

**EVALUATION OF TEST  
PURCHASING PILOT FOR  
SALES OF ALCOHOL TO  
UNDER 18s – FINAL REPORT**

# **EVALUATION OF TEST PURCHASING PILOT FOR SALES OF ALCOHOL TO UNDER 18S – FINAL REPORT**

Andy MacGregor  
Scottish Centre for Social Research



**SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT SOCIAL RESEARCH**  
September 2007

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES.....</b>	<b>2</b>
2.1 AIM OF THE EVALUATION .....	2
2.2 EVALUATION OBJECTIVES .....	2
<b>3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS .....</b>	<b>3</b>
3.1 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH DESIGN .....	3
3.2 DATA ON TEST PURCHASES .....	3
3.3 YOUNG VOLUNTEERS .....	3
3.4 KEY STAKEHOLDER VIEWS .....	4
3.4.1 Stakeholder views – baseline .....	4
3.4.2 Stakeholder views – impact.....	4
3.4.3 Stakeholder views – outcome .....	5
3.4.4 Stakeholder views – summary .....	5
3.5 ANALYSIS .....	5
<b>4. RESULTS .....</b>	<b>6</b>
4.1 LICENSEE INTERVIEWS .....	6
4.1.1 Licensee sample .....	6
4.1.2 Knowledge, awareness and views of test purchasing .....	6
4.1.3 Likelihood of being targeted during pilot .....	8
4.1.4 Proof of age card schemes.....	8
4.1.5 Training of staff and licensee practice.....	9
4.1.6 Measures aimed at stopping alcohol sales to underage young people .....	11
4.1.7 Views of the test purchase visit .....	12
4.2 VOLUNTEER INTERVIEWS.....	16
4.2.1 Background information .....	16
4.2.2 Involvement in the test purchase pilot.....	16
4.2.3 Training and briefing for the pilot .....	16
4.2.4 Parental reaction to involvement in the pilot.....	16
4.2.5 Perceptions of the test purchase visits .....	16
4.2.6 Future test purchase exercises.....	17
4.3 INTERVIEWS WITH PARENTS.....	18
4.3.1 Background information .....	18
4.3.2 Awareness of the progress of the test purchase pilot.....	18
4.3.3 Perceptions of the training and briefing programme .....	18
4.3.4 Views of volunteer participation in test purchasing visits .....	18
4.3.5 Future test purchase exercises.....	19
4.4 INTERVIEWS WITH POLICE STAFF .....	20
4.4.1 Background information .....	20
4.4.2 Test purchase test failures .....	20
4.4.3 Feedback from licensees .....	20
4.4.4 Views of volunteer participation in test purchase pilot.....	20
4.4.5 Perceptions of success of the test purchase pilot.....	21
4.4.6 Measures aimed at stopping alcohol sales to underage young people .....	22
4.4.7 Ways forward for the test purchasing pilot.....	22
4.5 INTERVIEW WITH PROCURATOR FISCAL .....	23
4.5.1 Background information .....	23
4.5.2 Status of the pilot in Fife.....	23
4.5.3 Impact on the workload of procurators fiscal and the courts.....	23
4.5.4 Links between procurators fiscal, the police and licensing boards .....	24
4.5.5 Perceptions of success of the pilot .....	24

4.5.6	<i>Future of alcohol test purchasing in Scotland</i> .....	25
4.6	VIEWS OF KEY LOCAL GROUPS .....	26
4.6.1	<i>Background information</i> .....	26
4.6.2	<i>Impact on the work of the key local groups</i> .....	26
4.6.3	<i>Links between the different groups, procurators fiscal and the police</i> .....	26
4.6.4	<i>Impact of the pilot</i> .....	26
4.6.5	<i>Perceptions of success of the pilot</i> .....	27
4.6.6	<i>Future of alcohol test purchasing in Scotland</i> .....	28
4.7	TEST PURCHASE DATA SHEETS .....	29
4.7.1	<i>Background information</i> .....	29
4.7.2	<i>Test purchase visits</i> .....	29
4.7.3	<i>Outcome of test purchase visits</i> .....	30
4.7.4	<i>Aftermath of test purchase visits</i> .....	33
<b>5.</b>	<b>SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION .....</b>	<b>34</b>
5.1	VIEWS OF LICENSEES .....	34
5.2	VIEWS OF VOLUNTEERS AND PARENTS .....	36
5.3	VIEWS OF POLICE RESPONDENTS .....	36
5.4	VIEWS OF PROCURATOR FISCAL .....	37
5.5	VIEWS OF KEY LOCAL GROUPS .....	37
5.6	TEST PURCHASE VISITS .....	38
5.7	IMPLICATIONS OF THE ALCOHOL TEST PURCHASE PILOT .....	39
<b>6.</b>	<b>CONCLUSIONS .....</b>	<b>43</b>

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In February 2005, following consideration of an independent evaluation of tobacco test purchasing pilots, the Lord Advocate revised prosecution policy to allow test purchasing of age restricted goods by children and young people under the age of 18, in circumstances where the purchaser is not committing a separate offence. This allowed test purchasing of fireworks, tobacco and other age restricted products, but not alcohol. While satisfied, in principle, that alcohol test purchasing would be an effective enforcement tool, the Lord Advocate remained concerned about the safety and welfare of the young people taking part in test purchasing exercises. It was agreed, therefore, that before the relevant provisions of the new Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005 are generally commenced (probably 2009), a pilot exercise was to be undertaken. The aim of this pilot, conducted in Fife, was to assess test purchasing arrangements to enable common procedures and operating protocols to be developed to ensure that alcohol test purchasing can be carried out safely, fairly and effectively in a Scottish context.

The Scottish Centre for Social Research (ScotCen) was commissioned by the Analytical Services Division of the Scottish Executive Health Directorate to evaluate the Test Purchasing Pilot in Fife in May 2006. ScotCen adopted a mixed method approach to obtain the views of licensees, volunteers and parents, police officers, procurators fiscal, licensing board members, alcohol and drug action teams and community councils. Analysis of test purchase data sheets completed by Fife Police during test purchase visits was also carried out.

The responses of all the participant groups involved in the research suggested that the alcohol test purchase pilot had progressed very smoothly and that very few problems had been encountered. There was also evidence that there existed a greater level of support for alcohol test purchasing to be adopted than was the case for tobacco test purchasing during the tobacco pilot, with a majority of licensees arguing that test purchasing should be implemented more widely, albeit in tandem with a robust national proof of age card scheme, and in a few cases other measures such as increased surveillance by police officers and education and training of licensed trade staff. As was the case during the tobacco test purchase pilot there was very little enthusiasm expressed for either the status quo or for test purchasing to be implemented in isolation.

During first test purchases 20% of premises failed the test purchase visit. Given the publicity launch, the media coverage and pilot information events for licensees, as well as actual visits to bars and shops carried out by police officers, the fact that one in five premises failed the first visit is arguably quite high. It is also important to note that on and off sale outlets of all types (apart from off licences) failed first test purchase visits. However, only 7% of premises failed the test purchase revisit, suggesting that the first visit had a great impact on the practice of shop and bar staff. In total, taking all types of test purchases into account, about 18% of shops, bars and nightclubs failed the test.

Test purchase failure during first visits was related to:

- Area of Fife (26% failed in Western Fife compared with 16% in Eastern Fife).
- Progress of time after launch: (25% of outlets failed in 2007 compared with 16% of outlets between June and August 2006). This suggests that awareness of the pilot decreased over time, and that being targeted as part of the scheme greatly increased licensee knowledge and awareness.

- Junior staff being at the point of sale (23% of junior staff failed compared with 12% of licensees). As well as demonstrating the importance of staff training, this supports the view of the police interviewees that young people were more likely to sell alcohol to their peers.

Although the pilot was viewed as being very successful other issues arose during its operation which might need to be addressed in the future. It was stated that the pilot had resulted in an increased number of adults being asked to purchase alcohol by groups of young people outside retail outlets. Also, respondents said that a few licensees were taking advantage of the fact that test purchasers would admit their real age and would knowingly sell alcohol to young people as long as they claimed that they were 18 years of age. Finally, the issue of young people having responsibility for the sale of alcohol, with inadequate supervision, was a cause of some concern, and suggestions were made that the laws concerning alcohol sales might have to be modified.

