

ABERDEEN CITY Licensing Report 2024-2025



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Keeping people safe

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Foreword

It gives me great pleasure to provide the Annual Licensing Report for 2024/25, in accordance with Section 12(A) of the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005.

Throughout the last year I have been committed to improving confidence amongst our communities by working in partnership with a focus on prevention, early intervention and proactivity. This supports our broader 2030 vision of safer communities, less crime, supported victims and a thriving work force.

In respect of Licensing, I recognise that success can only be achieved in collaboration with the 32 local authorities across Scotland. Along with contribution from many other associated national and local partners, this collaborative working ensures support for the licensed trade while also preventing alcohol fuelled violence, disorder and anti-social behaviour. Our joint campaigns which aim to protect children and young persons from harm will continue.

In the year ahead, our approach will remain focused on prevention and collaboration to ensure high standards of service delivery. I will continue to encourage officers and staff to engage with licensed premises and take relevant and proportionate action where appropriate to ensure licensing standards are maintained in the interest of the safety of the people of Scotland.

I would like to take this opportunity to once again thank our local partnerships for their contribution to maintaining high standards and driving improvement where necessary within the Licensed Trade for the benefit of the communities we all serve.



Chief Constable Jo Farrell

Police Scotland Licensing Overview –

The Violence Prevention and Licensing Co-ordination Unit (VPLCU) sits within the National Policing Together Division and have staff based across the force. The department has overall responsibility for determining and delivering national licensing strategy and policy, providing advice, guidance and support to divisional licensing teams and undertaking other specialist functions.

The VPLCU is a specialist department which consists of a small team of officers. The officers within the unit work with divisional licensing teams and partner agencies to help shape policy and strategy around the police licensing function. They provide advice to police licensing practitioners, operational officers, supervisors and policing commanders.

The VPLCU seek to ensure that legislation governing the sale and supply of alcohol is applied consistently across the country and all opportunities are taken to stop the illegal or irresponsible sale, supply or consumption of alcohol with the intention of preventing and reducing crime and disorder.

During 2024/2025, from a licensing perspective, our particular focus was on the following;

- Scrutiny of the serious incidents of violence, disorder and antisocial behaviour linked to licensed premises.
- Delivering and promoting campaigns which seek to address issues arising from the consumption of alcohol, particularly in relation to young persons and in the context of the night-time economy.
- Governance and ongoing development of the National ICT Licensing System, known as “Inn Keeper”, to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of liquor and civic licensing administration and management. Police Scotland continue to work on upgrading the National ICT system to ensure compliance with GDPR legislation.

Each of the 13 Local Policing Divisions have a licensing team responsible for the day-to-day management of licensing administration, complying with statutory requirements as well as addressing any issues that may arise within licensed premises in their local area.

LICENSING BOARD AREA

The Aberdeen City Licensing Board area is policed by North East Division

Chief Superintendent Kate Stephen is the Local Police Commander who has the responsibility for all day-to-day policing functions.

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Additional officers holding responsibility for licensing within the area of A Division are as follows:

Head of Department: Superintendent Jason Carrigan - Partnerships

Chief Inspector George Nixon - Partnerships, Preventions and Interventions.

Inspector Susan Taylor - Licensing and Events

Sergeant Neil Grant, 3 Police Constables and 4 Divisional Licensing Administrators.

Local Policing Priorities

Following our public consultation process, the policing priorities for Northeast Division, as set out in our Local Policing Plan are as follows;

- Antisocial Behaviour, Violence and Disorder
- Acquisitive Crime
- Protecting Vulnerable People
- Road Safety and Road Crime
- Serious Organised Crime
- Counter Terrorism and Domestic Extremism

In response to the local policing priorities, we will continue to address violence, focusing on alcohol related violence, as well as dealing with disorder and antisocial behaviour related to the sale and consumption of alcohol.

OPERATION OF THE LICENSING (SCOTLAND) ACT 2005

The North East Division Licensing Team is located across the division in Aberdeen, Inverurie, Elgin and Stonehaven. All staff have a division wide remit and a working knowledge of all the areas covered.

The North East Division Licensing Team, supported by Community Policing Officers, has promoted the Police Service of Scotland's force priorities alongside the five licensing objectives, the overarching principles and aims of the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005.

The national economic downturn continues to have a notable impact upon the Licensing Trade, which is evident in the reduction of customers and the number of licensing related incidents dealt with by Police Scotland.

So for example, supporting the weekend policing deployments by providing current licensing intelligence weekly, allowing intelligence-based targeting of premises identified as problematic or subject to higher than average number of incidents involving police etc. Similarly, supporting Events and football/sport related deployments by pro-actively gathering intelligence in the build up to these policing operations, through active engagement with licensed premises and subsequent information sharing so that operation resource is targeted to the correct areas ie to the licensed premises we know

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will be busy. You could quote examples if you like in each LAC area, such as MacMoray, AFC higher cat football matches and Shire summer shows etc.

