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The Impact of the Licensing Act 2003 on Levels of Crime and Disorder: Key Findings of the Blackpool Case Study, prepared for the Home Office

Original Citation

Newton, Andrew D., Armitage, Rachel, Hirschfield, Alex, Monchuk, Leanne, Rogerson, Michelle, Wilcox, Aidan and Jacobson, Jessica (2008) The Impact of the Licensing Act 2003 on Levels of Crime and Disorder: Key Findings of the Blackpool Case Study, prepared for the Home Office. Research Report. King's College London.

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KEY FINDINGS OF THE BLACKPOOL CASE STUDY

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February 2008

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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Implementation of the Licensing Act

Under the Licensing Act 2003, most pubs and clubs in Blackpool applied for and were granted the capacity to open for up to two additional hours per night. Premises had been informed in advance that requests for extensions of more than two hours per night were unlikely to be permitted. Premises tended to use their additional hours flexibly: that is, they opened beyond their traditional closing times only on relatively busy nights – likely to be weekend nights.

It is difficult to assess the extent to which implementation of the Licensing Act in Blackpool entailed more robust enforcement within the night-time economy. Prior to implementation, the town's Nightsafe scheme had focused on enforcement, and this continued after implementation. Likewise, partnership working on the night night-time economy (and its associated problems) had received increasing emphasis in Blackpool prior to and independently of the Licensing Act. The Act appears to have further enhanced the role of partnership, for example with respect to the handling of licence applications.

Impact on crime and disorder

Police data

Analysis of police recorded crime data on violence against the person reveals some significant declines in this broad crime category between 2004 and 2006. Over the two years of the baseline period, there was an average of 470 recorded violent offences per month, compared to 425 per month over the one-year post-implementation period – a fall of ten per cent. However, much of the decline in violent crime cannot be attributed to the Licensing Act, since the downward trend was evident prior to the Act's implementation. The issue of attribution is complicated by the fact that a series of alcohol misuse enforcement campaigns (AMECs) were run over the evaluation period, in addition to the enforcement activity carried out as part of Nightsafe.

Temporal analysis of violent crime data suggests that, in the context of a broad decline in violence, the later opening hours of pubs and clubs may have been associated with later violent offending. Across Blackpool, violent offending reduced between midnight and 3am, and increased between 3 am and 5am.

Further evidence for the link between later opening and later violence is provided by spatio-temporal analysis of the data – although the lack of comprehensive information on premises' actual open hours makes it difficult to draw definitive conclusions. The pre-existing concentration of violent offences in areas containing licensed premises increased somewhat in the post-implementation period: while around one quarter of violent offences in the baseline period occurred in 50-metre buffer zones around premises, this proportion increased to one third after implementation. The 50-metre zones also saw the greatest proportionate *reduction* in violence between 2 and 3am, and the greatest proportionate *increase* between 3 and 4am. Similarly, after implementation some hot-spots of violence, which were generally in areas with many licensed premises, persisted for longer into the night (that is, beyond 3am).

Recorded criminal damage offences declined between the baseline and post-implementation periods, but, as with violent offences, the downward trend pre-dated the Licensing Act. Neither the overall levels nor the geographic and temporal patterns of criminal damage suggest a relationship between this category of offence and the Act's implementation. Criminal damage was much less concentrated around licensed premises than violence: for example, in both the baseline and post-implementation periods just 11 per cent of offences occurred in the 50-metre zones around licensed premises.

Overall numbers of calls to the police for disorder remained relatively stable over the baseline and post-implementation periods, suggesting that the Licensing Act did not have an impact on levels of disorder. However, there were post-implementation increases in the numbers of calls between 3am and 6am. This, and the fact that calls were somewhat concentrated near licensed premises (in both pre- and post-implementation periods) indicates that later opening hours might have shifted some disorderly behaviour, like violence, to later time periods.

Stakeholders' views

Among seven licensing and other authority representatives interviewed in the post-implementation period, there was broad agreement that violent crime had decreased in Blackpool over the past year. However, the general feeling was that the Licensing Act was not the direct cause of this; respondents pointed, instead, to the increased policing of the night-time economy, ongoing work by the relevant partnerships, and the relatively quiet 2006 summer season. There was also general agreement that binge drinking, and the associated threatening atmosphere in the town centre, had not declined, and that diversification of the night-time economy had not occurred.

Representatives of NTE businesses had mixed views of the Licensing Act's impact on crime and disorder. Some said that problems had stayed the same or increased, while others talked of an improving situation. There was a general consensus that there had been a shift in drinking patterns and an associated slight improvement in behaviour. Many respondents noted that customers were less inclined to drink as much as possible just before closing time, and that they dispersed more gradually, thus preventing large groups of drinkers congregating on the streets. However, several respondents pointed out that most customers still got as drunk as before – and thus there was an ongoing need to tackle the culture of binge drinking.

Residents' views

The Licensing Act does not appear to have had a major impact on the behaviour and attitudes of Blackpool's residents. The survey of residents found that numbers visiting the town centre were not significantly higher in the post-implementation period than in the baseline period. In both periods, the most popular reason given for going to the town centre in the evening was to go to pubs, bars or clubs, and the second most popular to go to restaurants or cafes. This indicates that the aim of diversification of the night-time economy had not yet been achieved in Blackpool.

There were no significant differences in the proportions of respondents who felt unsafe in the town centre in the evening following implementation of the Licensing Act, or in the reasons given for feeling unsafe. Seventy-seven per cent of post-implementation respondents thought drunk and rowdy behaviour was a problem in the town centre, and 37 per cent that it had become more of a problem over the past twelve months – figures that are not significantly different to those from the baseline.

Fifty-two per cent of baseline respondents had thought that alcohol-related crime would increase following implementation of the Licensing Act; but significantly fewer post-implementation respondents bore out this pessimism – with 39 per cent saying that, in their view, it *had* increased. However, few post-implementation respondents perceived an improvement in levels of alcohol-related crime: only five per cent said the problem had decreased (significantly fewer than the baseline 11% who had thought it would decrease). A similar pattern was displayed with respect to views of rowdy behaviour.

Diversification

One of the longer term aims of the Act was to diversify the type of entertainment on offer in town and city centre night-time economy areas. It was reported by authority representatives that very few premises in Blackpool had applied to significantly vary the type of entertainment that they offered. However, the Act was being used to ensure that any new premises made an effort to design out features that were thought to lead to increased crime and disorder. Additionally, the council had applied for and obtained a premises license for the town centre so that they could provide regulated street entertainment such as music, dancing and street entertainers (such as mime artists). It was hoped that this would add character to, and help improve the atmosphere of, the town centre.

The findings of the residents' survey suggest that implementation of the Licensing Act has not had a significant impact on the overall numbers or type of people visiting the city centre and the most popular reason given for visiting in the evening at both baseline and post implementation period was to go to pubs, bars, or clubs

Acknowledgements

This report was commissioned by the Home Office as part of a larger evaluation of the 2003 Licensing Act.

The research that contributed to this report involved many different organisation. The bulk of the empirical work in the site was mounted by the Applied Criminology Centre (ACC), University of Huddersfield: Dr. Rachel Armitage, Professor Alex Hirschfield, Leanne Monchuk,, Dr Andrew Newton, Michelle Rogerson and Dr Aidan Wilcox and this is reflected in the authorship of this report. The ACC fieldworkers in Blackpool were Victoria Jupp, Nick Pearce, Dave Elgee and John Quinn. The role of the Institute for Criminal Policy Research was to draw this work together with that of other researchers, to create a synthesis report for the site. The original site report is available from the ACC.

We should acknowledge the contribution of others who were involved in the evaluation, notably the staff of BMRB especially Matthew Brown, Bruce Hayward and Matthew Sexton who managed the survey of residents in the five areas and to all the researchers at Cragg Ross Dawson, especially Tim Porter and Ben Toombs, who conducted the in-depth interviews in the case-study sites, and Home Office researchers who assembled a range of data both in the case study sites and nationally. We are grateful both to the research team at the Home Office who designed and oversaw the evaluation process: Alana Diamond, Catherine Nicol, Jonathan Smith, Corrine Charles, Beth Daws, Laura Brasnett, Sian Moley, Lucy Fletcher, Sharon Ross and Emily Diment.

We are particularly grateful to Alana Diamond, Greg Braun and Catherine Nicol at the Home Office for the help and support that they have provided throughout the process of drafting this and other site reports. Finally we would like to thank our peer reviewers, Spencer Chainey of University College London Jill Dando Institute of Crime Science and an anonymous reviewer, for their comments.

November 2007

1 INTRODUCTION

This report sets out the key findings of research into the impact of the Licensing Act 2003 in Blackpool.

The Licensing Act 2003

The Licensing Act 2003, which came into effect on 24 November 2005, abolished set licensing hours in England and Wales. Opening hours of premises are now set locally by local authorities through the conditions of individual licenses. The aim of the legislation was to liberalise a rigid system whilst reducing the problems of rapid-drinking and disorder associated with a standard closing time. It was hoped that in the longer term, the Act would help bring about a drinking culture which attached less value to rapid-drinking and drunkenness as ends in themselves. The Act also sought to provide licensing authorities with new powers to deal with problematic premises and to encourage closer partnership between the range of authorities who tackle problems of alcohol-related crime and disorder.

The Act has been the subject of much controversy. Although the aim of the Act was specifically to address problems associated with late-night drinking, there was a great deal of political and media concern in the run-up to implementation about the impact that it would actually have. It was feared that premises would be open 24 hours a day, leading to heavier drinking and higher overall levels of consumption. There were worries both about the public health impact of the new licensing regime and its effects on crime and disorder.

Responsibility for the Licensing Act lies with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. Recommendation 29 of the Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy (2004) requires the Home Office – with the support of other government departments – to assess the Act's impact on crime and disorder. Hence in 2005 the Home Office put into place an evaluation programme for this purpose. The programme included British Crime Survey analysis, a survey of 30 police forces, and five detailed case studies – of which the Blackpool study is one.

All five case studies had a variety of components; these are described in Box 1.1.

Box 1.1: Components of research in Blackpool

1. Police recorded crime data

Collation and analysis of time-stamped police recorded crime data for the period December 2003 to December 2006 on:

- violence against the person
- criminal damage
- sexual assaults.

Spatial and temporal analysis of the range of recorded crime data was conducted by the Applied Criminology Centre of the University of Huddersfield (ACC).

2. Calls to the police for disorder

Review, also by ACC, of calls to the police for disorder from December 2003 to December 2006.

3. Penalty notices for disorder

Collation of data by the Home Office on numbers of penalty notices for disorder (PNDs) issued in the period April 2004 to March 2007.

4. Accident and emergency (A&E) data

Collation and analysis of A&E data, also by ACC, for the period November 2003 to December 2006 (Friday and Saturday nights only) comprising:

- numbers of A&E attendances
- assaults recorded by A&E.

5. Residents' survey

A telephone survey of Blackpool residents conducted in two waves by the British Market Research Bureau (BMRB):

- Baseline survey conducted in February to June 2005 with a total of 702 respondents (including a separate boost sample of 152 people aged 18 to 30).
- Post-implementation survey conducted in February to May 2007 with a total of 761 respondents (including 138 in the boost sample).

6. Observation

25 visits to fourteen licensed premises undertaken by ACC in one baseline period (November 2005) and 20 in two post-implementation periods (January to March 2006 and January 2007).

7. Interviews with licensees, managers and staff of licensed premises

- 14 qualitative, semi-structured interviews conducted by ACC in January to March 2006 with 3 managers, 4 licensees, 4 door supervisors, and 2 members of bar staff.
- 15 qualitative, semi-structured interviews conducted by ACC in January 2007 with 5 managers, 3 licensees, 5 door supervisors, and 2 members of bar staff.

8. Interviews with licensees and representatives from night-time economy (NTE) businesses

36 qualitative, semi-structured interviews licensees and representatives from a range of late-night businesses (pubs, clubs, restaurants, take-aways, off-licences and taxi companies) in two phases:

- Baseline phase, October to November 2005 (15 interviews)
- Post-implementation phase, October 2006 to January 2007 (21 interviews).