Therefore, at outcome the general consensus was that the pilot had operated as well as could have been expected, and according to many respondents it had even exceeded expectations. It is likely that the approach adopted in Fife, with licensees being informed of the pilot and offered advice and support after test purchases had taken place, was responsible for its smooth running and the favourable reaction from key interest groups. If other areas adopt a similar test purchasing system the results of this pilot would suggest that there are few grounds for concern, and it is probable that a majority of key stakeholders including licensees, police and volunteers would be receptive to and supportive of the wider implementation of alcohol test purchasing.

## **Acknowledgements**

Interviews were conducted by Isobel Laidlaw, Andy MacGregor, Susan MacLeod, Irene Miller and Anne Robson. Focus groups were facilitated by Irene Miller, with scribing carried out by Susan MacLeod. Interviewer supervision was conducted by Irene Miller. Evaluation instrument design was by Andy MacGregor. Analysis and report writing were conducted by Andy MacGregor. Administrative and research support was provided by Lesley Birse and Ann Rennie. Transcription was carried out by Ann Rennie and Karen Stewart.

Many thanks to all of the individuals on the Enforcement Group who helped shape the research and offered advice and support to the research team during the evaluation. In particular, we would like to thank Mary Cuthbert and Joyce Whytock for their assistance and guidance during the project; once again their support was greatly appreciated. In addition, we would like to acknowledge the role played by Chief Inspector Alex Duncan of Fife Police Force in assisting the research team.

Finally, many thanks to all those individuals who gave their assistance to the research team, especially those who took part in the focus groups and interviews.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In February 2005, following consideration of the independent evaluation carried out by the Scottish Centre for Social Research (ScotCen) of tobacco test purchasing pilots conducted in 2002-4, the Lord Advocate revised prosecution policy to allow test purchasing of age restricted goods by children and young people under the age of 18, in circumstances where the purchaser is not committing a separate offence. This allowed test purchasing of fireworks, tobacco and other age restricted products, but not alcohol.

In deciding at that time to exclude alcohol from the revised policy the Lord Advocate took account of the fact that under the Licensing (Scotland) Act 1976 it was an offence for a person under 18 to buy or attempt to buy alcoholic liquor in licensed premises or to consume alcoholic liquor in a bar. Moreover, although alcohol test purchasers were likely to be aged 16 and 17, there were still welfare concerns in relation to both the premises that young people would be expected to visit and the fact that they may be more likely to be called to give evidence if the Procurator Fiscal decided to take proceedings.

The Lord Advocate subsequently indicated that he was satisfied in principle that test purchasing of alcohol by children and young people would be an effective means of enforcing the law in this area. An amendment was made, therefore, to the Licensing (Scotland) Bill at Stage 3 to allow for test purchasing of alcohol which ensured that the primacy of welfare of children and young people involved was addressed. It should be noted, though, that: “Under the provisions of section 68(4) of the Act it is not an offence for a person aged 16 or over to purchase beer, wine, made-wine, porter, cider or Perry for consumption with a meal in a part of the premises, usually set apart for the services of table meals, which is not a bar, or in a bar during its regular use as a restaurant. Similarly it is not an offence for someone to sell the alcoholic liquor listed above to such a person aged 16 or over, or for someone to purchase on behalf of the person aged 16 or over” in these circumstances. For this reason, it was decided that when entering on sales licensed premises the test purchaser would only attempt to purchase alcohol at the bar and its purchase would not be linked in any way to the purchase of food.

While satisfied, in principle, that alcohol test purchasing would be an effective enforcement tool, the Lord Advocate remained concerned about the safety and welfare of the young people taking part in test purchasing exercises. It was agreed, therefore, before the relevant provisions of the new Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005 are generally commenced (probably 2009), a pilot exercise was to be undertaken. The aim of this pilot, conducted in Fife, was to trial test purchasing arrangements to enable common procedures and operating protocols to be developed to ensure that alcohol test purchasing can be carried out safely, fairly and effectively in a Scottish context.

The Scottish Centre for Social Research (ScotCen) was commissioned by the Analytical Services Division of the Scottish Executive Health Directorate in May 2006 to evaluate the Test Purchasing Pilot in Fife. This Final Report covers the methodology adopted by ScotCen for the whole pilot, with the results section focusing on the outcome phase, with comparisons being made with the baseline and impact research phases. The interim report<sup>1</sup> covered the baseline phase and parts of the impact phase.

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/02/19152501/0>

## **2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **2.1 AIM OF THE EVALUATION**

The main aim of the research was to review the operation of the test purchasing pilot in Fife in relation to the safety and suitability of the operating procedures, the impact of the initiative, the views of those involved, and whether the test purchasing of alcohol could be effective in reducing under-age sales, while protecting the safety of the young people involved in the scheme and taking cognisance of the views of the licensed sector.

The evaluation also addressed whether or not the procedures in place worked or whether they needed to be adapted for future test purchasing exercises. It should be noted that an overall assessment of the impact of the test purchase on the consumption of alcohol by under 18s in Fife was not within the scope of the research. However, key stakeholders were asked for their views related to the impact of the pilot on alcohol consumption levels of young people, as well as instances of drink related anti-social behaviour.

### **2.2 EVALUATION OBJECTIVES**

The detailed objectives of the evaluation were to:

- Examine the results of the test purchasing exercises after analysing the data obtained by Fife Police to gauge the effect of the exercise in terms of the number of test purchase visits, the nature of the premises targeted, the number of sales made, etc.
- Gather the views of licensees in Fife at three different phases: baseline, (June 2006) impact (late 2006) and outcome (April 2007); about their practice in relation to selling to young people, their views and practice in relation to proof of age schemes, their perceptions of test purchasing in principle and their perceptions of the pilot as a whole.
- Gather the views of the young people involved in the test purchasing exercise to see what participation has meant to them, for example, if the experience has been enjoyable or distressing, anxiety provoking or not; and their parents or guardians to find out their perceptions of their children's participation and whether they would be happy for them to take part in similar work again.
- Gather the views of police officers involved in the pilot concerning the actual practice of licensees in relation to selling to young people, their perceptions of test purchasing, their perceptions of the training offered and how well it operated in practice and any difficulties encountered, their perceptions of its reception and impact on licensees, and their recommendations for future test purchasing exercises.
- Elicit the views of Procurators Fiscal in the pilot area, to ascertain their views of the pilot exercise, its perceived impact on the courts' and Licensing Boards workload, etc.
- Gather the views from the Licensing Board, community councils and Fife DAAT in the pilot area on the perceived impact of the pilot on drinking related crime/anti-social behaviour, etc.

### **3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS**

#### **3.1 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH DESIGN**

There were two main types of data gathered during the evaluation:

- quantitative data on all attempts at test purchases
- the views of samples of all major categories of stakeholder concerning various aspects of the pilot scheme and its impact.

The following major categories of stakeholder were included in the evaluation:

- Volunteers involved in test purchasing exercises
- Parents/guardians of these volunteers
- Licensees representing all different types of on-sale and off-sale outlets, e.g., off licenses, hotels, supermarkets, public houses, grocers etc
- Police officers and Procurators Fiscal
- Licensing Board, community council and Fife Drug and Alcohol Action Team representatives.

#### **3.2 DATA ON TEST PURCHASES**

Data on all test purchases was collected in a consistent and uniform manner. The data sheet prepared by ScotCen and agreed with the Fife Police Force covered the:

- name and address, type of outlet, (supermarket, off sales, licensed grocers, pubs etc)
- date of visit, code for police area and code number for test purchaser
- gender and month/year of birth of young volunteer carrying out test purchase
- type of test purchase (first visit, revisit)
- whether visit resulted in attempt to purchase (if not, the reason why)
- whether proof of age information requested and outcome of attempt to purchase
- status of person from whom volunteer attempted to purchase
- status of person informed of test
- awareness of radio advertising in relation to pilot.

#### **3.3 YOUNG VOLUNTEERS**

Data on all potential young volunteers was collected in a consistent and uniform manner. Strict standards of confidentiality were maintained. Consent was sought from the young person and their parent or guardian for participation in the evaluation.

### **3.4 KEY STAKEHOLDER VIEWS**

The three phases of data collection of stakeholder views were:

*Phase 1: BASELINE: June to July 2006*

This phase gauged the views of licensees, volunteer test purchasers, parents/guardians as far as possible BEFORE the first test purchasing visits took place.

*Phase 2: IMPACT: November to December 2006*

This phase examined the immediate impact of the test purchasing visits on the targeted licensees, and perceptions of the operation of the pilot of the police officers.

