

Police and Crime Committee – 3 December 2015**Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – The Impact of Alcohol of London's Night-Time Economy**

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair in the Chair): Can I welcome our guests today? It is a pleasure to have you before us. I am just going to go around and introduce everyone.

We have Janice Hart, who is the Service Director in Public Protection at the London Borough of Islington. Welcome. I was very keen to hear from Islington when I saw the piece of work we are doing because I know I have heard from the Borough Commander there some of the work you are doing. It is great to have you here. We have Sergeant Kevin Blenkinsopp, who is the police lead for the night-time economy in Islington from the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS). Welcome today. We have Jon Foster next, who is the Senior Research and Policy Officer at the Institute of Alcohol Studies. We are looking forward to hearing from you today. We have Daisy Blench, who is the Policy Manager – Alcohol Policy and Responsibility for the British Beer and Pub Association. Thank you for joining us today. Then we have Commander Simon Letchford, who is from the MPS and leads in this area across London. Our final guest, who has not quite arrived yet, is Christopher Snowdon, who is the Director of Lifestyle Economics at the Institute of Public Affairs.

I am going to start off the questions today and I really wanted to start off with trying to understand. Maybe I could address this to Simon to start off with. How do you actually define what 'alcohol-fuelled/related crime' is? How are you defining that in the MPS?

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): That is really difficult. If we can answer that today, then we will have probably --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): Solved it all?

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): -- achieved nirvana. The reason it is difficult is because it manifests itself in a number of different ways. It is also very subjective. If somebody has had three pints and they commit a crime, is that alcohol-fuelled violence? If they have had two and commit a crime, is it alcohol-fuelled violence? It is a really really difficult challenge.

Most of the data that we have - and Jon [Foster] will give you some really useful data - is perception data. It is about what people experience and what people feel. We think that - this is a national statistic - about 27% of all calls to police have an alcohol factor behind them. If you speak to officers, about 50% of the incidents they deal with, they think, have alcohol as a factor.

The other challenge with it is that it affects in three ways. You have crimes on licensed premises, you have crimes where the victim is under the influence of alcohol and you have crimes where the offender is under the influence of alcohol.

We have tried to do some analysis and our analysis on this is not particularly good at this stage. We do have an 'alcohol' flag that we use for three different types of crime but, as with all flags, its use is not fantastic. We looked at three boroughs and a month's worth of crime data, looking at licensed premises. About 50% of crimes on those premises were associated because the victim or suspect had consumed alcohol. Of those, about half had a flag on them and so you can see the issue with flagging.

At the moment, we do not define what 'alcohol-fuelled violence' is. We flag it if it is alcohol is an issue either for the victim or for the offender or if it is on licensed premises.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): Is it something that you are looking at trying to develop or are you finding it just too difficult to grasp?

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): Certainly through the Home Office we are talking about coming up with a definition of alcohol-fuelled violence and then a national flag and then a requirement to report back through the Home Office's reporting system. It is certainly something we are exploring.

Moving forward, what we would probably want to do is to use technology better to identify crimes so that it does not require a physical person putting a flag on it but is a way of searching data to pull out keywords, etc, which may be a more accurate way of identifying and recording alcohol-related issues.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): Thank you very much. Welcome, Christopher [Snowdon]. I have already introduced you. Welcome along today. Thank you for joining us.

My next question may be to Jon and Christopher. The MPS is trying to define this issue. Is it widely understood how they operate and how they are trying to define it? Is how they are working an accepted level of practice or do you think it should be different?

Jon Foster (Senior Research and Policy Officer, Institute of Alcohol Studies): Simon [Letchford] has identified the issue that it is very difficult to get to the bottom of with busy officers on the beat actually flagging it and reporting it accurately. There are lots of time constraint problems.

I think in terms of moving forward and what has been suggested, there are things going on with the Home Office and there are moves to have a national flag in order to standardise things. That is very welcome. Just by the nature of the issue, it is quite difficult to get to the bottom of and a little bit unclear. As Simon said, some of the perception data - which, hopefully, I can talk about a little later - gives another angle and perhaps is not definitive in itself but is useful at the same time in terms of context.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): Is there any good practice in other countries, perhaps, where they flag this in a better way that is then able to be used to try to tackle the issue?

Jon Foster (Senior Research and Policy Officer, Institute of Alcohol Studies): I am not too sure of the details but, as far as I am aware, there are similar problems in other countries. Yes, that might be something to look at, actually. That is a good point.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): Nobody has necessarily cracked it. Christopher, are you aware of any examples in other countries or other things? It sounds like there is a national scheme that is going to be, hopefully, coming in when they can define it. Is that the way forward?

Christopher Snowdon (Director of Lifestyle Economics, Institute of Public Affairs): There have been attempts in other countries to be a bit more categorical about whether offenders are drunk at the time. The slight problem with that is that drunk offenders are actually more likely to be apprehended and so it might lead to overestimates.

The system we have in Britain in terms of national overall statistics – which is what I tend to look at – is just based on, as you have already heard, what the victims think. It always seems to be more or less 50% of crimes and that has not changed. Even though crime itself has dramatically fallen in the last 20 years, the percentage that are thought to be alcohol-related has remained remarkably similar, which is kind of odd. It seems to be that alcohol-related crime, if these statistics are correct, is going down at exactly the same rate as all other forms of crime. Whether it is car theft, robbery or whatever, everything is dropping at more or less the same rate. I do not know if there is a better way of doing it without spending a huge amount of money.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): That is the problem. It is the cost of it. I wonder whether I could bring Kevin in, then? At a borough level, we have heard that there are inconsistencies in how it is recorded. What are you doing to make sure that there is consistency in the recording using the systems you currently have?

Sergeant Kevin Blenkinsopp (Police Lead for Night-Time Economy Islington, Metropolitan Police Service): In terms of Islington, what we have looked at is putting a dedicated team out, which is standardised and so it has a consistent approach to night-times, particularly at the weekends, Thursday, Friday and Saturday. We are trying to benchmark that so there is consistency and we can act consistently not just across the reporting but also when we are taking action in partnership with the venues. It is about consistency for us. We are setting standards and putting a dedicated team out and trying to have a consistent approach throughout the borough.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): Have you done extra training with officers and so on?

Sergeant Kevin Blenkinsopp (Police Lead for Night-Time Economy Islington, Metropolitan Police Service): Absolutely. As I said, we have a dedicated team that goes out every week. They are drawn from different areas of the organisation to bring that local knowledge as well. Over the past year, we have conducted a large amount of training, more so than we have done previously, with not just our staff but the venues as well through Pubwatches, through interaction and through developing training packages around vulnerabilities and what is expected of the venues to help us to reduce the crime, particularly violence and public nuisance.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): Janice, can you outline what you are doing in your borough to make sure you fully understand the scale of alcohol-fuelled crime?

Janice Hart (Service Director – Public Protection, London Borough of Islington): OK. The way that we are dealing with data is probably slightly different. We have an in-borough analysis team. With their assistance, we do take both the police and all of the council data, all of the reports and actions that we take around anti-social behaviour and noise, and then we are able to look at a much more complete picture about where the issues are.

As you probably know, we have adopted the late-night levy and so we have a patrolling team that is out, which brings us a huge amount of subjective information. The sort of information they are adding to that is, when they visit venues, whether there seems to be a high level of drunkenness, what the management capabilities are and how they are dealing with that. We also have a medic as part of that team and they are administering triage and first aid. We now have quite a good handle on people who are picked up who are drunk. Where have they come from? What is the kind of ‘pat and hat’ as to why they are there?

Then what we do is we put all of that together with Kevin’s [Blenkinsopp] assistance. Every two weeks we have a much more extensive report, which gives us the information to then go on and task and act around the

whole picture, we feel, of the data, not just the crude figures. It is also fair to say that Kevin's licensing officer is working with my team. What they do is trawl the computer-aided dispatch reports – they do a bit of what Simon [Letchford] was talking about – to look for keywords and stuff like that. What we do is have a live situation on Monday when you can look at the complete weekend and the week before that and then they will, with my team, go and investigate incidents. That drives our enforcement programme.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): That is much stronger than most boroughs with that resource you have there. Presumably it allows you to keep looking at trends and, if certain venues keep coming up, look at what action you could take.

Janice Hart (Service Director – Public Protection, London Borough of Islington): What I would say is that we have not added resource to do that other than with the levy team. It has just been adopted as part of people's work and just taking a different approach to how we operate.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): One of the things that I have talked about for a long time and that we have tried to get in across London is the Cardiff Model – which I am sure you are all familiar with – across accident and emergency (A&E) departments, sharing that anonymised data with local community partnerships, which are able to then help you target resources.

Do you think that implementing it right across London would help us understand alcohol-fuelled crime more as well and how we respond to it? Perhaps I will start with Janice and work around.

Janice Hart (Service Director – Public Protection, London Borough of Islington): I think so. We have tried in our borough. It is very difficult because we have four feeder hospitals and, even with our local hospital, it has been difficult to get that going. We certainly would, because one of the problems that we struggled to understand is how much of things like the ambulance reports and police reports relate to the domestic situation rather than the premises. Actual premises incidents are fairly low and at the minute that is our gap. We would like to see it, but we have struggled to get it working for us.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): Kevin, any comments on that?

Sergeant Kevin Blenkinsopp (Police Lead for Night-Time Economy Islington, Metropolitan Police Service): Yes. It is going to be a consistent approach across London. Obviously, Cardiff has a hospital and it relates to Cardiff in the majority, whereas here we have lots of hospitals, lots of boundaries, lots of boroughs and lots of issues around that. Ideally, the more information we have, it would make sense that we would be able to develop our product and our service, but it is going to be difficult to implement.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): It is a bit more complex but it could be done. Jon, your thoughts?

Jon Foster (Senior Research and Policy Officer, Institute of Alcohol Studies): The key issue in Cardiff is that it has one night-time strip economy and one hospital, whereas here it is far more complicated. I know that [Professor] Jonathan Shepherd CBE [Director, Violence Research Group, Cardiff University], who came up with this, is aware of the problems and is doing a certain amount of work to try to look at what the barriers are. One of the key barriers seems to be buy-in from hospital staff, particularly secretaries and people admitting people to A&E, and motivating them and getting them to understand why this is really important. It is definitely something that could help turn and get over the barrier and spread things. A co-ordinated push coming from here across London would definitely help, yes.

Daisy Blench (Policy Manager - Alcohol Policy and Responsibility, British Beer and Pub

Association): I would echo some of what has been said about the complexities of perhaps introducing the Cardiff Model in London. I think from a trade prospective there are definitely some really interesting learnings from that, obviously, from the police point of view about targeting and resources but also from the trade point of view in terms of tackling issues through some of the partnership schemes that are supported by the trade. If the local Pubwatch/Best Bar None scheme or whatever knows where to target its efforts and where to look at that where those problems are occurring, then that is really helpful.

The concern we would have is just making sure that that data is used quite carefully, because we have had some concerns that that can be used as part of the licensing process when we are not always convinced that that is particularly useful in terms of saying whether a premises should have its licence renewed or conditions applied or whatever. Again, I gather that others are aware of the limitations of that. There are some interesting learnings, but we need to be cautious about how it is used.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): Thank you. Simon, is it something that the MPS has looked into?

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): Yes, we looked into the Cardiff Model probably about four or five years ago and it is a really good model. What is quite interesting about it is that it is led by health through [Professor] Jonathan Shepherd CBE and so it is very much a health approach to alcohol harm, which is something that I would certainly support. We looked at the traffic light system that they operate with on-licence premises and we took some of that learning into London.

The challenge is the scale. You have 30,000 licensed premises in London, a significant number, and it is trying to manage all of those. It is very much based on an administrative type of process, which we do not necessarily have the time for.

However, what we have taken out - and a couple of people have already echoed it - is the partnership approach. The way you will tackle it, you will not enforce your way out of this problem. It has to be through partnership, engagement and education. An awful lot of people will go out and drink and never get involved in crime or become victims of crime, but a small group will. It is about the social norms within the groups they mix with and it is about the environment they go to.

There is definitely something we can look at around places. You have already mentioned crime data. Within London, we look at problem premises, those that constantly come up. That is a challenge for us because some of them are iconic locations. We did some work a couple of years ago in Kingston and the Club Oceana down there was an iconic location. What people would do is they would mention Club Oceana on a crime report, "I was on a bus outside Club Oceana". With the way we ran the data, it made it look like there was a really big problem at the club and it was not always easy to justify that.