These interviews were undertaken by Cragg, Ross and Dawson (CRD), and are henceforth referred to in this report as 'interviews with NTE businesses'.

8. Interviews with authority representatives

Qualitative, semi-structured interviews with representatives of the licensing authority and the 'responsible authorities' (police, fire service, and local authority planning, social services, environmental protection and trading standards departments, the licensing solicitor, the town centre manager, and a representative of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership. Interviews were conducted in two phases:

- Around the time of implementation of the Licensing Act, September 2005 to January 2006
- Post-implementation, November 2006 to February 2007 (4 interviews with 7 respondents, including 4 police respondents interviewed jointly).

These interviews were undertaken by researchers from the Home Office.

The context of the Blackpool case study

Blackpool is a large seaside resort in the north-west of England. It has a main holiday season running from Easter through to early November, when the famous Blackpool illuminations are switched off. The Blackpool Pleasure Beach is another popular attraction, and the town also regularly hosts the main political party conferences.

The Blackpool unitary authority area has a population of approximately 140,000 (Office for National Statistics, 2005 mid-year estimates). However, it is estimated that

during peak weekends this population can almost double. Blackpool's Crime, Disorder and Drugs Strategy reports that the town attracts approximately 11 million visitors a year.¹

The indices of deprivation indicate that there is an acute problem of social deprivation in Blackpool – it was ranked 24 out of 354 local authorities in England in 2004 (where 1 was the most deprived area).² Problems of deprivation are concentrated in particular areas: analysis of the 2001 census highlighted that six of Blackpool's wards contained some of the highest crime areas in the country, as well as being associated with problems of poor health, high unemployment and low income levels.³

Tourism and the leisure industry have long been central to Blackpool's economy, and are currently being further promoted through the town's 'Master Plan'.⁴ This is a 15 to 20 year, £4.6 billion strategic plan for growth, which includes high profile projects such as a state of the art addition to the Blackpool Pleasure Beach and the reconstruction of the seafront promenades.

Blackpool's night-time economy

As of March 2007, a total of 1,412 premises licences authorising the sale or supply of alcohol were in force across the Blackpool. Of these, 1,254 licenses authorised the sale of alcohol for consumption on the premises only, or for consumption both on and off the premises.⁵ (See the discussion of 'current licensing statistics' in Chapter 4 for more details.)

Blackpool's popularity as a holiday destination for families and older visitors has been declining for many years. Recently, however, the town has attracted increasing numbers of young people, including large single-sex groups on stag and hen trips. Among the many pubs, bars and nightclubs in Blackpool is a 'super-club' – reputedly Europe's largest club - which has a 4,000-person capacity and attracts coach groups from Manchester, Liverpool and beyond the north-west of England. For the purpose

¹ Blackpool Community Safety and Drugs Partnership: Crime, Disorder & Drugs Strategy 2005/08

² ONS, 2004 - <http://neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/>

³ Blackpool Community Safety and Drugs Partnership – Crime, Disorder and Drugs Strategy 2005/08

⁴ Blackpool Urban Regeneration Company (2005) - The Blackpool Resort Master Plan

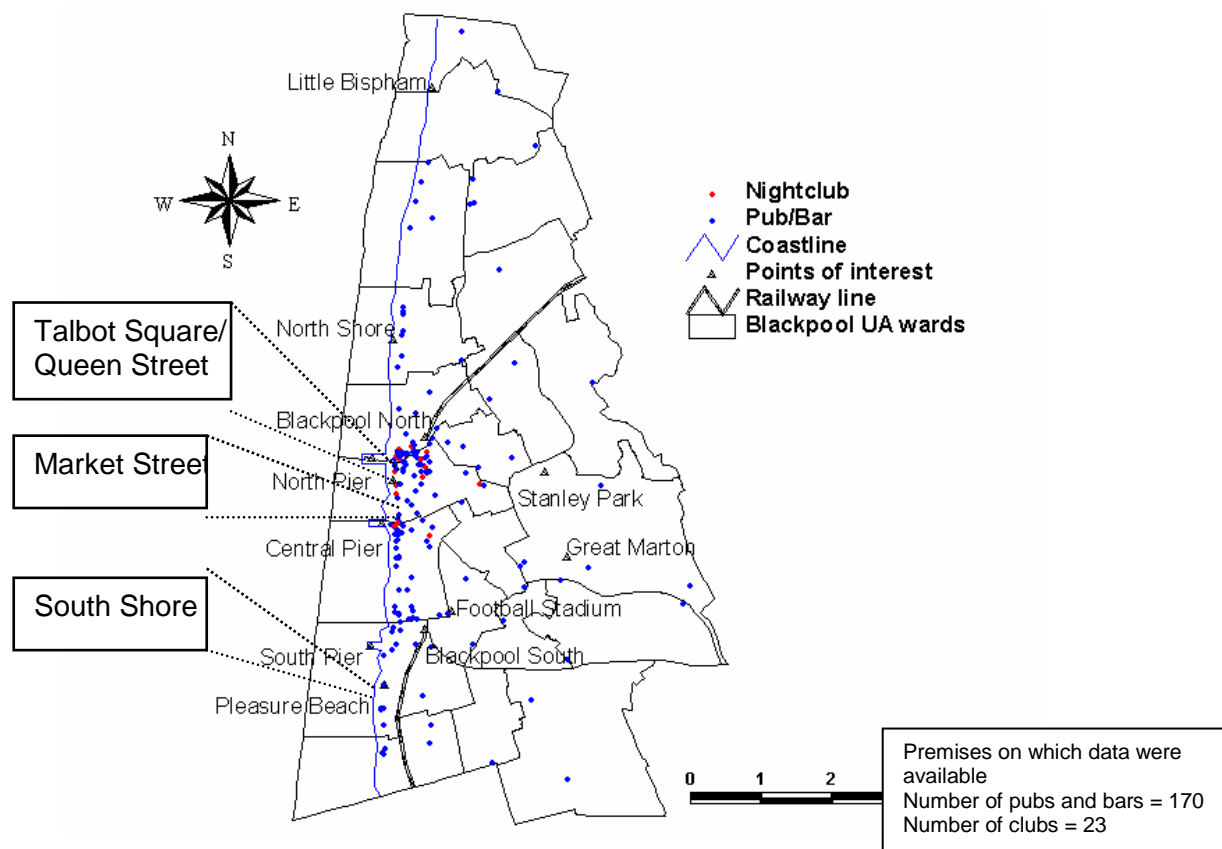
⁵ Department for Culture, Media and Sport, www.dcms.gov.uk/reference_library/rands/statistics/alcohol_entertainment_licensing_statistics.htm

of the case study research, a total of 170 pubs and bars and 23 night clubs in the area were identified and geo-coded. This was the number of premises for which address details and other minimum operational data were available via the licensing authority.

There are three main drinking areas in Blackpool (see Figure 1.1 for a map of the case study area). Talbot Square/Queen Street is a well-known, highly concentrated drinking circuit located in the town centre. It contains 16 bars and pubs plus a number of takeaways and restaurants. It is close to North Pier and the Promenade which stretches along the sea front. Close to the Talbot Square/Queen Street circuit is the Market Street drinking area – there is constant movement between the two localities. Market Street contains a mix of bars, clubs and late-night food venues, and has the longest taxi rank in the town. During the summer season, the illuminations attract many people to this area.

The third main drinking area is South Shore. This is at the far end of the promenade - roughly 40 minutes walk from the town centre. It is a large area covering the south side of the entertainment district, with residential quarters and Blackpool FC's ground. The area has many cheap guest houses and bed and breakfasts. The pubs and clubs in the area tend to cater for local people rather than tourists, and the area is generally quieter than Talbot Square/Queen Street and Market Street.

Figure 1.1 Map of the case study area



Alcohol-related crime and disorder

Given the popularity of Blackpool as a destination for groups of young people going to pubs and clubs, it might be expected that problems of alcohol-related crime and disorder are a feature of the town. Certainly, NTE business representatives, who were interviewed at the time of the Licensing Act's implementation, regarded drunken, disorderly and violent behaviour as a major issue in Blackpool. Fighting, aggression and vandalism were said to be commonplace even during the week:

To be honest, we are used to it. If there is a fight, that is normal, you know. Because really, I see a fight a night. (respondent from restaurant)

These problems were said to be long-standing, although some thought that media attention had put the spotlight on Blackpool and created the impression among the wider public that it was a recent development. However, most respondents agreed that the level of alcohol-related disorder had reached a peak a couple of years ago; some felt that the situation had improved since then, while others thought that violence was now an established part of the culture.

Friday and Saturday nights were almost always said to be the busiest and most problematic. Trouble was said to take place usually on the street (although it might start inside a venue and move outside), especially in Talbot Square/Queen Street, and to peak at around 2am when up to 30,000 people would be ejected from clubs and would head for the same takeaways and taxi ranks. Almost all respondents agreed that young men are most likely to cause trouble, although it was often noted that women were increasingly involved in incidents as well.

The structure of the report

Following this introduction, there are five chapters to the report. Chapter 2 examines local measures to manage the night-time economy that are largely independent of the Licensing Act 2003 – in that they were implemented before, although continued after, the Act came into effect. This is followed, in Chapter 3, by discussion of the development and content of local policy under the Licensing Act. Chapter 4 then looks at the implementation of local policy under the Act. Chapters 5 and 6 consider evidence for the Act's impact on crime and disorder in recorded crime figures (Chapter 5) and residents' and stakeholders' perceptions (Chapter 6).

2 TACKLING ALCOHOL-RELATED CRIME AND DISORDER: MEASURES PRE-DATING THE LICENSING ACT 2003

This report is primarily concerned with the implementation and repercussions of the Licensing Act 2003 in Blackpool. However, implementation of local policy under the Act occurs in a context partly shaped by other measures aimed at managing and addressing problems associated with the consumption of alcohol and the night-time economy. These measures were implemented before the introduction of the Licensing Act, and generally continued since. This chapter discusses the scope of these pre-existing measures.

Tackling alcohol-related crime and disorder – measures pre-dating the Licensing Act: summary

Measures undertaken in Blackpool prior to the licensing Act include:

The police-led Nightsafe scheme involving high visibility policing in night-time economy areas, combined with multi-agency test purchasing operations and inspection visits at licensed premises.

The establishment of the Blackpool Business Improvement District (BID) and the Crime, Drugs and Disorder Strategy for 2005-8, produced by BSafe Blackpool, the aims of which include the reduction of assaults, and particularly those fuelled by alcohol, by 20 per cent.

The implementation of Alcohol Misuse Enforcement Campaigns (AMECs), involving high visibility policing, increased use of penalty notices for disorder, test purchase operations at on- and off-licences, and the use of dispersal orders tackling anti-social behaviour.

A range of measures undertaken by licensed premises themselves to reduce problems of crime and disorder. For example, most licensees have active involvement in some aspects of the Nightsafe scheme – notably through their participation in Blackpool's Licensees' Forum.

Multi-agency action pre-dating the Licensing Act

Prior to implementation of the Licensing Act, multi-agency working on the night-time economy was already well-established in Blackpool. An important initiative is the police-led Nightsafe scheme, which was set up in 2002 to tackle alcohol-related crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour in the town centre. Various agencies are

involved in this including the police, local authority trading standards, the ambulance service, the fire service and the primary care trust. The initiative emerged out of Operation Aslan which ran from 1999 with the main purpose of providing more visible policing in the town centre. (An area of the town centre continues to be known as the 'Aslan Zone', and remains the focus of high-visibility policing.)

Nightsafe continued Aslan's focus on high visibility policing in night-time economy areas. This is combined with test purchasing operations and inspection visits at licensed premises, carried out jointly by the police and other agencies including trading standards, environmental health and (more recently) the fire service. Recorded crime data and intelligence are used to target the most problematic premises. The scheme also incorporates a range of preventive and educational elements, including the use of a yellow and red card system by the police to give warnings to members of the public about bad behaviour; the introduction of taxi marshals late at night; an educational campaign on alcohol aimed at young people; and presentations to licensees and bar staff about responsible drinking.