*Phase 3: OUTCOME: April – May 2007*

This phase looked at the longer term effect of test purchasing on targeted licensees, and the police officers' views of the operation of the whole pilot. Procurators Fiscal, volunteers and parents were interviewed. Members of the licensing board, community councils and Fife Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) took part in focus groups.

#### **3.4.1 Stakeholder views – baseline**

At baseline the researchers were made aware of which premises the police intended to target and on which occasion, in order to inform their own sampling strategy for licensee interviews. Views were therefore sought before the first test purchase visits from:

- Licensees and managers of premises (100 interviews)
- Young volunteers who were trained as test purchasers (6 interviews)
- Parents/guardians of these children (6 interviews)

Fife Police started carrying out test purchases on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2006. The research team had carried out the majority of the licensee interviews before the 30<sup>th</sup> of June. ScotCen carried out random stratified sampling of the list of licensees provided by Fife Police in order to identify a sample of premises which covered all of the five main outlet types. After this a baseline structured interview schedule was prepared. These were short interviews, were conducted on a face-to-face basis and were with the license holders or managers of the respective outlet; junior staff members were not interviewed. The interviews covered knowledge and awareness of test purchasing, licensees' practice in relation to selling to young people, their training of staff members, their views about and practice in relation to proof of age schemes, their perceptions of test purchasing in principle, and their perceptions of its anticipated effect on their own and other licensees' practice.

In terms of young test purchase volunteers and their parents, the baseline interviews were semi-structured, addressed their expectations and knowledge of the initiative, any concerns they might have had and the volunteers' views of the training or information provided by the police, etc. These interviews took place face-to-face in the respondents' houses during the same visit. Six interviews were conducted with both volunteers and their parents or carers.

#### **3.4.2 Stakeholder views – impact**

Views were sought *after* the test purchasing visits had become established from:

- Licensees/managers of outlets who had already been targeted with test purchase visits (30 interviews, 20 with those that sold alcohol and 10 in which no sale resulted)

- Police Force representatives: Interviews were held with those that had either a supervisory or an operational role (n=4).
- Volunteers and parents interviewed at baseline gave their final interviews.
- Five new volunteers and parents were recruited and interviewed for the first time.

The interview schedule at impact was similar to the baseline schedule, but with an additional component to address test purchase visits. The police officers were interviewed using an in-depth schedule; these interviews were conducted on a face-to-face basis.

### 3.4.3 Stakeholder views – outcome

The following respondent types took part at outcome:

- Licensees (n=100; *not* the same as those who had been sampled at either baseline or impact; licensees who passed (n=58) and failed (n=42) the test were sampled)
- Volunteers and parents first interviewed at impact (n=5) gave final interviews
- Police Force representatives: Interviews were held with those that gave either their views at impact or were able to comment on the operational aspect of the pilot (n= 4)
- Procurator Fiscal (1 interview)
- Focus groups were convened (n=3) with Licensing Board representatives, community council members and the Fife Drug and Alcohol Action Team.

### 3.4.4 Stakeholder views – summary

The Table below shows the numbers of interviews/focus groups which were carried out during the evaluation. Therefore 283 interviews and 3 focus groups were carried out, the vast majority of the interviews were held with licensees.

	Licensees		Young People	Parents	Procurator Fiscal	Police officers	Focus groups
	Targeted	Not targeted					
Baseline		100	6	6			
Impact	30		6/5*	6/5*		4	
Outcome	100		5	5	1	4	3**
Total	130	100	22	22	1	8	3

\* 6 volunteers and parents were interviewed at baseline and followed-up at Impact (Phase 2). Also, researchers recruited a new a sample of volunteers and parents at Phase 2 and followed this second group in Phase 3.

\*\* Licensing Board representatives, Community councils and Fife DAAT took part in focus groups.

## 3.5 ANALYSIS

All open-ended questions with licensees, volunteers and parents were recorded by the interviewer taking full notes at the time of interview, before preparing a near-verbatim account as soon as possible after the completion of interview. This account was transcribed and entered on to Microsoft Access to aid analysis. All in-depth interviews and focus groups were digitally recorded, transcribed and qualitative thematic analysis carried out using the N6 analysis package. Structured data (test purchase data sheets and licensee interviews) were collated, processed and analysed using SPSS, a statistical analysis package. Statistical significance testing was carried out, where appropriate.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1 LICENSEE INTERVIEWS

#### 4.1.1 Licensee sample

Table 4.1 demonstrates that 48% of interviews at baseline and 45% of interviews at outcome were carried out with licensees working in all off sale premises combined; a slight majority of interviewees represented the on sale sector. As would be expected, given the relative numbers of the respective outlets in Fife, the two most common categories of licensees interviewed were based in licensed grocer/shops (32%) and pubs (49%). The category of nightclubs was also expanded to cover ‘fun’ pubs – larger-scale theme pubs in the main with more similarities to nightclubs than pubs.

Table 4.1 Licensee interviews – types of outlet by research phase

Type of outlet:	BASELINE Frequency N (%)	OUTCOME Frequency N (%)
Licensed grocer/shop	31 (31.0)	33 (33.0)
Supermarket	12 (12.0)	11 (11.0)
Off licence	5 (5.0)	1 (1.0)
Public House	43 (43.0)	54 (54.0)
Nightclub/‘Fun’ pub	9 (9.0)	1 (1.0)
<b>TOTAL</b>	100 (100.0)	100 (100.0)

At baseline, 99% of licensee interviews were conducted with untargeted licensees (premises not visited for a test purchase at interview). The outcome interviews were conducted in late March and April 2007; all of the interviewees worked in targeted premises. In addition:

- 42 of the 100 outlets had sold alcohol to volunteers during the first test purchase visit
- 31% of off sale compared with 51% of on sale outlets had sold alcohol to volunteers
- 38% of premises were in Central Fife, 37% in Western Fife and 25% in Eastern Fife

#### 4.1.2 Knowledge, awareness and views of test purchasing

Table 4.2 shows that reported knowledge of test purchasing increased greatly between baseline and outcome, with two times the number of licensees at outcome saying that they knew a lot about test purchasing (51% vs 26%,  $P < 0.001$ ; *i.e. the probability that the difference observed is real is greater than 99.9%*). At baseline, though, 42% of licensees reported that they knew little or nothing about test purchasing despite the fact that there was a lot of publicity and awareness-raising related to the pilot exercise.

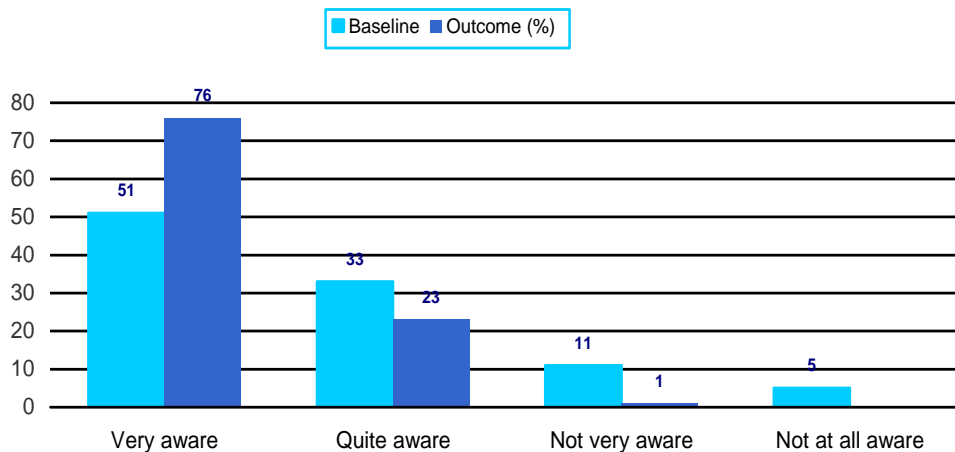
Table 4.2 Knowledge of test purchasing by research phase

How much do you know about test purchasing?:	BASELINE Frequency N (%)	OUTCOME Frequency N (%)
I know a lot	26 (26.0)	51 (51.0)
I know quite a lot	32 (32.0)	38 (38.0)
I know a little	27 (27.0)	11 (11.0)
I know nothing	15 (15.0)	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	100 (100.0)	100 (100.0)

At outcome, 51% of both the off and on sale licensees said that they knew a lot about test purchasing. This represented a major change for on sale licensees in particular – at baseline only 4 (8%) on sale respondents compared with 46% of off sale respondents said that they had a lot of knowledge of test purchasing. Nine of the 11 interviewees who reported that they knew little about test purchasing at outcome were on sale licensees.