The other challenge often as well is that people will drink in certain locations and then they will commit their offences further away. Often, the premises will disassociate itself but it is part of the problem. It is very much about how we engage everybody within a location, which is what Cardiff has done, to come together to problem-solve it.

Christopher Snowdon (Director of Lifestyle Economics, Institute of Public Affairs): I do not have much to add, really, other than to say that the published research coming out from Jonathan Shepherd's team is very interesting for me from a very selfish point of view. As a researcher, the more data the better. What I

have found particularly with a couple of things I have written about alcohol this year is that the data is just lamentable, actually. It is little more than guesswork most of the time.

Some of those problems are intractable because you are trying to judge how drunk somebody is and whether this crime would have happened if they were drunk or not. There are all sorts of problems because it is largely subjective. The figures that are routinely bandied around in terms of how many A&E attendances are due to alcohol, and even how many hospital episodes are due to alcohol, are based on almost nothing at all. The same applies, actually, to the costs. The costs we hear about in terms of health and crime are: (a) very old; and (b) based on the same kind of shaky data.

From a personal point of view, I would like to see more data, but I do appreciate that we do not want to be just spending endless amounts of money on a technocratic system and trying to get lots of data when actually a lot of the time we know what the solution is in the first place.

Jenny Jones AM (Deputy Chair): On this issue, it does strike me that if we used, for example, the level at which it is not legal to drive anymore, it might be a good starting point. You would give everybody a breath test and, if they are over the legal driving limit, because that is the point at which all judgement is impaired, it would at least be perhaps a baseline when you are inputting data.

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): You could do that, but that would require you to breath-test everybody. Do we just do it for suspects? Do we do it for victims as well? That is your ability to operate a vehicle. I am not sure that that would then be a lawful measurement of whether you are capable of committing a crime or being --

Jenny Jones AM (Deputy Chair): No, but if you are deciding whether to flag this as an alcohol-related crime, then having some sort of baseline for it would make sense, would it not? It seems to me that the breath test for the drink-driving level would be logical.

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): I am not sure how easy that would be to do. Also, an awful lot of crimes are often reported later after the events, assaults, etc, and so victims have sobered up and suspects are sobered up. It would be quite difficult and challenging to breath-test everybody and it is an arbitrary amount.

The challenge is that we can flag lots of crimes as being alcohol-related, but that is not the answer. The answer is what we actually do on the ground. It is the prevention activity and where we operate that. If you look at where crimes are committed, most crimes are committed where the offender has the greatest chance of success. If I am going to steal something, I am going to go to an area where there are lots of people. People go to the night-time economy because there are lots of people who have money and expensive items, and who may be leaving those items lying around and are easy pickings. If I am a sexual predator, I am going to go to a nightclub where, potentially, people are vulnerable through drink and I can pick them off. It is how we operate on that --

Jenny Jones AM (Deputy Chair): I accept all of those things. I accept all of that. However, as a baseline, when you are dealing with people on the street, surely breathalysing them would be a good start. I understand all the difficulties, but on this one thing, dealing with it instantly there and then and knowing just how drunk people are would be a good guideline. I will leave it there.

Christopher Snowdon (Director of Lifestyle Economics, Institute of Public Affairs): It would be lovely data to have, but you have some serious practical problems here. In the case of A&E, you are dealing often

with people who are totally drunk. Presumably there would not be any legal obligation that they have to give a sample if they do not want to. It is a lot more work for often very busy staff. Therefore, although it would be nice to know how much everybody has drunk on a Friday night, really, the practical problems would be overwhelming.

Roger Evans AM: In my anecdotal experience of this – and as I live in a town centre I see a fair bit of it from my window at night – is that there are some people, almost exclusively male, who go out with the objective of ending up in a violent confrontation at the end of the evening. It is something they can talk about to their friends the day afterwards. Therefore, there is a level of repeat offending amongst some people.

Simon, can you identify those people and what can we learn from them about this problem?

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): I agree with you. There is a really good bit of work that has been done by [Dr] Simon Christmas [Visiting Senior Research Fellow, King's College London] around social norms. You are absolutely right that there is a small core of people – not just men but women as well – who are going out on a Friday and Saturday night and binge-drinking and getting drunk is part of their social group. They do not see that as abnormal. They do not look at the fact that most people do not go out and get involved in a fight or get involved in some sort of disorder. There is something about how we educate and work with those individuals.

In terms of the repeat offenders, there are some opportunities there around banning orders. There are really good schemes like Banned From One Banned From All. You are from Havering, are you not?

Roger Evans AM: Yes, we have it and it works.

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): Yes, it works really well and so there is a consequence piece. One of the things that we have talked about as well is whether you start to challenge the people. If I go out with you and you get drunk, I get a fine because I keep buying you a drink while you are drunk; I get a fine as well. Then, you start to lose your social circle of friends because they think, "I am not going out with you because every time I go out with you I get a fine". We have to be a bit more creative in terms of how we start to challenge the social norm that it is OK to go out, get drunk and get in a fight.

I think the second bit to it is where they are getting into those fights. Invariably, it is to do with the location. Whether it is in a taxi queue at a chicken shop, it is where people come into conflict and bump into each other where there is no – what we call – 'capable guardian'. There is nobody controlling that space. We are working with the Security Industry Association to get them to start to take responsibility for policing the areas outside the clubs, working with the food outlets and the taxi queues to get people in a vehicle, get them away and get them home. Then they cannot get into a fight.

Daisy Blench (Policy Manager – Alcohol Policy and Responsibility, British Beer and Pub Association): Can I just echo that on the research, which Simon mentioned? There is quite an interesting project that Drink Aware, the industry alcohol awareness charity, has started, which is essentially taking the research by [Dr] Simon Christmas and piloting two parts of the campaign. One is called Club Hosts, which is about having people within the club who are there to protect people who might be vulnerable in certain situation. Also, there is an advertising campaign in cinemas, newspapers and all kinds of media to remind people that the behaviours that are not acceptable sober are not acceptable drunk. The first phase is focusing on sexual assault and making people realise and remember that, even if they are going out with the objective to get drunk, those behaviours are never acceptable and the consequences in terms of their life could be quite dramatic. They have piloted that very successfully in Nottingham and are in the process of finalising the

results from that. They are looking at other areas at the moment where they can pilot that and potentially come up with a package that local authorities might be able to make use of and backed by the industry as well.

Tony Arbour AM: One thing arises from what the Commander was saying about norms. Don't lots of perpetrators claim that they committed an offence – I do not know; domestic violence or whatever – and say it was because they were drunk or had had a lot to drink on the basis that that somehow or other mitigates the offence? You told us right at the very beginning that it is a question of interpretation and you know and you check whether or not the victims were drunk. What about people who say they were drunk but were not?

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): They can say that, but it is not a legal defence in law. Drunkenness is not an excuse. You are absolutely right. That is why we have to be really careful in our language that we do not allow them to use that excuse. Alcohol does not cause domestic violence. People who abuse their partners do not just do it when they are drunk. They do it when they are sober as well, and they do it very well because they often hide it. You are absolutely right and we should never, ever allow people to use that as an excuse.

Where it is a risk for victims is that quite often people make themselves more vulnerable through drink. We – whether we are their friends or whether we work within the industry or whether we are law enforcement or health – have a duty to try to look after them. The host scheme is something that we are really keen on. It is about encouraging clubs and pubs to look after their guests. In any other business, you would want to look after the people who spend the most money in your business. Often in licensing, the first thing they do when they have drunk too much is to throw them out and expect somebody else to pick up the pieces. Getting them to take on a more of a harm reduction and caring role is good for their business, I would suggest, and it also reduces the demand on all of the other agencies that often have to pick that up later.

Tony Arbour AM: Can I ask Chris? Based on his research, just how different is London to other urban night-time economies?

Christopher Snowden (Director of Lifestyle Economics, Institute of Public Affairs): My research, if you are referring to the stuff about the Licensing Act, was looking nationally and the capsule synopsis is that of all the predictions that were made about it ten years ago, if you remember the doom and gloom, none of them came to pass. Alcohol consumption fell, binge-drinking fell and alcohol-related crime fell.

I did have a quick look at London to see if the statistics were going in a similar direction. Yes, basically, they are. Criminal damage is down 55% since 2004/05. If we combine aggravated bodily harm (ABH), grievous bodily harm (GBH) and assault together, they are down 22%. It is well known that crime is down in London. Obviously that is not as a result of longer opening hours, but it certainly is in spite of it and in spite of all the predictions made ten years ago. London is a constantly growing and increasingly vibrant place to live. That is very obvious. It needs to have a night-time economy to match it.

The Licensing Act did not bring about European café-style culture, as some people said it would, but it did bring about slightly more European opening hours. People often forget that a very large number of countries in the world, including quite a few in Europe, do not have licensing and do not have restrictions on opening times at all. They just close when the demand peters out. In practice, most pubs are still closing at 11.00pm or maybe midnight most of the time, but it makes sense in a city with the global reputation that London has that we do not have wartime-type licensing restrictions anymore. It has been a good thing and it has been good for the night-time economy, which has been under stress for all sorts of other reasons in recent years. It is certainly a big bonus that it has not been accompanied by the huge increase in crime and ill-health that was predicted.

Tony Arbour AM: You have described the London experience where crime has fallen rather than risen. Is that repeated in Manchester? Manchester would say that it was vibrant and was growing and had a flourishing night-time economy. Has there been the same effect that crime has fallen in Manchester, too?

Christopher Snowden (Director of Lifestyle Economics, Institute of Public Affairs): Crime has fallen pretty much across the board. We are talking averages and so there will be some places that are different than others. They did a study specifically in Manchester looking at A&E attendances a few years ago. I do not think they found a drop as a result of the Act, but they did not find any rise.

Generally, the picture has been the same. The Licensing Act, effectively, has been an irrelevance, really. It has not made any difference either way, which of course goes against what is known as 'availability theory', which is that the more you allow people to drink and the more it is available, the more they will drink. Some people are still wedded to this.

I do not actually live in London; I live down near Brighton. At the moment, there is a supermarket trying to open up and it cannot get a licence because the policy of Brighton and Hove Council is for no more alcohol licences at all because, if you have more alcohol licences, people will drink more. This supermarket cannot open up because it is assumed for some reason that it will lead to more people drinking because it would be selling alcohol. Normally when supermarkets open up, the objection is that they are going to put all the other shops out of business. In this instance, the belief seems to be that it is going to lead to more alcohol sales. Nobody is saying that it is going to lead to more fruit and vegetable sales, which it would also sell.

It can be quite harmful to have this religious belief in availability and consumption being totally intrinsically linked.

Tony Arbour AM: Would you agree with the analysis, Jon, that London has behaved no differently from the rest of the country?

Jon Foster (Senior Research and Policy Officer, Institute of Alcohol Studies): Broadly speaking, yes. The trends have been quite similar across the country. In fact, looking at the levels of crime dropping, they have been quite similar across other international countries. There are some intangibles and we cannot quite say why things have gone down, but the picture is improving. However, as Chris said, these positive trends probably would have happened even if we had not had a new Act and things had not changed. We cannot put too much on the Act and there are bigger things like consumer behaviour, the affordability of alcohol, what the recession has done to that, changing demographics and that kind of thing.

As much as it has been good in some ways, you also need to look at what else the Act done. The one thing that can be very clearly pinned on the Act is not 24-hour drinking because that does not really exist; however, because there is the option there to have 24-hour licences, everything has shifted back into the night. On average - and this is a national average as opposed to a London average - in the week things shut about one hour later and in the weekend it is about two hours later. That is an average and, clearly, in parts of London things go a long way behind that.

That seems to have two impacts. The first one is that at the start of the night, which is again quite a difficult one to research and put numbers to, it has opened up that window for people to drink and preload before going out. It does not seem - again, it is a difficult thing to research - that people spend any more time or money out on a Friday or Saturday night and they go out for four, five or six hours, whatever they did before. They do not spend any more money; they just do it later because there is that window to drink at home first.

Then, at the end of the night, police and other emergency services are stretched over a longer period of time. While the volume of crime they deal with has gone down, it is spread out over a much longer period of time. That has caused genuine logistical problems. I am sure that Simon [Letchford] can talk in more detail, but I know that nationally the vast majority of police forces had to rejig their shift patterns when the Act came in in order to --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): Yes, we are going to get into detail on the Act a little bit later, if that is all right.

