

Witness Statement
(CJ Act 1967, S.9; MC Act 1980, ss5A(3)a and 5B,
Criminal Procedure Rules 2005, r27.1)

STATEMENT OF: Ms Bianka Mali t/a Smoky Lounge

AGE: Over 18

OCCUPATION: Licensee/ DPS

This statement (consisting of 2 pages each signed by me) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated anything which I know to be false or do not believe to be true.

Dated the Sunday 2nd February 2025

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1. My name is (Ms Bianka Mali of 78 Gambier House Mora Street EC1V 8EJ and I am the Licensee/DPS proposed licensee for Smoky Lounge 83 Mayes Road, N22 and have worked in the licensing industry for approximately 10 years. I have completed my level 2 award for personal licence holders and held my personal licence for almost 1 year.
 2. I grew up in my family's restaurant business, where I gained hands-on experience in hospitality, including serving customers, managing busy periods, and ensuring responsible alcohol service. The licensing laws there were similar, so I understand the importance of compliance and maintaining a well-run venue. In London, my husband and I previously ran a coffee shop, which, while not licensed for alcohol, gave us valuable experience in customer service, engaging with the community, and building good relationships with neighbours. This background has helped us successfully manage our current business in a professional and responsible way.
 3. From the beginning, we made an effort to introduce ourselves to our neighbours and explain how we plan to operate. We sent letters to local residents and engaged with them because we want to cooperate and be a positive part of the community. More than 60 people signed our petition in support, giving us positive feedback and welcoming us as a good addition to the area. Only a small number—around five—are against us. We've listened to concerns, taken proactive steps to address them, and are committed to running our business in a responsible and respectful way.
 4. -As a woman in business, I have faced many challenges, including gender bias and the assumption that women are less capable than men in leadership roles. Women often experience discrimination in hiring, promotions, and business partnerships, as well as more difficulty accessing funding, since investors tend to favour male-led businesses.
 5. Despite these challenges, I have worked hard to build and run a successful business, proving that women are just as capable in this industry. My goal is to create a welcoming and inclusive space while setting an example for other women in business.

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6. The director of the acoustic consultancy we hired, Laura, is also a woman, and she provided a comprehensive, professional report. However, despite her expertise, her findings were ignored for a long time when I tried to engage with the council's noise team.
7. This raises an important question—if a qualified female expert's report was dismissed, and as a woman running a business, I face extra challenges, how am I suddenly considered a problem for the neighbourhood?
8. I have done everything professionally, followed all procedures, and worked hard to cooperate with residents. Yet, it feels like my efforts are not given the same consideration as they would be if I were a man.
9. We (Myself and my family – Husband) undertook the refurbishment works to the premises during the early part of spring/summer time period of 2024, reinstating the use of the premises that had been left in disrepair and been closed for an extended period of time.
10. We have installed and upgraded the kitchen area, installed a new ventilation system, a fully comprehensive CCTV system and renovated the entire premises.
11. We engaged with Haringey Council's Environmental Health Noise Nuisance Authority to gain further insight into the allegations of noise nuisance occurring due to the operation of the premises.
12. Before we appointed an acoustic consultants we sought approval from Haringey Council EHO Noise Nuisance authority and once they were approved we provided them (DAA Acoustic Group) with the information and then began the process of investigating noise impact in June 2024.
13. We approached the final stages in the renovation process and reached out to those in the vicinity to introduce ourselves to the local residents and to also gather opinions on what could help us interrogate our business to them, we also received feedback about historical problems/issues in the area and about how the premises was run.
14. We used this information to create a plan to ensure that our business would not mirror or create the same problems which occurred in the past.
15. It was confirmed by Noise Nuisance authority that a large number of allegations of noise nuisance (61) were reported by residents (from 2022 to June 2024) but all of the 61 reports were not substantiated/verified when officers visited the premises area and no abatement notices were issued.
16. Haringey Planning & Licensing Policies encourages business regeneration and growth, broad and varied businesses to revitalise areas of the borough which are rundown/disused which the premises fitted into and would therefore benefit local residents.
17. Me and my family have heavily invested our time and savings into this business/industry and plan on running this business successfully for the entire duration of our **20 year plus renewable lease**, without any negative incidents, we wish to ensure that our business become a viable, productive part of the community, never raising any issues or caused any negative problems.

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18. From the actions taken we have made our intentions very clear, we are the only party who have committed our own funds to investigate the historical noise issues comprehensively and over the last 8+ months, issues or problems raised by any party are dealt with seriously, we take proactive steps to ensure that things are dealt with immediately. We have incorporated this policy of dealing with issues comprehensively into all our members of staff.
19. Before submitting the premises licence application we undertook research into the premises and the historic issues surrounding the previous ownership and employed the services of acoustic and licensing consultants in order to unravel all the issues and to provide expert advice and recommendations.
20. We also engaged with the residents in the local vicinity initially via a leaflet/letter drop which was extremely successful as we gained further insight into the previous issues and how we may be viewed by residents who were effected by the negative actions.
21. The objections from the interested parties came as a complete shock to us, as the allegations from the interested parties highlighted that we would be bringing issues of "crime & disorder, antisocial behaviour, and public nuisance, if the application was granted.
22. Obviously we expected some scepticism but at the time the application was submitted and the objections were logged against us, we had already implemented several conditions and noise prevention measures and used these methods during all of the authorised temporary event notices.
23. We were authorised to operate the premises until 1am via the use of temporary event notices (TEN's) we used are entire allocation of TEN's for 2024 with no negative issues being experienced
24. We understand the seriousness of the allegation and firstly wish to correct these allegations emphatically to state that we do not wish to become a negative aspect within the community/vicinity and have presented and agreed to adopt several detailed conditions with various responsible authorities which would enable our business to operate in conjunction and in the promotion of the 4 licensing objectives.
25. We have always worked/ran a business in full co-operation and compliance with the law, and all relevant legislations and council regulations. We would hope that the Police Authority who have full access/records in relation to crime and disorder matters can and will confirm that our licensed premise has operated in compliance with the law, with no negative issues since we took ownership in 2024.
26. Upon receiving the objections from the interested parties via the licensing officer/authority we wanted provided a personalised reply directly to the residents/interested parties addressing the points made by the objectors and also updating them to the current situation about the application proposals, but we weren't given the contact details of the those parties so we had to provide the licensing authority with a generalised letter that they presented to the those who raised an objection.
27. The general letters (GL1) to the interested parties (Attached to end of this statement) as well as the specific letter to a neighbour who didn't engage even after 3 direct attempts provided the necessary general information in order to inform them about the business and hopefully alleviate the concerns from the interested party labelled as (GL1 & BB1,BB2).

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- 28. In the additional information pack which includes a conciliation document of approximately 5 pages of text and 29 conditions, as well as a Dispersal Policy as well as a reduction in the proposal hours of operation for the premises which closely mirror the proposal from the noise nuisance & police authorities.
- 29. We would just like the opportunity to run our business in accordance with our plans, conditions and additional information free from negative speculation.

I am willing to attend court and give evidence in relation to this matter if required.

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