Figure 4-A demonstrates that awareness of the pilot itself among licensees also increased at outcome, with 76% of licensees stating that they were very aware of the pilot (76% outcome vs 51% baseline;  $P < 0.001$ ). All premises had been visited at the time of the outcome interview; only one respondent said that they were not very aware of the pilot at this phase.

**Figure 4-A** Awareness of test purchase pilot by research phase



At baseline over 61% of respondents said that test purchasing was a very good idea, compared with only 44% of interviewees at outcome (see Table 4.3); this difference was statistically significant ( $P < 0.05$ : *i.e. the probability that the difference observed is real is greater than 95%*). However, over 86% of licensees at outcome reported that test purchasing was at least quite a good idea. It should be noted, though, that there was little difference between the responses of those that sold alcohol to volunteers and those that passed the test. Although 51% and 36% of off sale and on sale licensees respectively thought that test purchasing was a very good idea at outcome, this difference did not reach statistical significance.

**Table 4.3** Views of test purchasing by research phase

Test purchasing is:	BASELINE Frequency N (%)	OUTCOME Frequency N (%)
<b>A very good idea</b>	61 (61.6)	43 (43.9)
<b>Quite a good idea</b>	34 (34.3)	42 (42.9)
<b>Not a very good idea</b>	-	4 (4.1)
<b>Not a good idea at all</b>	4 (4.0)	9 (9.2)
<b>TOTAL</b>	99* (100.0)	98** (100.0)

Notes to table \*Don't know/Can't say = 1; \*\* Don't know/Can't say = 2.

### 4.1.3 Likelihood of being targeted during pilot

It can be seen in Table 4.4 that 90% of licensees at outcome compared with 78% of licensees at baseline perceived that it was at least quite likely that they would be subject to a test purchase visit during the pilot phase ( $P < 0.05$ ). Also, at outcome higher percentages of licensees (71%) who represented outlets which had failed the first test purchase test thought that it was very likely that they would be subject to a test purchase visit in the future.

Table 4.4 Likelihood of test purchase occurring at outlet by research phase

<b>Likelihood of test purchase being carried out at your outlet?:</b>	<b>BASELINE Frequency N (%)</b>	<b>OUTCOME Frequency N (%)</b>
<b>Very likely</b>	53 (53.0)	55 (55.0)
<b>Quite likely</b>	25 (25.0)	35 (35.0)
<b>Not very likely</b>	10 (10.0)	5 (5.0)
<b>Not at all likely</b>	3 (3.0)	2 (2.0)
<b>Don't know/can't say</b>	9 (9.0)	3 (3.0)
<b>TOTAL</b>	100 (100.0)	100 (100.0)

### 4.1.4 Proof of age card schemes

The interviewees were asked for their perceptions of existing proof of age card schemes, such as the PASS accredited Young Scot, CitizenCard or ProveIt card schemes. Table 4.5 shows that there were slightly higher levels of support for proof of age card schemes at baseline. Also, by comparing Tables 4.3 and 4.5 it would appear that the licensees seemed to prefer test purchasing to existing proof of age card schemes as an enforcement measure. It should be noted, though, that 38% ( $n=16$ ) of those licensees who failed the test at outcome said that proof of age card schemes which were already in existence were not a good idea.

Table 4.5 Views of proof of age cards by research phase

<b>Proof of age cards are:</b>	<b>BASELINE Frequency N (%)</b>	<b>OUTCOME Frequency N (%)</b>
<b>A very good idea</b>	54 (55.1)	44 (44.9)
<b>Quite a good idea</b>	26 (26.5)	29 (29.6)
<b>Not a very good idea</b>	5 (5.1)	12 (12.2)
<b>Not a good idea at all</b>	13 (13.3)	13 (13.3)
<b>TOTAL</b>	98* (100.0)	98* (100.0)

Notes to table \*Don't know/Can't say = 2.

At outcome, 99% of licensees stated that they would ask for proof of age information (cards, driving licences, passports etc) if they had doubts that the person purchasing alcohol was above the age of 18 or 21 years (see Table 4.6). Even given the fact that the percentage of licensees giving a similar response at baseline was relatively high (92%) this difference was statistically significant ( $P < 0.05$ ), suggesting that the pilot had affected reported behaviour.

Table 4.6 Requests for proof of age cards/information by research phase

<b>If a customer might be underage would you ask for proof of age info:</b>	<b>BASELINE Frequency N (%)</b>	<b>OUTCOME Frequency N (%)</b>
<b>Always</b>	92 (92.0)	99 (99.0)
<b>Mostly</b>	6 (6.0)	1 (1.0)
<b>Sometimes/rarely/never</b>	2 (2.0)	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	100 (100.0)	100 (100.0)

#### 4.1.5 Training of staff and licensee practice

Table 4.7 shows that there was some evidence of an increase in reported training levels of staff at outcome, with only one licensee who employed staff saying that no training was given. Over 83% of licensees who failed the initial test now reported giving at least ‘quite a lot of training’ to staff at outcome. Also, levels of reported training appeared to have increased particularly within the on sale sector at outcome, although 11 of the 16 respondents who reported giving staff little or no training represented on sale premises. However, at baseline only a slight majority of the on sales licensees said that they provided staff with at least ‘quite a lot of training’, compared with over three-quarters of on sale respondents at outcome.

Table 4.7 Amount of staff training by research phase

<b>Amount of training of staff re selling alcohol to young people:</b>	<b>BASELINE Frequency N (%)</b>	<b>OUTCOME Frequency N (%)</b>
<b>A lot of training</b>	30 (30.0)	29 (29.0)
<b>Quite a lot of training</b>	34 (34.0)	44 (44.0)
<b>A little training</b>	18 (18.0)	15 (15.0)
<b>No training</b>	9 (9.0)	1 (1.0)
<b>Not applicable (no other staff)</b>	9 (9.0)	11 (11.0)
<b>TOTAL</b>	100 (100.0)	100 (100.0)

Those licensees that gave training to staff were asked to describe it in more detail. The open-ended statements suggested that both formal and informal training was given to staff. However, there was wide variation in the amount of training offered. Supermarket respondents tended to report having active training programmes, sometimes encompassing test purchasing, as well as ensuring staff were all aware of relevant policies, and use of refusal books. Some public house licensees said that staff had attended ‘Serve Wise’ training sessions. On the other hand, many interviews argued that common sense had to be used and there was little training to be given, apart from ensuring that proof of age had to be asked for if staff were unsure as to the age of the purchaser. It should be noted, though, that respondents who reported extensive or minimal training programmes represented outlets that still failed the test.

*“Basically telling staff to be aware. If they don't look 21 years, ID them.”*  
Respondent 212 (Pub, Sold alcohol)

*“Attended seminar... Team briefings, notice boards, business policies, refresher training, awareness linked with CCTV, quiz and security tops on high-priced merchandise e.g., vodka. Post test purchasing I invited police into store to demonstrate the seriousness of an individual’s actions through a team brief...”* Respondent 215 (Supermarket, Sold alcohol)

*“Just common sense and being aware...”*  
Respondent 231 (Licensed Grocer, Did not sell alcohol)

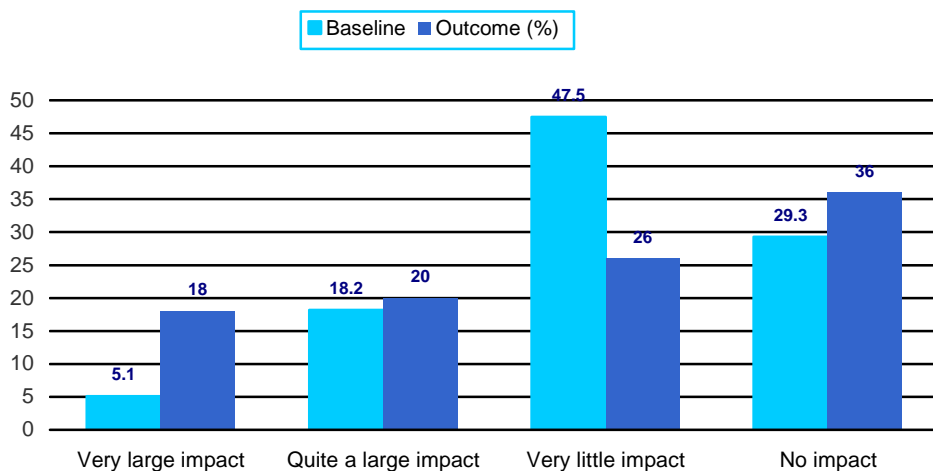
*“We use the Serve Wise course, 75% of staff have certificate... Staff awareness and refresher courses approximately every three months.”*  
Respondent 234 (Pub, Did not sell alcohol)

*“I send in random test purchasers. I insist they must ask for ID if they look under 18. Make them aware of the licensing laws about who and who not to sell to and to also be aware of people buying excessive alcohol.”*  
Respondent 315 (Licensed Grocer, Did not sell alcohol)

*“One lady she has worked for years, she knows what to do. One young girl of 16, she is the one who made the mistake. I have told her what to do but still she made the mistake.”* Respondent 417 (Licensed Grocer, Sold alcohol)

Figure 4-B demonstrates that licensees were more likely to state that the pilot would have an impact on their own retail practice at outcome compared with baseline, although 36% also said that the pilot would not affect their practice in any way. About 48% (n=20) of respondents who failed the initial test purchase visit reported that the pilot would have at least quite a large impact on their retail practice. However, 31% (n=13) of those that represented premises that failed the test also said that their retail behaviour would not change.