Jon Foster (Senior Research and Policy Officer, Institute of Alcohol Studies): Yes.

Tony Arbour AM: Daisy, is it the experience of the trade that London really is not any different from anywhere else?

Daisy Blench (Policy Manager - Alcohol Policy and Responsibility, British Beer and Pub Association): Broadly, I would agree. There is obviously similarity to other large cities, but the main difference is London, as well as having a huge amount of people living and working here, being a massive tourist destination. From the trade perspective - and we have already touched on it - it does mean that there is always going to be that volume of different people constantly. In terms of the trends, as people have said, it is broadly the case. I think it probably makes it in some ways more of a challenge, as with other cities like Manchester, in terms of that volume and density of people. I would otherwise agree.

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): Can I just add an extra bit? I was reading something yesterday that clearly shows a north-south divide in terms of harm. The harm is much less or people's positive outcomes are much better in the south. There is less binge-drinking and fewer young people drinking than there are in the north. I think there is potentially a cultural difference in how we drink down in the south, effectively.

On Jon's [Foster] point about what we have seen with the 24-hour drinking, we have seen a pushback of demand and we have seen an increase in preloading. Actually, off-sales are a real challenge for us with people buying in off-licences and counterfeit alcohol.

Interestingly enough, in Havering we piloted some work with breathalysers in nightclubs. A condition of entry was that you had to blow in a breathalyser to get in. That has been reasonably well received by door staff because it gives them a reason to refuse entry. On average, if you speak to the trade, most people buy only one-and-a-half drinks when they are in a nightclub and so they do not make a huge amount of money out of alcohol sales.

In terms of the policing, if you look at some of our night-time economies such as in Westminster and Lambeth, the clubs that are opening at 6.00am in the morning to capture the people who have been out in the evening are increasing, and it does create a policing demand for us that we are not necessarily used to. Having additional police officers on a Sunday policing what is effectively a night-time economy at 11.00am in the morning is not something we have been used to previously.

Tony Arbour AM: How interesting. I did want to ask you. You mentioned Kingston. Are there hotspots that, if you like, affect the average level in terms of numbers of offences across London? I represent Kingston and so I would not want to knock Kingston in any way, but suppose the level of drink-related crime is higher in Kingston - shall we say - than in Sutton. Is the significance of that as a hotspot sufficient to lift the entire

level of drink-related crime across London? In other words, is there a substantial disparity between the hotspots and the non-hotspots?

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): The answer is yes. It is the Pareto principle or the 80-20 rule, which is that 20% of the premises contribute 80% of the demand. There are certainly locations in London that contribute. Romford Town Centre is one in the east. Kingston is one in the west. There are a number in the south as well. What that enables you to do is to then target those in terms of prevention activity.

Kingston is quite interesting because, when we looked at it a couple of years ago, the demographic was a student population and you had people going out on Wednesdays. That was a demand day. You get different drivers. That is when you can start to work with the universities to try to educate young people about the risks and the dangers that they put themselves in.

Tony Arbour AM: Local wisdom says that it is related to the fact that the principal bus routes come from boring places and so --

Jenny Jones AM (Deputy Chair): For example?

Tony Arbour AM: I was just going to say that if you live in Hounslow, you can catch a bus and come into Kingston. Of course Kingston is a more exciting place than Hounslow and of course it does not cost much and they can come. However, I do not want to knock Hounslow, either.

I wonder if I can extend the area of questioning, really, to you all. Is alcohol related to high-level crime - in other words, serious crime - or by and large just simply low-level disorder? Is there any link between alcohol and high-level crime? Somebody else might like to have a go. What do you find in Islington? Were those old guys who robbed the bank drunk?

Sergeant Kevin Blenkinsopp (Police Lead for Night-Time Economy Islington, Metropolitan Police Service): I am not sure if they were all Islington residents. I would say that there is a link to the lower-level disorder going on to become more significant violent crime. What we have certainly seen in Islington is that where we have been able to put a targeted resource in there, based on the intelligence that we have been able to provide - and the stats are starting to back it up but we have been running for only a year now - we have been able to target those areas to try to prevent it. We are working with the businesses to highlight when they have low-level disorder outside their premises to contact us or to contact the resource - in our case, we employ as part of the levy a private security firm - in the first instance, who will go and interact with that group, whether it be to provide some crime prevention advice or advice about their behaviour to stop them going on to become violent offenders or commit further offences later in the night.

Therefore, there is a link, if I am honest, but it is about targeting and putting the right resources into it and getting the venues to work with us to prevent that becoming crime later on. We cannot do it alone. We cannot be everywhere. There are not the resources to do that. However, working with the industry, with the closed-circuit television (CCTV) and with the Council, we are seeing an improvement.

Tony Arbour AM: Do you have Street Pastors in Islington?

Sergeant Kevin Blenkinsopp (Police Lead for Night-Time Economy Islington, Metropolitan Police Service): We do not, currently. Going forward, it is something that we would like to have. As we sit here at the moment, no.

Janice Hart (Service Director – Public Protection, London Borough of Islington): We have had discussions with them and it is just the difficulty in getting any kind of constant presence. Part of not being able to do that is the reason around having the levy team. What we identified and our reason for wanting to adopt it was that there is this grey area. Our premises work really closely with us and we do encourage the behaviours of hosts taking responsibility in their neighbourhood but, when people have gone from them, it is difficult. That was the gap. That was the thing that the police could not fill and the businesses could not fill. That was why we introduced the team. That is the bit that is being a success, including for the businesses, which obviously do not want to pay any more money than they have to.

Tony Arbour AM: What does the MPS think of Street Pastors?

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): They are a really good idea. We support them. We support a number of those schemes. We have Street Pastors, Best Bar None and Purple Flag. There are a number of schemes run by the industry that are really, really good and each of them tackles a different specific issue, whether it is underage sales, whether it is vulnerability. Having that presence on the streets to look after the vulnerable is effectively what they are trying to do. Personally, I think it is a really good thing. It is citizen engagement. It is absolutely something that we would do.

Can I just answer your question about the link with the offences? By far the biggest volume is anti-social behaviour that is linked to alcohol. The point is that alcohol is a contributory factor more often in some offences. In violent offences and sexual offences, alcohol is more of a contributing factor. Whilst the numbers are quite small, it is disproportionately represented in some crime types, which is probably slightly different in terms of the demand. If you look at it purely from a demand point of view, it is the anti-social behaviour, it is the kids drinking in the street, it is the street drinkers and it is that type of offending - and noise - that takes a lot of our time up. However, when you look at serious crime, it is disproportionate for some of those crimes.

Christopher Snowden (Director of Lifestyle Economics, Institute of Public Affairs): If I can make a basic point about the statistics, if you are relying on victims of crime to tell you whether the offender was drunk, you are relying on the victim meeting the offender. If you have your house burgled, you probably have no idea whether the offender was drunk. If it is a case of embezzlement, internet fraud or all sorts of things, we would have no idea. Of course, with murder, the most serious crime of all, the victim is not around to give you an opinion.

Tony Arbour AM: That goes back to the point that I made originally that the perpetrator is going to say, "The reason I did it was because I had too much to drink".

Andrew Dismore AM: I represent Camden, which has a pretty vibrant and exciting night-time economy. Thousands and thousands of people come along and have a very good time and it is only a small minority who can cause problems.

I want to take up one or two of the themes that have been coming out so far and perhaps I could start with this issue of low-level crime, which is obviously the major issue. One of the things that seems to have come out is that if a police officer arrests somebody for some form of anti-social behaviour relatively early in the night, then that officer can be off the street for the rest of the evening dealing with that particular arrest and that, therefore, depletes police resources in the area whilst that is dealt with. Is there any way of overcoming that?

It is a question probably for Kevin [Blenkinsopp] as much as for Simon. Perhaps you would start, Simon, and Kevin can give us his view from the shopfront.

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): What we try to do, certainly around some of the busier night-time economies, is to have dedicated teams that specifically come on later to police that environment. Officers being taken off the streets to do paperwork is always a challenge. You cannot just ignore crime because you want to focus on something later in the evening. There are other opportunities through banning orders and banning them from the town and Anti-Social Behaviour Act orders to remove them. I have not picked it up as a specific issue. I do not know whether they have at Islington at all.

Sergeant Kevin Blenkinsopp (Police Lead for Night-Time Economy Islington, Metropolitan Police Service): I think there is an element of it, yes; there is some anti-social behaviour and there is the time it takes to process those individuals. However, you have to set the standards. If you are going to accept that in your night-time economy, then other people are going to follow it. Yes, there may be a demand initially for those resources, but you would hope that in time we would see that peter out. If you are causing disorder, whether it be at a low level around noise or more serious public disorder, then action will be taken against you. In Islington, again, we are actively trying to take action against those people and get the venues to assist us with that by providing statements and CCTV quickly so that we can deal with it, there is a repercussion and those standards are upheld. Overall improving the standards will in time reduce the demand.

Andrew Dismore AM: Reducing the 'temptation' is the wrong way of putting it but I do not know what a better word would be. It is to be a little more lenient earlier in the evening so as not to deplete your resources later on?

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): One of the tactics that we employed last year as part of Operation Equinox, which is about tackling violent crime and the night-time economy, was to set the tone earlier on in the evening by putting out our neighbourhood officers and setting the expectations. It is exactly as Kevin says. It is about what is acceptable and what is not acceptable behaviour. What you must then do is enforce that at some point. Otherwise, if people think, "You tell us that we are not supposed to urinate in the street and then nothing ever happens", then they will all do it. There are two bits. That is where the Street Pastors are really good. It is about setting the tone and the environment, and then eventually escalating it up if you need to and enforcing that activity to reinforce the message.

Andrew Dismore AM: From your point of view, arresting somebody earlier on in the evening, even if it does tie the police officer up for some time, is a worthwhile investment?

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): If it is appropriate, yes.

Sergeant Kevin Blenkinsopp (Police Lead for Night-Time Economy Islington, Metropolitan Police Service): I do not think it is always going to result in an arrest. There are other measures that can be taken in terms of warnings and fixed penalty notices for certain offences. It is not always going to tie up an officer for a period of time in custody.

Janice Hart (Service Director – Public Protection, London Borough of Islington): It is fair to say as well that we have also moved some of our daytime resources within the Council to work during those hours. We do that supporting and fixed-penalty notice enforcement around things like urination and warning about our Designated Public Places Order (DPPO), which helps with preloading. We have another arm of our service that goes out and does that stuff earlier in the evening.

Andrew Dismore AM: That was the next thing I wanted to come to, actually. Sorry, did you want to say something?

Jon Foster (Senior Research and Policy Officer, Institute of Alcohol Studies): Just quickly on the issue specifically of custody capacity, it was one of the questions we asked in the survey we did. Hopefully, you had some information yesterday from the survey.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): Yes.

Jon Foster (Senior Research and Policy Officer, Institute of Alcohol Studies): There were 4,000 police officers from across the country but we had over 1,000 from the MPS and so I have drilled down just on those 1,000 responses. Of those respondents, 66.4% said that either every shift or very frequently custody capacity was a problem. That is above the national average, which was 53% and so a fair bit above. It seems that custody capacity is perhaps a bit more of a problem in London than elsewhere.

Andrew Dismore AM: That is an important point. Is that because of where the custody suites are, as well as - going back to the point I was making - tying up officers' time longer if they are having to take people further away to lock them up and process them? I know we have Kentish Town, which is not entirely ideal but could fill up relatively quickly, I suspect. I am not sure about Islington. Where do you take your prisoners in Islington?

Sergeant Kevin Blenkinsopp (Police Lead for Night-Time Economy Islington, Metropolitan Police Service): We have our own custody suite.

Andrew Dismore AM: You have your own custody suite, yes.

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): It is purely a capacity issue. Unfortunately, policing demand is not even and so you do get peaks of demand for prisoners. We will move the prisoners around the custody estate as and when we need to. You are certainly right that places like Lambeth and Charing Cross can quite quickly fill up if you make a number of arrests for violence. A lot of the outer boroughs perhaps do not get a similar demand.

Andrew Dismore AM: Can I come on to the question of preloading, which Janice [Hart] just brought us back to and which came up earlier on? The suggestion earlier on was that people go to the supermarket, drink at home and then go out. However, one of the problems that Camden has raised with me is slightly different. It is people going to the supermarkets near the town centres and buying the alcohol there not to drink at home but, effectively, to drink in the street. Although you can try to control drinking in the street, it happens. That then leads to people being more drunk - that comes with preloading wherever they have it - and also extra litter and glass and difficulty managing the night-time economy because it has spread from the venues into the street itself as well.