Another example of multi-agency working was the establishment of the Blackpool Business Improvement District (BID) in October 2005. This is a partnership between local authorities and local businesses, aimed at providing additional services or improvements to a specified area. The BID is initially a five-year project and covers the main town centre and other areas designated for future commercial development. It is proposed that initiatives under the BID will include funding for a business crime co-ordinator to work with stakeholders to reduce crime.

Blackpool's multi-agency Crime, Drugs and Disorder Strategy for 2005-8, produced by BSafe Blackpool,⁶ outlines seven priorities which include the aim of reducing assaults, and particularly those fuelled by alcohol, by 20 per cent. Various schemes to reduce levels of alcohol consumption have also been undertaken under the BSafe umbrella, including a project working with street drinkers, alcohol education in schools, and the appointment of a nurse to go out on patrol with police officers in order to target youth drinking areas and provide advice on safe drinking habits.

⁶ BSafe Blackpool is the Blackpool Community Safety and Drugs Partnership (formerly the Blackpool CDRP and DAT).

Enforcement pre-dating the Licensing Act

As discussed above, the Nightsafe scheme is largely an enforcement initiative, with its emphasis (emerging out of Operation Aslan) on high-visibility police patrols and joint inspection visits.

Related enforcement activity includes the implementation of the Home Office-sponsored Alcohol Misuse Enforcement Campaigns (AMECs) in Blackpool . AMECs were rolled out in a number of areas England and Wales. They aimed to tackle the crime and disorder associated with the night time economy and involved various elements of high-visibility, multi-agency enforcement, including increased use of penalty notices for disorder (see below), test purchase operations at on- and off-licences to tackle under-age drinking, the use of dispersal orders to address anti-social behaviour, and accompanying publicity.

AMECs were implemented in Blackpool from July to August 2004, December 2004 to February 2005, November 2005 to January 2006, and May to June 2006. An additional summer mini-AMEC operated between July and September 2005. As the third AMEC was undertaken around the time of implementation of the Licensing Act 2003, it is difficult to disentangle the initial impact of changes introduced under the Act from the possible impact of the AMEC.

Penalty notices for disorder (PNDs), which were introduced by the Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001 and implemented nationally in 2003-4, are a tool for tackling low level offending and anti-social behaviour. They are frequently used to target problems of drunken, rowdy behaviour.⁷ PNDs can be issued by the police and in a limited capacity by community support officers and other accredited persons. For the Licensing Act evaluation, data were collected on PNDs issued in Blackpool from April 2004 to March 2007. This shows that the number of PNDs issued peaked in October 2004, and then declined until February 2005 when a fairly steady increase began.

⁷ PNDs are intended to be a quick and effective tool for use in policing minor offences such as 'causing harassment, alarm or distress' and 'disorderly behaviour while drunk', while reducing the workloads of both the police and the courts.

Measures with active involvement of licensed premises

Interviews conducted with NTE businesses in the baseline period reveal a range of measures that, prior to implementation of the Licensing Act, were being undertaken by licensed premises with the aim of reducing problems of crime and disorder. Most of these measures continued after implementation.

For example, most licensees have active involvement in some aspects of the Nightsafe scheme – most notably through their participation in Blackpool’s Licensees’ Forum. This is a pubwatch-type scheme which was first set up around five years ago, but is now generally considered an element of Nightsafe. Members of the forum hold regular meetings – usually convened by the licensees themselves – at which they can discuss and resolve licensing issues. The forum has also increased levels of contact and co-operation between the police and licensees. One outcome of the forum was the establishment of a voluntary agreement between premises to abolish irresponsible drinks promotions on Friday and Saturday nights.

Licensees have access to a radio network linking venues - through which they can share information about people causing trouble in their premises - and the town centre’s CCTV system. Another initiative involving licensees, although organised by the police, is the ‘Best Bar None’ competition. This rewards licensees who have demonstrated good practice in managing their establishments – and is seen as a positive alternative to the practice of punishing licensees who fail to comply with licence conditions.

Individual measures adopted by pubs, clubs and bars, aimed at improving security within and immediately outside the premises, include the use of security staff accredited by the Security Industry Authority (SIA). (SIA registration came into force in April 2005.) All venues use either toughened or shattering glassware, and most have ‘panic buttons’ of some description, linked either directly to the police or to other staff members. Other individual measures include staff training, the introduction of dress codes (with the intention of excluding troublesome customers), and policies of refusing admission to large single-sex groups.

3 LOCAL POLICY UNDER THE LICENSING ACT 2003

This chapter describes the development of local licensing policy under the Licensing Act 2003, and the main content of that policy as set out in Blackpool's Statement of Licensing Policy.

Local policy under the Licensing Act: summary

Blackpool LA sits within the Council's legal and democratic Services. The head of the LA is also the Council's principal solicitor. The responsible authorities (RAs) in Blackpool include: the police, fire service, and local authority planning, social services, environmental protection and trading standards departments. However, some RAs have been uncertain about their roles under the Act.

Blackpool Council published its Statement of Licensing Policy (SLP) in January 2005. Most RAs do not appear to have participated fully in the consultation process.

The SLP refers to the possibility of introducing a cumulative impact policy, noting that the town centre and promenade 'are areas where the behaviour of customers of all premises taken together has a greater impact than normal'. However, the decision was taken *not* to define formally these areas as saturation zones. Subsequently, the Nightsafe partnership has campaigned for a CI policy, and it appears that this may shortly be introduced.

The development of local policy

With the implementation of the Licensing Act 2003, the former licensing department of Blackpool Council was moved from the Environmental Services Department and established as the licensing authority (LA) within the Council's legal and democratic Services. The head of the LA is also the Council's principal solicitor.

Section 5 of the Licensing Act 2003 imposes a statutory duty on licensing authorities to produce and keep under review a Statement of Licensing Policy. The purpose of the policy statement is to set out how the licensing authority intends to carry out its licensing functions and thereby promote the licensing objectives of:

- Prevention of crime and disorder;
- Public safety;
- Prevention of public nuisance;
- Protection of children from harm.

The Act specifies responsible authorities (RAs) who must be consulted for each licence application, and can place conditions on licences. The Blackpool RAs are the police, fire service, and local authority planning, social services, environmental protection and trading standards departments. Within the police (that is, the western division of Lancashire Police), the licensing function was attached to the uniformed operations department.

Blackpool Council prioritised resources for the implementation of the Act, in recognition of the critical role of the licensing trade for Blackpool's economy and reputation. Hence the Council funded up to 11 temporary staff in the LA, and also provided funds for additional staff in the environmental protection and social services departments.

In drafting the Statement of Licensing Policy (SLP), the LA took its steer from the LACORS (Local Authorities Co-ordinators on Regulatory Services) guidance and from other local authorities. The Statement was published in January 2005, after a period of consultation. However, according to LA and RA respondents interviewed by the Home Office, the consultation proved to be limited with only the police participating fully. A representative from planning admitted that he had not read the SLP. A fire service respondent explained that his service was attempting to unify its response to the policy statements being developed by the 14 different councils within Lancashire Fire Authority.

The Statement of Licensing Policy

The introduction to Blackpool's SLP describes the Licensing Act 2003 as:

An opportunity to introduce flexibility, entrepreneurial activity and consumer choice into what has hitherto been an inflexible, restrictive and prescriptive regime. The modernisation process presents business and the community with the opportunity to contribute to the new licensing regime operated by the Council and to work with the Authority to reduce crime and disorder, improve public safety, prevent public nuisance and protect children.

There are two main parts to the document. The first outlines objectives of the new licensing system and how the LA will administer the system. The second describes

the principles to be followed in the consideration of licensing principles, and provides guidance for applicants about this process.

Section 2.5 of the Statement of Licensing Policy elaborates the licensing objective of preventing crime and disorder. It is noted here that:

The prevention of crime and disorder is a vital element in ensuring the quality of life in a community and an important aspect of a successful and vibrant local economy. The link between the consumption of alcohol and crime and disorder is well recognised and documented and the Council is committed to working with the partner agencies to address this. Lancashire Constabulary has identified 40% of violent crime to be alcohol related and that 70% of assaults occur around pubs and clubs.

The context of these issues is clearly stated with the observation that:

The tourism and entertainment industry in Blackpool is a major contributor to the economy. The Licensing Authority recognises its duty is to protect the substantial residential population in the area, to ensure that regulated entertainment can be enjoyed safely and to balance these objectives with the legitimate expectations of commercial operators.

The various enforcement and preventive elements of the Nightsafe scheme (see Chapter Two) are cited as exemplifying good practice in the efforts to 'combat crime and disorder associated with the late night entertainment sector'.

Cumulative impact

Guidance issued under the Licensing Act states that the licensing authority may adopt a policy to address the issue of the 'cumulative impact' of large numbers of licensed premises in particular areas. Where a cumulative impact policy is adopted, this introduces a rebuttable presumption that certain types of licence application (involving the sale or supply of alcohol) for premises within the defined 'saturation zone' may be refused.

The Blackpool SLP refers to the possibility of introducing a cumulative impact policy, and notes that the town centre and promenade 'are areas where the behaviour of customers of all premises taken together has a greater impact than normal'. However, the decision was taken *not* to define these areas as saturation zones. Rather, it is stated that if objections are made to licence applications in these locations, then

the licensing authority will consider whether the granting of any further licences would undermine one or more of the licensing objectives and may refuse an application on this basis. The onus in such circumstances will be on the objector, to provide evidence to show that the grant of a licence would produce the alleged cumulative impact.

In practice, according to a police representative, a 'cumulative impact policy by proxy' was adopted. The police made it clear to licensees in the 'Aslan Zone' – an area in the town centre with a high concentration of licensed premises and in which high visibility policing is carried out - that they would not object to premises asking for an additional couple of hours, for example a 4am closing time with a 5am compulsory exit. (Previously these premises had not been open beyond 2am) Outside the Aslan Zone, where most licensed premises were open until 11pm, the police said that they would not object to premises wishing to stay open to 12am with a 1am exit.

In post-implementation interviews, it was suggested by that it may have been better to adopt an official cumulative impact policy. Since publication of the SLP, the Nightsafe partnership (in particular representatives from the Primary Care Trust and the police) had campaigned for the introduction of such a policy. Their case had recently been accepted by the LA, and it was expected that the town centre would become a designated CI area in the near future. This expectation appears to have been borne out, since recently published DCMS licensing statistics show that as of 31 March 2007, Blackpool had one designated cumulative impact area.⁸

⁸ www.culture.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/3EFAC489-7914-448D-ABAA-9A1E84138D87/0/TableQ4_revised9nov.xls

4 THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LOCAL POLICY UNDER THE LICENSING ACT 2003

This chapter looks at how licensing policy has been implemented in Blackpool following the introduction of the Licensing Act 2003. Three aspects to implementation are considered here: first, the extent to which additional licensing hours have been applied for, granted and used; secondly, enforcement activity under the Act; thirdly, multi-agency working under the Act.

Implementation of local policy under the Licensing Act: summary

Of 161 Blackpool licensed premises on which data are available, 15 per cent applied for no additional licensing hours under the Act, 42 per cent applied for between one and eight additional hours per week, and 44 per cent applied for nine or more additional hours per week.

It appears that most pubs and clubs in Blackpool were granted the capacity to open for up to two hours longer per night, but these additional hours tended to be used only on relatively busy nights – likely to be Friday and Saturday nights.

In granting licence variations, the LA and RAs frequently took the opportunity to attach conditions to the new licences, aimed at improving security in and around premises.

The extent to which implementation of the Act entailed more robust enforcement within Blackpool's night-time economy is difficult to assess. However, the introduction of the Act appears to have resulted in multi-agency inspection visits to premises becoming more focussed on the most problematic venues in the town centre and on the issue of compliance with licence conditions.

