

Proposal for a Controlled Drinking Area for the Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham: Local Police Report.

Introduction

The full roll out of Safer Neighbourhood Teams across the borough of Hammersmith and Fulham has presented local police with a real opportunity to engage with local people and listen to their problems. It has also meant that the already strong links the police have had with local partners have strengthened still further and there are many example of really good work currently being practised. One excellent piece of work is that around the street drinkers. Details are provided below of some of the work that has happened and continues to happen. There is a realisation however that the street drinkers and the community problems and tensions that they bring are not going away despite this good work, in fact the problems are getting worse. This has resulted in some 'joined up thinking' among partners as to what steps need now to be taken to build upon the good work done so far. A borough wide Controlled Drinking Area (CDA) is what the local police believe will help with this problem.

History

The London borough of Hammersmith and Fulham has a long standing street drinking community. Historically these groups of drinkers have remained in certain areas of the borough causing local problems of noise, disorder and littering. The groups have until recently comprised predominantly white British males. During the last eighteen to twenty four months there has been a second group of drinkers emerging. This group are comprised of accessional workers from Eastern Europe, mainly Poland. Many of this group come to England for work, they will come to Hammersmith and Fulham because of long standing cultural links with the area but many will not find the work they seek or only do so on a casual basis. With no where to go but money available to them many are turning to drinking alcohol. They frequent the boroughs parks, open spaces and town centres. This group is rapidly growing and together with the original group of street drinkers now present a borough wide problem.

Current work / Projects

The area in and around Vanston Place in Fulham has had a localised CDA for the past two years. We are currently awaiting an evaluation on it's success but it is known that when it was first implemented there was no local Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) and therefore enforcement of the Area was purely down to response team officers who could not give the area the attention it needed. More recently now that SNT's are borough wide, enforcement has been easier but it has resulted in a displacement of the problem.

The area of Ravenscourt Park and the close environs have had a Dispersal Zone (DZ) in place for the past twelve months. This was implemented to help deal with the problems of large numbers of accessional workers gathering in the area initially seeking work on a day to day basis but all too often turning to drinking alcohol in the park area. The area is effectively policed by the Ravenscourt SNT however this can only be done when that team is on duty and forms one of many different duties that this SNT has. One of the inevitable effects of the

DZ has been displacement of the problem to neighbouring wards. For a short period of time the geographic area of the DZ was extended along King Street in Hammersmith, this extended the area in which police could use their powers but displaced the problem further.

If there is an epicentre to this borough issue then it is Brook Green in Hammersmith. A similar situation exists in Shepherds Bush Green but Brook Green has many more residential properties and schools in close proximity and the numbers of complaints from members of the public to police and the local council are highest from this area. Recognising the issues here, police together with the Community Safety Unit from the council, Outreach workers and the local Parks Police have run and continue to run days of action in the area. These involve a concerted effort to engage with the street drinkers, attempt to deal with some of their issues and for police to deal with any anti-social behaviour and by their presence provide a reassurance for the local community. Two of these operations were run last year for three and then two days respectively. Now that we have full SNT cover it has been possible to build in a day a fortnight to concentrate specifically on Brook Green.

The Scope of the Problem

Proposals for CDA's in various locations across the borough have been suggested for some time. In the experience of the police in attempting to tackle this issue it has become apparent that the only effective way to move our work forward is to request a borough wide approach to the problem. To provide a brief indication of how widespread the problem has become I have broken down the borough ward by ward to present the situation as it stands at this time.

College Park and Old Oak. A controlled drinking area in the neighbouring borough of Ealing has seen a small but growing number of drinkers being displaced across the borough boundary into the northern part of our borough, particularly around Savoy Circus. Wormwood Scrubbs itself is not affected at present but should this area be excluded from the proposed area there is every reason to suspect that there will be displacement from all sides into this area.

Shepherds Bush Green. This area has one of the original entrenched groups of drinkers on the Green itself. The problem is worse in the summer months in terms of numbers of drinkers and also complaints received due to the increased number of people using the area.

Wormholt and White City. Wormholt Park itself is again one of the historic areas where local street drinkers congregate. In recent months there has been a displacement of Polish street drinkers to this area also. Tends to be more of a seasonal issue but it is anticipated that it will now become an all year round issue now the polish have discovered this area.

Askew. Small pockets of street drinkers found in both Wendell Park and Cathnor Park. Again as a result of displacement from the Ravenscourt area.

