



London Borough of Islington: Alcohol Misuse

Alcohol is an important part of Islington’s thriving night time economy, which contributes to employment and economic development in the borough. However, Islington also experiences high rates of alcohol-specific and alcohol-related harm. Directors of Public Health can now use health data and evidence to challenge alcohol licence applications.

Islington’s public health team worked with colleagues in the licensing department, the Safer Islington Partnership, and the police to identify where public health data could support the effective implementation of licensing policy.

Islington created a tool to bring together several different alcohol-related indicators, including ward-based alcohol-specific hospital admissions data, local alcohol-related crime and violent crime statistics (from the Safer Islington Partnership), local alcohol-related ambulance callouts (from the GLA Safestats repository), and data on existing on and off-licensed premises in the borough. This enabled Islington to systematically and quickly assess licence applications against alcohol-related health harm, within the context of the location and density of existing licensed premises.

Where the evidence indicated that a representation at committee may be required, Islington discussed the application with colleagues in licensing and the police to ensure a co-ordinated approach. It used its data with published evidence on alcohol harm, density of licensed premises, and hours of sale to make representations. Public health then made representations at licensing committee.

To date, of the applications where public health contributed to representations, 13 licence applications were refused a licence, and two of the applications requesting a licence to serve alcohol 24-hours a day were granted, but with reduced hours of sale. Three of those that were refused were appealed; one appeal was withdrawn, one was not upheld and one was allowed with conditions. Where required, public health gave evidence at these appeals, which were heard at the local magistrate’s court.

The public health team is now using the tool within Camden, have shared with other public health teams, both within London and other regions, as well as having presented the approach at a London-wide alcohol licensing event.

“Directors of Public Health can use health data and evidence to challenge alcohol licence applications”

In April 2013, responsibility for public health was transferred to local authorities. This case study is part of a series highlighting the innovative work London local authorities have done to promote healthier lifestyles and reduce health inequalities since taking on this new role. For more information, email addicus.cort@londoncouncils.gov.uk

