in London – 80 per cent of people no longer spend a second night out sleeping rough.

3.0 Procedure

3.1. What do I do if a person arrives at **LIC** begging for money? Firstly, if you are a general member of staff in the **Centre** who does not have access to an office telephone, you should refer the individual to one of the main offices on the premises. Once the person has been referred to the office, the member of staff in the office should set out to do the following:

- i. Assess the person to make sure they are not in need of emergency medical care – if they are, call 999 straight away
- ii. Determine what type of help the person may need. E.g. money, shelter etc
- iii. Call the necessary organisation that deals with the person's specific need. All contact details for organisations are located within this document.
- iv. Follow the instructions of the organisation and ensure the person knows where they need to go and what they need to do to receive the help that has been arranged for them.

3.2. Dos & Don'ts when a person comes to the **Centre** begging for money. Important points:

- i. Do not give any cash belonging to the centre to the individual.
- ii. Do not write them a cheque nor give them a debit card.
- iii. Do not allow them to stay at the **centre** overnight or outside of opening hours.
- iv. Do not allow them to beg from the other visitors within the premises.
 - i. Do make sure the person is not in need of urgent medical attention.
 - ii. Do deal with their needs promptly and efficiently.
 - iii. Do show them kindness and compassion.

4.0 Useful Contact information

| NAME & BRIEF INFO | CONTACT DETAILS | |
|---|--|---|
| <i>StreetLink London</i> URGENT Provide local services | TEL: 0300 500 0914 | |
| <i>Shelters Helpline</i> URGENT Will provide shelter straight away in emergency | TEL: 0808 800 4444 | |
| <i>Single Homeless Intervention and Prevention</i> URGENT Will provide shelter in emergency | SHIP@lewisham.gov.uk Tel: 020 8314 7007 38 Winslade Way, SE6 4JU | |
| <i>St. Mungos Hostel</i> URGENT Shelter available if there is space | Tel: 020 8297 5930 Spring Gardens 1 Arlington Close, London SE13 6JQ | Tel: 020 8692 3454 Pagnell Street Exeter Way, New Cross SE14 6LL |
| <i>Lewisham Foodbank</i> URGENT Will provide emergency food supplies | https://lewisham.foodbank.org.uk/locations/ Tel: 07938 071854 Hope Centre Malham Road, Forest Hill London SE23 1AN | |
| <i>Providence Row</i> URGENT Supporting rough sleepers with breakfast, a shower, internet access and charging facilities | The Dellow Centre, 82 Wentworth Street, London E1 7SA. Opening hours: 9am – 4pm 020 7375 0020 | |
| <i>Citizen’s Advice</i> Provides advice and information on a wide range of issues, including: Welfare benefits, Debt, Housing, Employment, Consumer. | The Leemore Centre, Bonfield Road, Lewisham, SE13 5EU 0800 231 5453 | |
| <i>Lewisham Council Local Support Scheme</i> Will provide grants | https://lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/benefits/local-support-scheme | |
| <i>Local Estate Agent</i> <i>South London Estate</i> | 115 Brownhill Road London, SE6 2HF Tel: 020 8695 1666 | |
| <i>Lewisham Primary Care Recovery Service (PCRS)</i> <i>Community Drugs Services</i> | 210 Wandsworth Road, London SW8 2JU Tel: 020 8699 5263 | |
| <i>New Direction Lewisham CGL (change, grow, live)</i> <i>Community Family, Children, Drugs, Alcohol Services</i> | Tel: 020 8314 5566 Web: www.changegrowlive.org | |

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| <i>Psychiatric Liaison Service</i> URGENT | University Hospital Lewisham, Lewisham High Street SE13 6LH |
| <i>Mental Health Services</i> | Tel: 020 8333 3000 |
| <i>Refuge - Domestic Abuse Support for Women, Men, Children and Young People</i> URGENT | Freephone 24-Hour National Domestic Violence Helpline: 0808 2000 247 |