**Figure 4-B Perceptions of impact of test purchase pilot on own practice by research phase**



At outcome, 42% of respondents were unable to give an opinion as to how the pilot would impact on other licensees in the area (see Table 4.8). However, the majority of those able to give a view in both research phases thought that the test purchase pilot would impact upon the retail practice of other licensees.

Table 4.8 Perceptions of impact of pilot on practice of other licensees in area by research phase

<b>Impact of pilot on practice of other licensees in area:</b>	<b>BASELINE Frequency N (%)</b>	<b>OUTCOME Frequency N (%)</b>
<b>Very large impact</b>	21 (21.0)	15 (15.0)
<b>Quite a large impact</b>	30 (30.0)	28 (28.0)
<b>Very little impact</b>	17 (17.0)	10 (10.0)
<b>No impact</b>	4 (4.0)	5 (5.0)
<b>Don't know/can't say</b>	28 (28.0)	42 (42.0)
<b>TOTAL</b>	100 (100.0)	100 (100.0)

#### 4.1.6 Measures aimed at stopping alcohol sales to underage young people

The interviewees were asked what they thought the best way of stopping the sales to those who are under the legal age to purchase alcohol would be in the future. Table 4.9 shows that the most popular response at baseline and outcome was for test purchasing to be utilised in combination with the use of a robust, nationally-accepted proof of age card scheme (i.e. one not already in existence); 54% of licensees held this view. About one-quarter of interviewees thought that a move towards a nationally-accepted proof of age card scheme was the most appropriate way to restrict sales of alcohol to those under the age of 18 years. The “other” category was mainly comprised of those licensees who gave a combination of various options from Table 4.9. As a result, at outcome 57% of licensees called for test purchasing to be carried out, albeit in combination with other methods. At outcome 13% of licensees thought that there should be increased surveillance carried out by police officers (9% plus 4% in ‘other’ categories). It is important to note that there was very little support for the status quo and no support at all among licensees for test purchasing to be adopted in isolation.

Table 4.9 Licensee views of measures to restrict sales of alcohol by research phase

<b>Which of the following measures do you think is best:</b>	<b>BASELINE Frequency N (%)</b>	<b>OUTCOME Frequency N (%)</b>
<b>Test purchasing combined with a national proof of age card scheme</b>	55 (55.0)	53 (53.0)
<b>National proof of age card scheme alone</b>	25 (25.0)	27 (27.0)
<b>Other</b>	12 (12.0)	7 (7.0)
<b>No TP, more education and training of staff</b>	3 (3.0)	2 (2.0)
<b>No TP, increased surveillance (police, trading standards etc)</b>	2 (2.0)	9 (9.0)
<b>Test purchasing alone</b>	-	-
<b>No change, status quo is fine</b>	3 (3.0)	2 (2.0)
<b>TOTAL</b>	100 (100.0)	100 (100.0)

Twenty (48%) of those licensees that represented premises that failed the test purchase visit perceived that test purchasing combined with a new, national proof of age card scheme was the best way forward. It is also worth that about 15% (n=8) of respondents representing the

on sale sector, and seven of those interviewees who sold alcohol to volunteers, called for increased surveillance from police officers in the future.

#### 4.1.7 Views of the test purchase visit

All of the licensees interviewed at outcome were aware that a test purchase had been conducted in their retail outlet or bar. Table 4.10 shows that other senior staff members were serving during 50% of the failed test purchase attempts. However, senior staff sold alcohol on

Table 4.10 Staff member serving at time of test purchase by result of test purchase visit

Who was serving during test purchase?:	Sold alcohol N (%)	Did not sell alcohol N (%)	TOTAL N (%)
A senior staff member	20 (50.0)	25 (44.6)	45 (46.9)
A junior assistant	13 (32.5)	13 (23.2)	26 (27.1)
I was serving	3 (7.5)	17 (30.4)	20 (20.8)
Other	4 (10.0)	1 (1.8)	5 (5.2)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>40*</b> (100.0)	<b>56*</b> (100.0)	<b>96</b> (100.0)

Notes to table \*Can't say/Don't know = 2.

44% (20 out of 45) of occasions in which they were at the point of sale; whereas junior staff sold alcohol on 50% of occasions (13 out of 26). Table 4.18 (see page 31) supports the view that most failures resulted when junior staff were serving. It should be noted that nine of the 13 sales occurring when a junior member of staff was serving took place in bars, hotels or nightclubs. The 'other' category included temporary staff, members of family and premises which had been visited on more than one occasion, with different staff members serving.

Table 4.11 shows that staff in outlets which passed the test were more likely to state that the visit had been quite obvious to those concerned. However, it is worth noting that a majority of respondents who passed or failed the test said that the visit was not at all obvious. On sale respondents were more likely to say that the test purchases were quite obvious (over 30% said the visits were at least quite obvious). Alcohol was sold during five tests when, according to the interviewees, it was quite obvious to staff (presumably in retrospect) that it was indeed a test purchase visit.

Table 4.11 How obvious test purchase was to staff serving by result of test purchase visit

How obvious was test purchase visit?:	Sold alcohol N (%)	Did not sell alcohol N (%)	TOTAL N (%)
Very obvious	-	12 (22.2)	12 (13.2)
Quite obvious	5 (13.5)	5 (9.3)	10 (11.0)
Not very obvious	9 (24.3)	8 (14.8)	17 (18.7)
Not at all obvious	23 (62.2)	29 (53.7)	52 (57.1)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>37*</b> (100.0)	<b>54**</b> (100.0)	<b>91</b> (100.0)

Notes to table \*Can't say/Don't know = 5; \*\*Can't say/Don't know = 4.

Table 4.12 shows that licensees who represented premises which passed the test were twice as likely as those that failed the test to say that the visits had been conducted in a very fair manner. It is also important to note that the vast majority of all respondents argued that the tests had been carried out fairly. Twelve respondents felt unable to give a view, presumably because they were not on the premises when the visit took place.

Table 4.12 Perceptions of fairness of test purchase by result of pilot visit

How fair was test purchase visit?:	Sold alcohol N (%)	Did not sell alcohol N (%)	TOTAL N (%)
Very fair	9 (25.0)	26 (50.0)	35 (39.8)
Quite fair	17 (47.2)	20 (38.5)	37 (42.0)
Not very fair	6 (16.7)	4 (7.7)	10 (11.4)
Not at all fair	4 (11.1)	2 (3.8)	6 (6.8)
TOTAL	36* (100.0)	52* (100.0)	88 (100.0)

Notes to table \*Can't say/Don't know = 6.

As was the case at impact, the general consensus was that the test purchases were carried out quite fairly, the volunteers did not or were not made up to look over 18 years and if they were challenged by staff they told the truth about their age and accepted the staff member's decision. Some of the respondents added that members of staff had not followed procedures or had not been concentrating fully, for example, due to personal problems or believing the plain clothed officers to be acting suspiciously and thus lacked judgement when they sold to the volunteers. A minority of licensees, though, argued that the volunteers looked over 18 years of age, female volunteers were wearing make-up and male volunteers were very tall, and in a few instances the volunteers were quite persistent at the point of sale. Such cases were viewed as verging on entrapment. It was also stressed that it was very difficult to gauge the age of young people. Similarly, a few licensees thought that police might spend their time more fruitfully elsewhere, such as targeting groups of young people drinking in public places.

