

Licensing laws study

Crime and disorder has not been significantly affected by the introduction of more liberal licensing laws, according to a study by the Institute of Criminal Policy Research based at King's College, London.

The Licensing Act 2003, introduced in November 2005, abolished set licensing hours in England and Wales amid much controversy. Although its aim was specifically to address problems associated with late-night drinking, in the run-up to its implementation it was dubbed by some media as a drunkard's charter, with concern about the impact on public health and the effects on crime and disorder. The Home Office set up a multi-strand evaluation focusing largely on the Act's impact on crime and disorder, with elements including:

- A statistical exercise covering 30 police forces in England and Wales
- A national telephone survey of police licensing officers
- Findings from the British Crime Survey (BCS) Night Time Economy module covering periods before and after implementation
- Detailed case studies of the experience of five towns and cities (Birmingham, Blackpool, Croydon, Guildford and Nottingham)

The study has shown a one per cent fall in recorded incidents involving violence, criminal damage and harassment, and a fall

of five per cent in serious violent crimes. However, the timing of incidents has changed, with a one per cent rise in the overall number of incidents occurring between 1800 and 0600 and a steep rise in the small minority of incidents occurring in the small hours - 0300 or later, with the peak time for serious violent crime shifting forward by about an hour.

The 30-force survey showed an overall seven per cent increase in recorded harassment offences in the year after the change but this can be interpreted as a result of the deployment of new police powers such as the penalty notice for disorder (PND), a tool to tackle low level offending and anti-social behaviour, including drunken and rowdy behaviour.

And according to the BCS Night Time Economy module there was no change following the introduction of the Act in the proportion of people feeling unsafe in town centres at night, or in the proportion of people witnessing drunken anti-social behaviour in town centres.

Overall, in the first year of the new licensing regime problems of crime and disorder did not increase and the five case study sites showed little change. Violent crime fell by three per cent - this masked increases in three sites offset by falls in the other two. Calls to the police either did not change or showed significant reductions. The majority of residents in all five sites thought alcohol-related crime was stable or declining,

while generally, people working in the night-time economy and those involved in its regulation thought the same. For more information on the evaluation study go to:

www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk

Trapped boot has fatal consequences

An underlying cause of the recent fatality on a full barrier CCTV surveillance level crossing in Colchester, England, appears to lie with pedestrians not respecting the lowered barriers and cutting across in the seconds before the train arrives. On this occasion it went horribly wrong when a young woman's boot became trapped in the flange-way gap in the highway surface necessary to allow trains to run safely over the level crossing.

Flange-way gaps are a topic of interest to railways around the world as they have recognised the potential for wheel chairs, cycles and, as shown at Colchester, pedestrians to become trapped. Indeed, this issue was the subject of a workshop at the Seventh International Level Crossing Symposium held at Monash University in Australia in February 2002. To date, there is no effective solution, which allows both the passage of trains and addresses the hazard to which some level crossing users are exposed.

However, the trapped boot fatality is another tragic reminder of the consequences that can occur when level crossing users ignore the instructions for the safe use of level crossings.

Level crossing upgrades flow from a double fatality

Community action that raised thousands of dollars following the deaths of two brothers at a level crossing in the US has led to the cash paying for safety upgrades. The level crossing in Johnson County, Indiana, was the site of a double fatality in February 2007 when Jake and Travis Findley were killed when the vehicle in which they were travelling was struck by a train operating on the Indiana Railroad in February 2007. The loss of these young lives was the catalyst for a community-wide fundraising effort, which in six months raised more than £310,000. The money is funding upgrades at the crossing where Jake and Travis died and two other crossings in the locality. Moving from crossings equipped with lights to crossings with lights and half-barriers highlights both the potential to reduce risk through community action and the substantially higher costs of level crossings in other countries where the cost can reach more than £1 million per crossing. Some of the money raised by the 'Jake and Travis Arms of Life Fund' is being set aside to fund user education under the auspices of Indiana Operation Lifesaver, recognising that engineered solutions alone cannot change behaviours.

Train driver sues suicide victim's family

A driver of a train that killed a Queensland businessman is suing the suicide victim's estate for negligence. Executive Greg Maddock, aged 50, dived in front of a train at a Brisbane train station

in September 2004. Now, the man who was driving the train that hit Mr Maddock is seeking AUS \$400,000 in damages. Paul Jackson, aged 39, was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder after the incident and still requires psychological treatment from time to time. His lawyer, Laura Neil, said Mr Jackson has not been able to return to work as a train driver, a job he had held for 15 years. Documents filed in the Queensland Supreme Court state that it was Mr Maddock's duty "to conduct himself with reasonable care to avoid causing injury to others within the foreseeable range of his actions." Mr Jackson is seeking \$70,000 in general damages, more than \$242,000 in future economic loss, more than \$28,000 in past economic loss and the remainder in special damages for medical and psychological treatment and loss of superannuation.