Is that a problem? What are your thoughts about that?

Janice Hart (Service Director – Public Protection, London Borough of Islington): It is an issue for us. We have quite a vigorous approach to it now. As I said, we have the capacity to send out officers to deal with that who are either associated with the levy or council staff. We work really closely with the businesses that tend to revolve around that. It is primarily the later nightclubs. They have a vigorous policy of not allowing people in if they have been preloading. If we have identified them, then we will let them know and that stops it.

Also, we do take action against the off-licences themselves. We have a slightly different way of dealing with licensing offences in Islington in that our first stop is a licensing panel, which is usually me, council staff and police. We have them in and we talk to them about what the issues are and get out of them an action plan to go forward. If that does not work and if they continue to sell to people who preload - because quite often they are visible from their premises, etc - then we will go through and review their licences. We have done that with several.

Sergeant Kevin Blenkinsopp (Police Lead for Night-Time Economy Islington, Metropolitan Police Service): I would agree. It is difficult. We have a DPPO on the borough, but it is a large borough and there is only an amount of resources. However, certainly the neighbourhood officers, the Council and the anti-social behaviour levy team are all effectively trained or aware of the issues around preloading because it is constant in certain areas for particularly street drinking. It is a case of getting those resources out. It is a case of doing enforcement with them. Particularly around the night-time economy with the pubs and things, it is to inform us in an early intervention approach. Also, we get reports back from our private security firm, which will give us an indication if it is coming from a particular venue so that we can take the action that Janice [Hart] mentioned in the engagement stage with the panel, and then onwards for review should it happen. Hopefully, it would not get to that stage.

It is a problem. People will go out and drink and we cannot stop that happening, although we are actively trying to deal with the worst elements of it.

Andrew Dismore AM: We are going to talk about the Licensing Act in more detail later on, but there is one particular point I could raise at this stage that is not specifically to do with the Act itself but the consequences of it.

The net result if the premises are open a lot later - and I suppose the Night Tube would also fit into this - is that it effectively means that the police resources are spread over a much longer period. I am just wondering what sort of problems that causes for you in providing the police staff on the ground for, from the point you were making, 18, 19 or 20 hours rather than just for the evening.

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): We have looked at the Night Tube and the potential impact. It is quite an interesting one because I suppose there is no evidence either way at the moment. You could look at it two ways. You could say that creating an opportunity for people to come and go throughout the night might --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): No, sorry. That is getting on to the Tube.

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): OK.

Andrew Dismore AM: The point I am making is not so much about this particular problem. The point I am making is about the staffing issue for you rather than the individual problems it causes. The point I am making is that, because you have 24-hour licensing and because we may have the Night Tube, it means your resources are spread for a longer period. Therefore, what implications does that have for policing resources in terms of officer numbers on the street for that longer period?

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): Unfortunately, it is not as simple as that because it is not an even demand across the week and it is not even across every borough, which is why some of the evidence-based approach is really really important and the demand-based approach is really important.

Specifically on the off-sales, they are two different issues, for me. You have the preloading, which is often done at home and it is buying alcohol and taking it home, and then you have the street drinking. There are slightly different tactics in terms of tackling it. For street drinking, it is very much around the low-cost, high-strength drinks and limiting them and putting them on the conditions of the licences, and not allowing people to sell individual cans of beer and not selling miniatures. There are opportunities to restrict the sorts of people who are going to go in and buy what is cheaper alcohol, get drunk and commit anti-social behaviour on the streets. The tactics have to be different and we have to be flexible enough to respond.

Andrew Dismore AM: Another point raised with me by Camden was the impact on community satisfaction as a whole with some of these problems. The suggestion is that particularly the anti-social issues – the noise, litter, vomit, urinating in public and all of those sorts of things – have a disproportionate impact on community satisfaction with how the night-time economy is managed as a whole, which then distracts attention away from reducing harm and violence and tackling the nuisance and disturbance. You have to deal with the residents in the wider area as well and the impact that that then has on satisfaction with the police more generally. I do not know if Simon wants to say something about that.

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): I agree with you. My stance has always been the same. I used to be the Borough Commander at Newham and I did a lot of work around licensing there. I have always said to the trade and the industry, “We want you to be successful and we want you to employ local people and regenerate local communities because that will help to reduce crime and is a really good thing, but what we will not accept is poorly run and badly run premises that create crime, disorder and unfair demand on public services. If you do that, we will use every single power in our book to shut you down”. That is everything from enforcing the minimum wage for the staff they employ to using the Licensing Act and fire safety regulations.

I absolutely agree with you there. That is why the partnership bit is so important. It is about creating a place that people want to go to and enjoy. The night-time economy should not just be somewhere to go to drink. It has to be somewhere you go for entertainment and having a great night out with your family and friends. We all have a collective responsibility to create that environment.

Andrew Dismore AM: That is exactly the point I was making at the start of my questioning. For most people, that is what they want and that is what they get.

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): Absolutely.

Andrew Dismore AM: I am interested in the point you make about the police powers. How many premises have the police actually closed in the last year?

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): Crikey. I do not have that figure. We have 30,000. There were about 45 that we used emergency powers to close down, which we call expedited reviews.

Jenny Jones AM (Deputy Chair): Out of?

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): There are 30,000 licensed premises but most of those do not ever come to our attention. There are 23,000 pubs and clubs. The rest are restaurants.

Andrew Dismore AM: How many have had their licences withdrawn not under emergency powers but some general objection?

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): I do not have those figures to hand.

Andrew Dismore AM: Do you keep those numbers?

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): We could probably get them through the local authorities.

Jenny Jones AM (Deputy Chair): That would be good for our report.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): Yes. That would be very useful.

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): Yes, we can get that for you.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): That would be useful. Lovely. In terms of premises and the issues you were just talking about where you have closed them down or not, you mentioned earlier something about how some parts of London insist on you being breathalysed before you can go into a club. There are issues with serious crimes such as knife crimes on premises. I was sent overnight from a constituent the issue of someone who was stabbed in a nightclub in north London, yet they had security staff on.

Why are they not properly searching and even using handheld devices to search people before they go in, like they are breathalysing, to make sure the people who are going in are going in to have a good time and are not out for violence or other means. Is that something you would look at in terms of your licence conditions, Janice?

Janice Hart (Service Director – Public Protection, London Borough of Islington): Yes, it is a fairly standard condition and it is something that the licensing officers would be monitoring when they go out and visit. The expectation in that sort of situation, in our borough, if that did happen in a premises would be that it is telling us that the searching regime is not working properly and it would be something where we would be starting to look at enforcement.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): Yes, but not every club would have some sort of search.

Janice Hart (Service Director – Public Protection, London Borough of Islington): Pretty much they do. All clubs --

Sergeant Kevin Blenkinsopp (Police Lead for Night-Time Economy Islington, Metropolitan Police Service): Most larger clubs certainly in Islington do. I am not saying all of them but --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): They have some sort of knife arch or other sort of handheld --

Sergeant Kevin Blenkinsopp (Police Lead for Night-Time Economy Islington, Metropolitan Police Service): Yes, some sort of searching regime, whether it be a knife arch --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): Normally it is one in 50. If it is not electronic, I am told that it is one in 50 if you are lucky. I do not go out clubbing these days and I would not have a clue, but it is one in 50 or so, I am told, who actually get searched.

Janice Hart (Service Director – Public Protection, London Borough of Islington): One in 50 get searched? That would not be the standard we would find acceptable.

Sergeant Kevin Blenkinsopp (Police Lead for Night-Time Economy Islington, Metropolitan Police Service): I would not know the statistics particularly but, if there is a particular issue and if something was to come to notice, then we would actively be looking to do something with that venue around the licensing conditions. It is hard to just go into every licenced venue – and at what point do you cut off – to say, “We are going to implement this, that and the other”. However, if there is a demand and a need, certainly around the larger bars and clubs, they will have a search regime specific to their premises.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): You would increase that and tighten that if there have been issues or just remove a licence?

Sergeant Kevin Blenkinsopp (Police Lead for Night-Time Economy Islington, Metropolitan Police Service): Absolutely. We would look to talk to them first and engage with them on what the problems were. At some point, if unfortunately things were to continue, or if they were unwilling to work with us to target the crime, then we would look to do more formal action, yes.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): Lovely. Thank you.

Tony Arbour AM: You mentioned that capacity was one of the difficulties, particularly in inner London. We on this side have produced papers on introducing ‘drunk tanks’, which operate in various places abroad. I wonder if Mr Snowden could tell us how effective they are and whether or not he has done any work on drunk tanks and their efficacy.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): Explain what a ‘drunk tank’ is, Tony. This is obviously something that you have looked into. I am not sure where --

Tony Arbour AM: I have seen pictures of these. They seem to mimic cells. People are put in there with an instant fine and are held there until they sober up. That would be a way of dealing with the problem, would it not?

Jon Foster (Senior Research and Policy Officer, Institute of Alcohol Studies): I think ‘Alcohol treatment centre’ is the more politically correct term --

Tony Arbour AM: Yes, but you knew what I meant.

Jon Foster (Senior Research and Policy Officer, Institute of Alcohol Studies): I knew what you meant, but it is important to point out that they are clinical medical environments. They are not police-run. In some parts of [the United States of] America they do have that, but not in the United Kingdom (UK).

Tony Arbour AM: Yes. I am thinking of police-run.

Daisy Blench (Policy Manager – Alcohol Policy and Responsibility, British Beer and Pub Association): The other thing, which quite a few areas seem to have been looking at lately, is safe zones, which are perhaps a step back from that when people are drunk but perhaps have not necessarily committed any crime. Quite a number of areas like Glasgow and Edinburgh have them and they are intended to take the pressure off emergency services. The Glasgow one has some quite interesting stats about the money that they save the emergency services in terms of the pressure they take off.

Jenny Jones AM (Deputy Chair): We should go and see it.

Daisy Blench (Policy Manager - Alcohol Policy and Responsibility, British Beer and Pub Association): It is supervision for people until they sober up with perhaps plasters, water and that kind of thing, rather than necessarily a policing or medical centre. I do not know whether it is something which --

Tony Arbour AM: I think we call those 'sobering centres' or something like that. The case for taking the pressure off the ambulance service and so on is self-evident. No, I am talking about someone who in the old days, "His eyes were glazed, his speech was slurred, he was drunk, your Worship". You put him in there and then you fined him.

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): Can I just raise a point on that? They are called 'Alcohol Recovery Centres', 'booze buses' or 'welfare centres'. The analogy I use is that, if I eat too much food and get food poisoning, I do not go to a police station and get put in a cell until I feel better; I go to hospital. If I drink too much and I am incapable, I should go to hospital because it is a medical emergency. A number of you have been around long enough. We used to have higher rates of deaths in custody for that exact reason: placing people who have been drinking in cells. Actually, I think I would not support drunk tanks on the street. There should be welfare centres where people get medical treatment because often a head injury is associated with drunkenness. That is the critical bit of getting early intervention and treatment.

The challenge for us is that what we do not want to do is to create a safety net for people who go out and binge-drink and so they think it is OK because we pick them up at the end of the night. There has to be a consequence for their behaviour. I would certainly look at what more we can do to put that consequence in so that there is a cost for them. The National Health [Service] is very reluctant about this because of the principle of 'free at the point of treatment', but it cannot be right that every Friday night someone goes out and gets drunk and then we look after them. We have to do something about trying to treat them, help them and support them so that they do not do that and so that there is a consequence.

Tony Arbour AM: I understand that that is your view but I did initially ask Mr Snowden about this. What happens elsewhere?

Christopher Snowden (Director of Lifestyle Economics, Institute of Public Affairs): I am afraid I have not seen the evidence of it. I must admit I quite like the idea of drunk tanks myself, but I would have to go wherever the evidence leads. If it is leading to people dying, then I would not be in favour of it. Obviously, they would have had to have committed a crime first --

Tony Arbour AM: If it someone who is drunk and urinates in the street, it would be appropriate for that sort of thing?

