

Edinburgh Licensing Forum – Response to Overprovision Survey

Closing date: 13 May 2024

Overview

This response is a summary of views expressed by members of the Licensing Forum. The forum discussed the policy of overprovision across two separate meetings and via survey of its members. Individual members and organisations represented on the forum may have submitted their own response which goes into additional detail.

Views of the forum

The Forum was split on whether or not overprovision should be continued in Edinburgh.

Resident members of the forum who expressed a view were generally in favour with the view that the presumption against new licenses has led to higher standard in premises, as well as support for the public health goals of the policy.

There was also a view expressed by a resident that in areas which do have an excessive amount of licensed premises, that encouraging other sorts of venues was a good idea (café, games hall etc).

There were some questions from a resident of its effectiveness given number of previously granted licenses in areas designated as overprovided for.

One resident agreed with maintaining the current zones of overprovision and extending this to Leith and Leith Walk. Other residents did not pass comment on which zones should be considered.

Trade representatives of the forum were strongly against the continuation of overprovision. Highlighting the following reasons:

- The belief that overprovision is a blunt instrument and does little to reduce alcohol related harm. Inequality remains the biggest factor in alcohol abuse.
- There is no simple cause-and-effect relationship between the number of premises and alcohol-related problems and overall, noting it is increasingly difficult to make a link between individual premises and problems in a specific locality.
- Discourages investment into the city with Edinburgh losing out to other areas and cities.
- Discourages investment in current sites, with additions to hospitality spaces or refitting of convenience stores.
- Causes confusion for those who do not have a deeper understanding of the nuances of the policy.
- Negatively impacts on regeneration of areas, which is particularly important post-pandemic and changes to work-life patterns.
- Negatively impacts on employment opportunities and in turn, compounds inequality.
- In its current form, it doesn't differentiate by type of premises or crucially, the amount of alcohol sold/to be sold.

- As all individual applications need to be assessed on their own merit, overprovision is effectively redundant but creates an artificial barrier to improvement.

Trade representatives said that if the policy was to continue, they would strongly urge that this is based on a locality as opposed to whole area approach.

The NHS indicated their support for the continuation of the policy to support two licensing objectives (protecting children from harm and improving public health) in two areas (Old Town, Princes St and Leith St; and Tollcross), but highlighted they would be calling for additional areas in their own response.

The representative from Social Work (Public Protection) was supportive of the continuation of the current policy, highlighting the impacts that overprovision and overconsumption can have negative health harms, increase risk to vulnerable individuals, and the disproportionate impact on women and children.