



Call for drug addiction centres to be moved

By Nicola Cooke

Drug addiction treatment centres should be moved from Dublin city centre to industrial estates on the edge of the capital, according to business representative bodies.

Dublin City Business Association (DCBA) and Dublin City Business Improvement District (DCBID) have called on the government to make the move, or speed up the passage of legislation that would ban vagrancy or begging near commercial premises.

They said they were concerned about the six methadone treatment centres in the city centre, which cater for around 1,200 people, and the knock-on effects on businesses and tourism.

DCBA chief executive Tom Coffey said the policy of housing drug treatment services in the city centre was a regressive one, allowing drug dealers to mingle easily with city crowds, and giving them numerous rendezvous points to sell to drug users.

"We need to pursue a successful system such as that pursued by the Dutch authorities,

which brought the addiction services out to industrial estates where the drug pushers could be exposed, and would not follow their victims," said Coffey.

He added that the DCBA, along with the Galway Business Association and the Cork Business Association, had lobbied the government on the issue for the three cities.

DCBID chief executive Richard Guiney said the proliferation of homelessness and begging in Dublin was "an enormous issue that is doing us no favours".

"There are two types of vagrants on the streets: those who are in desperate need and those who aren't. Our team of street ambassadors see people pitching up in the morning with their paper cups. They have travelled into the city for this purpose," said Guiney.

"I understand Dublin Tourism is also receiving feedback in its visitors' surveys about this issue. Locals and tourists are being harassed at ATMs, bus stops and anywhere that people congregate outside."