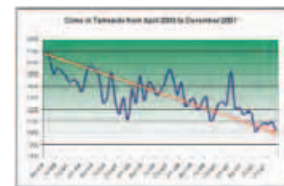


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# 'Community Diary crucial in conviction'

THAT was the headline in the Tameside Citizen Newspaper recently when an off licence lost its licence to sell alcohol after evidence provided by the residents' innovative Community Diary was used when the application was reviewed.

The Licensing Enforcement Panel took the decision to revoke the licence to sell alcohol from the Hyde Road, Denton shop, after reading compelling evidence that under aged drinkers were obtaining their alcohol from the premises.

As well as the Diary entries from nearby residents, Tameside's Trading Standards also carried out a successful test purchase (sending in a person clearly under the age of 18 to see if they were served alcohol) as well as videoing adults buying alcohol for and on behalf of youths congregating outside the shop.

Video evidence also showed that the premises were a congregation point for youths, which was seen as intimidating especially to vulnerable residents.

In a report heard from the panel, Trading Standards said: "We do not believe that the premises have been or would ever be in control of the sale of alcohol from their premises and they continue to tolerate youths congregating outside their premises consuming alcohol."

The evidence provided in this case just goes to show what an excellent idea the Community Diaries are.



**CONGREGATION POINT:** The shop in Denton attracted groups of youths which was considered intimidating, especially to vulnerable residents. Right, alcohol purchased by underage drinkers seized in the operation.

The details sent in by the public proved to be a crucial part of the investigation and greatly assisted the authority in



identifying that under aged sales activity was occurring from the premises.

# Testing times in crack down on sale of alcohol to teens

TRADING Standards is working hard to ensure Tameside's boozing teenagers are no longer able to get their hands on alcohol.

The Tameside Reporter reported last year that a survey revealed more than half of the borough's teens were drinking at least once a week.

The Reporter spent one night last year with Tameside Trading Standards test purchasing team to observe just one of the many ways the council aims to resolve the problem.

Test purchasing sounds simple, a child attempts to buy cigarettes or alcohol, but in reality Trading Standards must complete many hours of work both before and after a night of test purchasing.

Before a night's testing, premises need to be selected.

Trading Standards can make their selection of venue randomly, but in

Tameside this has not happened so far as the test purchasing exercises have been based on complaints received about the shops selling to under aged persons.

The night's work began by briefing the test purchaser, a 14-year-old girl.

The test purchaser was average height for her age, petite build and certainly looked no older than 16.

A good indicator of her young age was the braces on her top and bottom teeth.

Accusations of tricking shopkeepers by using teens appearing older have been directed at test purchasing schemes in the past, but Tameside officers strongly believe in using children who clearly look underage.

Four test purchasing officers work on such a night.

Two speak with the shop assistant after the attempted purchase and the

other two must always remain with their test purchaser.

The operations are always carried out in partnership with the police.

Their local knowledge helps with preparing and executing testing but they also have power to confiscate CCTV tapes from any shop caught making an underage sale.

Shop one was a typical corner shop, in the heart of a nice area, among rows of quiet terraced streets.

The team moved quickly and the process ran as explained during the brief. A sale was made.

The team allowed our reporter to go into the shop before the test purchaser had entered.

In the shop setting the test purchaser looked smaller and her nerves made her appear even younger than 14.

So it was bewildering when she managed to buy two alcopops unchal-

lenged. Further shops were visited and more made sales to our test purchaser.

Time was running out due to restrictions on hours minors can work and only half the businesses due a visit had been completed.

Testing had to stop after that as time had run out.

Trading Standards prepared to prosecute shops that sold on the night we went with them.

Despite the volume of work the exercise creates, the team are determined to get the message across that selling to minors will not be accepted in Tameside.

Over the last two years sales by off licences and supermarkets to fifteen and sixteen year olds have been reduced dramatically due to the work of the Trading Standards Service and its partners.



## How we're working together to help reduce alcohol and drug problems

### Reducing drug and alcohol harm within our communities

*You said...*

- You want to feel safer in our town centres after dark.
- You are concerned about our young people drinking alcohol on the streets.

*Tameside Council in partnership has...*

- Introduced a multi-agency initiative to tackle night time disorder in our town centres (STAND).
- The Drug and Alcohol Action Team works alongside Trading Standards to reduce the supply of alcohol to young people.
- Young people found on the streets drinking alcohol are referred to both the Anti-Social Behaviour Team and

the Branching Out service for interventions.

- Trained practitioners in drug and alcohol awareness.
- Commissioned a dedicated diversity worker to develop a drugs and diversity network.
- Linked agencies with the wider diverse community that make up Tameside and to develop community champions across the borough.

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