

Haringey Metropolitan Police Response to the Haringey Overview & Scrutiny Committee: The clustering of betting shops in Haringey

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Introduction

The implementation of the Gambling Act 2005 heralded an increase in volume and concentration of betting shops on Haringey borough (since 2007 ten new premises have been opened and account for 14.9% of all bookmakers). There has recently been an interest from both statutory partners (problem solving group looking at the impact of betting shops – chaired by Urban Environment at Haringey Council) and the local community (public demonstrations in September/October 2010) at the perceived proliferation of betting shops in the borough. It has been suggested that betting shops are significantly contributing to both crime and anti-social behaviour and consequently have a detrimental effect on the local community.

The Gambling Act 2005 introduced a two tier regulation system whereby Operators obtain a licence from the Gambling Commission then apply for a betting premises licence from the local authority. It is recognised that in Haringey, decisions made by the local licensing authority have been overturned at appeal by the local courts. It is also acknowledged that the Gambling Act 2005 removed any restrictions on operators where they had to prove 'an un-stimulated demand', simple competition and market forces now dictate where an operator might decide where to open a betting shop, hence the clustering.

To evaluate the validity of these concerns, appropriate research and analysis must be conducted. This will accurately pinpoint the issues associated with betting shops and enable the design of relevant and effective long-term responses. The statistics presented have been extrapolated from police systems covering a six-month period commencing the 1st of April 2010.

This report endeavours to provide a holistic overview of the current level of criminality associated with local gambling premises. This will be achieved by focusing on localities with a high concentration of premises and the quantitative and qualitative impact that this has on the local community.

Geographical Analysis

Haringey has a total of 66 betting shops that are widely dispersed across the borough. Ladbrokes and William Hill account for 71.2% of premises, however, this dominance is in rapid decline as other operators noticeably increase their market share, for example Paddy Power has opened one premises a year since 2007.

The geographical distribution of premises highlights an elevated concentration in the more deprived areas of the borough. This may be coincidental, as businesses in general tend to migrate towards areas with a greater population density in order to expand their customer base and ultimately maximise profit margins.

Four distinct concentrations (defined as an area with a significant disproportional density of gambling premises) have been identified in Haringey - two in Wood Green (at opposite ends of the High Road), one at Bruce Grove (at the junction with Tottenham High Road) and one along Green Lanes. It should be noted that several areas (with the addition of another gambling premises) have the potential to become a concentration within Haringey.

General Overview

A total of 200 incidents relating to betting shops have been reported to police, this equates to 0.4% of all call demand over six-months, however this marginal figure might not be completely accurate as conditions relating to the licensing of bookmakers may actively encourage under-reporting to the police.

William Hill reported more incidents (90 in total) comparative to other bookmakers; however, they recorded an average incident rate per premises of 4.5 - the same as Betfred and less than Paddy Power (6.3 incidents per premises). Ladbrokes (who own the most premises in Haringey) recorded an incident rate per premises of 1.8.

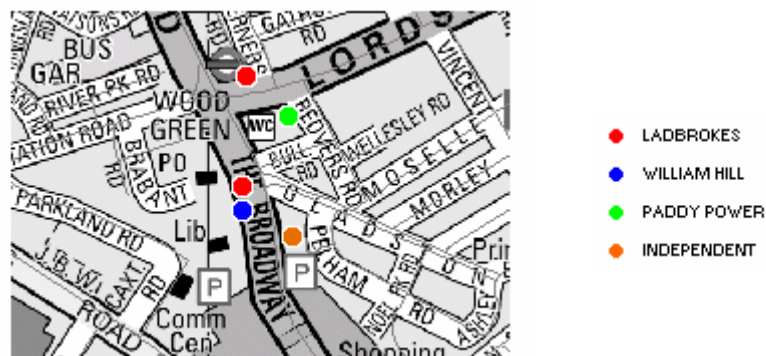
A total of 136 offences (an average of 22.6 per month) have been recorded with criminal damage offences accounting for 58.1% of the total. A majority of these criminal damage offences (88.6% - 70 crimes) relate specifically to gaming machines, with detailed analysis of the individual crime reports indicating that the criminal damage occurs most frequently after customers lose.