Christopher Snowden (Director of Lifestyle Economics, Institute of Public Affairs): That is right, yes. For a low-level crime, maybe a drunk tank would probably be a better place for them than a hospital. They likely do not face any medical emergency; they are just drunk and need to sleep it off. Putting them in a drunk tank rather than a prison cell or a hospital bed actually makes quite a bit of sense.

However, if there are unintended consequences associated with it, I would have to change my mind. I do not know.

Tony Arbour AM: Yes. I understand that there have been bad experiences with the police and that the police are risk-averse but --

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): No, I disagree with that. It is not about being risk-averse. Somebody who has drunk too much alcohol and is unconscious is a medical emergency.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): Yes, exactly.

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): Police officers are not trained to look after drunk people to that extent. Absolutely, if somebody is urinating in the street, they are committing a crime and they should be punished for that, whether it is a fixed-penalty notice. I am all for creating an environment where we can treat them out on the street, put them in a tent or put them on a bus on the street. I absolutely support that concept. I think what I do not support is this thing that we are going to create these big tanks where we put drunk people and we leave them there until they are sober. We would not be supportive of that because of the medical risk. Absolutely, we want to work with the medical agencies because we recognise the huge demand it places on them and on us. That is my principle on the medical risk.

Christopher Snowden (Director of Lifestyle Economics, Institute of Public Affairs): In effect, that is what the police are doing all the time on Friday and Saturday nights. They are taking people back for committing low-level offences, letting them sleep it off and usually letting them off with a caution the next day.

Andrew Dismore AM: Is this the difference between the old ideas of 'drunk and disorderly' and 'drunk and incapable'?

Tony Arbour AM: Yes, exactly right.

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): Absolutely. There is a big difference.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): Thank you. Daisy [Blench], if you have any more information on those Glasgow and Edinburgh examples, it would be very useful for us.

Jenny Jones AM (Deputy Chair): I wanted to ask Christopher because we have been talking as if boosting the night-time economy is a good thing to do. It is somewhere to take your family out and that sort of thing. However, I am just asking you now. Is it a desirable thing to do or is it just an inevitable social change?

Christopher Snowden (Director of Lifestyle Economics, Institute of Public Affairs): It is both. It is a desirable and inevitable social change and I do not think anyone wants to roll the clock back to a time when, basically, the pubs closed at 11.00pm unless they could get away with pretending to be serving food or allowing dancing or what-have-you. It has genuinely diversified the night-time economy in a way that we appreciate when we go on holiday. We have heard about people's nights being moved back later into the night. When people go to southern Europe, they think it is wonderful that nobody goes out until 9.00pm at the earliest and they have some food and then they have a drink.

Jenny Jones AM (Deputy Chair): They do not have quite the same problems of low level disorder, though?

Christopher Snowden (Director of Lifestyle Economics, Institute of Public Affairs): They do not, no, but it would suggest that licensing is not the key to it if you have countries where they do not have any licensing restrictions at all and they do not have these problems. Surely, if we are looking to follow best

practice, we would emulate what other counties do, which in the case of France, for example, means having no tax on wine. Of course nobody is suggesting in this country that we have zero tax on wine like half of the countries in Europe do or have no licensing restrictions like several countries in Europe do. The point is that the Continental approach that everybody aspires to has clearly not come about as a result of restrictions. However, to answer your question, it is desirable and it is important, actually, for London in the 21st century to have 21st-century licensing hours.

I think it is true, as was said earlier, that it does stretch police and emergency services. I said it was irrelevant before, but one thing the Licensing Act certainly has been associated with is a big decline in violence at the old kicking-out times of 11.00pm and, to a lesser extent, 2.00am but a smaller rise between the hours of 3.00am and 6.00am.

There are pros and cons associated with that. The problem in terms of police staffing is that, yes, more hours are needed on the beat, but what is your priority? We could close all of the pubs at 6.00pm at night and the police would have less to do and there would probably be fewer alcohol-related problems, but it would not be compatible with a lively, modern city. Everything is about a certain degree of compromise.

The important thing is that violence has fallen overall. I do not think we want a situation in which everybody pours out of the pubs at 11.00pm, the police grab a few people around the scruff of the neck and throw them in the cells and everything is quiet by 1.00am.

Jenny Jones AM (Deputy Chair): I think we have to look at the overall economic picture. If it actually costs us more in terms of policing, emergency services and so on than it benefits sole traders, pubs or whatever, then those are calculations that we have to make as a society.

Jon Foster (Senior Research and Policy Officer, Institute of Alcohol Studies): It would be useful just to pick apart what we mean by 'the night-time economy'. A lot of people are starting to refer to it as 'the evening and night-time economy'.

There is some research that has not, unfortunately, yet been published; it was supposed to be out on 19 November 2015. Westminster commissioned some academics and an economic consultancy called TBR - and when you hear figures saying that the night-time economy is worth £60 million to the country, it comes from this economic consultancy - just to look at what has happened in Westminster and the stress area around Soho in the last ten years. That is not a typical area. It is hugely dense. If you put Manchester, Edinburgh and Cardiff together, it is still bigger than all of their night-time economies. It is massive. They picked apart where the economic benefits come from in the day. They have estimated that 35% of it comes from the afternoon, 45% of it comes from the evening until midnight and only 20% comes after midnight. These are provisional figures and we will have to wait for the final stuff to come out, hopefully, quite soon. When we think about demand pushing things back into the night and the effect on the police and then we talk about the need for economic growth, where that happens in the day and the timeframe has a big impact. If you are talking about the overall and minimising that spill-over and the negative impact on the police, in pure economic terms, perhaps only 20% of the growth is after midnight. What Westminster has done over the last eight to ten years is to really push restaurants even though it has a cumulative impact policy (CIP), which is supposed to cap numbers. It does not really do that but it is very good for place-shaping and for changing what premises you get there. It has had its CIP there but it has still had 40% more licensed restaurants and has gone towards this pre-midnight, restaurant-based economy.

Jenny Jones AM (Deputy Chair): I am not sure who it was but somebody said that people are spending the same amount of money; they are just spending it at different times or over longer.

Jon Foster (Senior Research and Policy Officer, Institute of Alcohol Studies): Yes.

Jenny Jones AM (Deputy Chair): Is the spending moving? Is it actually all the same spending and there is not an increase?

Jon Foster (Senior Research and Policy Officer, Institute of Alcohol Studies): It is hard to say. As I said, I have seen only very top-line bits of this research. I have not seen the whole lot. However, it would be reasonable to assume that they have at least intended to move things towards a more restaurant-based, pre-midnight, evening economy in order to mitigate the post-midnight negative effects and the impact on the police. It would seem to be that they have managed that.

Jenny Jones AM (Deputy Chair): See, it is really important with all of these definitions about 'alcohol-fuelled crime' and 'the night-time economy' or whatever.

Andrew Dismore AM: Soho is very much *sui generis*. It is not like the other night-time economy areas, and I am not sure that the solutions in Soho would work elsewhere. For example, there is the whole theatre trade, which then feeds into the restaurant trade in Soho both for pre-theatre eating and then afterwards. I used to be on the Licensing Committee in Westminster many years ago and I do not think you can draw generic lessons from what happened in Soho because it is so different to --

Jon Foster (Senior Research and Policy Officer, Institute of Alcohol Studies): What they have done, though, is to have a very clear strategy, which is something that is lacking from many town centres across the country, not just in London.

Andrew Dismore AM: You could not deliver what they are doing in Soho in some of the other places because the basic trade on which it is based does not exist elsewhere and it is unlikely to.

Jon Foster (Senior Research and Policy Officer, Institute of Alcohol Studies): It would be useful to see in other places.

Andrew Dismore AM: There is an old saying, "If you build it, they will come", but I am not entirely sure that they necessarily would.

Jon Foster (Senior Research and Policy Officer, Institute of Alcohol Studies): It would be useful to make that distinction between the evening and post-midnight and where that economic benefit, the jobs, etc, actually come from.

Jenny Jones AM (Deputy Chair): Economic damage as well.

Jon Foster (Senior Research and Policy Officer, Institute of Alcohol Studies): Exactly, yes, both sides.

Daisy Blench (Policy Manager - Alcohol Policy and Responsibility, British Beer and Pub Association): Just to chip in on that, absolutely, I recognise that the balance is really important. However, from a pub perspective, it is worth saying that the hours that many pubs are open are not substantially longer but that little extra bit of trade is sometimes extremely important in keeping the business viable overall. Often they are not opening later at night but they might be opening for breakfast, which is not necessarily a strain on policing. Sometimes having that short amount of extra hours is maintaining their overall profitability. Therefore, while I recognise that you do want to work out where the growth areas are and balance that against

the pressures on police resources, for a lot of pubs the flexibility in licensing hours has been absolutely crucial to adapting to changing consumer habits and being able to maintain their place in local economies. They are not necessarily massively longer hours but they are helping them stay afloat in many cases.

Christopher Snowden (Director of Lifestyle Economics, Institute of Public Affairs): They would not open longer if it was not economically beneficial for them. Nobody has forced them to open longer. Whatever the economic effect of the Licensing Act has been, it needs to be seen in the context of a very large reduction in alcohol consumption nationally and things like the smoking ban and the recession, which have all had a big impact on the licensed trade.

The benefit of the Licensing Act really, in London and elsewhere, is not so much the wider economic benefit, whatever that may be. It is just the fact that people have a bit more freedom to have a drink after 11.00pm and that people who visit this city do not see it as a laughing stock because we have extremely archaic licensing laws.

Janice Hart (Service Director – Public Protection, London Borough of Islington): I was just going to say that we have done a very similar thing to what Westminster has done with our licensing policy. The analysis for us was that the night-time economy was going out of kilter. What we saw consistently was the same kinds of licensing applications, all late night, many 24 hours. The analysis of the Council and the police was that it was going too far.

In the last policy revision we did, we did very similar things to what Jon [Foster] has spoken about. We have cumulative impact areas. They are important because, now, when you bring an application in those areas, you have to convince the Licensing Committee that your premises is going to be of benefit to them. That works really well and we have seen a big change in the sort of applications we get.

In terms of hours, we now have a 'suggested core hours' policy and we have been quite clear that we have lots of late-night premises and we do not really want very many more. Again, it enables councillors to assess against that when they look at applications. We have all really strongly bought into that policy - officers, Council and the police - and across the two years that it has been in place we have seen a very different place emerging and some good-quality applications that are coming to us.

Jenny Jones AM (Deputy Chair): I wanted to move on to the Night Tube because it is going to be, potentially, a boost for the night-time economy. Would anybody like to start on whether or not you think that is going to have a big impact? We keep expecting things like 24-hour licensing and so on to have a big impact and then it is not quite what we expect. Do you have any views on the Night Tube?

Jon Foster (Senior Research and Policy Officer, Institute of Alcohol Studies): It depends on what happens around it and whether the premises try to extend their hours because of it. As Simon [Letchford] started to hint towards, if it is there as a dispersal mechanism to help people get home - because a lot of the problems happen when people hang around having left around a venue - it could be very positive. However, it has the potential to have a significant impact on public services and the amount of money the local authorities have to pay to deal with alcohol-related problems, whether it is at a low level in terms of street-cleaning or whether it involves police and violence. It will be interesting to see how councils respond and what happens within the trade.

Jenny Jones AM (Deputy Chair): In May 2015 it was announced that:

“... 100 police officers will patrol the Night Tube as new figures show that sexual and violent crimes are up on the Underground.”

Is that your ...

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): It is not my responsibility, fortunately.

Jenny Jones AM (Deputy Chair): That is true.

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): The British Transport Police is responsible for policing the Tube and I know that it has a fairly comprehensive plan for the start of the Night Tube. We looked at it from the MPS point of view because a lot of them exit still in the MPS.

I suppose I am sitting on the fence still in relation to this because part of me says that getting people away from venues and reducing crowding is a good thing and it reduces confrontation, but people may use it to travel between other venues. If you look at the line that comes down through Brixton and Clapham, they may use it to travel in and out and, rather than just a way out of London, it is a way to get back in. We know that criminals are not necessarily stupid and they will recognise that there is an opportunity for them to target people coming off the Tube in the surrounding streets for property crimes and things like that --

Jenny Jones AM (Deputy Chair): That is true for buses as well.

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): Absolutely. We want to be alive to the potential for an increase in demand and police it appropriately. The way to do that is through visibility. If people see police officers, they are far less likely to commit crimes.

Jenny Jones AM (Deputy Chair): Janice, have you allocated or have you talked about allocating a number of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs)? Do you still have PCSOs in Islington?

