

Notes from the Local Licensing Forums Best Practice Discussion Friday 2nd December 2011, Alcohol Focus Scotland

Review of action points identified by each person at July meeting and progress to date

Each person reminded the group of the action points they had identified for their Local Licensing Forum and gave a brief update on progress so far.

- Inquorate meetings - 1
 - Forum members were sent an email pointing out that the previous meetings had been inquorate and therefore business could not be progressed.
 - The two meetings following this email have been quorate.
- Inquorate meetings – 2
 - Have attracted new members to reinvigorate the Forum.
- Youth member
 - Engaged a new youth member through the Young Peoples Services.
- Lack of direction - 1
 - Two people have taken responsibility for setting the agenda, which now includes standing items. The structured agenda has helped to guide discussion and inform the agenda for the following meeting.
 - Will also invite experts in particular areas of interest to address the Forum.
- Lack of direction – 2
 - Introduced the West Dunbartonshire report that led to the overprovision assessment to members as an example of work being done by other Forums. Hope this will lead to further discussion and action by the Forum.

Identifying areas of difficulty and sharing good practice

- Communication between Board and Forum
 - Felt that one joint meeting per year was not enough
 - Discussed whether the Conveners of the Board and Forum could meet outwith the Joint meetings. Noted that this happens in at least one other area – Fife.
 - Post meeting note: as discussed at the July meeting, any recommendations made to the Licensing Board must clearly state what recommendation is being made and give the reasons why the Forum is making the recommendation. Language such as “The Forum is concerned about x” does not make it clear why the Forum believes there is a problem; it does not make it clear that the Forum is advising the Board to take action and does not make it clear what action the Forum is recommending to the Board.
- Membership and constitution of the Forum
 - Discussed the benefits of having a certain number of places per category (eg 2 residents, 2 trade) versus allowing people to ‘wear two hats’. Number of places per category allows an equal spread of members across the various bodies that should be represented: health, licensed trade, young people, etc, however if a member fits into more than one category – eg someone who is there as a resident but also works in the licensed trade - then this will lead to accusations of an imbalance in the Forum. Accepting that people have more than one interest allows the Forum to benefit from their experience and knowledge but makes it more difficult to show the balance of interests on paper.
 - Post meeting note: be aware that the licensed trade is only one category that should be represented on the Forum. If a Forum has places for one pub, one restaurant, one sports club, one off-sales and one nightclub then the category has 5 places on the Forum. Are there 5 places for residents, 5 for health/social work/education, 5 for young people, 5 for police? If not, then there is an imbalance.

- Several Forums have constitutions that allow members to send a replacement when they cannot attend.
- Several Forums have constitutions that state if a member has not attended the Forum for 2 (or 3) consecutive meetings, nor sent a replacement, then they will be removed from the membership.
- **Young people**
 - Several Forums amended their constitutions to allow persons under 18 to attend the Forum
 - Young people may require extra support to attend Forum meetings, eg a pre-meeting
 - In one area – West Lothian – they encourage a group of young people to attend the Forum in order to offer support to each other (safety in numbers). However they are limited to 2 official places – ie they have 2 votes. This works well in this area.
- **Agenda and reports**
 - Discussed the benefits of having standing items on the Forum agenda to give a clear structure to meetings. Noted that reports from the LSO and police would inform discussions on some of the 5 objectives: preventing crime and disorder; preventing public nuisance; securing public safety and possibly protecting children from harm. A further standing item must be included on health to cover the other objective: protecting and improving public health.
 - Noted that reports are more beneficial to members when they include a summary of issues and/or an overview of trends. Statistics by themselves are not very meaningful to those who are not experts in the subject.
- **“Alcohol: the Facts in Fife 2011”**
 - This report was shared as an example of good practice. In terms of good practice there was an agreement between the Licensing Board and Local Licensing Forum to do this work and to use the statistics. The information is organised by each of the 5 objectives which will make it easier for the Licensing Board to use it in their Statement of Licensing Policy. There are some summaries highlighting areas for members of the Board and Forum to prioritise. The intention is to do this piece of work each year to build up a picture of the trends in the areas. Also it is intended that gaps in information will be identified and better information will be able to be collected. It offers a good comparison to the West Dunbartonshire report to the Licensing Board in 2010 which gave comparisons and recommendations and informed the overprovision policy.

Next meeting

It was agreed that it would be useful to continue to meet and discuss progress and good practice. 6 monthly seemed to be a reasonable timescale. The date for the next meeting will be set nearer the time.