As applies equally to enforcement activity, partnership working on the night-time economy (and its associated problems) received increasing emphasis in Blackpool prior to and independently of the introduction of the Licensing Act. But the Act further enhanced the role of partnership, for example with respect to the handling of licence applications.

Applications for additional licensing hours

Information was requested from the LA on the numbers of additional licensing hours applied for on licence applications made by a total of 161 premises. These represent premises on which address details and minimum operational data were available from the Licensing Authority. Based on the assumption that, among these premises, the pubs had previously closed at 11pm and the clubs at 2am, it was calculated that:

- 15 per cent of the premises applied for no additional hours
- 42 per cent of the premises applied for between one and eight additional hours per week
- 44 per cent applied for nine or more additional hours per week.

In the interviews with NTE businesses, all respondents from drinking establishments said that they had applied for up to two extra hours per night.

Responses to applications for additional hours

The NTE respondents had apparently been told by the police in advance of submitting their applications that licence extensions of more than two hours per night, with one further hour allowed for drinking up time, would not be permitted. (Many in any case did not believe that there would be enough trade of the type they wanted after 2am to justify the costs involved in opening later.) This broadly accords with what was said by a police representative interviewed by the Home Office, as reported in the previous chapter. Having requested extensions within the limits of which they had been forewarned, the NTE respondents did not encounter problems with their applications, although a number had relatively straightforward conditions attached to their new hours.

Similarly, of fourteen licensed premises visited by the ACC researchers, thirteen had applied for and been granted additional hours, although none was granted an extension beyond 4am.

According to the Home Office post-implementation interviews, over the 12 months since the introduction of the Act, some premises applied to extend their hours beyond those previously granted – but the police successfully objected to these extensions.

Use of additional hours by licensed premises

There is a lack of comprehensive data on the numbers of additional hours *used* by licensed premises in Blackpool. It is clear, however, that many licensees did not intend to use all their additional hours, but wished to use them flexibly, according to customer demand. For example, some of the NTE respondents interviewed in the baseline period, especially those whose premises were not directly located in the main drinking 'circuit', said that they expected to use their additional hours during the peak summer months or on special occasions. Others wanted the opportunity to

extend hours on an impromptu basis, should the need arise – for example, on an unexpected ‘good night’.

A year after implementation, the experiences recounted by a NTE respondent from a chain pub suggested that the initial caution about longer opening hours was justified from a business perspective:

Nobody tells anyone to shut but when you are down to your last 50 people then you just shut, and the real late ones [bars] will take over. It really is funny, we all kind of shut when we feel like it and I think it is a great thing. The breweries don't like it, they want us to stay open until 4. But when you say ‘OK, that is four doormen and so many staff’, and they tend to let us shut when we get down to the last 50. Why waste money?

It was also reported in Home Office post-implementation interviews with authority representatives that not all premises were using their additional hours on a regular basis, because of a lack of customer demand:

A lot of them will have until 1am but generally they only use until midnight. (police representative)

I suspect out in the sticks, the ones who have gone for extensions until about midnight, I think they are probably using that. But I think in the town centre...they probably tend to use them at weekends or special times but not fully. (LA representative)

The ACC researchers visited a small number of licensed premises (14)⁹ to establish, among other matters, their actual hours of business following implementation of the Licensing Act. All of these premises had applied for additional hours: more specifically, for between two and sixteen additional hours per week. On average, these premises used just under half (48 per cent) of their additional hours per week (assuming all additional hours that had been applied for were granted), and ranged from using no additional hours to using 14 additional hours weekly.

In short, it appears that implementation of the Licensing Act led to most pubs and clubs in Blackpool being granted the capacity to open for up to two hours longer per night, but these additional hours tended to be used only on relatively busy nights. It can be assumed, therefore, that premises tended to open for longer on Friday and Saturday nights than on weekday nights

⁹ All but one of the premises were, or had previously been, among the 15 Blackpool premises associated with the highest levels of violent offences.

Imposition of licence conditions

In granting licence variations, the LA and RAs frequently took the opportunity to attach conditions to the new licences. A number of the NTE respondents reported (in baseline interviews) that they had had conditions applied to their new hours, but that these were fairly uniform, acceptable and understandable. The conditions included improved CCTV systems, increased visibility of door staff and closure of doors or windows to avoid noise pollution.

Only two of the 14 premises visited by ACC reported having had conditions placed on their licences: to employ additional door supervisors in one case and to install the radio-link and join the Licensees' Forum in the other.

The LA and RA representatives interviewed by the Home Office (post-implementation interviews) stated that the types of conditions placed on licenses depended on how problematic that premises was in terms of crime and disorder:

What the police did is they graded all the premises red, amber or green to give us a starter for what sort of conditions they were looking at. (LA representative)

According to the LAs and stakeholders interviewed by the Home Office, examples of conditions included SIA-registered door staff for premises opening after a certain time; high visibility clothing for door staff; upgrading or updating of CCTV systems; and membership of the Licensees' Forum (a condition that apparently was mandatory for all premises applying for any kind of licence variation). Conditions were also placed on take-aways which applied to remain open after 3am. It was generally reported that compliance with conditions was good.

In post-implementation interviews with NTE businesses, various developments in the management of premises were reported – reflecting, at least in part, the imposition of licence conditions. Most venues which had previously employed non-SIA door staff have had this accreditation made a condition of their licence. More noticeably, door staff in most venues were required to wear bright orange jackets, apparently to distinguish them from the crowd. This was widely resented for a number of reasons – including the fact that the jackets were hot in the summer. Many licensees were now operating more robust policies on under-age drinking, with several having provided specific training for staff. Several venues were actively supporting an

'Alternate Your Drinks' campaign encouraging drinkers to switch between alcohol and water during the evening, although faith in its efficacy was limited.

Enforcement under the Licensing Act

Among its other aims, implementation of the Licensing Act is intended to involve enhanced enforcement of licence conditions and, more generally, of public order. However, levels of enforcement had been increased in Blackpool prior to implementation of the Act, particularly with the implementation of Operation Aslan and, subsequently, the Nightsafe scheme (see Chapter Two, above).

The extent to which implementation of the Act entailed more robust enforcement over and above the ongoing work is difficult to assess. However, according to the post-implementation interviews with LA and RA representatives, the introduction of the Act resulted in multi-agency inspection visits to premises becoming more focussed on the most problematic venues in the town centre, and on compliance with licence conditions. For those licensees who did not comply with conditions, action was taken against them and in some cases the premises were closed down. For example, the very large nightclub which had been associated with crime and disorder was subjected to a number of strict conditions and enforcement activities. The venue was eventually sold to another person who was deemed to have taken a more responsible and carefully approach with regard to the conditions on the licence.

The multi-agency inspection visits were viewed as effective because they allowed all licensing conditions to be checked simultaneously. At the time of the interviews, it was reported that there had been approximately 13 licence reviews carried out in Blackpool, mainly for health and safety issues identified during the multi-agency inspection visits. These included reviews of off-licenses and takeaways as well as pubs and nightclubs. The reviews had reportedly resulted in licenses being revoked, suspended or having additional conditions added. Other premises had closed voluntarily before being taken to review. The review process was seen as an advantage of the new Act as it strengthened the enforcement process and encouraged licensees to improve the running of their businesses.

Whether the Act led to any increase in enforcement of public order in and around licensed premises is unclear from the interview data. In the post-implementation interviews with NTE businesses, respondents suggested that the police remained seriously under-resourced and, as a consequence, were often slow to act and often ignored calls for assistance. In particular, many respondents said that the police were not enforcing a local ban on street drinking. Some also said that the concentration of police in the town centre made outlying areas more vulnerable.

The police are there, but unfortunately our police force hasn't grown in numbers, and there is plenty more to Blackpool than just the town centre, so there is not enough police in the other areas... So they [drinkers] go to all the little areas like Latham and they congregate there. They say it is the drinking culture and it is under control, but it isn't. (respondent from restaurant)

It still takes quite a while for the police to get to you. Quite a few times I have phoned the police, because there were 14-year-old kids drinking outside. I said: 'Look there are six or eight kids outside drinking cans of Stella, only 14.' 'We'll send someone out', and nobody came out at all. (respondent from off-licence)

Partnership working under the Licensing Act

As applies to enforcement activity, partnership working on the night-time economy (and its associated problems) received increasing emphasis in Blackpool prior to and independently of the introduction of the Licensing Act. But the Act further enhanced the role of partnership, for example with respect to the handling of licence applications.

Among LA and RA representatives interviewed by the Home Office around the time of implementation, there was a general sense that working relations between agencies were good, and that one benefit of the Act was that it helped to validate the existing partnership:

We have a common interest now, we have a common piece of paper...a common cause... a common link with Blackpool Borough which never existing before. (fire service respondent)

The Act formalises structures that were already there. (social services respondent).

Similar points were made in the Home Office post-implementation interviews, in which there was general agreement that the Act had had a positive impact on

partnership working, particularly with regard to the involvement of some of the RAs who had not been previously included in initiatives such as Nightsafe. However, some interviewees argued that the absence of the primary care trust as an RA was particularly detrimental for Blackpool, because of the high levels of alcohol-related deaths, A&E attendances and hospital admissions in the town.

With respect to the specific issue of the handling of applications, the Home Office interviews indicate a general satisfaction with the ways in which the LA and RAs worked together in a pressured situation (the bulk of applications to vary and convert licences were received in the last two weeks of the transitional period). There was close liaison between agencies throughout the process – for example, the LA created a spreadsheet with details of all applications received, which was circulated to the RAs so that they could ensure they had copies of all the forms. In addition, the LA and RAs held weekly meetings to discuss individual cases and procedural matters.

Notwithstanding the broadly positive view of how the partners had worked together in processing applications, the sheer number of applications stretched agency resources to their limits. Additionally, the post-implementation Home Office interviews indicate that there was a degree of tension among some partners over the LA's general approach to dealing with applications. Some respondents reported that Blackpool had done well to strike a balance between complying with the licensing objectives and meeting the needs of the licensing trade, whose predominant income was from tourism:

So I think it was a bit of a balancing act between implementing the new Licensing Act...in a way which does not upset the tourist aspect of Blackpool...We did extremely well. (CDRP representative)

But, in contrast, interviewees from the police reported that the LA's approach could have been stricter:

There was a real lack of expertise in local authorities and they felt really vulnerable and so consequently many of the decisions were made on play safe, don't want to get sued, don't want any litigation. And so consequently you probably find that a lot of the policies are too lax...that there is an over emphasis on the police having to prove, prove, prove things, rather than making certain assumptions which I think are safe to make.

Current licensing statistics for Blackpool

At the time of writing (November 2007), the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has recently published a statistical bulletin on licences and licence applications from across England and Wales, including breakdowns by licensing authority. The data were collected by means of a survey of all licensing authorities.¹⁰

The Blackpool LA reported that as of 31 March 2007, a total of 1,557 premises licences – that is, licenses authorising the sale of alcohol, late-night refreshment or regulated entertainment, or any combination of these activities - were in force across the authority area. Of these, 1,412 authorised the sale or supply of alcohol for on and/or off-site consumption. Table 4.1 provides more details on Blackpool’s premises licences.

Table 4.1: Premises licences in force in the Blackpool licensing authority area, as of 31 March 2007

Sale or supply of alcohol			Late-night refreshment	Any regulated entertainment	All premises licences*
On-sales only	Off-sales only	Both on- & off-sales			
1,114	158	140			
1,412			315	391	1,557*

* The sum of the different categories of licence is more than the total of premises licences because most licences authorise a combination of activities.

In Blackpool, 871 premises had 24-hour licences in March 2007. This figure reflects the town’s status as a holiday destination, since 868 of these premises were hotel bars, and none were pubs or nightclubs. The remaining three premises with 24-hour licences were supermarkets or stores.