Ravenscourt. One of the worst affected areas on the borough. Due to the cultural centre for the polish community historically being in this area it has been a natural draw for the accessional workers. This has led to a huge increase in numbers of people to the area, many find work but many do not. This has led to not only a big rise in street drinking but also a huge rise in persons sleeping rough in the area. As highlighted earlier there is some good work being done by the local SNT but it is limited and does cause displacement.

Addison. This ward shares the Brook Green problem with Avonmore and Brook Green ward with the north of the Green being within the Addison area. Again the history and the extent of the problem together with current activity are detailed above. There has been a clear displacement and growth of numbers of street drinkers within this ward in the smaller park areas of both Loris and Melrose Gardens. In addition the north section of Shepherds Bush Road is frequented by the drinkers, several of the junctions having regular congregations of people present.

Avonmore and Brook Green. The partnership activity on Brook Green periodically pushes the problem to the area known as Little Brook Green, this has been compounded by the removal of many of the benches from Brook Green itself. Of late and quite common during the summer months, Brook Green itself does attract a number of young people, some over spilling from when the Hammersmith Palais closes but many are believed to be local young people, attracted to the park as it is quite well lit, it remains unfenced and therefore open to the public at all times and it is a safer open space than neighbouring Shepherds Bush Green.

Hammersmith Broadway. As well as the few street drinkers and beggars that one would expect to find in the busiest town centre on the borough there is a displacement to this ward from the Ravenscourt DZ. This has been addressed in the past by extending the area but this just displaces the problem further. Many of the before mentioned Polish rough sleepers and drinkers are to be found in Furnival Gardens and in the warmer weather along the river.

NDC Area. Has had some drinkers displaced from the Vanston Place CDA but has its own more local problem in Normand Park.

Munster. Fulham cemetery attracts both rough sleepers and street drinkers.

Palace Riverside. Bishops Park has recently started to attract street drinkers.

Fulham Reach. Both Fulham and Hammersmith cemetery together with Frank Banfield Park.

Fulham Town. Historic street drinking problems around the Vanston Place part of the town. As a result local CDA put in place two years ago. Problem in many respects has been designed out as benches have been cleared away and the area generally improved. There has however been displacement and today many frequent the car parking and lorry turning area behind Waitrose supermarket. At time of writing still await the analysis around the effectiveness of this local CDA.

Parsons Green and Walham. Some street drinkers on Eel Brook Common, did suffer from displacement from local CDA as above. Parsons Green itself does attract a large number of young people in the summer months especially, alcohol often forming a part of their recreation.

Sands End. Some evidence of street drinking in South Park.

General comment about scope of problem. This report thus far has concentrated on street drinkers per se. It is worthy of note two other features of this borough that impact upon street drinking. One is the geographic nature of the borough, which creates three quite separate town centre areas. Each has its own, vibrant night time economy. The geographic spread can cause issues for local police. There is a link between alcohol and violent crime as will be seen below. The other issue is the unique position this borough has with regard to football. We have three high profile football clubs on the borough. As professional as these clubs are and as good as most of our licensed premises are there do remain some issues with regard to persons drinking in the street on match days. The additional powers conferred by a CDA would be helpful in addressing some of these issues.

Intelligence

The impact of street drinking has an affect on a number of police related matters. It is not always easy to quantify or draw conclusions from some of the data available. Police calls to disturbances for example can mean any number of things and it is not easy to break this down further to identify when alcohol or specifically alcohol consumed on the street comes into play. It is therefore best to take an overview of the data provided to get the complete picture.

Public Order and Anti-Social Behaviour Calls to Hammersmith and Fulham

July 2005 – June 2006

Description	FF	FH	FS	Total
=====	=====	=====	=====	=====
DISTURBANCE IN PUBLIC PLACE	1926	1780	1614	5320
DISTURBANCE IN LICENSED PREMISES	78	90	58	226
COMMUNITY PROBLEMS	312	224	203	739
DRUNKENNESS	489	633	440	1562
GRAND TOTAL	2805	2727	2315	7847

July 2004 – June 2005

Description	FH	FS	FF	Total
=====	=====	=====	=====	=====
DISTURBANCE IN PUBLIC PLACE	1856	1739	2639	6234
DISTURBANCE IN LICENSED PREMISES	62	53	106	221
COMMUNITY PROBLEMS	216	178	305	699
DRUNKENNESS	568	391	749	1708
GRAND TOTAL	2702	2361	3656	8719

What is apparent from the data shown in these tables is the sheer volume of calls over a two-year period to ‘drunkenness’ and ‘disturbances in public places’. These calls represent a considerable demand on police resources.

