

Beggars campaign 'a success'

A campaign to stop people giving money to beggars in Bath has been hailed a success with some of those who used to ask for money turning to charities for support instead.

Outreach workers from the city's Big Issue office have spoken to a number of beggars who have seen a drop in takings since the launch of Your Kindness Can Kill, a high profile initiative designed to educate members of the public of the benefits of donating to charities rather than handing over cash to people on the streets.

It has prompted three of them to seek professional help for their problems, include drug and alcohol addictions, and inquire about getting a job as a *Big Issue* vendor.

Samantha Grief, from the Big Issue in Bath, said: "There have been a few people our outreach team see

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regularly and in the past we have got nowhere with our efforts to stop them begging and get help instead, because they are simply making too much money begging.

"But in the last couple of weeks we have had a few of them come through our doors to ask about getting support and this is really positive.

"They are telling us that they aren't making money, they are getting hassled, which was the whole point of the campaign.

"Hopefully these people are now working towards a lifestyle which is more positive and sustainable, which is really good news."

Ms Grief said there had also been a lot of anecdotal evidence from *Big Issue* vendors that they were see-



Samantha Grief, from the Big Issue in Bath

PICTURE: Artur Lesniak

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ing a lot fewer people begging at the usual pitches around

the city centre.

Your Kindness Can Kill has been supported by a number of local organisations and charities.

These include the Julian House homelessness shelter, DHL, B&NES Council, Avon and Somerset Police and the Bath Business Improvement District.

Anyone wanting to support vulnerable people on the streets of Bath can donate money by texting KIND20 £3 to 70070.

All the money raised will be divided between various good causes.

To find out more about the campaign go to www.yourkindnesscankill.co.uk.

Complaints fall over begging

Bath police have reported a drop in the number of complaints about persistent or aggressive begging since the launch of Your Kindness Can Kill campaign.

Acting Sergeant Chris Leadbeater, from the city centre team, said they had also been actively pursuing cases against repeat

offenders, with a number of suspects due to appear in court soon. He said officers needed support from the



public if they were to successfully crack down on offenders.

He said: "We use plainclothes officers, but many of these people know the faces of our team so change their behaviour when they spot us.

"What we need is for members of the public to take a note of the time, date and location of any incidents and report them to us immediately."

People can report beggars by contacting Bath police on the non-emergency number 101.