Over the first full financial year since implementation of the Licensing Act – from April 2006 to March 2007 - a total of 95 new premises licences were applied for in Blackpool. Ninety of these applications were granted, and the remaining five refused. Over the same period, 61 applications were made to vary premises licences: that is, to change the terms of the licence, for example with respect to opening hours,

¹⁰ All the survey findings can be found at www.dcms.gov.uk/reference_library/rands/statistics/alcohol_entertainment_licensing_statistics.htm

licensable activities or licence conditions. All of the variation applications were successful.

5 ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF THE LICENSING ACT ON CRIME AND DISORDER (1): POLICE AND HEALTH DATA

This chapter assesses the impact, if any, of the Licensing Act on levels of alcohol-related crime and disorder, as evidenced by police recorded crime data on violence against the person and criminal damage,¹¹ and numbers of calls to the police for disorder. The data were analysed at different levels: macro (entire study area), meso (near to licensed premises) and micro (at or inside licensed premises). The spatial analysis, which made use of a Geographical Information System (GIS), was carried out in order to assess whether the Act had impacted on crime and disorder in specific locations – especially areas around licensed premises.¹² Temporal analysis of the data was also undertaken to see if any changes in offence levels could be attributed to changes in licensing hours.

In addition to police data, some health data were also collected for the evaluation and are briefly discussed in the final part of the chapter. All the data reviewed in this chapter were collated and analysed by ACC.

Police data on crime and disorder: summary

Analysis of police recorded crime data from before and after implementation of the Licensing Act produced the following findings:

Levels of violence against the person had decreased: the monthly baseline average was 470 offences compared to 425 post-implementation – a fall of 10 per cent. The downward trend in violence was already evident when the Act was implemented: 5,637 offences were recorded in the average baseline period and 5,098 post-implementation.

The daily distribution of violent offences was broadly similar before and after implementation, with a continuing peak between midnight and 1am; however reduced offending between midnight and 3am and increased offending between 3am and 5am resulted in some flattening of this peak.

In both periods, about 2/5 of violent offences occurred in the 'cluster area' with a high density of licensed premises. In the baseline period, about 1/4 occurred in

¹¹ Sexual offences data were also collected for the evaluation, but it is difficult to draw conclusions from these about any potential impact of the Licensing Act because of the small numbers of incidents (an average of around 17 per month in the baseline period, and about 15 per month after implementation).

¹² GIS is a computerised system for the capture, storage, retrieval, analysis and visualisation of spatial data. It allows crime to be mapped over time and space, and to be cross-referenced with multiple data sources, for example licensed premises and land use. See Technical Annex for more detail on methodology.

50m buffer zones around premises, increasing to 1/3 after implementation. The 50m zones also saw the greatest proportionate *reduction* in violence between 2 and 3am, and the greatest proportionate *increase* between 3 and 4am

The main violence hot-spots were in areas with many licensed premises, and were largely consistent before and after implementation. After implementation, some hot-spots persisted for longer - beyond 3am.

1,222 violent offences were recorded in or at licensed premises during the 2-year baseline period. 15 premises (8% of the total) accounted for 57 per cent of these offences. In the year after implementation, 409 offences were recorded in or at premises; the share attributed to the 'top 15' increased slightly to 65 per cent.

Recorded criminal damage offences declined between the baseline and post-implementation periods, but, as with violent offences, the downward trend pre-dated implementation of the Act. The average monthly figure for the baseline period was 488, compared to 452 post-implementation: a fall of 8 per cent.

Criminal damage was less concentrated around licensed premises than violence. In both the baseline and post-implementation periods, around 22 per cent of offences occurred in the 'cluster area', and 11 per cent in the 50m buffer zones.

The level of calls to the police for disorder remained relatively stable over the baseline and post-implementation periods. The average monthly figure for calls in the baseline was 1,713, compared to 1,689 post-implementation. There were some changes in the daily distribution of calls: most notably, there were post-implementation increases in the numbers made between 3am and 6am. Calls were somewhat concentrated near licensed premises: both pre- and post-implementation, about 20 per cent of calls were from the cluster area, and around 30 per cent from the 50m buffer zones.

In the post-implementation year, the number of assaults recorded by A&E increased by approximately 18 per cent with respect to the mean baseline figure. Increases in A&E assaults occurred in all but two the months in 2006, compared with the monthly averages for the previous two years.

The post-implementation year showed somewhat higher levels of assault in June and July compared to the baseline, which might reflect the impact of the 2006 World Cup. The daily pattern of A&E assaults was fairly consistent across both time periods – with assaults peaking between 1 and 3am. However, the post implementation period saw an increase in the proportions of incidents occurring at both ends of the night (10 to 11pm) and (4 to 5am).

Levels of violence – macro analysis (entire case study area)

Violence against the person is a diverse crime category which includes offences such as murder, wounding and common assault. Numbers of recorded offences of violence were analysed for a two-year pre-implementation period of December 2003 to November 2005, and a one-year post-implementation period of December 2005 to

December 2006. It should be noted that changes to the recording of violence against the person offences since April 2005, particularly in relation to less serious wounding, common assault and threats to kill, may influence the results of this analysis.¹³

In Blackpool, levels of violence against the person were lower post-implementation than in the baseline period. In the baseline period there was a monthly average (the average of the equivalent months in 2004 and 2005) of 470 recorded violent offences. This reduced by ten per cent to a monthly average of 425 offences after implementation. Table 5.1 shows the monthly figures and the associated percentage changes. This reveals that with the exception of April and December, for each month of the post-implementation period there were reductions in violence against the person compared to the corresponding months in the baseline period.

Table 5.1 Violence against the person monthly crime counts in Blackpool (December 2003 to December 2006)

	Year				Post implementation percentage change*
	2003	2004	2005	2006	
January		422	402	334	-18.9
February		382	368	373	-0.5
March		358	444	386	-3.7
April		485	460	536	13.4
May		570	506	448	-16.7
June		572	508	428	-20.7
July		551	540	478	-12.4
August		545	515	468	-11.7
September		529	453	442	-10.0
October		524	520	428	-18.0
November		433	367	346	-13.5
December	383	437	431	401	5.1

The baseline period is an average of the two year period 2004/2005

Note: shaded months are the post-implementation period

The downward trend in offences of violence displayed in Table 5.1 cannot be read as necessarily reflecting the impact of the Licensing Act. At the time the Act was introduced, the downward trend was already evident. The number of violent offences in the average baseline period was 5,637 and this decreased in the post-implementation year to 5,098 offences. The issue of attribution is complicated by the fact that a series of alcohol misuse enforcement campaigns (AMECs) were run over the evaluation period.

¹³ Hence, for example, national recorded crime figures show increases in levels of less serious wounding and common assault from 2004 to 2006, but the British Crime Survey shows a decline in these offences over the same period.

Statistical tests were run to determine whether changes in levels of violence were significant.¹⁴ These reveal that there was a significant reduction in violence in the second six months of the baseline period, and another significant reduction in the second six months of the post-implementation period; other changes were not significant.

Figure 5.1 Violence against the person crime rate in Blackpool UA and local initiatives (November 2003 to December 2006)

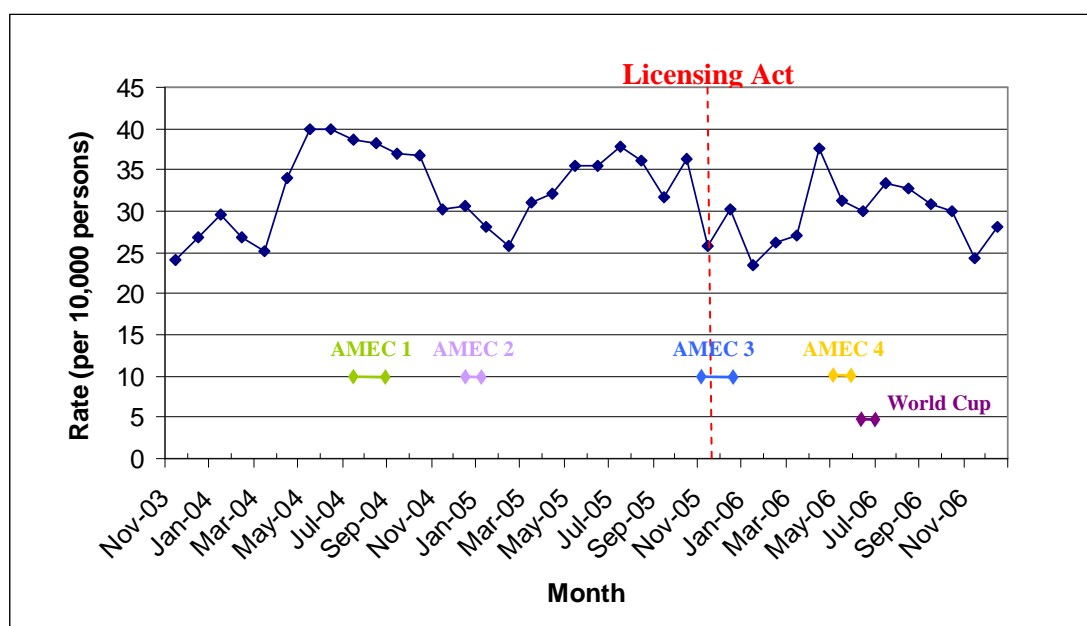


Figure 5.1 presents the monthly rates of violence against the person in Blackpool (per 10,000 persons) across the baseline and post implementation periods plotted against the introduction of the Licensing Act and other relevant initiatives in Blackpool. The graph shows that violence against the person was already displaying a downward trend at the time the Act was introduced. Therefore the reductions may be attributable to factors other than the Act. The graph also shows that the periods in which Alcohol Misuse Enforcement Campaigns (AMEC) ran corresponded with reductions in violence against the person.

¹⁴ Independent sample t tests were used for this analysis, and were run on weekly crime counts in the baseline and post implementation periods. Due to potential seasonal fluctuations that may hide important changes that could only be observed in the first six months or second six months periods, each year was subdivided into a half year period. Weekly values were used as opposed to monthly values as this increases the sample size and reduced the standard error, thus making the test more robust.

The number of PNDs issued in the post implementation year increased by 25% from 569 to 835. The number issued peaked in October 2004, then decreased until February 2005, when a steady increase began. The number of PNDs increased from the end of AMEC 3 however it is not clear whether either the AMEC or the Licensing Act is having an impact.

Figures for the most serious violence against the person offences, which include murder, attempted murder and manslaughter, were analysed separately. These reveal a decline of six per cent from 188 offences per year in the baseline period (the average figure for the two baseline years) to 176 offences in the post-implementation year.¹⁵ In both periods, offences of serious violence made up around three per cent of all violent offences.

Daily and weekly and distribution of violent offences

The distribution of violence against the person across times of the day retained a similar pattern pre- and post-implementation. Offences continued to peak between midnight and 1am, and were skewed towards the early hours of the morning. However, much of the post-implementation reduction in violent offences was concentrated between midnight and 3am, while there were increases in the number of offences recorded between 3am and 5am – resulting in a flattening of the midnight peak in offences. The temporal changes are shown in Figure 5.2.