Janice Hart (Service Director – Public Protection, London Borough of Islington): No, they would come from the police.

Sergeant Kevin Blenkinsopp (Police Lead for Night-Time Economy Islington, Metropolitan Police Service): The answer is that I do not know. I do not have any control over the PCSOs. I am sure that it is a consideration for when the Night Tube comes in but, in saying that, I do not know.

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): Their hours of duty do not allow them to work that time of night and so it is unlikely that they will be using PCSOs.

Jenny Jones AM (Deputy Chair): The fact is that every borough ought to have a plan about this, should they not? They ought to have a plan about how they are going to deal with the Night Tube, except boroughs that do not have many Tubes.

Janice Hart (Service Director – Public Protection, London Borough of Islington): We have started to look at a plan. We do not have that many stations in Islington that are going to be operating. What will be interesting for us is that for some of our very late venues, ones that go through to 8.00am or 9.00am, part of

their reasoning for doing that is that it is easier for people to get home. It will be interesting to see whether that shifts back.

There are also issues with illegal minicabs, which is a really big issue. The areas where that is a problem for us are, fortunately, where the Tube will be running and so at the minute it looks reasonably positive to us. Again, our resources do run through until about 7.00am anyway at the moment.

Jenny Jones AM (Deputy Chair): Presumably, workers who are coming from a long way out will be able to get in as well and that is a real bonus, as long as their bus routes are not scrapped, of course. That might help some companies if their people can get in more easily and so on. I think a plan for each borough sounds like a good recommendation.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): Yes. The minicab issue is really crucial. We have looked at that recently here and at the Transport Committee. They may move out to the end of the Tube lines. Some of that illegal touting will get moved on.

Andrew Dismore AM: I wanted to pick up one point on the Night Tube. I represent both ends, as it were: Camden Town at one end and suburbia at the other end out in Barnet. One of the concerns I have - which is your problem, Simon - is what happens when people get off at the suburban stations at night without toilet facilities. We already have a problem with people misbehaving in people's front gardens and so forth. It is going to create an extra demand on territorial policing in outer London, is it not?

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): I agree with you and that is a point we have looked at. Certainly our point of view is about what happens to these people when they get to the end. It is not all of the London Tube, is it? It is fairly limited to start with and it does not go that far out. What happens when they get off and there are no cabs? What do they do? Do they cause anti-social behaviour? Are they more vulnerable to be victims of crime? Certainly our plan was to police that in the first couple of weeks to see what the demand was.

Andrew Dismore AM: Yes. If you take the Northern line, for example, I think I am right in saying that there are no public conveniences south of Charing Cross.

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): Yes.

Andrew Dismore AM: On the Edgware branch, there is only one north of Camden Town. You can see there is potentially a problem if people have had eight pints before they start to go home.

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): I agree with you. There is some interesting problem-solving that you can do. Certainly Camden, I think, has done it. What invariably happens when the nightclubs shut is that they push everybody out of the door, and what we have encouraged them to do is allow everybody to go to the toilet first because they found they were urinating out on the street outside and it affected the residents. It is just sensible problem-solving. If it becomes an issue, why do we not put portable toilets at the end of the lines that they can use and make it free so that people use them?

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): Very good.

Jenny Jones AM (Deputy Chair): I have heard about something called Havering Safe and Sound. I do not know if anybody here knows anything about that. Apparently, it won an international award for reduction of

overall crime during the night-time economy. There was a decrease of 35% in crime. Do you know anything about it?

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): Havering is my local borough. I know it has done an awful lot of work around working with the night-time economy in Romford. It was part of the problem-oriented policing awards. It does Banned From One Banned From All and Best Bar None. It is about adopting a lot of the good practice that is already in place. The level of violence in Romford has dropped fairly significantly over the last year.

Jenny Jones AM (Deputy Chair): Has that best practice been circulated?

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): Yes.

Jenny Jones AM (Deputy Chair): It has? Is it being used?

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): A lot of places do. Kingston has done some really good work on it. Most of the high-volume night-time economies such as Westminster and Lambeth have some really good schemes in.

What we are trying to push at the moment are business crime reduction partnerships as a vehicle because it is quite a crowded landscape when you look at all the different initiatives, ideas, schemes and bodies. Who do you belong to? Who do you pay? What we are trying to do is to bring them under one umbrella, which is a business crime reduction partnership. It is quite a simple process of sharing information securely between all of the businesses in that area, and being able to communicate through a radio so that they can talk to each other about problems and share information about problems. The police will have a radio so that they can respond much quicker. It is certainly something we are trying to promote in London so that where there are existing business improvement districts (BIDs) or another initiatives they come together and work more collaboratively.

Jenny Jones AM (Deputy Chair): Do they have a best practice sheet, a manifesto or something like that that they circulate and make sure is being implemented?

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): There is good practice on the Safer London website. There is some really good best practice on the College of Policing What Works website now. We have an internal MPS website as well, which has best practice for licensing activity. We are certainly pushing the evidence-based piece because there are a lot of schemes that have been pushed out that, which when you evaluate them, are causing more problems and more damage than they solve. There is a lot of opinion-based policy as opposed to evidence-based policy.

Daisy Blench (Policy Manager - Alcohol Policy and Responsibility, British Beer and Pub Association): In terms of the industry schemes, there has been a lot of work done recently on making sure that they are evaluating properly and providing guidance on how to implement schemes and how to evaluate their effectiveness. An industry group has pulled together all of the schemes that are industry-funded and has produced quite a lot of information for local authorities on this. I am happy to share that with the Committee if that would be useful.

Jon Foster (Senior Research and Policy Officer, Institute of Alcohol Studies): I would be very pleased to see that as well. Having looked into this as part of a wider licensing project I have been doing, there is a huge lack of evidence that things like Best Bar None work, in terms of having evaluation. There is lots of anecdotal stuff that it helps co-operation and it gets people together around the table, but proving that it

makes a difference is very different. There are lots of rather suspicious statistics out there – like, say, since Best Bar None opened three years ago crime is down 20% – with no way of linking those things together. As has been said, in some areas they definitely do cause more harm than good.

Daisy Blench (Policy Manager – Alcohol Policy and Responsibility, British Beer and Pub Association):

One of the issues has been that, as mentioned earlier, data is obviously the most important thing but sometimes it has been a case of, “Let us get on with it for a while”. We know there has been a positive impact in terms of improving relationships but increasingly schemes and industry are realising that they need to be able to provide the evidence that they are effective.

Janice Hart (Service Director – Public Protection, London Borough of Islington): We have an academic partner. We are working with them on several evaluation schemes, one of which is about whether CIPs work. The other is going to be about our late-night levy and what impact that has. We feel the same: there is very little real research evidence to prove whether things work or not.

Jenny Jones AM (Deputy Chair): It seems like a role for London Councils, perhaps, to liaise properly and make sure best practice is shared.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): Thank you. Janice, when we were talking about the Night Tube earlier, you said that Islington was not really affected. I am reliably informed that there are seven Tube stations that will be open in Islington and so there probably is some work that you --

Janice Hart (Service Director – Public Protection, London Borough of Islington): Yes. There are only two in our night-time economy areas; the others are in more residential areas.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): Still, there will be an impact. All boroughs are going to have to work on this.

Janice Hart (Service Director – Public Protection, London Borough of Islington): Yes.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): Let us move on to the impact of the Licensing Act. I know we have been touching on it a lot.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: We have covered quite a lot of topics here and so I am going to pick through it and see if there is much more value to add.

I was intending to ask about, after ten years, what the impact had been of the Licensing Act. A lot of you have made comments already about the 24-hour licensing arrangement but of course there are a number of other measures and tools within the Licensing Act. Janice [Hart] mentioned the CIPs. Can I just start by asking maybe Jon and Christopher [Snowdon] whether they have any comments on the other facilities, tools and abilities that the Licensing Act gave the public sector?

Jon Foster (Senior Research and Policy Officer, Institute of Alcohol Studies): It is worth pointing out that over the last ten years the Act has been continually amended and changed. It went from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to the Home Office and the police have more powers than they originally had, which is certainly a good thing. It does a lot to help the police but it does very little to help stop problems upstream. Particularly, we have talked about preloading and, if you look at the off-trade, it has grown almost twice as fast as the on-trade.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Sorry, when you say 'upstream', Jon, what do you mean?

Jon Foster (Senior Research and Policy Officer, Institute of Alcohol Studies): A lot of the things we have talked about are dealing with the problems when people get drunk but there is very little local authorities can do in terms of the off-trade and what alcohol is out there to encourage people to drink a bit less beforehand. Talking about preloading, there is very little that local authorities can do to limit the number of off-licenses in an area. There may not be a very direct link between how many there are and how drunk people get, but look at Scotland and its Act, which in some ways is very similar but has been rejigged to tackle the off-trade. If you look at all of the alcohol that is consumed, two-thirds of it is bought via the off-trade and drunk at home. Scotland's off-trade hours are from 10.00am until 10.00pm, which is not going to make a huge difference but does make it a little more difficult. If we are talking about on-route loading and people drinking out in the night-time economies, that would have a bit of an impact.

Scotland also has a ban on multi-buy sales, which it is trying to tighten up a little bit. There was one evaluation that came to the conclusion that supermarkets encouraging people to buy a bit more - putting white wine by the fish, three-for-twos and that kind of thing - increased wine consumption across Scotland by between 20% and 25%. That is quite a significant amount. Some of that will feed through into the night-time economy. It is a very hard issue to get at, the off-trade and that preloading impact, but there are things that could be done. Not here, unfortunately.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: The scope of the Licensing Act?

Jon Foster (Senior Research and Policy Officer, Institute of Alcohol Studies): Yes.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: There is too rigid a distinction between 'this is licensed' and 'this is not' and the bulge, therefore.

Jon Foster (Senior Research and Policy Officer, Institute of Alcohol Studies): Yes. In a similar vein, there is a lot of work around better incorporating public health into licensing and a debate around whether there should be a fifth objective, as they do have in Scotland, and quite how that would work. I do not think it would be transformative and some people from public health would be quite disappointed. It has far more of a proximal impact. There would be a big impact with policing and other areas, and certainly police and other emergency services are quite positive about what an impact public health could have.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Christopher, do you have any comments about the other impacts of the Licensing Act as amended?

Christopher Snowdon (Director of Lifestyle Economics, Institute of Public Affairs): Generally, the view seems to be that it has been a big improvement for the reasons you have just heard in terms of being able to close down licensees and also giving the community more of a say in licensing hearings.

As regards preloading, it is nothing new, for a start. I was preloading 20 years ago at university and plenty of other people were as well. If it has risen in the last ten years, it will be largely down to at least two things. One, the differential --

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Price.

Christopher Snowdon (Director of Lifestyle Economics, Institute of Public Affairs): Yes, price, basically. Supermarkets are able to absorb tax rises more easily than the licensed traders and the licensed

traders also have all sorts of extra taxes and regulations, minimum wages and things like this, which have meant that prices are very high. If there is more of it in London I would not be surprised because pub prices in London are much higher than they are in the rest of the country.

Jenny Jones AM (Deputy Chair): I think they are.

Christopher Snowden (Director of Lifestyle Economics, Institute of Public Affairs): Yes. You will not pay more than £5 for a pint of beer anywhere else in the country. You can do in London.

Jenny Jones AM (Deputy Chair): I am sorry; I thought you were saying it the other way around. Sorry. Strike that from the record.

Christopher Snowden (Director of Lifestyle Economics, Institute of Public Affairs): That does incentivise people to buy in the off-trade. The other thing is the smoking ban. Obviously, people can smoke at home if they want to smoke. Yes, price and regulation is what it comes down to. Nobody is going to significantly lower tax and nobody is going to get rid of the smoking ban and so these are facts we have to live with.

I certainly do not agree that we should be looking to close down off-licenses. Every now and again, the temperance lobby produces some research showing that the more off-licenses you have, the more people drink. This is obvious reverse causation. Businesses open where there is demand. The only effect you would possibly get if you started restricting the number of licenses is possibly that the price would go up slightly because there would be a lack of competition.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Thank you. Janice, you mentioned the impact of the CIP and how local authorities are managing to use it. Are there any other powers within the Act that you found useful or any that are vestigial and do not get used?