*“The barman actually said it was a joke. Two policemen came in first and then... two wee girls came in, they didn't look 15.”* Respondent 404

*“I've heard some people saying that they are dressed up to look older but at the end of the day that's what youngsters do so if it makes us even more careful then I don't mind if it's fair or unfair. We should be challenging young people and checking ID.”* Respondent 405

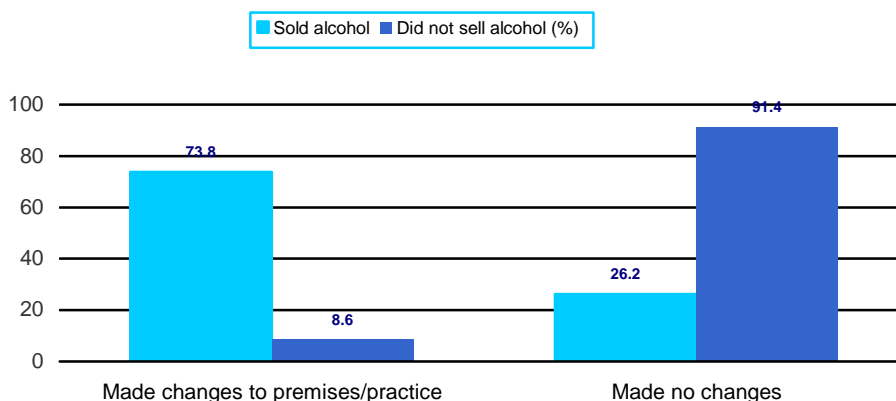
*“I think the whole system is unfair but I can't say if that actual test purchase was, I didn't see the person. It was just annoying because we are very vigilant anyway and the chap that was serving had had a bit of an upset that morning so he obviously wasn't entirely focused. As I say, I never saw the girl but one of the customers said the police woman looked younger than the girl!”*  
Respondent 413

*“There was no trickery involved, the youngster looked underage, admitted it when asked and there was nothing underhand about it.”* Respondent 427

*“We were warned that test purchasing was going on and after we were caught the first time the police were brilliant, they said ‘now tell your staff we will be back’. I did but it happened again. That's our fault, there isn't anything unfair or underhand about it, we were warned.”* Respondent 430

In total, 36% of licensees stated that they had made changes to their premises or their retail practice as a result of being targeted during the pilot phase. Figure 4-C demonstrates, though, that almost three-quarters of licensees representing premises that failed the test (n=31) reported that changes had been made to their retail practice.

**Figure 4-C Changes made to premises and retail practice as a result of test purchase visit**



Most interviewees stated that they were now more vigilant as a result of being targeted during the pilot, they had stressed to staff the importance of sticking to recognised procedures and to ask for proof of age documentation if they had any doubts. The serious consequences of failing test purchase visits or being caught selling alcohol to those below 18 years of age was underlined, and a few respondents said that staff members had been sacked as a result of selling alcohol to volunteers. Many comments were received which indicated that staff were now being advised to ask for proof of age from people up to the age of 30 years. Some licensees had now incorporated an ‘over 21s’ policy as a result of the pilot. Staff training as a whole appeared to have increased after the test purchasing took place. In some cases new policies and procedures had been adopted as a result of staff failing the test purchase test, and in one case the shop no longer sold alcohol. Those licensees who reported that no changes had resulted tended to state that they had already implemented quite robust training protocols and that staff were fully aware of their responsibilities.

*“If under 30 years ask for proof of age. The public hate it but should carry ID, it is the only way to protect yourself.” Respondent 205*

*“We have highlighted the over 21s sign and they will be ID'd if they look under 21. We have reduced the number of alcopops on display and reduced the number of single cans. We sell them in multipacks now which discourages young people to ask because they're more expensive.” Respondent 315*

*“We've decided not to sell alcohol anymore... It's such a limited part of our merchandise that it's hard for staff to stay focused and ask for confirmation of age... It's not worth me putting someone else through the course; then you have all the Sunday carry on where it has to be covered up. I'm quite glad to be rid of it.” Respondent 408*

*“We are much more vigilant now and we've put in CCTV so I can check on everything. It makes staff more aware if everything being recorded. I've also put signs up on the till to remind staff to check.” Respondent 418*

The licensees were asked if they wanted to make any additional comments. Most of those who responded argued that test purchasing was a good idea, although it should not operate in isolation. Other interviewees thought that it would not address the issue of adults buying alcohol for younger people, and police should also be dealing with large groups of young people drinking on street corners or public parks. Many in the on sales trade argued that test purchasing should be focused on specific shops which were said to be openly flouting the law. A few licensees also called for more support to be given to them by police officers working within the community.

## **4.2 VOLUNTEER INTERVIEWS**

### **4.2.1 Background information**

The interim report covers the views of the first group of six volunteers who were interviewed during the baseline and impact research phases. However, five more volunteers were recruited to take part in the evaluation and were first interviewed in November 2006 and then again towards the end of the pilot in April 2007. The interviewees were all aged 16 years at the time of the interviews. The interviews were carried out with three male and two female volunteers, and each area of Fife was represented.

### **4.2.2 Involvement in the test purchase pilot**

The volunteers said that they had been sold alcohol on a total of twenty occasions, with one interviewee stating that he had been sold alcohol on 10 separate occasions. All of the volunteers had been sold alcohol at least once.

### **4.2.3 Training and briefing for the pilot**

As was the case with the first cohort of interviewees, the volunteers reported that the briefing they had received from the police had been very thorough and had covered every aspect of the pilot. No changes were suggested.

*“Because I knew exactly what to do, I knew what was going to happen whether I was sold alcohol or not. I didn't have to ask, it was all explained.”*  
Respondent 2

### **4.2.4 Parental reaction to involvement in the pilot**

The volunteers thought that their parents were very much in favour of their participation in the pilot. It was said that the parents' views were that it was good work experience and also beneficial for the community.

### **4.2.5 Perceptions of the test purchase visits**

The respondents were asked what they liked and disliked about taking part in test purchase visits. At the outcome phase the volunteers stated that they liked being paid for the work, test purchasing could be an interesting experience and it was worthwhile to have an insight into the work of the police. On the other hand, the interviewees reported that it could be embarrassing to be asked for their age during actual visits, and it could be quite boring to wait for police to finish the necessary paperwork after a sale had occurred.

*“The money was good but apart from that I thought it was an interesting thing to do, a new experience... it was quite strung out, we would be out for about four hours but only make two visits. The hanging about could be a bit boring, it takes a while to process things when there has been a sale.”* Respondent 3

The volunteers all said that taking part in the pilot had been very much as they had expected, as the police had covered all possible scenarios during the initial briefing. No interviewee was able to give an example of any surprise events that had arisen during the pilot.

The volunteers reported that they were no longer participating in the pilot as either the project had ended in their area or they had turned 17 years of age.

#### **4.2.6 Future test purchase exercises**

All of the volunteers indicated that they would be willing to take part in future test purchase exercises if they were of an appropriate age. This was also the case with the six volunteers who took part in the earlier phase of the project. The five interviewees went on to say that the experience had been good fun, they enjoyed being paid for their time and they had hopefully been responsible for helping the community in some way. Indeed, this group of volunteers could not think of any changes which would improve future test purchase projects.

*“I enjoyed it, it was not hard, and it did some good.”*

Respondent 4

*“It was fun. I got paid, it was good experience and I saw how some shops operated and behaved.”* Respondent 5

## **4.3 INTERVIEWS WITH PARENTS**

### **4.3.1 Background information**

The interim report addresses the views of the first group of six parents who were interviewed during the baseline and impact research phases. However, five more volunteers and their parents and carers were recruited to take part in the evaluation and were first interviewed in November 2006 and then again towards the end of the pilot in April 2007. Four mothers and one father were interviewed.

### **4.3.2 Awareness of the progress of the test purchase pilot**

The parental respondents said that that they had been quite or very well informed by the police officers throughout the pilot. No individual had any complaints about the level of information provided by the police, although a few comments were received which suggested that the volunteers did not always say a great deal about the experience to their parents.

*“We had a visit from a police woman before it started and that was very informative. She explained everything and I didn't have to ask any questions. Each time she has been out, the police have been very good at telling us when she would be picked up and dropped off.” Respondent 2*

### **4.3.3 Perceptions of the training and briefing programme**

The interviewees reported that the briefing given to volunteers by police officers was thorough and prepared them for their participation in the pilot. It was also said that a volunteer had spoken to young people who had carried out test purchases before to gain more understanding of the processes involved. One parent thought that it was very difficult for police to prepare volunteers for every possible eventuality.

