

# National Doorwatch

## General Safety & 1-man door

### Survey

### Interim Report

### June 2011



## Executive Summary

Earlier in the year National Doorwatch (NDW) were asked by the SIA to conduct research to address the following objectives.

- To establish/identify current thinking across the door supervision sector on the regulatory regime, including majority and minority views
- To identify the factors that influence opinion of those working in the sector
- To advise how the SIA can best consult with the sector on the way forward for a new regulatory regime
- To suggest ideas for consultation methods that would gain the highest responses (e.g. communication channels, frequency, feedback etc).
- To identify methods of engagement that would not work
- To propose a workable solution and pilot which could bring together the views of frontline door supervisors, preferably in non-managerial positions.

Following on from this research there were a number of issues raised, which required a more in depth review. These issues included, amongst others;

- How did the SIA become viewed by door supervisors (DS) as a de-facto union?
- The relationship between DS, their employers, and the venue management
- The impact of accepted operating practice on safety, in regard to DS and the general public.

NDW recognised that safety is critical to the delivery of a prosperous, profitable, and sustainable Night-time Economy (NTE) in the Events & Leisure Sector (ELS). Therefore NDW sought to find existing research on matters relating to the issue of safety in the ELS. There appears to be little information in this area. The existing research is predominantly focused on managing the physical environment, people, assets, and profit, etc. The information which is available appears to be fragmented, and anecdotal, which meant NDW had to produce a baseline indicator of the current situation, against which future research could be bench-marked. Consequently, a survey was prepared with the intent of capturing quantitative and qualitative data.

The survey was conducted on-line using a combination of question styles. In all there were 484 respondents who started the survey. These were sifted through the use of questions and technological control to produce a total of 296 completed surveys (61%) The completions do deliver a representative cross-section of the door supervision sector in respect of the above conditions, and geographical locations.

The findings of this survey highlight a numbers of areas where the safety of DS and the General Public are put at risk. The most interesting of these was the fact that over 10% of DS, reported their decision to refuse or remove people exhibiting challenging behaviour had been over-ruled by the venue manager/owner. The consequences of this decision were 22 incidents of assault, which included 3 cases where people were glassed by the individual concerned. The reasons for over-

### 3

ruling a decision ranged from the aggressors friendship with the manager/owner, to the manager seeking increased sales, and/or they knew better than the DS as they were in charge.

With specific regard to DS who had experience of operating a one-man door policy, 69.4% reported they were expected to deal with all incidents, without any active support from the venues management and staff. DS reported that they were aware that members of management or staff held a DS licence at 40.7% of these venues. Additionally the fact that venues operated a 1-man door was also known to the Police, Local Authority in the around 60% of cases.

Where 1-man doors were in operation there was marked fall in the number of incidents a venue might deal with on a regular basis. This was in direct comparison with venues operating 2-man/team doors. For example refusals for entry to the venue by customers exhibiting Drunk & Disorderly behaviour, dropped by up to 60%. Similar levels of fall occurred with refusals for drugs, and underage drinking. Again this level of fall was reflected when it came to incidents where the removal of people was required.

Given the size of these falls in the comparison, it could be argued this is the reason why it is only necessary to employ one DS at these venues. It could be argued that fewer DS result in less crime. It could also be argued that the percentages of incidents actually remain the same; it is the level of response that differs. The latter would appear to be borne out in the qualitative responses to this question. It also concurs with the basic premise of James Roberts work in Hoboken, New Jersey USA. He found that the absence of DS significantly increased the risk of criminal/anti-social behaviour in clubs and bars. His 2007 study showed crime increased as the quality/presence of DS decreased to the point they were considered ineffectual.

In terms of general venue safety, DS were asked to highlight the locations in their venues where incidents of assaults were most likely to occur. They were asked to report this for "Customer on DS" assaults, and "Customer on Customer" assaults. The street was rated the most likely location for Customer on Customer assaults, as opposed to the actual entrance to the venue. This finding was effectively a comment on general anti-social behaviour which was outside of their control as observed by the DS. In the main Customer on customer assaults, tended to take place once inside the venue. The dance-floor rated the highest risk for Customer assaults on DS. Customer on DS assaults tended to occur at the point of refusal, and other business critical compliance hot-spots such as the toilets, smoking area, etc.

