



CAFÉ WATCH



In 2009 **Westminster City Council** was awarded Beacon status in the category of Cutting Red Tape. **This award recognised that the council has a clear strategic focus that drives regulatory services and enables it to have a wide impact on the community it serves.** The **Café Watch Scheme** was developed to tackle a number of health and safety issues associated with the coffee houses in central London.

Achievement

- Improved co-ordination between public agencies has led to more effective regulation of health and safety in the main coffee houses in central London.
- The coffee businesses have adopted a more strategic approach to health and safety that provides much-improved protection for their staff, their customers and their premises.
- It has been reported there has been a 50% reduction in crime in the café chains operating in the city, in the space of one year.
- Significant reduction in the workplace violence associated with theft in the cafés.
- Effective partnership-working has helped to remove some of the barriers caused by the very different organisational and operational arrangements of the businesses. This has supported a common understanding of the issues, greater ownership of solutions and effective implementation of action plans.

Lessons Learnt

Information-sharing between public agencies is crucial to the effective appraisal of regulatory risks, and to the development of robust solutions.

Effective, proportionate enforcement action not only helps to protect workers and consumers – it also contributes to improving the trading environment for business and to protect their commercial reputation.

A risk-based approach to health and safety is effective in reducing crime and anti-social behaviour.

Securing the co-operation of key individuals takes patience – and a sound understanding of the environments within which they operate.

The leadership provided by elected Members, across a range of regulatory areas, influences the community agenda and ensures that equalities and diversity are at the heart of the business planning process.

Focus For Action

CivicWatch Business – a project initiated by the health and safety team as part of Westminster City Council's civic renewal policy, to create a safer environment in which to work, through a strategic enforcement approach to tackling crime and anti-social behaviour, by implementing appropriate health and safety controls.

There was evidence from crime statistics and intelligence data that violence and the threat of violence in the workplace were increasing. A survey undertaken in 2007 by the **British Retail Consortium** found that there had been an increase of 50% in violence towards staff in the retail sector. The threat of workplace violence had remained unrecognised and unreported within the retail industry as a whole and in particular the coffee chains.

Many of the crimes that the Metropolitan Police reported to Westminster City Council involved issues with workplace violence where cafés, particularly the large chain cafés, were reporting incidents involving high levels of theft of handbags, mobile phones and items that were being stolen from tables and chairs. This type of theft can often be a catalyst for workplace violence such as aggressive behaviour from the thieves towards any member of staff who might step in or attempt to stop them. The potential impact on businesses includes lower productivity, increased labour turnover and loss of morale amongst the workforce – and a company's commercial reputation.

Effective Solutions

Joint regulatory inspections, utilising the skills of Crime Prevention Officers (CPOs) from the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) and Westminster City Council Environmental Health Enforcement Officers (EHEOs). A standard format to the inspections enabled a structured interview with local staff and management to take place and to provide them with an overview of the ways in which the risk of violence should be managed within the business.

A great deal of work was done to develop working practices within and between the different teams to build a shared understanding of the issues. Steps were also taken to raise the profile of Café Watch, so that frontline staff know whom to provide with information and intelligence.

A health and safety toolkit was jointly developed with the Health and Safety Executive's Laboratories.

Branch-specific risk assessments were introduced to target improvements on sites with the highest number of reported incidents.

Training in conflict management was provided to café staff to enable them to deal with threatening behaviour, drug-influenced aggression and abusive and anti-social behaviour.

The use of CCTV images to identify persons involved in incidents and to provide evidence to taking appropriate action.

Contacts and Links

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British Retail Consortium

www.brc.org.uk

CivicWatch Business

www.westminster.gov.uk/policingandpublicsafety/crimeandlawenforcement/civicwatch/civicwatch/projects/neighbourhoodengagement.cfm

IDeA - Cutting Red Tape Community of Practice

www.communities.idea.gov.uk/welcome.doc