*“I don't think you can ever know exactly what to expect with something new. They did explain what would happen in the different scenarios if alcohol was sold or not.” Respondent 3*

### **4.3.4 Views of volunteer participation in test purchasing visits**

The parents were asked what the volunteers had liked best and least about taking part in the pilot. According to this group of parents at outcome the volunteers liked getting paid or rewarded for their work, they enjoyed providing a public service by working alongside the police and they found it quite exciting when they were sold alcohol. A few of the negative features noted by volunteers included the delays encountered when police had to inform or charge shop or bar staff, the fact that in certain areas the police were taunted by members of the community and other commitments clashed with possible test purchase activities.

*“The money and I would say that getting to know the law was the best thing... When they asked her to do it over and over again. She turned it down the last time because she's got a boyfriend now so she doesn't have so much free time.” Respondent 1*

*“When she was sold alcohol, she thought that was quite exciting. That and being taken by the police for coffee and cake to a café... I think there was quite a lot of hanging around when they were out, that's all.”*

Respondent 2

*“He didn't like the rough areas; people were shouting at the police and taunting them.”* Respondent 5

Two parents admitted that they had slight concerns about their children taking part in the pilot. One respondent wondered how her daughter would cope with the actual test purchase visits, whereas the other interviewee worried that the volunteer might be taken to premises too close to the home environment. However, both of these respondents said that their concerns had been unfounded. On the other hand, all of the respondents thought that taking part in the pilot would have benefits for the volunteers. It was viewed as being good work experience and a confidence-building exercise for the young people concerned. The volunteers were also thought to have appreciated working with the police, gaining an insight into the law related to alcohol sales and carrying out a worthwhile service for the community.

*“Because she was nervous but she carried it out and realised she could, so that was good for her confidence.”* Respondent 2

*“I think it's a good learning experience, it's given him an insight into police work, what goes on behind the scenes, that sort of thing.”* Respondent 3

#### **4.3.5 Future test purchase exercises**

Two of the parents said that they were unsure as to whether their children were still actively involved in the test purchase pilot, whereas the other respondents said that the volunteers had completed their work. Reasons given for the volunteers no longer participating in the pilot were that the pilot itself was at an end, the volunteer had turned 17 years of age and, in one case, the view was taken that the volunteer looked older than his actual age.

*“They decided he looked too old. Some of the people that sold him alcohol disputed that he could only be 16.”* Respondent 3

All of the parents said that they would be willing for their sons or daughters to take part in future test purchase projects if they were of an appropriate age. This was due to the fact that the perceived benefits greatly outweighed any negative factors or concerns. Indeed, this cohort of parents could not think of any ways in which the alcohol test purchase pilot could be improved upon.

*“Again, because it's good for her to be in a situation where she is a bit anxious but has to face up to things, that's how confidence is built. It is good for her to see how the police go about things and that people do actually get caught for selling to under age youngsters... I've given this some thought because I know you were coming but I can't think of anything to change.”*

Respondent 2

*“He enjoyed it, he enjoyed working with the police.”* Respondent 5

## **4.4 INTERVIEWS WITH POLICE STAFF**

### **4.4.1 Background information**

Four members of Fife Police Force were interviewed at impact and outcome. Three of the interviewees were interviewed during both phases, but due to a change of role a replacement was sought in one divisional area. The Interim Report covers the views of police respondents at impact, but at outcome the respondents were asked to reflect on the whole pilot exercise.

### **4.4.2 Test purchase test failures**

At outcome the respondents thought that more test purchase failures had resulted than they would have originally anticipated, especially when first visits were considered. Also, the amount of publicity given to the pilot meant that the level of first test failures was arguably relatively high. However, it was acknowledged that relatively few outlets failed the test purchase revisit as the pilot progressed, and as a consequence the pilot had been a useful education exercise for licensees and staff.

*“My first impression was we'd have a low failure rate because of the amount of information and literature we gave to the licensees but the rate of failures has been higher - we had 6 in one weekend. There was quite a difference in the second visits. I think some of the people serving did not fully appreciate the impact of failure - the learning curve from the first failure was immense.”*

Respondent A

### **4.4.3 Feedback from licensees**

The police interviewees tended to say that the licensees had reacted positively to the test purchase pilot. It was stated that licensees wanted to work with the police and had increased the training of staff and had placed relevant signage in the outlet as a result of the pilot. Due to the increased awareness of the issues surrounding young people and alcohol it was also reported that a number of adults had been reported to the procurator fiscal for purchasing alcohol on behalf of those under the age of 18 years. Negative feedback from licensees had also been received – in most cases the complaints came from those that had failed the test.

*“A lot of them want to work with you. They have introduced more training to their staff and asking people for identification, they don't want to encourage under age drinking.”* Respondent B

*“...we've had I think at least 2, possibly 3 cases of adults being reported to the Procurator Fiscal for purchasing alcohol and this is basically because of the raised awareness with shop staff, they're getting their suspicions that somebody is buying alcohol for kids outside, we're going along, getting the CCTV evidence, interviewing the kids and then getting evidence against adults so... it's been a positive add-on to the initiative.”* Respondent C

### **4.4.4 Views of volunteer participation in test purchase pilot**

As was the case at impact, the recruitment and briefing of volunteers was viewed as being very successful. Some initial teething problems were noted, such as bureaucratic problems

relating to the use of volunteers, or the fact that a minority of volunteers were not always available for test purchase activities when they had indicated. However, after initial teething problems were dealt with, the police respondents thought that the majority of volunteers recruited were very reliable and participated in the pilot with few problems.

The police interviewees perceived that the main benefits the volunteers had experienced as a result of their participation in the pilot were that they had gained worthwhile work experience and an insight into police work. Some volunteers were said to have become more confident as a result of taking part in the pilot. Also, the fact that volunteers were paid for their time was thought to have added to their enjoyment. Only one respondent was able to think of a negative issue that had been mentioned by a few volunteers. This was that a few volunteers could be disappointed if a sale did not result during a test purchase visit, and they also argued that to make the test purchase scenario more realistic they should have been allowed to say that they were 18 years of age.

*“... if they were involved in an operation and they never got served then they were disappointed and you’ve got to manage that disappointment... some of them clearly said to us that they thought, as did their parents, why can they not say that they’re 18?... because they’re expressing to us that that would be more realistic.” Respondent C*

*“I always speak to them and their parents and... I’ve never had one single comment from a parent or a test purchaser that’s given me any concern at all about their participation.” Respondent D*

All of the police interviewees perceived that the volunteers would be willing to take part in future test purchase exercises, assuming that they were of an appropriate age. Volunteers were thought to have enjoyed the project, had benefited from their participation and had experienced few problems.

#### **4.4.5 Perceptions of success of the test purchase pilot**

The general consensus was that the pilot had been very successful at outcome. The fact that the police had managed to test all premises months ahead of schedule was thought to demonstrate how well the project had been organised and implemented. Also, it was thought that licensees had become more aware of the issues surrounding alcohol sales to young people, in particular after being subject to the first test purchase visit, and many were said to have tightened up procedures. However, the pilot was reported as resulting in an increase in adults buying alcohol for young people, which was beyond the scope of the project. Also, it was said to be a very resource-intensive exercise for the police.

*“It has been successful because everyone is aware now, even if they have failed once must have passed a second time because they are re-educating their staff; they are making it clear they don’t want to sell to underage people. Some are still getting drink but are getting older people to buy it for them..., this wasn’t covered in the pilot.” Respondent B*

*“... clearly there is a problem with adults purchasing on behalf of kids. We’ve had a number of complaints from licensed premises who have obviously raised their game, their levels of looking out, basically youths are*

*congregating outside giving members of the public hassle to go in and... purchase alcohol...” Respondent C*

*“... and it went really smoothly and I base that on the lack of complaints about anything from anybody and obviously the fact that we’re finishing the pilot about three months ahead of schedule, despite us having ... some significant implications in terms of staffing for the divisions.” Respondent D*

#### **4.4.6 Measures aimed at stopping alcohol sales to underage young people**

All of the interviewees thought that the best way of restricting sales to young people was to adopt alcohol test purchasing in combination with the development of a robust national proof of age card scheme. Not all of the police interviewees seemed convinced themselves that a national proof of age card scheme was needed, but added that the licensees were calling for such an approach, and therefore this would assist future joint working between police and the licensed trade. As was the case at impact, a proof of age card scheme was thought to help licensed trade staff get in the habit of asking for the buyer’s age, and the test purchasing visits could then assess how successfully retailers and bar staff were implementing such a policy.