Street drinkers 27/07/2005 – 27/07/2006

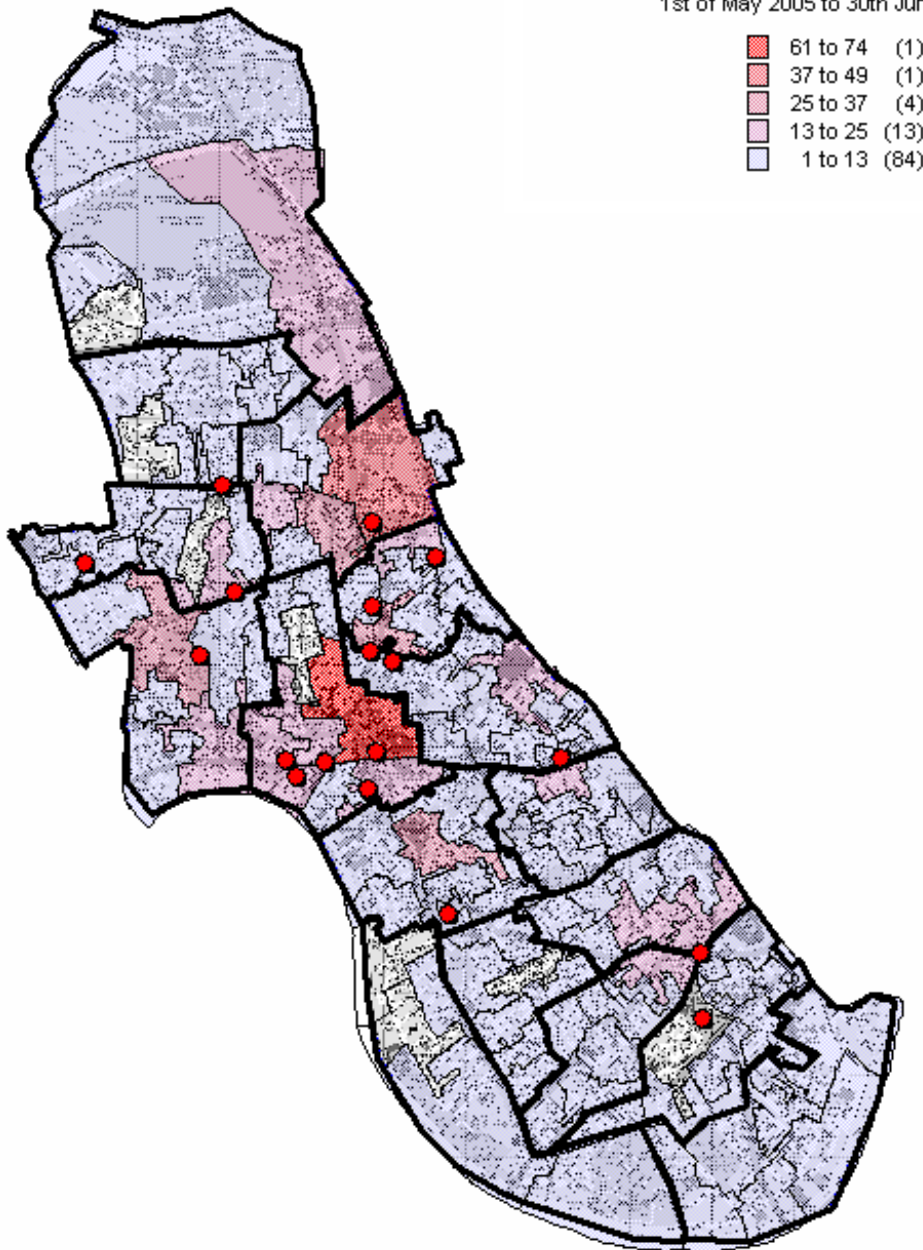
Data collection carried out thus far from mid-December 2005 to 27 July 2006 on all alcohol-related incidents on the street in FH

Offenders:

Offence	Incidence
ABH	1
Assault	3
Brook Green Street drinkers	5
Disturbance	1
Drunk and disorderly	15
Drunk and racially abusive	3
Drunk at a sporting event	2
Drunken nuisance	1
Drunken argument	1
Drunk in a public place	4
Intent to rob (probable)	1
Lovers' tiff	1
Possession of offensive weapon	1
Public Order offence	5
Shepherd's Bush Street drinkers	1
Theft	3
Unconscious on the street	2

The table above is not yet complete. It represents the analysis done so far in relation to a search under the categories shown. As and when further data is analysed this will be added to this table.

