

**SCRAP THE
VAGRANCY
ACT**

Homelessness is not a crime.

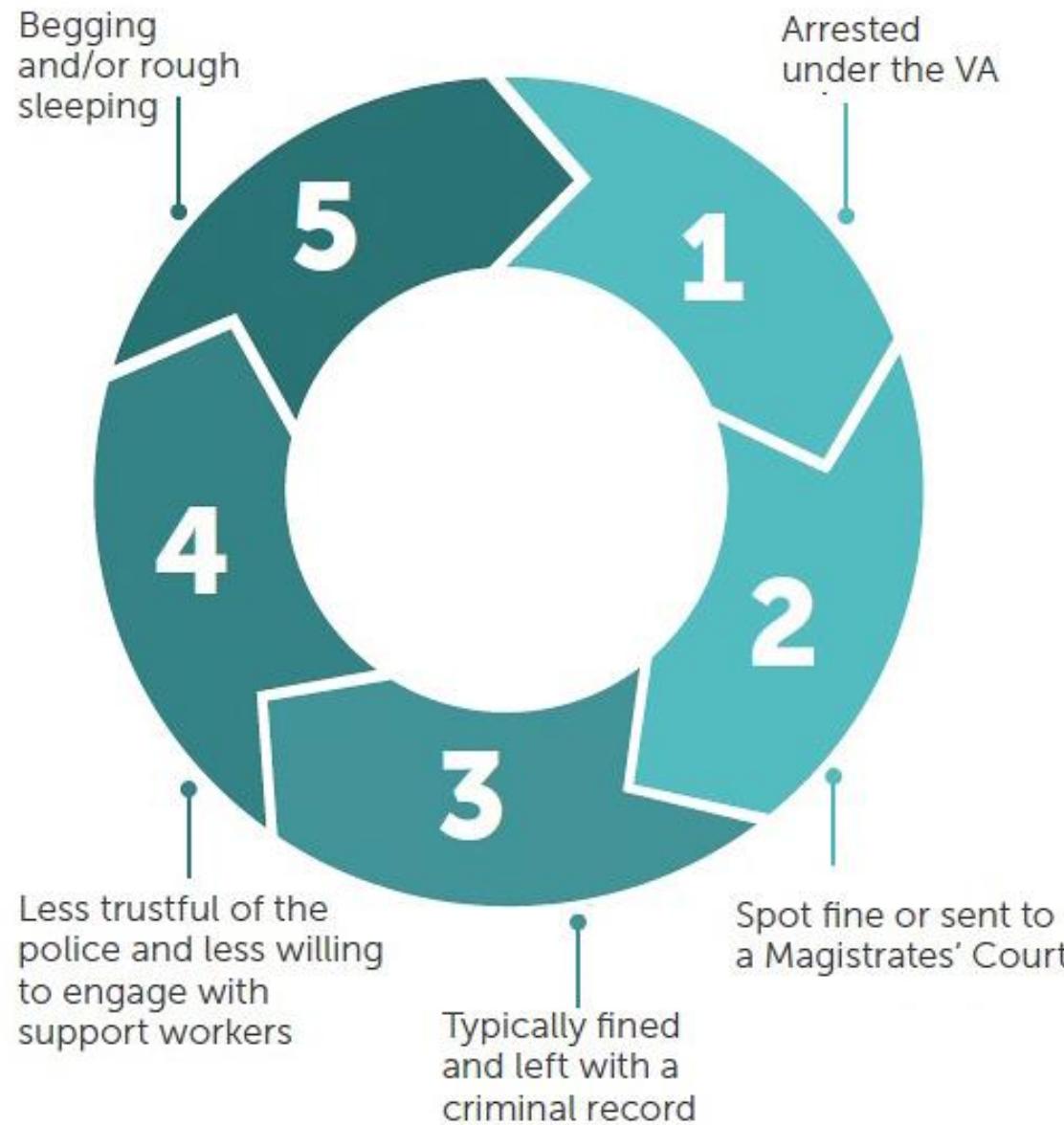
The Campaign to #ScraptheAct

Why repeal the Vagrancy Act?

- The Vagrancy Act (1824) made it a crime to sleep rough or beg in England and Wales, with anyone who is seen living on the streets or begging liable for arrest.
- It did nothing to resolve the root causes of homelessness. **In fact, it's far more likely to push someone further from the vital services that help them to move away from the streets.**



WHAT HAPPENS NOW



WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN



Police paired with outreach teams to identify and engage rough sleepers into support.

Rough sleepers referred to support workers and housing options for a comprehensive assessment of needs.

