

ABERDEEN CITY LOCAL LICENSING FORUM
ANNUAL REPORT JANUARY – DECEMBER 2024

Introduction

Following discussion at the Joint Meeting of the Licensing Board and the Local Licensing Forum in September 2023, it was agreed that the Forum would compile an annual report each year.

This report covers the period from the AGM in February 2024 to year end in December 2024.

Forum meetings and membership

The year began with the AGM in January 2024 at which the following office bearers were agreed

Elaine Mottram – Chair

John Mooney and William Rae – Vice Chairs

The current membership of the Forum is as follows

LSOs – John Philip, Diane Sande, Stephen Stewart

Trade representatives – Final Cran, JP McGivney, Grant Wiseman

Adult Social Work Representative – Barry Stephen

Children and Young People's Social Work Representative – Steve McConnachie

Aberdeen Street Pastors – Pete Turner

Police Scotland – Neil Grant

Aberdeen Inspired – Danuta Dobrzanska

ADP – Lucy Simpson

Off Sales – Artur Ghazaryan

Karen Gatherum

Licensing Solicitor, Sandy Munro, continues to attend meetings.

John Mooney resigned in August 2024 due to a secondment to Scottish Government. The Forum is required to have a representative from its local NHS Board and discussion is taking place with the Director of Public Health to identify a replacement for John Mooney.

After a very positive response from Aberdeen University regarding a representative of young people, discussion continues to identify someone to take on the role.

Six meetings took place in 2024 – February (AGM), May, June (Annual Development Meeting), August, September (Joint Meeting with the Licensing Board) and December.

Attendance continues at approximately 9 members attending each meeting.

Key areas of Local Licensing Forum discussion during 2024

1. Trends in alcohol use

One of the trade representatives on the Forum provided an insight into changing alcohol use in the City and noted that times are very challenging for the trade with footfall remaining lower than pre-Covid levels. Changes in drinking habits for young people, the older population going out earlier in the day and cost of living pressures mean that the trade has needed to develop very creative ways to maintain their business. Transport (lack of taxis and night time buses) is another significant factor influencing trade.

2. LSO presentation and discussion

The LSOs provided a presentation outlining their role and the kind of issues they deal with. The LSOs noted that they make every effort to be proactive in order to manage risk related to on-sales.

3. Development session

Gavin Wright who is Service Manager for Recovery Services at Alcohol and Drugs Action provided a presentation and led a discussion about alcohol use in Aberdeen. A wide range of issues were touched on – numbers of premises selling alcohol, hospital admissions and deaths related to alcohol use, ADA client profile information (age, gender, postcode) and costs associated with alcohol use for NHS, social care and police.

Key messages included in the Forum update to the Licensing Board were

- A significant proportion of clients seen by ADA are from the following postcodes - AB11 (Ferryhill, Torry), AB16 (Mastrick, Northfield, Middlefield), AB 24 (Woodside, Tillydrone, Seaton)
- It is well known that increased availability of alcohol is linked with increased harm yet there are increasing number of off sales premises, an increase in premises which will deliver alcohol, and increased online sales.
- Online sales present a particular risk because the consequences may be hidden for longer than other types of consumption.
- Low and no alcohol products – there are mixed views about whether or not these are helpful in reducing alcohol consumption.
- There is a slightly higher rate of alcohol consumption in Aberdeen, above the Scottish Chief Medical Officer Guidelines, when compared to the rest of Scotland – 25% in Aberdeen, 23% rest of Scotland

4. Success Criteria

The Forum recognises the importance of being able to assess their impact in a quantifiable way. As a result, a draft paper was prepared outlining measurable components of both the costs of alcohol use and the benefits. Long- and short-term considerations were included and both financial and human factors. This draft paper was the focus of discussion at the Joint Meeting of the Licensing Board and the Forum in September 2024.

In summary,

a) Measurable benefits included

- Income for the City
- Tourism increases
- Night time economy and general vibrancy of the City
- Opportunities for employment

b) Measurable costs included

- Distribution of alcohol harms across City eg postcodes of those seeking support from services – NHS, agencies providing support eg Alcohol and Drugs Action
- Incidents of violence and abuse
- Hospital admissions where alcohol is a factor
- Number of children on the child protection register where parental drinking was identified as a concern

c) Other relevant measures

- Density, distribution and trends across city of venues of operating nightclubs, bars and off-sales premises.
- Map of density of off-sales venues overlaid on postcodes of population experiencing alcohol harm.
- Volume of home deliveries

5. Annual Functions Report

Discussion has continued regarding the Forum recommendations relating to the Annual Functions Report. These recommendations were aimed at making the Annual Functions Report more engaging and informative. However, while the recommendations had been approved by the Licensing Board it was noted that implementation of the recommendations is severely limited by current IT systems

6. ELEPHANT Study

The ELEPHANT study (Evaluating Later or Expanded Premises Hours for Alcohol in the Night Time Economy) has been underway in Glasgow and Aberdeen and the Forum continues to maintain contact with Professor Niamh Fitzgerald who is leading the study. A number of Forum members attended a meeting in Stirling in March 2024 where interim findings were discussed. A final report is still awaited.

7. National Network of Licensing Forums

There have been no meetings of the National Licensing Forum Network during 2024 but the Forum Chair maintains regular contact with the Scottish Government Justice Department. We were asked by the SG Justice Department to feed back our views on how they could support Local Licensing Forums. Our recommendations were

- to support a Scotland wide way of measuring the success of Forums
- to explore economic and tourism impact related to licensing

- to support the development of IT systems which will assist local data gathering.
- to ensure effective communication in relation to on-going and upcoming National Campaigns to allow the Forum to engage

Looking ahead to 2025

Workplan for 2025

At the Forum meeting on 3rd December a programme of work was agreed.

- a) Survey results relating to footfall in the City and trends relating to hospitality.
- b) Exploration of relevant alcohol harm data resulting from discussion with the City Council Data Insights Team.
- c) NHS data relating to alcohol use and harms.
- d) Discussion of ELEPHANT Study conclusions.

Insights and conclusions will be shared with the Licensing Board as part of our updates and at the annual Joint Meeting.

Elaine Mottram, Chair
February 2025