Premises Licences

In the year 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025, the following applications were received and processed by the police licensing team for consideration of the Aberdeen Board.

Type of application	No.		No. of Police Representations/Objections	
Year	23-24	24-25	23-24	24-25
New/Provisional Premises Licence	20	13	5	0
Variations	71	54	19	7

Occasional and Extended Hours Licences

In the year 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, the following Occasional and Extended Hours Licences were processed by Police licensing team for consideration of the Aberdeen Board.

Type of application	No.		Granted		Refused		Withdrawn	
Year	23-24	24-25	23-24	24-25	23-24	24-25	23-24	24-25
Occasional/ Extended Hours	468	397	468	392	0	1	0	4

Section 72 - Personal Licence Applications

In line with the legislation, the Divisional Licensing team will scrutinise convictions and the five licensing objectives. In general, if an applicant has no relevant convictions, the Police will not provide any representation or objection. If the applicant has relevant convictions, Police will either provide a representation confirming those convictions, or they will object to the granting of the licence, based on the nature of the conviction, and whether they believe the person to be 'fit and proper' to hold a licence. Where any query arises from any such application, a member of the team will seek to discuss the application with the applicant, or the applicant's agent, to ensure that responses to the Board by means of representation or objection are considered, reasonable and proportionate.

In the year 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, the following applications were received and processed by the police licensing team for consideration of the Board.

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Type of application	No.		Granted		Refused		Withdrawn	
Year	23-24	24-25	23-24	24-25	23-24	24-25	23-24	24-25
Personal Licences	275	286	274	286	0	0	1	0

Monitoring

Reviewing incidents on, or connected to, licensed premises is a key part of our day-to-day business.

Community based Police Officers are encouraged and expected to routinely visit licensed premises within their area. Aberdeen City benefits from a dedicated Weekend Policing Plan to support the night-time economy.

Within the reporting period, there were 1815 inspections (visits) to licensed premises within Aberdeen City recorded on the Innkeeper system. This is a decrease of 1160 inspections from the previous reporting year.

Any Police Officer who attends an incident at a licensed premises is expected to submit a concise report via the Innkeeper system, particularly when the incident involves violence, disorder, anti-social behaviour, drunkenness, drug misuse, underage drinking, breaches of licensing legislation or any other matter that might impact on public safety.

Within the reporting period, there were 108 incidents connected to licensed premises within Aberdeen City recorded on the Innkeeper system. This is a decrease of 97 incidents from the previous reporting year.

The information obtained may show a causal link between the operation of the premises and the incident. An incremental intervention process allows for issues to be addressed quickly and effectively at an early stage. This includes a low level 'interaction' which may involve a discussion between the Police and the premises management and/or licence holder. The level of engagement from within the Aberdeen City licensed trade is very good and in many instances this approach reduces recurrence or escalation.

You will note the decrease in the number of inspections of licensed premises carried out by Police Officers. This is in response to changing demands across the Division and is reflected in the decrease in recorded incidents within licensed premises. The allocation of our resources is intelligence led, and Officers will be directed to areas that best serve our community. Police Scotland is committed to monitoring licensed premises, and we will continue to work with the trade and other partners to provide a safe environment for the public.

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Premises may become 'monitored' with closer attention being paid to any incidents occurring there. This is often undertaken in conjunction with tasked, supportive visits to the premises by uniformed Police Officers.

However, where necessary, the staged process allows for more formal intervention to support premises where the need for support has been identified. A premises licence holder and the premises management may be asked to meet with the Police when concerns will be discussed. This will often involve an agreed action plan being put in place, with a reasonable time scale for completion.

The most common example of an agreed 'action' is refresher training of staff covering their responsibilities including the sale of alcohol to underage or intoxicated persons, 'Challenge 25' and the general terms and conditions of the licence held.

Should the intervention stage not bring about the necessary changes, or be otherwise unsuccessful, the next stage is the submission of a premises licence review application for the consideration of the Licensing Board.

Over the reporting period there were 2 premises in Aberdeen City that were subject to a period of monitoring or intervention.

The team enjoys a strong working relationship with the Local Authority Licensing Standards Officers. Both teams meet on a regular basis to share information and regularly conduct joint visits to licensed premises, on both a pro-active and reactive basis.

North East Division Licensing Team is represented on the Local Licensing Forum and it works alongside other groups and organisations to jointly improve local licensing issues.

Partnership working between the Police, the Licensing Standards Officers and the premises licence holders and premises' management teams allows us to resolve any issues and often prevents the necessity to bring matters to the attention of the Licensing Board by premises licence review application.

In the reporting period there were no premises licence review applications or Closure Order applications submitted to the Board.

The North East Division Licensing Team also has a system in place which monitors certain conduct of Personal Licence holders. Should such a licence holder be charged with any offence, this is brought to the attention of the team. Should the circumstances appear to be inconsistent with any of the five licensing objectives, consideration will be given to bringing this to the attention of the Board by way of a personal licence review. In addition, should an individual be convicted of a relevant offence, this will undergo the same scrutiny.