Janice Hart (Service Director – Public Protection, London Borough of Islington): First of all, I would be a bit challenging about off-licenses because cumulative impact can and does apply to them. In fact, one of our areas is only about off-licenses. Again, we have done a lot of work with applicants about looking at exactly why they want to sell alcohol and what kind of hours that happens in. It is not unusual for us now to have off-licenses that might be licensed only from 12.00pm until 8.00pm because we have had them look at when their sales are. There is not this kind of blanket approach. The thing we would say about the Licensing Act is that it does give you a lot more of an ability to take a strategic look at your borough and what is happening there. That is a real positive for us.

I think the enforcement capacity you have and the stepped approach that you can take is key. Certainly for us, we have used every freedom that has come into the Licensing Act in order to manage ours. A lot of people are very negative about the late-night levy and certainly for us that has been a real bonus. The key for us is that we run that in conjunction with businesses. We have a board that includes them and we can see after a year that their view of the levy is quite different to what it was when we started. The ability to set policy, to involve residents and the other responsible authorities in approving applications and then to take the steps that we can to resolve issues have been big things for us.

Jon Foster (Senior Research and Policy Officer, Institute of Alcohol Studies): If I can just clarify what you have said, Islington does things very well and uses the Act to the full extent of its ability.

Janice Hart (Service Director – Public Protection, London Borough of Islington): Yes, and that is the problem in other places.

Jon Foster (Senior Research and Policy Officer, Institute of Alcohol Studies): That is the problem. Most places do not.

Janice Hart (Service Director – Public Protection, London Borough of Islington): That is right. It is not the Act that is the problem; it is how it is used. In a lot of boroughs, there is a lot of energy put into why you cannot do things instead of why you can do things. It does drive you to work in a different way. You do need to work more in partnership and you do need to work with businesses because that is all critical.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Janice, I know it is difficult to ask you to comment on other councils but do you think that that is about staff capacity in other councils? Obviously councils have lost 50% of their revenue.

Janice Hart (Service Director – Public Protection, London Borough of Islington): I do not think so.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Is it about the awareness and willingness of councillors? I was quite struck when the Act did first come in that there were some powers within that that most councillors and communities did not realise they had, like the ability to challenge a licensed premises mid-licensing, for example. Is there a need to do more awareness work?

Janice Hart (Service Director – Public Protection, London Borough of Islington): I do not think it is about capacity. We do not have any more staff now in licensing than we had pre the 2005 Act. It is just about working in a different way. In terms of involving the police, what we find is that it saves us a lot of time by working together and it probably saves resources. We speak to quite a lot of councils. There is a lot of best practice stuff that goes out and the stuff that we do is focused, but ultimately it is just about a change in approach. That is probably difficult for some places.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Daisy, how has all this affected the trade? Has the trade adapted?

Daisy Blench (Policy Manager – Alcohol Policy and Responsibility, British Beer and Pub Association): I very much agree about awareness of the powers that the Act includes. One of the difficulties for the trade has been that, although I agree with Chris [Snowdon] broadly that it has been a good thing, there have been so many changes to the Act since it came in that for operators to get used to those changes has been very difficult. Often, it is quite costly. There have been five major changes in the ten years it has been in operation, and that is not including any of the more minor amendments. Some of those, particularly the levy --

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: This is the late-night levy?

Daisy Blench (Policy Manager – Alcohol Policy and Responsibility, British Beer and Pub Association): I am sorry; the late-night levy. I do appreciate that some areas like Islington have taken quite a collaborative approach and worked with the trade about where that money is spent and how it is spent, but ultimately it is another tax on business.

Our concern is always that [the late-night levy] is not targeted. It does include everyone in that local authority area regardless of whether they contribute to the problems. For pubs, they pay around a third of their turnover in tax. It is one of the most heavily taxed sectors. Particularly for small pubs who do not necessarily

contribute to those late night problems, we do see that that is adding to that burden regardless of how it is implemented in many ways. We do feel that there are better ways to raise that money if you need to, perhaps through a BID, appreciating that different areas have introduced it in different ways. The changes have been a challenge for the trade, particularly in terms of training, but we would absolutely echo calls for greater awareness of those powers.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Does the trade generally feel it is involved enough in licensing decisions, either locally or indeed at a national level?

Daisy Blench (Policy Manager - Alcohol Policy and Responsibility, British Beer and Pub Association): Nationally, I think we have been quite lucky in terms of having worked with those who are involved to changes to licensing within the Home Office, Simon [Letchford] and colleagues. We have a good relationship with them. In many local areas, we have very good relationships and there is good partnership working. The system, as it works, has democratised it in many ways because it allows the trade to have a voice and the local residents to have a voice.

Our concern would be that sometimes the most vocal residents in an area can have a disproportionate impact on certain decisions. It is fair that their voice is heard but you often do not hear the majority, who are perhaps happy with the contribution that premises make to the area, are happy attending that premises --

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Tell us about it, Daisy. We all know that.

Daisy Blench (Policy Manager - Alcohol Policy and Responsibility, British Beer and Pub Association): I know. I am preaching to you, but it would be our concern that sometimes those people who do not speak as loudly are not always heard, even if they use those premises and want them to still be there.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Yes. You want fair treatment. Sorry, Jon, did you want to come in?

Jon Foster (Senior Research and Policy Officer, Institute of Alcohol Studies): Just briefly on capacity, in a lot of local authorities it is an issue. They have lost licensing officers and environmental health officers to huge degrees with 50% reductions over the last few years. Part of the problem is the funding system within the Act, which is flat. Local authorities up and down the country have to charge pretty much the same fees even though Westminster is very different to Barnet, which is very different to North Yorkshire, and yet they are getting the same revenue back from the fees.

The Local Government Association (LGA) has calculated that it is £1.5 million a month across the country that local taxpayers are subsidising the trade, which is £180 million over the last ten years of the Act. In some areas they break even and can fund the necessary officer time, which is fine, but in other areas it is a big problem. From the research people I have spoken to, it is the areas that have that funding problem that then see the bigger knock-on problems in terms of having unsuitable premises operating when they should have had the capacity to shut them down.

Christopher Snowden (Director of Lifestyle Economics, Institute of Public Affairs): The ideal situation, which will never happen, is that local authorities get all of the alcohol duty that is raised in that area. If that happened, I suspect you would see a significantly more liberal approach to licensing in general.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: It is not just a balance between liberality and repression, is it? There is doing it creatively, which is what Janice [Hart] was talking about: facilitating a night-time economy in a positive way?

Christopher Snowden (Director of Lifestyle Economics, Institute of Public Affairs): Absolutely.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: It is not just all carrots and sticks. There is something in between.

Christopher Snowden (Director of Lifestyle Economics, Institute of Public Affairs): If the alcohol duty was going directly to the local area --

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: It would change attitudes. That is what the whole business rate debate has at its heart in the UK at the moment. That is very interesting.

Can I just ask Kevin whether every borough in London has a designated licensing officer from the MPS, while we are talking about the capacity to manage this properly?

Sergeant Kevin Blenkinsopp (Police Lead for Night-Time Economy Islington, Metropolitan Police Service): There is a range. Every borough is different. There is no consistent policy as it stands at the moment. For example, in Islington we have three licensing officers. Other boroughs will have more and some will have less depending on their needs from a police side. I think there is some work around standardising it.

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): If it helps, we have looked at this. There are inefficiencies in the way that we do it. We have a number of them that are sergeants and a number of police constables. Some have more than two or three people involved in it. What we want to do is to bring some consistency to a London-wide model for licensing.

The other area is around their training. There is no recognised police training for licensing officers and no accreditation, which would be really good for the officers. It recognises the work the officers do but also enhances when they give evidence in licensing panels or court. That consistency across London is something that we aspire to, and we could probably reduce the number because it probably is slightly disproportionate.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: The thing about consistency though, Simon, if I can just question you a bit there, is that I represent Lambeth and Southwark and even in one of my boroughs, Lambeth, my experience and sense of it is that there is a huge night-time economy in Brixton, but the people who run those businesses there are more experienced and more assertive managers. There seem to be far more problems around Clapham High Street, where there are new businesses and operations - I want to but I will not name some of them - and where there is a new generation of licensees who do not have either that experience or indeed that sense of - dare I say it - public duty. It is more about making the money. On paper it looks as though Brixton may be more of a problem, but in reality it is Clapham High Street. Surely, approaching it equally is a problem. You have to do more of a risk-assessed approach and understand the local dynamics.

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): I agree with you in terms of where we deliver that activity. I am talking more about the consistency of the training, the expertise and the knowledge of the officers, and their ability then to problem-solve. Lambeth is a really good example of some pretty large-scale nightclubs or venues that will take that corporate responsibility on properly.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Very seriously, yes.

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): Clapham High Street is quite interesting in that you have just rolled out Safer Clapham and you have employed the Security Industry Association marshals, which seems to be quite working quite well in trying to manage the space.

I agree with you. The businesses are changing, are they not? The traditional pub is going and it is more around a venue that serves everything from craft beer to food to cornflakes. The environment is changing because that is what consumers want, and we have to make sure that those who hold a license do it responsibly and appropriately and in a way that does not create additional demands on other people.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Is there something about training license holders more? People are relatively easily allowed to have a license and there are a lot of really difficult management skills that come with it that are needed.

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): Yes, and that is a lot of what we have been doing with the industry. There are probably only a few large-scale people involved in it. It is their responsibility to do that.

Daisy Blench (Policy Manager - Alcohol Policy and Responsibility, British Beer and Pub Association): Just to briefly chip in on that, training is a huge issue for the industry, certainly. Pub companies and pub chains tend to have all of their staff do that training, but where we find the challenge is with some of those independent pubs that are not necessarily members of ours. It is more difficult to get the message out that training is really important and to make sure they know their obligations and responsibilities.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: One of the things is looking at the effectiveness of partnerships between the industry, police and the council. Is it also a challenge there that the hard-to-reach industries are not playing a role?

Daisy Blench (Policy Manager - Alcohol Policy and Responsibility, British Beer and Pub Association): It can be. I think one of the benefits of some of the partnership schemes like Pubwatch and, as we have mentioned, the Banned From One Banned From All approach - which is essentially what Pubwatch does, sharing information and working with the police really closely - is that they will bring together the licensees in a given area. It is less discriminatory of whether they are owned by a chain or whether they are an independent. It is just a case of bringing together all the local licensees.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: It is locality-based?

Daisy Blench (Policy Manager - Alcohol Policy and Responsibility, British Beer and Pub Association): Yes. For us, that is quite a good way of getting to some of those licensees who are not necessarily owned by one of our member companies. We can still get out some of our guidance and social responsibility messaging around drunkenness or underage selling. That is another good network. Those partnership schemes can get to those premises.

Janice Hart (Service Director – Public Protection, London Borough of Islington): If we are going to talk about approach, if you have limited resources, probably the best place to put them is at the application stage. Certainly what we find now is that very few of our applications are receiving resident representations. It is now far more frequent that the responsible authorities are making the representations simply because they are putting more time into looking at the applications and trying to weed out those people who are not able to operate that business.

At the committee stage, we have moved our councillors away from allowing [applicants'] their legal representatives to speak for them and are asking the actual applicant to address them because then you get to really understand what they know, what they have submitted, how much of it is their work and how much of it

is somebody else's. We do get applicants who pull their application, go away, do more work on it, come back and work more closely with us and the police to get themselves in a better state before they open.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: That is a really interesting point. Lawyers are getting in the way a bit, really, because what you need is a dialogue between the community and the licensee.

Janice Hart (Service Director – Public Protection, London Borough of Islington): Yes, to understand the person.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Very good. Thank you.

Roger Evans AM: We have had quite a good debate about the licensing arrangements as they currently are but I am interested in what you might change to improve the situation. Jon, I would like to start with you.

Jon Foster (Senior Research and Policy Officer, Institute of Alcohol Studies): There is a lot that could be done without changing the Act in terms of getting people to pay attention to the guidance, the Act and the case law. For example, a lot of authorities will not quiz an applicant. There is a box on the application form where you are supposed to pay reference to the guidance at [paragraph] 8.33, and it goes through the local area and you are supposed to talk about how your business will impact on local things. Most people just leave that blank. The councillors have the opportunity to quiz, as we have heard, and they do not use it and so you get people, who should not have a license, getting through.

There is a big issue where local authorities are scared of being too assertive because they will be taken to appeal. Certainly a lot of people I have spoken to said, "We know that we could and we should do this, but we have no budget at the moment for expensive legal costs and so we will just let things through", which of course creates problem for the police when they are unsuitable premises.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: It is short-sighted.