Immediate access to housing, and support for mental health and drug or alcohol related addictions, alongside employment and training services.

Permanent accommodation with ongoing holistic support to maintain a tenancy.

Our Approach

EVIDENCE

- We put out surveys 2019-20 to gain the views of police, magistrates and Police and Crime Commissioners.
- We collated data on prosecutions using the Vagrancy Act to show that numbers are already falling.

LEGALLY SOUND

- Crisis took legal advice on whether Vagrancy Act “crimes” not including rough sleeping were covered by newer legislation. **This allowed us to empirically prove that the Vagrancy Act is not needed anymore** and make the case to get on with repeal.



TELLING LIVED EXPERIENCE ACCOUNTS



“I was first arrested for the Vagrancy Act in 2008. I just asked someone for 20p so I could use the phone. Two police saw it and arrested me on the spot for begging. I spent the night in the cells and was in court the next morning. They just fined me and sent me straight back to the streets. No more help. Nothing.”

- Karl

“Since coming to Blackpool I've now had thirteen charges under the Vagrancy Act, and I've also been taken to court twice for it. Getting the papers just made me angry. They just come up and tell you to move, but I don't know where they expect you to go? Five of those warnings I was even asleep when they gave them to me, so how could that have been for begging? I just woke up to find it on my sleeping bag. ‘Sitting in a public place gathering money for alms,’ they called it.”

- Pudsey



Parliamentary Launch

19th June 2019

Pickles and Primrose with Alex Cunningham MP
They each wrote and pre-recorded a dramatic piece on the Vagrancy Act, which was shown on video screens for attendees.



We did everything we could to **increase visibility of the campaign amongst Members of Parliament**, including billboards in Westminster Tube Station and campaigns emails.



SCRAP THE VAGRANCY ACT

Homelessness is not a crime.

"The Vagrancy Act is an archaic law that undermines the positive work being done by this government to help the homeless – it should be repealed immediately."

Bob Blackman MP
Harrow East



"It is clear from what we have heard from Members across the political spectrum that we are all of one belief: that the Vagrancy Act is no longer fit for purpose to deal with any issues surrounding rough sleeping in the 21st century."

Nickie Aiken MP
Cities of London & Westminster



"The Vagrancy Act should be repealed. It is an antiquated piece of legislation whose time has been and gone."

Robert Jenrick MP
Newark

"The Vagrancy Act 1824 criminalises vulnerable people for simply having nowhere to go, and wastes valuable police time and resources with issues that could be far better managed by outreach workers and multi-agency support services."

Tracey Crouch MP
Chatham & Aylesford



We made a tactical decision to work to secure political buy-in **from the Conservative Benches** – and these MPs lobbied internally for us.



Success!

This tactic worked as the government bowed to internal and external pressures and finally tabled its own version of our amendment.

With widespread support from all parties in the Commons for the Lords amendment, the government subsequently tabled its own amendment for repeal. This was accepted unopposed in the early hours of Tuesday 1st March 2022.

Repeal will now come into force within the next 18 months.

Secretary Priti Patel
Secretary Dominic Raab

To move the following Amendments to the Bill in lieu of Lords Amendments Nos. 89 and 146:—

(a)

* page 56, line 32, at end insert the following new Clause—

"Repeal of the Vagrancy Act 1824 etc

- (1) The Vagrancy Act 1824 is repealed.
- (2) Subsections (3) to (7) contain amendments and repeals in consequence of subsection (1).
- (3) The following are repealed—
 - (a) the Vagrancy Act 1935;
 - (b) section 2(3)(c) of the House to House Collections Act 1939 (licences);
 - (c) section 20 of the Criminal Justice Act 1967 (power of magistrates' court to commit on bail for sentence);
 - (d) in the Criminal Justice Act 1982—
 - (i) section 70 and the italic heading immediately before that section (vagrancy offences), and
 - (ii) paragraph 1 of Schedule 14 and the italic heading immediately before that paragraph (minor and consequential amendments);
 - (e) section 43(5) of the Mental Health Act 1983 (power of magistrates' courts to commit for restriction order);
 - (f) section 26(5) of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 (alteration of certain penalties);
 - (g) in the Criminal Justice Act 2003—

A close-up photograph of a man with a shaved head, smiling warmly at the camera. He has a mustache and is wearing a grey zip-up hoodie. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Griff

you can end homelessness.

What's next?

The government has published its plans to replace the Vagrancy Act with new police powers that would criminalise begging.

We believe this could criminalise homelessness by the back door.

We're responding to the consultation and mobilising our supporters to oppose these plans.

Any Questions?