We continue to support our frontline colleagues in relation to events, by pro-actively gathering intelligence through our active engagement with licensed premises and the subsequent sharing of information which enables operational resources to be

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targeted to priority areas. These events can include footballing operations at Pittodrie Stadium and Festive city centre operations.

PREVENTING THE SALE OR SUPPLY OF ALCOHOL TO CHILDREN OR YOUNG PEOPLE

Aberdeen City attracts a lower number of reports of underage drinking or youth congregation involving alcohol in comparison to other towns and cities across Scotland.

Where a person under 18 years of age is found to be either under the influence of alcohol, drinking alcohol in a public place or in possession of alcohol, the Police Officer involved will take all appropriate steps to ascertain the source of the alcohol.

Where information that cannot be fully evidenced is received regarding the sale of alcohol to children and young persons, in accordance with the national guidance contained within the 'Alcohol Toolkit', letters will be sent to licensed premises in the area reminding them of their responsibilities and requesting extra vigilance.

If such concerns were to continue in respect of specific premises, then other operational strategies would be considered.

There was one reported case of adults buying alcohol for children within Aberdeen City during the reporting period.

There were no reported cases of alcohol being purchased by a person under the age of 18 within Aberdeen City during the reporting period.

In support to the Protection of Children from Harm licensing objective, applications for premises licences and variations to premises licences come under close scrutiny often resulting in the submission of letters of objection, or more commonly, of representation, in which the imposition of conditions in respect of on sales, with regard to the times and terms in which children can be on such premises, will be recommended by the Chief Constable.

TACKLING SERIOUS AND ORGANISED CRIME

Many of the processes and procedures involved in licensing applications are carried out to guard against Serious Organised Crime Groups (SOCG) infiltrating the licensed trade in any way. There are a number of these groups operating within Aberdeen City, of whom Police Scotland continually monitor, disrupt and take enforcement action against. This scrutiny is further enhanced with the nation-wide Innkeeper system. This database contains details of all liquor and civic licences for every Division in Scotland and enhances our information sharing in respect of premises and people in the licensed trade as they move about the country and work in multiple venues.

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If such an SOCG were able to gain a foothold in licensed premises this would afford such groups with a seemingly legitimate income stream, which could be no more than a veneer for other criminal activities such as money laundering, tax evasion, drug and people trafficking and other dishonest activities.

Many of the procedures currently carried out by the North East Divisional Licensing Team, particularly in relation to new premises licences and the transfer of premises licences are done to ensure complete financial transparency and to ensure there are no business related irregularities which may be indicative of SOCG involvement.

Frequent and directed Police attendance and contact with licensed premises also increases the opportunity for irregularities to be identified or reported.

As part of this, the North East Division Licensing Team regularly liaise with Police Interventions staff who are aware of SOCG activity within the Division to ensure that applicants are not affiliated in any way to such groups, before responding to the Licensing Board.

The consistent high profile approach and interaction with licensed premises in direct correlation with the aforementioned close scrutiny in the application process should reinforce the work carried out to maintain this position.

PROPOSED ACTIVITY FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

Over the forthcoming year, North East Division Licensing Team, in conjunction with Community Policing Teams, will work alongside licensed premises, to ensure that these premises are adhering to the spirit of the legislation and operate in a manner that supports the five licensing objectives. We aspire to increasing our number of supportive visits to licensed premises and hope to see a continued reduction in the number of incidents taking place on licensed premises.

We will continue to work closely with the Aberdeen City Council Licensing Team, for example, sharing information and joint premises inspections. We are also seeking to strengthen our existing relationships with the Security Industry Agency and our colleagues in the NHS.

We will ensure our people have the skills and knowledge to enable them to target and reduce violent crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour and will work with our partners to develop and deliver a collaborative approach to prevent these issues.

The Divisional Licensing Team will continue to work closely with our National Licensing Policy Unit to ensure the local delivery of policing services by ensuring a consistent approach is taken in tackling alcohol related violence, disorder and anti-social behaviour linked to licensed premises.

It is intended that our involvement and participation in public safety campaigns will continue. We are actively encouraging premises to partake in our 'Bystander' training aimed at protecting vulnerable people.

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We aim to work closely with the licensed trade, seeking to improve licensing standards in premises by continuing the proactive approach adopted by the Divisional Licensing Team and maintaining a robust inspection policy throughout the Division to identify any potential shortcomings with appropriate reporting to the Licensing Board as required. In partnership with the Licensing Standards Officers, we have produced a newsletter which will be distributed to all licensed premises in the city. The newsletter will contain advice and direction to assist licensees.

By working with established partnerships but particularly with the licensed trade, we hope to continue to see a reduction in alcohol-related crime, particularly violence, whether perpetrated within licensed premises, public places or private spaces. To conclude we would like to thank you for your continued support, and we look forward to a successful 2025/2026.