

Combating



Bouncers often end up making sure rogue revellers are thrown out of pubs and clubs but West Yorkshire Police have launched an operation to ensure rogue door staff are also weeded out. John Dean writes

Fears that a minority of pub and club door staff might flout recent legislation to make sure they are licensed have prompted West Yorkshire Police to launch a pilot project in one of their busiest cities.

Officers from the Bradford South Division are checking door supervisors as part of an initiative launched after concerns that the national Security Industry Authority (SIA) was not prosecuting offenders in West Yorkshire.

The initiative uses legislation brought into being with the enactment of the Private Security Industry Act 2001, which stated that anyone responsible for security, protection, screening the suitability of people entering premises or dealing with conflict in pubs, clubs and other licensed premises must be licensed and display their registration when working.

Responsibility for its management fell to the SIA and to obtain its registration, door supervisors must achieve a nationally-accredited training qualification, pass a

rogue elements

criminality check and pay a licence fee. However, in West Yorkshire there were concerns that prosecutions were not being taken forward by the SIA and PC Mick Warburton, the force's licensing officer, said: "We felt that was sending out the wrong message."

The result was a joint scheme with the Crown Prosecution Service, the local criminal justice unit and the SIA in which the police are taking the lead, checking to ensure that door staff are registered. The force says that anyone found flouting the law will be prosecuted and faces a maximum penalty of six months in prison and/or a fine of up to £5,000.

According to the force, there are 2,200 registered door staff across the county and following the Bradford pilot, which will also include licensing checks, the operation will be rolled out across the rest of West Yorkshire.

PC Warburton said: "We have not set this up because we feel we have a problem with unregistered door staff in our area. However, the use of rogue supervisors in licensed premises across West Yorkshire will not be tolerated. It is not only illegal but can contribute to crime and disorder.

"The public needs to be aware that door staff should be registered and we wanted to raise awareness of that among bobbies as well. We feel this is a straightforward issue - you are either registered or not."

Initially, under the pilot, which started last month, licensing officers are visiting pubs and clubs to check on registration documents.

Over the first weekend of the project, officers visited 11 bars and clubs, checking 35 door supervisors.

Insp Darren Williams, of Bradford's licensing department, said: "It is reassuring that every one of the licensed premises we visited was complying with the requirements

of the Security Industry Authority. They are to be congratulated for being responsible licensees who are playing by the rules. This positive result also reflects the good work that has been going on between the police and licensed premises to ensure compliance.

"We will be continuing to run checks on door staff over the coming weeks and months and we hope the results will continue to be positive. We have recently tightened up our procedures and anyone caught in breach of the rules will face prosecution."

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Although licensing officers are carrying out initial checks, PC Warburton feels the system can be rolled out to other officers as part of their daily duties. "In time, we would like the neighbourhood policing teams to be more involved as well," he said.

The campaign is aimed at transgressors, but the police are keen to work with door staff, who they regard as an integral part of dealing with violent crime. One of the ways they help police is acting as 'taxi marshalls' as an early intervention tactic for disorder in town and city centres around taxi ranks. And because, like road tax, there is an offence for non-registration and also for one of non-display, the police

are supplying yellow reflective armbands on which door staff can display their registration.

PC Warburton said: "It is imperative that we engage in partnership with such personnel. We want to support those that have spent the money on training and registration and we do not think it is fair on them if they can see, across the road, someone outside another establishment who is not registered and has not spent that money.

"We want to build up a positive message with this pilot scheme. We do not feel there is a problem and we do not expect to see a lot of who are not registered. We are not expecting a lot of prosecutions in West Yorkshire. It will be a test of our compliance."

The Security Industry Authority is responsible for regulating the private security industry. An independent body reporting to the Home Secretary, it was established in 2003 under the Private Security Industry Act 2001.

SIA licensing covers work include manned guarding, which includes security guarding, door supervision, close protection, cash and valuables in transit, public space surveillance using CCTV, key-holding and vehicle immobilisation. Licensing ensures that private security operatives are 'fit and proper' persons trained and qualified to do their job.

The SIA recently released figures which showed that enforcement operations carried out in the last quarter of last year showed 97 out of every 100 door supervisors checked were licensed.