Individual betting shops are not crime generators, however where there is a concentration of premises the increase in incidents impacts significantly on public perception, this is further amplified where the concentrations are situated in known crime and disorder hotspots.

There is some very good practice in place in most of the betting shops in the borough. This varies depending upon the skills and confidence of the staff in the individual shops.

Focus - Wood Green: North High Road

Historically this area has been a focal point for disorder and gang activity, with the causality being attributed to the exceptional transport and leisure facilities that attract a large volume of young individuals. The area currently consists of 5 gambling



premises:

These 5 premises have reported a total of 27 incidents (accounting for 13.5% of the total call demand pertaining to gambling premises) over the reporting period. In terms of numerical volume the number of reported incidents per business is relatively equal (with the exception of the independent bookmakers who reported none).

The fact that William Hill (the only known business to have a 'positive reporting policy') recorded a similar number of incidents as the other bookmakers is surprising, however, when compared to the number of recorded offences it becomes apparent that both Ladbrokes and Paddy Power only contact police regarding more serious matters (again this suggests an element of under reporting that is possibly tied to preventing a revoke of their license).

A majority of the incidents reported were concerned with rowdy and inconsiderate behaviour (17 calls - 63.0%) and highlight a possible anti-social behaviour issue. Closer analysis of the data highlights a significant increase in calls emanating from the Paddy Power premises, equating to 42.9% of calls over the past three months and 50.0% of calls during September.

Police intelligence indicates that the Paddy Power premises is being frequented by a large group of youths who wish to play the gaming machines. The catalyst for disorder is when the staff remove the underage young people from the premises. The

premises (which has only been recently opened) is located in the centre of a known disorder hotspot and although the premises is not the cause of the disorder it is currently a significant contributing factor in the area.

This highlights a perception that the current licensing legislation does not have the ability to effectively manage and affect the suitability of some new premises locations, for example an application to open a betting shops at 261A High Road, Tottenham has been received. The proposed venue is already in a known disorder hotspot (with youth violence, robbery and gang activity) and similar to the aforementioned Paddy Power premises could create a focal point and catalyst for further crime and disorder in the area.

Other Issues

Green Lanes has been identified as an area of concern in relation to disorder in the vicinity of the gambling premises. Intelligence suggests that a significant number of incidents are related to intimidation (including sexual harassment) from individuals smoking outside the gambling premises.

One hypothesis around the issues in Green Lanes and the anti-social behaviour is the proximity of the betting shops to social housing that predominantly house vulnerable adults. Intelligence suggests that these vulnerable people frequent the betting shops in Green Lanes.

Recommendations

The following bullet point summary details possible responses to reduce the impact of betting shops on Haringey (this list is not exhaustive and is for guidance only):-

- A stronger partnership with the operators – The Strategic partnership could work with the operators to suggest more consideration to the location of new premises; this would potentially prevent both concentrations of premises and premises in unsuitable locations (crime and disorder hotspots).
- Restriction of Machines – the licensing authority might want to consider a discussion or condition asking that the location and number of machines in a betting shop be carefully placed to discourage the opportunity for underage players to access them and reduce the possibility of criminal damage offences.

- Evidence for licensing applications - the police could review their processes for gathering evidence in support of or challenging a licence application when notice of an application is made to them. Similarly a stronger working relationship with the regional managers of the betting shops could improve the situation in specific shops or locations.
- Banning Orders – Some of the shops have used banning orders once they have identified persistent problem individuals at premises. This would need enforcement support from all partners.
- Improved Signage - clear messages regarding Anti-Social Behaviour, Criminal Damage and underage gaming and the associated consequences of committing an offence would act as a deterrent.
- Improved Communication - betting shops should be encouraged to inform the police of any issues or crime more promptly as the practice of not calling police to avoid recorded incidents leads to inaccurate assumptions being concluded.
- Smoking Areas - the introduction of smoking facilities at the rear of the betting shops (particularly in Green Lanes) would remove the perception of intimidation and prevent any sexual harassment in the street.