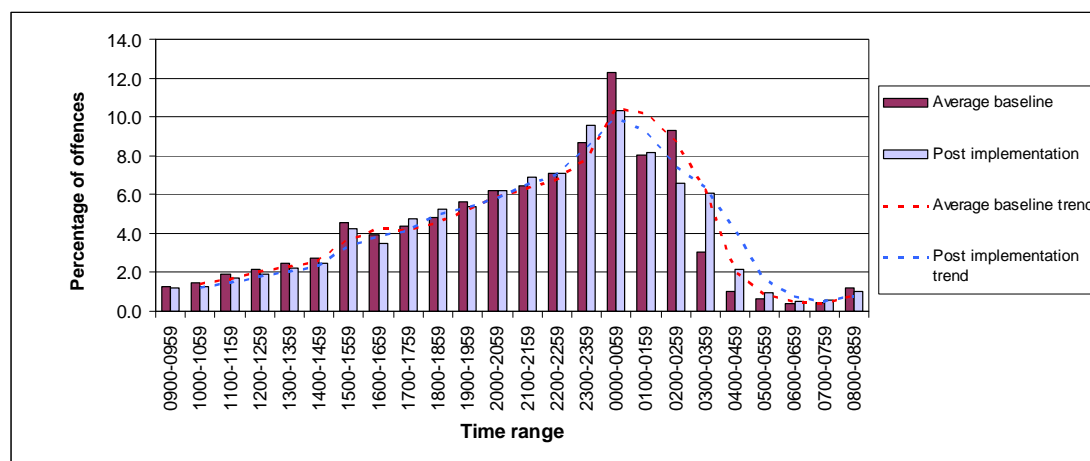
Little change was seen in the weekly distribution of violence, as the reductions in offences were distributed relatively evenly across days of the week. Offences peaked on weekend nights both pre- and post-implementation. Overall, there was a seven per cent decline in weekend violence, if the post-implementation annual total is compared to the mean annual figure for the two baseline years, and a thirteen per cent fall in weekday violence. The overall reduction was ten per cent.

The decline in weekend violence was by no means consistent over the post-implementation year. Over four of the first five post-implementation months, weekend violence *increased* compared to the baseline period, whereas all violence remained more stable, but showed a general decline. In contrast, the second half of the post-implementation period was generally characterised by falls in violent offences compared to the baseline period, but these falls were far more pronounced at

¹⁵ Because the numbers of serious violence offences are small, geographical analysis of these data was not undertaken.

weekends. In September 2006, however, a reduction in overall violence took place against the background of an increase in weekend violence.

Figure 5.2 Proportional changes to violence against the person offences by time of day in Blackpool UA (average baseline and post implementation periods)



Levels of violence – meso analysis (near to licensed premises)

Levels of offending were analysed for a ‘cluster area’ with the highest density of licensed premises,¹⁶ and within 50m-radius buffer zones around premises. The cluster area contained around two-fifths of the Blackpool’s violence against the person both prior to and following the implementation of the Act. The 50m buffer zones saw an increase in the concentration of violence from just over one-quarter of incidents in the baseline period to one-third after implementation. Thus against the backdrop of reductions in violence, problems appeared to be increasingly concentrated in the immediate vicinity of licensed premises. The 50m buffer zones also saw the greatest proportionate *reduction* in violence between 2am and 3am, and the greatest proportionate *increase* between 3am and 4am.

More detailed geographical analysis shows that a number of the hot-spots for violence were in areas with a high density of licensed premises – particularly in the main drinking areas of Talbot Square/Queen Street and Market Street. These are shown in Figure 5.3, in which the purple ellipses represent the baseline hot-spots and

¹⁶ The cluster area contained 63 per cent of premises; within the area, the mean distance between nearest premises was 51m.

the blue ones the post-implementation period. The depicted hot-spots do not account for the timing of the offences, but consider the overall concentration of offending. The map shows that many of the hot-spot areas in the baseline period remained hot-spots in the post-implementation period. However, some hot-spots to the north and north-east of the study area no longer were hot-spot areas in the post implementation period. The hot-spot to the north of the football stadium no longer existed but was replaced by a new hot-spot to the north east of the stadium.

Temporal analysis combined with the hot-spot analysis reveals that in the post-implementation period, some offences still clustered (although with diminished intensity) around Talbot Square/Queen Street and Market Street in the hours of 3am to 5am, whereas in the baseline period no hot-spot was found at that time of the morning. Thus the temporal change in offending referred to above was reflected in a spatial cluster within central Blackpool.

Levels of violence – micro analysis (at or inside licensed premises)

At the micro level, 1,222 violent offences were recorded in or at licensed premises during the two-year baseline period (the sum of two years' data). Fifteen premises, or eight per cent of all premises, accounted for 57 per cent of all offences – with one of these premises alone accounting for 18 per cent. In the post-implementation period, 409 offences were recorded in or at premises; and the proportion of violence accounted for by the 'top 15' increased slightly to 65 per cent. Twelve premises fell into the list of 15 in both periods, and these tended to be located in the Talbot Square/Queen Street and Market Street areas. The distribution of offences among the 'top 15' premises in the baseline and post-implementation periods are presented in Tables 5.2 and 5.3.

Figure 5.3: Violence against the person hot spots in Blackpool (average baseline and post implementation periods)

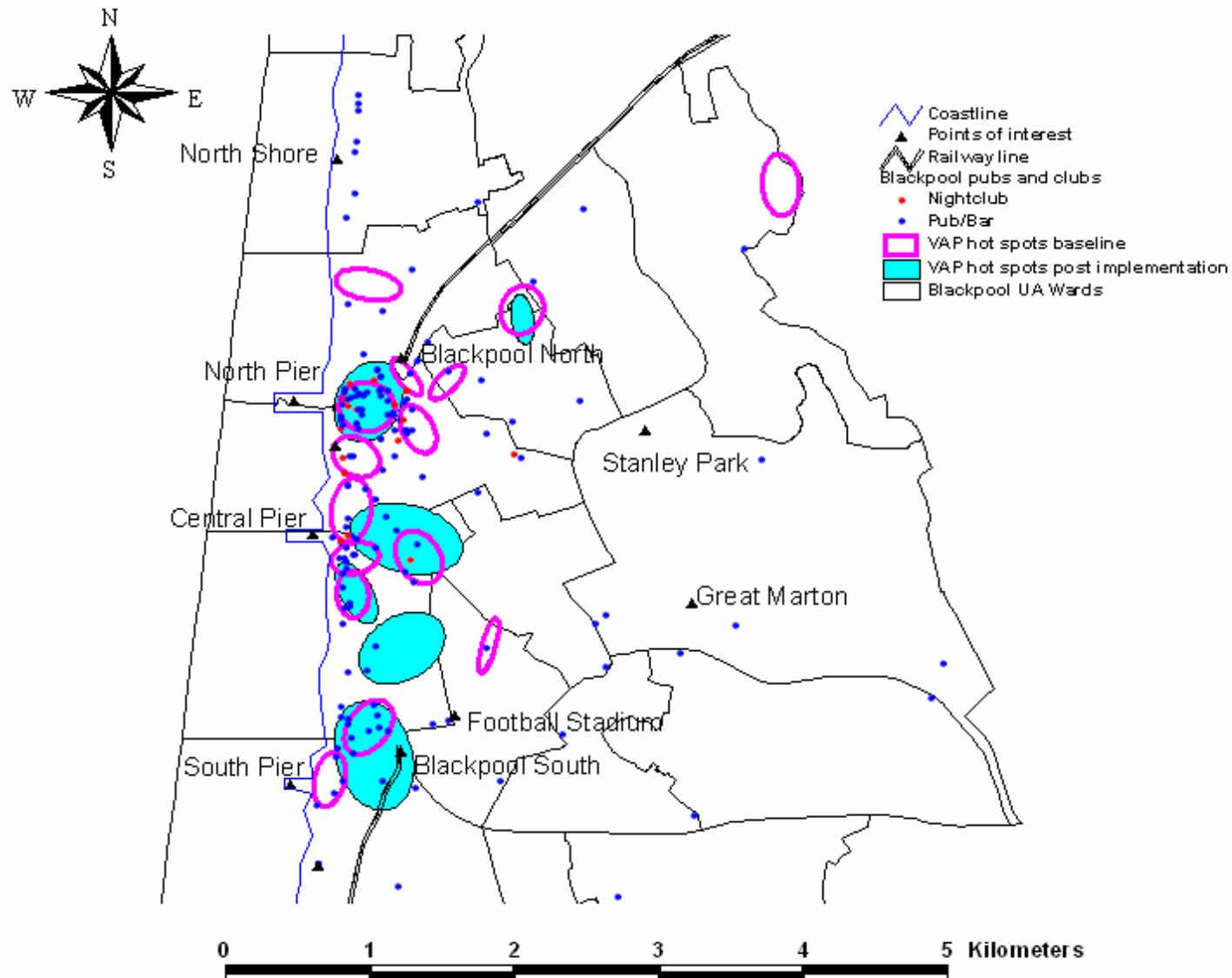


Table 5.2: Violence against the person offences recorded at Blackpool’s ‘top 15’ licensed premises – baseline period

<i>Venue</i>	<i>No. of offences*</i>	<i>Cumulative no. offences*</i>	<i>% offences**</i>	<i>Cumulative % offences**</i>
A	218	218	18	18
B	109	327	9	27
C	66	393	5	32
D	43	436	4	36
E	40	476	3	39
F	34	510	3	42
G	28	538	2	44
H	25	563	2	46
I	23	586	2	48
J	22	608	2	50
K	21	629	2	52
L	19	648	2	53
M	18	666	2	55
N	17	683	1	56
O	16	699	1	57

*Sum of two years’ data

**Percentage of all offences recorded in or at premises

Venues shaded in blue were in ‘top fifteen’ in both baseline and post-implementation periods.

Table 5.3: Violence against the person offences recorded at Blackpool’s ‘top 15’ licensed premises – post-implementation period

<i>Venue</i>	<i>No. of offences</i>	<i>Cumulative no. offences</i>	<i>% offences*</i>	<i>Cumulative % offences*</i>
B	70	70	17	17
K	55	125	13	31
C	47	172	12	42
A	15	187	4	46
M	11	198	3	48
E	9	207	2	51
D	8	215	2	53
J	7	222	2	54
N	7	229	2	56
I	6	235	2	58
P	6	241	2	59
Q	6	247	2	60
L	6	253	2	62
H	5	258	1	63
R	5	263	1	64

*Percentage of all offences recorded in or at premises

Venues shaded in blue were in ‘top fifteen’ in both baseline and post-implementation periods.

In Chapter Four of this report, the available data on numbers of additional licensing hours applied for under the Licensing Act are discussed. It is noted here that premises have tended to use any additional licensing hours flexibly: that is, they close at any time up to their ‘official’ closing time, depending on how busy they are.

This, and the lack of comprehensive data on hours applied for and granted by the licensing authority, makes it difficult to identify any impact of additional licensing hours *used* on the levels of violence associated with premises.

However, based on visits to the premises by ACC researchers, levels of violent offences in or at small number of premises (14),¹⁷ and their actual opening hours, were examined in detail. Two of these premises used no additional hours per week, and accounted for ten per cent of all offences (that is, all offences associated with the 14 premises) in the baseline period, which dropped to six per cent post-implementation. Six premises used between one and 5.5 additional hours weekly; these accounted for 61 per cent of offences, falling to 40 per cent of offences post-implementation. In contrast, six premises used between six and 14 additional hours per week and saw their share of violent offences increasing: from 30 per cent in the baseline to 54 per cent post-implementation. (These figures are presented in Table 5.4.) The small number of premises included this analysis precludes any general conclusions being drawn about the relationship between additional hours and levels of violence.

Table 5.4 Estimated additional hours *used* per week by premises visited by ACC fieldworkers and violence against the person offences

Additional hours (used)	Number of premises	Percentage of violence against the person	
		Average baseline	Post implementation
None	2	10	6
1 to 5	6	61	40
6 plus	6	30	54
Total	14	101	100

Criminal damage

Criminal damage includes crimes such as arson, damage and vandalism to buildings, vehicles and other property and threat or possession with intent to commit criminal damage. The criminal damage figures are analysed for the same pre- and post-implementation periods (December 2003 to November 2005, and December 2005 to December 2006) as the violence figures.

¹⁷ Ten of the premises visited were in the 'top fifteen' in both periods; two were in the 'top fifteen' in the baseline only; one was in the 'top fifteen' after implementation and one was not in the 'top fifteen' in either period.

Macro level

Recorded criminal damage offences in Blackpool declined between the baseline and post-implementation periods. As with violent offences, the downward trend pre-dated implementation of the Act: a total of 5,858 offences were recorded in the average baseline period and this fell further to 5,418 in the post-implementation period.¹⁸ This is equivalent to an average monthly figure for the baseline period of 488, compared to 452 for the post-implementation period – a fall of around eight per cent. In all the post-implementation months except April, August and November, the number of offences was lower than the average for the corresponding months of the baseline period. The summer months of July and August saw the greatest reductions – of 22 per cent and 17 per cent respectively.

