

Camden Local Strategic Partnership

Meeting	9 October 2008
Report Title	Camden Council's Licensing Policy Statement and Alcohol Harm Reduction
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Purpose	As a matter arising at the LSP's 4 July meeting, the Chair asked for a summary of how the council's Licensing Policy Statement addresses the issue of alcohol harm reduction.
Recommendations	The LSP is asked to note the report as an information item.

1 Introduction

1.1 The Council's licensing and enforcement approach under the Licensing Act 2003 is based on promoting the four licensing objectives:

- the prevention of crime and disorder;
- ensuring public safety;
- the prevention of public nuisance;
- the protection of children from harm.

It is set out in the Council's Licensing Policy Statement.

1.2 The Council recognises that licensing law plays a key role in preventing and controlling alcohol-related crime and anti-social behaviour, and ensures that the licensing objectives are promoted through well-managed premises and, where appropriate, by regulating the number, location and hours of premises. The Licensing Policy Statement and its enforcement is central to the council and PCT's joint Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy 2007-2010 launched in May 2008. The four key goals of this strategy are:

- Reduce the impact of alcohol misuse on the community
- Reduce harms to health
- Increase access to treatment
- Reduce underage drinking and alcohol-related harm amongst young people

2 Licensing Applications

2.1 The Council requires applicants to set out in their application the measures they will take to promote the licensing objectives. As alcohol related violence and disorder is a major concern in Camden, the Council can apply conditions to licences to help limit consumption of alcohol and prevent binge drinking.

2.2 Regarding off-licenses and the problem of street drinking, conditions could include: strong beer and cider above 5.5% ABV will not be sold; no

single cans or bottles of beer or cider will be sold; all alcoholic drinks will be clearly labelled or marked with the name of the premises. This last condition is primarily used to help establish what premises are being used by street drinkers, so that the Council and the Police are able to offer appropriate advice and assistance to that premises. This condition could also be used at premises where there is concern about underage sales.

- 2.3 Other possible conditions to prevent underage sales could include: operating a proof of age scheme; keeping a log of all refused sales of alcohol available for inspection; implementing a staff training programme on the identification of young people who are underage, or, in certain circumstances, not permitting young people in the premises at any time whilst alcohol is being sold.
- 2.4 Camden has adopted a policy on the hours of licensed premises in order to ensure that residents are protected from the potential negative impact of extended licensing hours. The Council stipulates that applications for licenses outside the 'framework hours' must outline proposals to address the prevention of crime and disorder and the prevention of public nuisance.
- 2.5 The Council has also implemented special policies in two areas of the borough, Camden Town and Seven Dials in Covent Garden, where the number, type and density of premises selling alcohol has a serious negative impact on the local community. These policies include a presumption against new licenses, or the extension of existing licenses, which the Council can use to refuse applications for premises within the two cumulative impact zones.

3 Enforcement

- 3.1 The Council uses the following powers from the Licensing Act to enforce licensing law:
 - Police enforcement powers to close down instantly for up to 24 hours any licensed premises or temporary event on the grounds of disorder, the likelihood of disorder or nuisance noise from the premises.
 - Enforcement powers to prosecute persons responsible for offences under the Act, including breaching licence conditions or selling alcohol to someone who is drunk.
 - Powers of the police, responsible authorities or local residents and businesses to seek a review of the licence or certificate in question.
- 3.2 The Council's approach to dealing with licensing concerns is designed to ensure that enforcement is proportionate, and that advice and support are given where necessary, but that firm action is taken against irresponsible licensees. Unlicensed Alcohol sales will be treated as a serious breach by Camden that will require action other than advice in the majority of situations.

- 3.3 The Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy also contains a commitment to work with licensed premises to reduce the harms caused by alcohol misuse, including underage drinking.
- 3.4 The Council makes full inspections of premises and carries out covert visits and monitoring of areas known to be a problem. The Council also regularly carries out test purchases to investigate the sale of alcohol from off-licenses to underage drinkers. Unlawful sales of alcohol to children will be treated as a serious breach under the Licensing Act 2003. Where Camden has evidence to prove alcohol has been sold to children, in breach of the Act, prosecution may be considered in the first instance without prior warning. In July and August 2008, the Licensing team and the police undertook underage test purchases at 23 premises, resulting in 4 sales and 19 refusals. 240 test purchases are planned for 2008/9.
- 3.5 In addition, the police are about to run a four month pilot of “Prove It”, a scheme to address underage sales, in Gospel Oak and West Hampstead wards. Its aims are to:
- To provide training and continuous support to retailers about their statutory duties not to sell alcohol to those under 18 years,
 - To reduce the volume of underage sales in the target area based on baseline data collected at the beginning of the scheme,
 - To educate young people about the consequences to their health and safety as a result of drinking,
 - To reduce the fear of crime and associated alcohol related disorder in the pilot areas
- 3.6 One of the key mechanisms that the Council and its partners use to manage alcohol-related crime and disorder is the Licensing Task Group. These fortnightly operational meetings are used to proactively manage enforcement, through assessment of statistics from the Police, other local intelligence and licensee complaints. The Group’s tasks include visiting problem licensed premises, re-enforcing responsible management of licensed premises, monitoring potential hotspot areas and investigating complaints. 21 premises licences have been reviewed since the Licensing Act was implemented. Of these 7 have resulted in additional conditions to licences, 5 licences suspended with additional conditions added and 4 licences have been revoked.
- 3.7 The Council also works with the police, the PCT and other local agencies on a variety of initiatives designed to reduce alcohol-related violence and public disorder, including joint licensing enforcement operations; seasonal multi-agency alcohol misuse enforcement campaigns; a borough-wide Controlled Drinking Zone, Best Bar None and marketing campaigns to promote sensible drinking. For example, a social marketing campaign was recently run, targeted at under 16s and 16-24 yr olds, students and white Irish males aged 25-45 years to increase their awareness of potential harm from alcohol and to induce behaviour change. In addition, The PCT has recruited three new health

promotion workers to support health promotion activities in those under the age of 18, those aged 18-24 and in the workplace.

- 3.8 Joint licensing enforcement operations include a series of coordinated joint visits to high risk licensed premises throughout the borough. These provide a strong enforcement presence in Camden and demonstrate that the Council and other responsible authorities are working closely to address alcohol related crime and disorder issues in Camden.