Jon Foster (Senior Research and Policy Officer, Institute of Alcohol Studies): There are huge amounts of inconsistency in terms of case law and how it is used. Some areas, as I said, are far more assertive and other areas just do not use it.

What else would I change? The fee system I have mentioned as well. That is something that head office is in contact with the LGA about. There is a very simple solution. Taxis and street trading already have to prove that they reflect the cost of administering and so just taking the fee system from taxis or street trading and putting it into the Act would help with that.

Really, I think there is lots of stuff that could be done on a London-wide strategy in encouraging best practice around case law and what you can and you cannot do and addressing some of the misconceptions around the Act. For example, among licensing, 'the premises-by-premises approach' is a very common phrase, which is taken to mean that you have to look at each premises as if bubble-wrapped off from what else happens around it. If you look at the Court of Appeal and what it talks about, in a number of cases it says that you should take into account these dynamic interactions between that premises, what is next door and what is over the road and how these things fit together.

Some authorities that take that approach within their decisions have far more power to put a condition, to object or to look at the potential knock-on impacts, whereas authorities that are scared out of that let things through and then have more problems down the line. In the project that I have been doing on licensing, that

has been a really big theme. Local authorities just feel financially and legally outgunned by the trade in certain areas.

Christopher Snowden (Director of Lifestyle Economics, Institute of Public Affairs): A lot of what you have just said is quite true. It is a blank canvas, to a large extent. Obviously, different parts of the country implement it in hugely different ways. That was the idea: to give local communities the freedom. There are probably various technical things that people have problems with. I know I was speaking to a load of licensing people last week and they had various quibbles here and there. It is not really something I know enough about to comment on and so I will not.

Roger Evans AM: OK. What are the police asking for? I know the Commissioner has made some remarks about this. What is the MPS ideal?

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): It is always dangerous for us to ask for legislation, is it not? With the late-night levy, there has not been a huge take-up. There are only eight nationally with one in London. I would like to see that refined more into the local area rather than a whole borough so that it could be far more targeted. Clarity of the split of any revenue that that raises would be helpful, as to who gets the money.

The other area we would be very keen on is having a much greater role in tackling this as a health issue and not an enforcement issue. That goes right back to a number of things I have mentioned – and the stuff they have done on smoking is really good – about changing society's view of alcohol as being harmful if you drink it to excess, and then how you change behaviour. That will then ripple down to where we pick it up further down the chain. Certainly health and more focus around the late-night levy would be really helpful.

The last bit we are quite interested in is rather than looking at individual premises, you look at an area and there is an area collective responsibility. It is easy for premises to say, "It did not happen in my club. Therefore, it is not me", when clearly it is their clientele. Conversely, the other licensed premises around it – whether they are food shops or whatever – can also say it is not their responsibility. It is something about trying to bring them all together and work in partnership to problem-solve it.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): Thank you very much. Our final small section, Kemi is going to lead on about the role of the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC).

Kemi Badenoch AM: You have touched on quite a few of the questions that I am going to ask and so, hopefully, we will just get a little more detail. First of all, what do you understand the role of the Mayor to be in tackling alcohol-fuelled crime?

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): I am not sure I still agree with the term 'alcohol-fuelled crime' because I am not quite sure that I understand what it means. 'Alcohol harm' I would probably want to use.

There is a clear responsibility about co-ordination. No one agency can tackle this on its own. The demands go across all of us and so bringing them together to work more collaboratively to solve the problems. The alcohol sobriety work we are doing with the bracelet in Croydon around consequences is a good example of where the Mayor's Office can bring that co-ordination.

Kemi Badenoch AM: I was going to ask about that and whether you thought it was going well. Do some of these things appear gimmicky in terms of their effectiveness?

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): If you apply proper evidence-based research and evaluation, then you answer your own question because if it proves its worth it is worth investing in. My understanding of the alcohol bracelet is that it has changed people's behaviour in terms of reoffending and continuing to drink. That is something we should push out if it reduces demand for emergency services.

Kemi Badenoch AM: What about anything else that you think that the Mayor and MOPAC should be doing at the moment that they probably are not doing? This is a question to all of the panel. What would you like to see the Greater London Authority (GLA) doing within the Mayor and MOPAC's remit?

Daisy Blench (Policy Manager - Alcohol Policy and Responsibility, British Beer and Pub Association): I was going to say that one of the roles for the Mayor's Office can be to shape the debate slightly differently. We have had a lot of talk today about partnership and about the ability of the trade to work with the different bodies. The announcement on the potential appointment of a Night-Time Champion is really interesting because that is the opportunity to perhaps look at it and ask what kind of night-time economy we want to see, rather than to have this sometimes narrow focus on harm. I am not saying that anyone on the panel today has that approach but that it is sometimes something that restricts our ability to tackle those issues because we do not necessarily look at where we are trying to get to but we look at the problems that exist. The ability of the Mayor's Office and the GLA could be to push towards saying, "Let us look at where we want to get to and how we get there". That helps bring about some of that partnership working and is a really important role that can be played.

Janice Hart (Service Director – Public Protection, London Borough of Islington): Perhaps supporting some of that research and evaluation work would be helpful. There is a lot of discussion that goes on across councils as a licensing group that is pan-London, but nobody ever really pulls together what is happening in all the different places and looks to see what the real impacts have been. That is part of the reason why we have gone down the route of trying to get an academic partner because it does concern you. You do want to know, particularly around health because that is the big thing for us in our borough. We still have a really high incidence of death and alcohol-related ill health and understanding how we can start reducing some of that is important.

Kemi Badenoch AM: It sounds like there is a general consensus that a pan-London strategy would be very useful in addressing quite a few things. I know that the Greater Manchester Devolution Agreement means that they are looking a little more joined-up not just within their local authorities but also with the NHS. Do you know of any other regions that are doing that and would it be the kind of thing that you would want to see in a London-wide strategy?

Daisy Blench (Policy Manager - Alcohol Policy and Responsibility, British Beer and Pub Association): Nottinghamshire is doing quite a lot through the Local Alcohol Action Areas project that the Home Office announced with 20 areas of focus [on tackling alcohol related harm and diversifying the night time economy]. Greater Manchester was one of those areas. That has been quite a good project for bringing together the relevant parties and sometimes looking at a wider area where that makes sense. A few areas, rather than just having a town, a local authority area or a city, have done what comes most naturally to that area whether it is county-wide or the whole of Greater Manchester. That has been quite an interesting project for looking at some of those approaches.

Kemi Badenoch AM: Janice, how much work does MOPAC do with local boroughs to highlight what is going on in this area?

Janice Hart (Service Director – Public Protection, London Borough of Islington): I do not think there is a great amount. Our own involvement would tend to just be around the fact that it knows that we do some quite progressive things. We do talk to people and they sometimes give other people our contact, but there is not a great amount that we do with MOPAC around licensing.

Kemi Badenoch AM: OK. My last question is something that I made a note of when we were talking about the 'drunk tanks'. I am not sure that that is what we would call them, but I was quite interested that you mentioned that this was a health-related issue and not an enforcement one. What percentage of people who are either 'drunk and disorderly' or 'drunk and incapable' do you think would fall into the health category and require health treatment?

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): I do not know but there is some really good evaluation that has been done by a guy called Paul Evans, who is an Assistant Chief Constable up in Wiltshire, looking at welfare centres. There has been quite a lot of evaluation. What they effectively do is they triage people. They will separate out those who are likely to go on and commit criminality or have been committing criminality - the police deal with those - and those who are under the influence of alcohol to the extent that they need medical intervention. There has been some evaluation in terms of the savings these have provided to both the police and health, but the key bit is that the cost of providing it has to still be met by health and police. It is about how you can recover some of those costs.

Kemi Badenoch AM: That is probably what the thinking behind that idea was: that there must be a proportion of costs that can be recovered via the individuals themselves. Having something, whether we call it a drunk tank, a treatment centre or whatever, where the individual is paying for the police time and health time that is being used, would you like to see something like that? If not, why not?

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): Yes is the answer. There has to be a consequence. There are some opportunities, a bit like we do with the speed awareness courses. You get the treatment but then you get a fine, which you can offset if you go on an alcohol awareness course. The biggest challenge will always be overcoming that health will not charge for it because of the principle that health is free at the point of use. We can administer fixed penalty notices but I am not sure that is going to change their behaviour longer-term unless you make it a significant amount of money, and then it becomes --

Kemi Badenoch AM: No, it would not. The deterrent effect is probably just one of several things. In the climate we are in now, where we are constantly talking about savings and becoming more efficient, maybe finding private sponsors for things like that could be another --

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): Possibly. We have certainly been talking to the Behavioural Insights Team - the 'Nudge Unit' - at the Cabinet Office to look at some ideas and some proper evidence-based approaches to try to change people's behaviour. It is how you do it. On the whole discussion about units, nobody understands units. It does not make sense. Maybe you could make it an equivalent to calories. People get that. Drinking a large glass of wine is the equivalent of half of your daily intake. All of that changes their behaviour. I definitely think there are some opportunities with the Behavioural Insights Team to look at how we can change behaviour in a way that reduces consumption and does not allow people to get into a position where they are incapable.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Just a quick supplementary to that. I know we are concentrating on crime in the public space and so on but one of the things that has not been mentioned is what I would call 'child protection' and the number of teenagers who are underage who are drinking and who get into trouble.

Does that pose a particular challenge for the police and public services in terms of tackling it? It is not unusual, is it, for a group of 15 year-olds, inexperienced at drinking, to go over the top and get into big trouble? By definition, they are breaking the law anyway.

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): That is the harm piece again, is it not? Young people drinking alcohol underage is not only harmful to their development but puts them into situations where they become vulnerable as offenders or perpetrators. I have been interested to know – and colleagues will probably have greater knowledge on the statistics – that the number of young people drinking heavily is going down significantly, but what we are finding is that the small group who still do are drinking more. There is a small group of young people who do drink to excess and we absolutely should be doing more to try to help them and support them.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: What can you mobilise to intervene there?

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): I suppose it is really about trying to find what they call ‘teachable moments’ when is the opportunity to engage with them and give them those messages and when it is really important. There is certainly an opportunity for education at that point when you can speak to young people. When they do come into contact with any of the agencies, do we have the right messages to give them? Are they receptive? I know that in Lambeth they do a lot of work with young gang offenders in that ‘teachable moment’ when they are in the cell. That is the intervention opportunity. That is when we have to look at opportunities to put intervention in at that stage.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: What about holding the parents to account?

Commander Simon Letchford (Metropolitan Police Service): Absolutely.

Janice Hart (Service Director – Public Protection, London Borough of Islington): We did a very successful piece of work that was under the Community Alcohol Partnership heading. I do not know if you have heard about that but that is the three-pronged approach where you work with businesses, you work with young people and you also work with parents around awareness of underage drinking and how you can tackle it. To our mind, if there was a fee structure that changed, that is the sort of thing that you could fund that you have had to lose now.

There is also that problem-solving approach. If the police are dealing with an issue like that, building in licensing and trading standards in our area, we then would do test purchasing and we also would be speaking to them. Then that would all come together so that we are dealing with the supplier as much as the young people.

Daisy Blench (Policy Manager - Alcohol Policy and Responsibility, British Beer and Pub Association): Just briefly on that, Community Alcohol Partnerships are a really great initiative. They are run by the Retail of Alcohol Standards Group, which is the major retailers and some of the producers. The difficulty with that core group that Simon [Letchford] mentioned is that the vast majority are not buying it themselves; they are being given it by parents or peers. The trade has done and will continue to do a lot on this issue because it does not do operators any favours to have underage selling as a big issue. We want to reduce that; eradicate it. It is that kind of group that are being given alcohol from other sources, which is a challenge.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Deputy Chair): Thank you very much. That ‘teachable moment’ is also when they are hospitalised into A&E. There is a whole issue that I have been talking about with youth workers in

A&E. I met one from St Thomas's yesterday but it is just him plus one other person to deal with all of the young people coming in with injuries and so on. If the fees change, you could look at how you could fund wider things that would support that.

That was very interesting. Thank you so much for your evidence this morning. It has been really helpful in our consideration on this issue. If there are things when you go away that you wish you had mentioned or if there is a report or Daisy - you mentioned a couple of things - or something you just want to send in to us, please do send them to our Committee staff.

This page is intentionally left blank