The distribution of criminal damage offences by time of day followed a similar pattern in the post-implementation period as the baseline period. In both periods, the frequency of offences tended to increase gradually throughout the morning and early afternoon, peaking between 5pm and 2am before gradually declining until 8am. During the baseline period there was a particularly notable spike between midnight and 1am (representing a 27 per cent reduction for this time interval) which did not occur in the post implementation period (It is important to note that this may be due to errors in recording rather than an actual change; if the time of offence is unknown it may be entered as default (0.00) or midnight). The distribution of criminal damage offences across the week showed little change before and after implementation, with offences peaking on Friday and Saturday in both periods.

Meso level

Criminal damage appeared to be less concentrated around licensed premises than violence against the person. In both the baseline and post-implementation periods, around 22 per cent of criminal damage offences occurred in the licensed premises 'cluster area' – approximately half the proportion of violent offences that occurred in this area. In both the baseline and post-implementation periods, just over 11 per cent of offences occurred within 50 metre buffer zones around licensed premises, and around 13 per cent in 50-100 metre zones. The flattening of the midnight peak in offences in the post-implementation period was exaggerated in the 50-100 metre zones and the 'cluster area'.

¹⁸ Statistical t tests for criminal damage found that the reductions during the baseline period were significant, but the subsequent reduction was not significant.

Hot-spot analysis reveals that, like offences of violence, criminal damage was concentrated around Talbot Square/Queen Street and Market Street. There were additional hot-spots in the vicinity of the Central Pier and South Shore, and to the north east and south east of the town. These hot-spots were broadly similar in the baseline and post-implementation periods; however, hot-spots in the post-implementation period appear to be concentrated in fewer areas than in the baseline period. Some baseline hot spots between North Pier and North Shore, and to north of the football stadium, were no longer evident in the post implementation period. Temporal analysis of hot-spots shows little change between the baseline and post-implementation periods.

Calls for disorder

Calls for disorder include calls about incidents such as disturbances in public places, disturbances in licensed premises, drunkenness and noise nuisance. Data on calls are often used as an alternative to police recorded crime data, as they can be seen as a proxy measure of the public's perceptions of crime and the need for police assistance.

Calls for disorder are analysed for the same pre- and post-implementation periods (December 2003 to November 2005, and December 2005 to December 2006) as the recorded crime figures.

Macro level

The annual number of calls for disorder in Blackpool over the average baseline period was 20,554. There was then a slight (1.4%) increase to 20,269 in the post-implementation year.¹⁹ A more detailed look at the monthly figures reveals that during the first six months of the post-implementation period, monthly incident counts were lower than for the corresponding months in the baseline period (using the baseline monthly average). However, during the second half of the post-implementation period, with the exception of August, monthly counts were higher than for the corresponding baseline months.

¹⁹ Statistical t-tests did not find any significant change in overall numbers of calls for disorder during the baseline and post-implementation periods.

There were some post-implementation changes in the distribution of calls for disorder throughout the day: most notably, there were post-implementation increases in the numbers of calls made between 3am and 6am. However, there was little change to the overall pattern, with calls continuing to peak between 8pm and 9pm. The weekly distribution of calls showed little overall change - both the baseline and post-implementation periods saw calls peaking on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays – but calls on Fridays and Saturdays increased slightly after implementation.

Meso levels

There was some concentration of calls for disorder in areas containing licensed premises – although this was less marked than for violent offences. Fifty-metre buffer zones around premises accounted for about 20 per cent of calls both pre- and post-implementation; and the ‘cluster area’ with a high density of premises accounted for around 30 per cent of Blackpool’s calls for disorder in both periods. While overall changes to the daily distribution of calls were small, there was a tendency for changes to be more pronounced with proximity to licensed premises. This applied, for example, to a *decrease* in calls between 1am and 3am, and an *increase* between 3am and 4am

Health data

Accident and emergency (A&E) data are regarded as potentially a rich source of data on violent crime, particularly as research suggests that injuries that occur in the context of the NTE may not come to the attention of the police. Serious incidents of violence may be reflected in health data, permitting comparison with recorded crime data in order to increase the robustness of the findings. However, difficulties of collection and interpretation can limit the value of these data.

For this study, data on A&E attendances were collected for November 2003 to December 2006, for the time periods of 10pm on Friday through to 5am on Saturday and 10pm on Saturday through to 5am on Sunday. Only those patients attending who were aged 17 to 35 were included in the data set. The data-set comprised records of 2,103 attendances. Of these, 1,478 – that is, 70% of the total – had been flagged as assaults. The incidents of assault were extracted and analysed by month, by hour of the day/night and by age and gender.

In the post-implementation year, the number of assaults recorded by A&E increased by approximately 18 per cent with respect to the mean baseline figure. Increases in A&E assaults occurred in all but two the months in 2006, compared with the monthly averages for the previous two years.

There were broad similarities in the annual distribution of A&E assaults between the baseline and post-implementation periods, with a clear peak occurring in October in both periods. The post-implementation year showed somewhat higher levels of assault in June and July compared to the baseline, which might reflect the impact of the 2006 World Cup. Like the annual distribution, the daily pattern of A&E assaults was fairly consistent across both time periods – with assaults peaking between 1 and 3am. However, the post implementation period saw an increase in the proportions of incidents occurring at both ends of the night – that is, in the late evening (10 to 11pm) and in the early hours (4 to 5am).

It is notable that while the police recorded crime figures *decreased* in the post-implementation period, the A&E assault figures *increased*. On average, there were just over twice as many violent offences recorded by the police (on weekend nights) than A&E-recorded assaults in the baseline period. There was some convergence between the two sets of data in the post-implementation period brought about by the nine per cent fall in police recorded offences and the 19 per cent increase in the A&E assaults. The reasons for the disparities and subsequent convergence between the data-sets are difficult to determine in the absence of further data. One explanation might be that assault victims increasingly preferred to report incidents to A&E units than to the police.

6 ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF THE LICENSING ACT ON CRIME AND DISORDER (2): RESIDENTS' AND STAKEHOLDERS' PERCEPTIONS

This chapter examines residents' and stakeholders' perceptions of the impact of the Licensing Act – and particularly its impact on crime and disorder. Residents' views were obtained from BMRB's baseline and post-implementation survey. Stakeholders include the licensing authority and responsible authority respondents interviewed by the Home Office, and NTE business representatives interviewed by CRD. Information on the residents' survey and the Home Office and NTE business interviews is provided in Box 1.1 in Chapter 1.

Residents' and stakeholders' perceptions: summary

The main findings of a pre- and post-implementation survey of residents were:

The number of respondents visiting the town centre was not significantly higher in the post-implementation period than in the baseline period. In both periods, the most popular reason given for visiting the town centre in the evening was to go to pubs, bars or clubs.

In both survey periods, respondents who did not visit the town centre were consistent in their reasons for not doing so - most commonly a lack of interest, worries about crime/assault, and a feeling of being too old.

There were no significant differences in the proportions of respondents who felt unsafe in the town centre in the evening (37% post-implementation), or in the reasons given for feeling unsafe.

77 per cent of post-implementation respondents thought drunk and rowdy behaviour was a problem in the town centre, and 37 per cent that it had become more of a problem over the past year – figures that were not significantly different from baseline.

39 per cent of post-implementation respondents thought that alcohol-related crime had increased since the Act was introduced - significantly fewer than had thought it *would* increase when asked at baseline.

Among LA and RA respondents interviewed post-implementation, there was broad agreement that violent crime had decreased over the past year. However, most did not attribute this to the Licensing Act; respondents pointed, instead, to increased policing of the NTE, ongoing work by the relevant partnerships, and the relatively quiet 2006 summer season. There was also general agreement that binge drinking, and the associated threatening atmosphere in the town centre,

had not declined, and that diversification of the night-time economy had not occurred.

Representatives of NTE businesses had mixed views of the Act's impact on crime and disorder. Some said that problems had stayed the same or increased, while others talked of an improving situation. There was a general consensus that there had been a shift in drinking patterns and an associated slight improvement in behaviour. Most noted that customers were less inclined to drink as much as possible before closing time, and that they dispersed more gradually. However, several respondents noted an ongoing need to tackle the culture of binge drinking.

Residents' perceptions

Both the baseline and the post-implementation survey covered the following broad topics:

- Frequency and patterns of the respondent's current usage of the night-time economy in the town centre;
- Experiences of alcohol-related disorder in the town centre and the respondent's own neighbourhood.

In addition, the baseline survey asked about the respondent's expectations and knowledge of the Licensing Act, whilst the follow-up survey asked about the respondent's perceptions of the impact of the Act

The major findings of the surveys, drawing out the key points of contrast between the baseline and post-implementation responses, are presented below.

Town centre visiting

The relevance of town centre visiting to the potential impact of the Licensing Act is that it had been hoped the Act would contribute to the diversification of the night-time economy, and thereby encourage a wider range of people to visit city and town centres. It was also hoped that a decline in levels of alcohol-related violence and disorder would make city and town centres more attractive to people who would otherwise be deterred by fear of crime.

The results of the residents' survey suggest that the Licensing Act may not (yet) have had its desired effect of encouraging wider participation in the night-time economy. In the post-implementation survey, 55 per cent of respondents had visited Blackpool

Blackpool town centre at least once in the previous 12 months – a figure that was not significantly different to the baseline figure. Of those post-implementation respondents who had visited the town centre, 33 per cent said they visited once a week or more.

There were no significant differences in the *reasons* given for visiting the town centre by the post-implementation respondents, compared to the baseline respondents. The most popular reason cited in both waves of the survey was to go to pubs, bars or clubs (43% baseline; 50% post-implementation), and the second most popular reason was to go to restaurants and cafes (24% baseline; 19% post-implementation).

However, a significant change was seen in the proportion of respondents who reported usually going out on a Saturday night relative to other nights (58% of post-implementation respondents who had been to the town centre in the previous 12 months, compared to 28% of baseline respondents). There was also evidence that people were staying out later at night following implementation of the Licensing Act – indicating that extended licensing hours were having an impact on some patterns of participation in the night-time economy. Significantly fewer respondents reported leaving the town centre *before midnight* on Mondays to Thursdays (58% post-implementation compared to 75% in the baseline) and on Saturdays (26% compared to 39%). Significantly more respondents reported leaving *after 3am* on Mondays to Thursdays (12% compared to 2%), Fridays (16% compared to 2%) and Saturdays (21% compared to 5%).

Respondents who did not visit the town centre regularly or at all were asked why they did not visit more often. In both waves of the survey, the most common answer was that there were too many drunk/disorderly people, with similar proportions giving this as a response (23% baseline; 22% post-implementation). The other most common responses – in relation to which, again, no significant changes were seen - were 'not interested' (15% and 22%), worries about crime or being attacked (16% and 12%), and perceptions of being too old/that the town centre was more suited to young people (14% and 11%). The consistency in these responses suggests that broadening the appeal of the night-time economy remains a challenge.

Table 6.1 shows the factors that would encourage respondents to visit the town centre more often. Here, two significant changes are apparent. Significantly more post-implementation respondents said that nothing would encourage them to visit

more (44% compared to 33%), and significantly fewer said that more police or uniformed security on patrol would encourage them (13% post-implementation; 7% baseline).

Table 6.1: Factors cited by respondents who did not visit Blackpool town centre more often than once a month that would encourage them to visit more often

Factors that would encourage more visiting	Percentage of respondents	
	Baseline	Post-implementation
Nothing would encourage respondent to visit town centre more	33	44*
More police or uniformed security on patrol	13	7*
Fewer drunk people/ more control of drunk people	13	11
Safer town centres or high streets	12	12
Better variety of places to go and things to do	8	5
Facilities aimed more at people like me	6	6
Cheaper cost of going out	4	2
Other	13	21
<i>Unweighted N</i>	429	491

*Significant change

Note: This was an open question with no prompting and responses were coded by the interviewer. Respondents could give more than one answer.