US railroads honoured for suicide prevention work

The Association of American Railroads (AAR) and its members have been honoured for their work on suicide prevention, receiving an 'Allies for Action' award from the Suicide Prevention Action Network (SPAN, USA).

"The single largest cause of fatalities on the railroads is trespassing on railroad property and many of those trespassers are tragically attempting suicide," said Edward Hamberger, president and chief executive officer of the AAR. "By partnering with organisations such as SPAN - a leader in the

area of suicide prevention - we hope to be able to significantly reduce the number of fatalities on railroad tracks."

The AAR accepted the award on behalf of its members, Amtrak, Anacostia and Pacific, BNSF (Burlington North Santa Fe) Railway, Canadian National, Canadian Pacific, CSX, Genesee and Wyoming, Iowa Interstate, Kansas City Southern, Metra, Norfolk Southern, Union Pacific, Vermont Railway and Wheeling and Lake Erie.

£160m youth programme

The government is making available £160 million for youth facilities and projects from May as a key strand in its Aiming High 10-year strategy for young people. The fund will be available for bidding at the beginning of May but all bids must demonstrate the participation of young people and genuine partnership between public and voluntary or private sector organisations. A core aim of the strategy is combat negative reports about young people, but also equip them with tools and facilities to keep them out of trouble and divert them away from negative behaviour. This is the broad thrust behind Network Rail's 'No Messin!' campaign and other initiatives by train operating companies such as Northern Rail, Southern Railway and South West Trains, so the Aiming High strategy should be of interest to practitioners involved in such initiatives. For more information go to the Department for Children, Schools and Families at www.dcsf.gov.uk

Audit highlights delay factors

The National Audit Office study into reducing passenger rail delays by better management of incidents has highlighted external factors including fatalities, trespass and vandalism along with adverse weather accounting for some 20% of train delay minutes in Great Britain. Although not the most numerous cause of train delay, externally generated incidents have an average delay of 45 minutes, which is around double that associated with infrastructure related faults.

By their very nature trespass, vandalism and fatalities on the railway require the involvement of the police and other emergency services adding to the complexity of the operational response particularly where the emergency services take control of the incident site. This is highlighted within the NAO report, which says that more could be done, as there is scope to build more effective relationships with other agencies.

View the NAO report at www.nao.org.uk/publications/nao_reports/0708/0708308.pdf

Workers assigned for ASB

The government's new Youth Taskforce Action Plan will require young people involved in anti-social behaviour to be assigned key workers as part of a £218 million crackdown. The action plan - which follows on from

work with problem families under the Respect Agenda banner - includes measures to create 20 junior family intervention projects over the next three years.

The projects are based on adult family intervention projects piloted across England in 53 areas - all of which have railways running through them. As in the adult plans, the junior projects will require young people to sign contracts agreeing to change their behaviour and assign them with key workers who will ensure they stick to their contract and get any support they need, such as drug treatment. If the 10 to 19-year-olds taking part refuse to improve their behaviour they could be given anti-social behaviour orders or individual support orders to make them co-operate.

For more information go to

www.dcsf.gov.uk

Teen drinking crackdown

Youngsters found drinking on the streets of North Tyneside are to be rounded up by police and taken home in a new alcohol strategy. The Child Safe initiative will involve officers patrolling the streets at weekends and homing in on underage drinkers who have been reported by the public. Officers will then take the children home, confiscate their alcohol and talk to their families about the dangers of drinking. A separate team will then write to the family offering advice and

support. The initiative also involves working with partners to raise awareness of the dangers of drinking while pregnant, and more work by Trading Standards officers to catch shops selling alcohol to under-18s.

Confidential reporting

March 31st, 2008 saw Canadian Pacific Railroad's Chicago Service Unit start accepting confidential - or as they would say in the USA close call - reports from front line staff having safety concerns. This, the second pilot scheme in the USA, builds on the first five year pilot scheme at North Platte, Nebraska, on Union Pacific territory which has been operational since February 1st, 2007. In turn these applications can be seen to have built on the foundations laid by the British CIRAS system which was presented at a joint regulator - employer - trades union workshop by Aidan Nelson, now with CSP, in Baltimore in April 2003.

Keep in touch...

If you have any news to share, details of an event you want to highlight, or want further information on Community Safety Partnerships Ltd contact suenelson@comsafetypartners.com or aidannelson@comsafetypartners.com