London Ambulance Service all alcohol related incidents
1st of May 2005 to 30th June 2006



We were fortunate enough to have access to the London Ambulance Service database, which has resulted in the map shown above. It is unfortunate that we can not from this discern which incidents occurred in open spaces but it does nevertheless show how widespread the problem is in relation to alcohol.

Dispersal Zone Monitoring Form

Area Covered: Ravenscourt Park Ward

Dates covered by this monitoring form: 1st – 31st May 2006

Named Officer/s completing the sheet: PS 44FH GOLD

Monitoring Questions	Monitoring Answers
How many patrol hours per day are spent patrolling the dispersal zone?	2
How many Police staff in total have been involved?	6
On how many occasions have groups been asked to leave the dispersal zone (please provide a figure)?	13
Have there been any occasions where groups have refused to disperse and police have had to make an arrest?	No
If so, how many and when?	0
Numbers of referrals to Adult Services.	0
Numbers of referrals to Youth Services.	0
Has there been any significant displacement to areas outside of the Dispersal Zone? If so where?	Brook Green has seen a change in drinkers and some are Poles, however there is no proof that they have come from the DZ. It is believed that some may have been displaced to Ealing.
Number of adults dispersed – 18 above?	Estimate 13 groups of 10-20, say 195.
Number of young people dispersed?	0
Has there been any feedback from the public about the order? If so please give an indication of the feedback.	Yes when we are on duty the numbers fall dramatically.
Has there been a decrease in asb in the zone: Your perspective-	Yes. The dispersal zone gives police powers to disperse groups before they have time to cause ASB or get drunk. It is a good ASB preventer.
Supported by figures-	Not recorded by the Met
Ethnicity, gender and ages of each person escorted home.	Ethnicity-0 Gender-0 Age-0
Ethnicity, gender and age of each person arrested.	Ethnicity- 0 Gender- 0 Age-0

I have included the table above as an example of some of the work already being undertaken. The data represents a fairly typical month and it can be seen the numbers of people that are being moved. The comments regarding displacement are interesting in that it is believed there is some displacement but no direct evidence to suggest Brook Green is experiencing an influx of people from the Ravenscourt area. I believe that when the DZ covered King Street itself then the displacement was more apparent to Brook Green.

One other piece of research not included here but of relevance is that relating to violent crime on the borough. A recent operation in the run up to the football world cup saw violent crime reduced on the borough by 11%. This was due to a police led but partnership focussed operation, which included visiting licensed premises, high visibility patrolling and a concentration on the known 'hot spots'. It is anticipated that by making the borough a CDA this will have an effect upon violent crime too.

Displacement of Problem

A common theme throughout this report has been the displacement issue. Something that is inevitable with any police activity whether we are dealing with crime issues or anti social behaviour or social issues. Tackling the street drinking problems is no exception to this and this is the principle reason for supporting the proposal that any CDA on this borough should be borough wide. Displacement will still occur when police tackle, directly, any street drinking activity but the additional powers that would be available enable officers to confiscate open containers and to, if necessary follow drinkers and exercise powers anywhere on the borough. There will be no part of the borough where anti social behaviour that arises from street drinking will be tolerated or be able to be practised.

Managing Expectations

This aspect is key. A borough wide CDA for Hammersmith and Fulham will not eliminate the street drinking problem on this borough. The police will not be putting more resources into the problem. What it will provide are more options for local police and police community support officers to deal with the problems. As mentioned at the opening to this report, every ward now has an SNT. This is a considerable resource. If granted there will also be some fundamental training for the boroughs twenty-four hour response teams who are also expected to play a key role in enforcement of the CDA.

Conclusion

I would conclude that the way forward in dealing with street drinking problems in the borough of Hammersmith and Fulham is the implementation of a borough wide CDA. The local police therefore fully support the local council in their application for this to be granted. In addition to the additional powers that would be granted to help enforce the CDA it does provide an opportunity for preventing the problem from getting worse. I would recommend advertising the fact as broadly as possible that this borough will not tolerate street drinking. This can be done through websites and reinforced at public meetings and would hopefully stem the flow of accessional workers to this borough.

Inspector Bill Heasman
02 August 2006