The level of risk to the general public was found by asking the DS to rate the type of event they were involved in controlling. Drum & Bass, and R&B were considered to be the events that carried the highest risk, with mainstream clubs close behind. Interestingly Taxi Ranks and Takeaways were also considered to hold a significant risk. It is worth noting that each type of event carried its own specific risk to all involved in the event.

Risk was also assessed in terms of the range of incidents with which a DS may be faced. They reported that assaults, knives, guns, and gangs featured prominently in Drum & Bass, R&B, Mainstream, and even under-18 events. Music Festivals topped the chart for incidents regarding drink (85%) and drugs (78.4%). The survey also looked at the level of knowledge and confidence in handling emergencies. 50% of respondents were either unsure or didn't know how to deal with a drugs overdose. Approximately 40% were similarly unsure how to handle a heart attack or a blocked airway and 48% were uncertain about dealing with a diabetic reaction. All of these particular incidents are have a strong correlation to the consumption/usage of drink and/or drugs.

On a final note at this early stage it is interesting that 92.1% of DS believe patrons at their venue will be safer than they are anywhere else. The reason for this may be to do with the issue of hyper-masculinity, or trending along existing social norms in terms of general perceptions of safety. This may be borne out by responses to a question regarding their families' usage of the night-time economy, without their presence. Suffice to say at this point that the gap between positive and negative answers increase along the time line and on genders differences.

In conclusion the early findings of this report indicate the concerns of NDW in terms of the general Safety of DS and the public is justified. It is clear existing legislation pertaining to the Health & Safety at Work Act, Managing Health & Safety at Work Regulations, and Lone Worker guidance, to name but a few are all being broken. Additionally those authorities charged with the enforcement of this legislation are at times actually complicit in the commissioning of these offences, albeit unintentionally. The reasons for this are many, and varied, but the cumulative impact on safety affects the sustainability of the Night-time economy in particular, and the ELS as a whole.

### **Urgent Recommendations**

- **1-man doors:** The research would suggest that banning 1-man doors would be a positive step for businesses on moral, legal, and financial grounds. Venues which take the decision to employ DS on safety or legislative grounds are admitting the potential for harm to the business and people exists. Once that admission is made the likelihood of establishing a successful defence against claimants are reduced. The venues risk assessment should be the deciding factor as to the use of security. If it is considered necessary then the absolute minimum level should be two.
- **Remedial Training:** It could be viewed by all as a real investment opportunity, in a business critical area. Properly organised and carried out in conjunction with Door Supervision Companies, Police, and other local partners, it could potentially result in virtually zero cost to the DS, whilst helping raise the level of safety provision for the general public and visitors to the UK. Given the forthcoming Olympics NDW would suggest the Government use the legislation it already has in place, to ensure that DS, whose training occurred prior to August 2010, are brought up to speed.

- **Event Specific Risk Assessments:** Licensing authorities could require premises to have a greater awareness of the risks associated with operating in their local community, and/or putting on particular types of event. This assessment should also take into account cultural and environmental impact factors, such as customer profile, customer numbers, number of rooms, the number of floors, as well as known conflict hotspots. Essentially venues should move from the fundamentally flawed assessment based on capacity; to a proactive robust evidence based Risk Assessment which addresses safety in a more flexible, dynamic, and cost effective way.
- **Enforcement:** Any conditions placed on a venue by the authorities should have a clear business case. These conditions should be aimed at supporting the venues vital contribution to the local economy. In return venues should be required to actively demonstrate their commitment to the safety and well-being of their employees, DS, patrons, in partnership with their local services, NHS, Police, Night-time economy support groups, etc. Additionally there should be a single specifically trained person responsible for all security decisions in a venue where this is appropriate. This will protect the management, the DS, and the integrity of the venues security, with the objective of promoting safe business practice. This could form part of a Code of Practice, or Memorandum of Understanding which would be rigorously enforced.

Ian Fox

Chair  
National Doorwatch Steering Group