Feelings of safety and perceptions of drunken and anti-social behaviour

Of all post-implementation respondents who had visited Blackpool town centre in the evening in the previous 12 months, 37 per cent reported that they felt unsafe at some point, which is not significantly different to the results from the baseline survey (46%). However, significantly fewer 16-30 year olds reported feeling unsafe in the post-implementation period compared to the baseline (27% compared to 44%). There were no other age differences between the two periods. The top three reasons for feeling unsafe were the same in both surveys, with no significant differences in the proportions selecting each: there were a lot of drunk people (52% baseline, 60% post-implementation); there were gangs/groups hanging around (41% and 37%); and the area was too crowded and noisy (27% and 23%).

All respondents were asked if they thought that people being drunk and rowdy was a fairly or very big problem in the town centre; 77 per cent of respondents in both waves of the survey thought it was. Respondents were also asked if they thought drunkenness had become more or less of a problem in the town centre over the

previous 12 months. Thirty-seven per cent thought it had become more of a problem in Blackpool town centre in the past year; a figure that is not significantly different to the baseline figure of 44 per cent.

Those who had visited Blackpool town centre at least once in the previous 12 months were asked what problems they had seen; the responses are shown in Table 6.2. There were no significant differences in the levels and relative frequency of responses given between the baseline and post-implementation surveys.

Table 6.2: Problems seen in Blackpool town centre by respondents who had visited at least once in the previous 12 months

Problem seen in town centre	Percentage of respondents	
	Baseline	Post-implementation
Fast food wrappers and other rubbish in the streets	92	91
Noise or disturbance caused by people who are drunk	86	83
Vomit or urine on pavements, in doorways or on the streets	83	78
People being verbally abused, threatened or intimidated by drunks	68	66
People being assaulted or injured by drunks or fighting between people who are drunk	66	63
Cans, bottles or broken glass in the streets	65	63
Damage to property	30	29
<i>Unweighted N</i>	<i>459</i>	<i>431</i>

Note: All items were read out to respondents and they were asked to say 'yes' or 'no' for each item. Respondents could give more than one answer so percentages do not add up to 100.

Those respondents who did not live in Blackpool town centre (N = 568) were asked if they thought people being drunk was a problem in their neighbourhood. In the post-implementation survey, 13 per cent said they thought people being drunk was a fairly or very big problem in their neighbourhood – which is not significantly different to the figure for the baseline period (9%). These respondents were also asked if they thought drunk and rowdy had become more or less of a problem in their neighbourhood in the previous 12 months. Twelve per cent of post-implementation respondents said they thought it had become more of a problem; 81 per cent thought it had stayed the same; and seven per cent thought it had got worse. These figures were not significantly different to those obtained in the baseline survey.

Views of the Licensing Act

Baseline respondents were asked if they thought that alcohol-related crime and rowdy behaviour *would* increase following the introduction of the Licensing Act 2003; and post-implementation respondents were asked if they felt these problems *had* increased.

With respect to alcohol-related crime, 52 per cent of baseline respondents thought this would increase, but significantly fewer post-implementation respondents bore out this pessimism – with 39 per cent saying that, in their view, it *had* increased. However, few post-implementation respondents perceived an improvement in levels of alcohol-related crime: only five per cent said the problem had decreased (significantly fewer than the baseline 11% who had thought it would decrease), while 44 per cent said the problem had stayed the same and 12 per cent did not know.

A similar pattern was displayed with respect to views of rowdy behaviour. Thirty-eight per cent of post-implementation respondents thought this problem had increased – significantly fewer than the 54 per cent of baseline respondents who had anticipated an increase in the problem. But only five per cent of post-implementation respondents thought rowdy behaviour had decreased (significantly fewer than the 13 per cent of baseline respondent who had predicted a decrease); 48 per cent thought it had stayed the same; and nine per cent did not know.

Post-implementation respondents were asked about the impact of the Licensing Act on their behaviour and on the night-time economy more generally. Thirty-four per cent of respondents who had visited the town centre in the past year said they now tended to stay out later. This bears out the finding reported above that more post-implementation than baseline respondents spoke of leaving the town centre after 3am, and fewer spoke of leaving before midnight. All respondents were asked if they now went out in the town centre in the evening more (or at all, if they did not previously) since the introduction of the Act. Only five per cent said they now visited more than they used to, compared to 25 per cent who said they visited *less* and 71 per cent that there had been no change.

Fifteen per cent of post-implementation respondents who had visited the town centre in the past year, and went to pubs, clubs or bars, reported that the amount of alcohol that they consumed on a typical night out had increased; six per cent reported that it had decreased; and 80 per cent reported no change. When asked about their *overall*

levels of alcohol consumption, 13 per cent of these respondents said this had increased, 11 per cent that it had decreased, and 76 per cent that it had stayed the same.

The vast majority – 94 per cent of respondents – thought that the Licensing Act had resulted in at least some pubs and clubs opening later: 47 per cent said that a lot were open later; 47 per cent that some were; four per cent that hardly any were; and one per cent that none were. Thirty-eight per cent of respondents agreed that since the introduction of the Act, streets were less crowded because people now had more choice about when to leave a licensed premises at the end of the night. However, 48 per cent disagreed with this. Fifty-eight per cent agreed that rapid drinking in the run-up to last orders had decreased, compared to 32 per cent who disagreed.

Perceptions of licensing and responsible authorities

Among seven authority representatives interviewed in the post-implementation period (who included four police representatives interviewed jointly), there was broad agreement that levels of violent crime had decreased in Blackpool over the previous 12 months. However, the general feeling was that the Licensing Act was unlikely to be the direct cause of the decrease in violent crime. Respondents pointed, instead, to the increased policing of the night-time economy, and the commitment to meeting the crime reduction target set by PSA (Public Service Agreement) 1:

But if you say to me 'did the Act play any part in that [reduction in crime]?' my answer would have to be none whatsoever. What has made a difference is that because obviously we signed to a PSA1 as all partnership had to, and we have to reduce crime by 16% from the 2003/4 base line in to March 2008. (CDRP representative)

Some recognised that, at the very least, the Act had served as a catalyst in these processes:

So we couldn't just stand here and watch a new Licensing Act come in and think 'oh, crime is going to go up' and then do nothing. So you will happily be able to report back that crime and disorder have gone down and it has been a success...But it is only because of all the work we are putting into it, the extra resources that we are putting into it. (police representative)

Another factor that was believed to have contributed to the decrease in violent crime was the reduced level of tourism associated with the poor summer season of 2006:

But one of the problems I find with Blackpool is that it is so dependent on the weather. And last summer, I mean you know it was a crap summer ...so it wasn't a like with like comparison. (police representative)

Some respondents noted that rather than there being a simple reduction in levels of violent crime, the distribution of problems had altered. For example, one respondent noted that the timing of crime hotspots had shifted to later at night. Another suggested that crime hot-spots were moving out of the town centre and into the more residential areas, as drinking at home increased with the greater availability of cheap alcohol in supermarkets. This change in patterns of crime was perceived as problematic for the police:

I mean I would rather have it in the town centre, to be honest I would rather, in that shaded area [the town centre], having them go mad and the rest of the area be quiet. Because that is far easier to police and resource than it is when it is at your house and my house. (police representative)

Respondents generally agreed that the Act had not had much effect on drinking behaviour: 'binge drinking' was still a big problem in Blackpool.

They just binge drink for longer, instead of binge drinking for five hours they do it for nine hours now. (police representative)

It [the Act] has not made one iota of difference. They get drunk on a Friday, Saturday night as they used to before the Act. (CDRP representative)

As a result, the atmosphere around the night-time economy remained the same:

The atmosphere of the town centre has not changed, all you have done is extend it and keep it going running late in to the morning in fact. You still have that hostile, alcohol-fuelled environment. (police representative)

An associated concern was that the Act's aim of diversification of the night-time economy had not been achieved. It was reported that very few premises in Blackpool had applied to vary significantly the type of entertainment they offered. Where there had been variation, this was not necessarily undertaken in such a way that a more diverse clientele would be attracted to the premises:

We've seen some trying to compete for trade in different ways. There is one of them which has turned into a lap dancing place and that was a traditional saloon bar. (licensing authority representative)

More positively, the Council had applied for and obtained a premises license for the town centre to enable it to provide regulated street entertainment such as music, dancing and street entertainers (for example, mime artists and human statues). It was hoped that this would add character to, and help improve the atmosphere of, the town centre.

Perceptions of NTE business representatives

Among 21 representatives of NTE businesses interviewed in the post-implementation period (October 2006 to January 2007), perceptions of alcohol-related crime and disorder varied according to their level of involvement in the late-night trade in alcohol. The less closely involved (for example, off-licensees, restaurant managers and managers of pubs which closed early) tended to feel that Blackpool had changed little since the introduction of the Act, and that levels of violence and anti-social behaviour had remained constant or had increased. Some also noted an increase in levels of drug addiction and related social problems.

In the season, on Saturday night, it is a no-go area as it is full of hens and stags and they are in the pub from midday. I don't go into town at all. (independent restaurant)

I think it's got worse. More violent, more drink and drug related. And they are getting away with it. (independent pub)

In contrast, those working in bars and businesses that opened late or were positioned on the busiest streets often took a more positive view – although some noted short-term problems when the Act first came into force. In their experience, what trouble there was tended to take the form of verbal abuse rather than physical violence, at least partly because licensees and staff knew how to control difficult customers.

I think when the later licences came in there were quite a few problems in the town centre. People were out longer... and if you are out for an extra two hours and you are drinking however many more pints then you are obviously going to be worse than what you would be normally. Now that the novelty has worn off and everyone is coming out later and they are only drinking what they used to drink, it seems to have levelled out and quietened down. (independent nightclub)

Only a minority of respondents attributed any positive behaviour changes to the Act spontaneously. But there was a general consensus that there had been a shift in drinking patterns over the past year, and a slight improvement in public behaviour. For many respondents, the key development was that customers were less inclined to drink as much as possible just before closing time. Many also noted that drinkers dispersed more gradually, thus preventing large congregations of drinkers and reducing trouble at potential flashpoints. This applied also to the venues themselves: since the majority now stayed open later, there was less need for people to crowd into clubs or bars with late licences.

It used to happen that you were driving through town at 11 o'clock and you saw a number of people and they were shouting, with everybody outside at 11 o'clock. You don't see them any more, because they don't come out at 11. At least they don't come out all together. (off-licence)

The people are still there but it has benefited the environment and the police as you haven't got 5,000 people congregating in a small area. You have a longer period of time for people to leave the premises, and for the police it is more manageable. (independent restaurant)

Several respondents pointed out, however, that although the Act had had some positive effects on general drinking patterns, most customers still got as drunk as before – and thus there was a need to tackle the culture of binge drinking. There were also anecdotal reports of negative by-products of the Act, such as increased levels of street drinking, particularly by under-age drinkers who were finding it harder to get served in pubs; and increased drug use (especially cocaine) by drinkers who wanted to stay out late.

The broad context of developments in Blackpool's night-time economy was what was said to have been the town's worst ever summer for tourism. Most attributed the poor summer trade to the availability of cheap air-fares, the growing appeal of foreign holidays, and the poor image of Britain's seaside resorts. Some respondents were pessimistic about the future of the town and believed the summer holiday trade was in terminal decline. They felt the town's future lay in the year-round hen and stag trade – which created a vicious circle, since this would further reduce the town's appeal to holidaying families.

Most pubs and clubs had not performed well financially in 2006, though it was hard to know whether this was due to the Act or the downturn in Blackpool's popularity. But many appreciated being able to respond to customer demand by opening and closing

in a more flexible manner. Several licensees believed that the new regulations had made their venues safer than the streets, as there were more vigilant security staff and people were drinking at a slower pace. However, some managers of chain venues said that they were being pressured by their companies to make the most of the extra hours by retailing irresponsibly.