*“I think the national proof of age card scheme is a good thing anyway, it’s certainly something the licensed trade vocally say would be appreciated in conjunction with test purchasing so number one I would say test purchasing combined with a national proof of age card scheme.” Respondent D*

#### **4.4.7 Ways forward for the test purchasing pilot**

At outcome the police interviewees were very positive about the conduct of the whole pilot. As a result they were unable to offer many suggestions as to how the process could be improved in other areas of Scotland, as initial problems such as heavy bureaucratic demands were said to have been already dealt with. One respondent hoped that it would be possible for other areas to carry out test purchases at different times of the week, but acknowledged that the availability of young people meant that restrictions would apply. However, the other suggestions related to addressing issues outwith the scope of the pilot. Issues which were thought to need addressing in the future included adults acting as alcohol purchasing agents for young people and the fact that those under the age of 18 years were able to sell alcohol; indeed this age group was viewed as being more likely to sell alcohol to their peers. The relative lack of suggestions of ways to improve test purchasing of alcohol in other areas of Scotland outlines the very positive impression the pilot had made on the police respondents.

*“... we are missing young people getting adults to purchase alcohol as well in the pilot scheme. As to the way the scheme has run itself, I don't think there is anything that could be improved. It has improved as it has gone along, with the reduction in paperwork.” Respondent B*

*“... I’ve been surprised at that you’ve had some shops... who have some people 15 or 16 years old selling alcohol... Our experience is that a lot of the times they don’t ask for authority and if they do the person to give them authority is too busy and they don’t really pay attention... I think that’s an unfair burden to put on somebody that age, I think... you have to be 18 to buy it then you should be 18 to sell it.” Respondent C*

## **4.5 INTERVIEW WITH PROCURATOR FISCAL**

### **4.5.1 Background information**

A procurator fiscal who had been involved from the early phases of the alcohol test purchase pilot was interviewed in May 2007. The interviewee stated that he had liaised with Fife Police months before the official launch of the pilot in order to formulate the operational protocols and that he had regular dealings with the police since. Also, the fiscal had an overall supervisory role for the criminal aspects of the investigation and prosecution related to the pilot. Due to the learning gained from the alcohol test purchase pilot, the interviewee said that he had given presentations about the scheme and would be involved in advising others as to how the pilot might be rolled out in other areas.

*“I was... involved with the police probably from about last April I would guess; in meetings regularly with the police, with X and the various police officers, so I was involved in the forming of...what the police call SOP – Standard Operating Procedures and the kind of template for reports that were coming in. And that continued fairly regularly, and I had meetings on a regular basis, or discussions on the phone, or meetings with X, and also with the police to hammer out a few issues that arose...”*

### **4.5.2 Status of the pilot in Fife**

The fiscal reported that the police were to submit reports every time there was a test purchase failure, but only after there had been a test purchase revisit within a fortnight of the initial failure. Hence, the reports which would reach the fiscal’s office would relate to licensed premises which had either failed both tests or had passed the second visit only. Due to the relatively small number of outlets which failed the test purchase revisit there had been little impact on the work of the courts at the time of the research, although some cases had yet to reach court. The interviewee also thought that it was important to note that there was not a typical test purchase failure scenario; that all types of licensed premises failed the test, from small grocers to public houses, supermarkets and petrol stations, and that all premises had to learn to be more vigilant. As a result of the pilot seven separate people (four licence holders and three employees) had been or were being prosecuted in relation to alcohol test purchasing failures at four separate licensed premises – in one of these cases which had been dealt with during the evaluation a licensee had offered a guilty plea to three separate charges and had received a £225 fine.

### **4.5.3 Impact on the workload of procurators fiscal and the courts**

The respondent indicated that the pilot had resulted in a substantial increase in his own and his office’s workload, but the impact on the courts had been minimal. This was due to the fact that the fiscal concerned had an active role from the early phases of the project, had regular meetings and discussion with the police and had to consider all reports when a sale had taken place. However, there had been few cases when licensed premises had failed the test twice, and the fiscal also had the view that most failures were due to careless practice by staff, for example, due to lack of appropriate education and training, rather than deliberate attempts by licensees and their staff to break the law. In total, court proceedings were raised in relation to failures at four licensed outlets during the pilot.

*“It’s been very resource intensive for the fiscal’s office, it’s had a minimal impact on the courts because... by the number of prosecutions you are not talking of much effect at all.”*

#### **4.5.4 Links between procurators fiscal, the police and licensing boards**

The relationships forged with the police during the whole pilot were viewed as being very positive and constructive by the fiscal. The interviewee stated that any problems had been ironed out quickly, and the pilot had progressed with few problems as a result. The major problem identified was that, after a very good start to the pilot, some police officers did not submit enough information to the fiscal, particularly in relation to the test purchase revisit. However, once this was pointed out to the officers concerned, the reports which were then submitted contained the required amount of information. The police force rather than the fiscal has contact with licensing boards, although the respondent said that the boards’ decisions had to be taken into account, along with all other relevant information. However, there was also said to be a clear distinction between the role of the licensing boards and the criminal prosecution. Licensing boards were said to need to consider whether licensed outlets were being run in an appropriate manner and, as a result, if a licence should be in operation, whereas the prosecution had to assess whether there was sufficient evidence to prosecute an individual and also if it would be in the public interest to do so.

*“... because at one point in the proceedings I was a bit concerned that they weren’t really investigating the cases as fully they should in relation to the licensee... it’s more in relation to gathering of evidence, and making sure that they properly carry out enquiries and properly interview the parties who are there. And...it started out okay but the information that was coming through in the reports as time went on wasn’t as good as it should be... So for a very short period I said ‘don’t submit any more reports unless they have this information’. And the police took very quick steps to remedy that because basically the police officers weren’t following the agreed process.”*

#### **4.5.5 Perceptions of success of the pilot**

The fiscal perceived that the pilot had been very successful. There were a number of reasons given for this, but the most important factors were that the pilot had sought to educate and inform licensees, and did not attempt to maximise the number of test purchase failures, and the links with police had been positive and there had been useful feedback between police officers and the fiscal’s office. The relative lack of prosecutions at the time of interview was also viewed as arguably being a sign of success, in that the publicity and provision of information to licensees was as much part of the enforcement programme as a whole, and few retailers or bar staff appeared to be breaking the law deliberately.

Few negative issues arising in the pilot were noted. The interviewee thought that the pilot was very resource intensive for Fife Police in particular. It was also stated that it would be useful to be able to link the number of test purchases with alcohol-related offences involving young people, and thus have some awareness of the cost-effectiveness of the approach, but the respondent acknowledged the difficulty of making such a direct association.

*“... I think it’s been very successful and... I would like to think it’s because we have taken a broader view, I could have viewed this very narrowly and just*

*taken the reports that came from the police,... whereas if there were any issues like that, I was going back to the police and discussing that with them and saying ... 'there are lessons to be learnt, let's try and get this correct, or I have taken no proceedings against this individual because of reasons A, B and C'. And there has been a healthy degree of feedback... the prosecution should not be viewed in isolation, the number of prosecutions... is not necessarily indicative of success... it needs to be seen as part of the bigger picture of enforcement as a whole”*

#### **4.5.6 Future of alcohol test purchasing in Scotland**

The fiscal was asked if there were any concerns if the pilot were to be rolled out across Scotland on the basis of the pilot, as well as what the major benefits of such an approach would be. As the pilot was viewed as being a success, and problems such as lack of information being submitted in police reports had been swiftly dealt with, the respondent had few concerns about test purchasing being adopted more widely. However, it was reported that any wider implementation should not be rushed, and it would be advisable to follow a similar approach to the pilot with an initial publicity drive and attempts to educate licensees in the first instance. For example, the training of shop or bar staff was not always viewed as being rigorous enough, and all types of licensed premises failed the test. Also, it was said that those licensees that fail test purchasing tests should be subject to criminal prosecution as the ultimate deterrent, when such a prosecution is in the public interest and there is evidence of a crime being committed against an individual. It was thought important, though, that the ultimate deterrent of prosecution remained, and that alcohol test purchasing had to be carried out by the police, and not other professional groups. Indeed, the close working relationship adopted by the fiscal and Fife Police during the pilot was thought to be worth replicating elsewhere when alcohol test purchasing is implemented across Scotland.

*“...prosecution is not the answer in itself... it's part of the enforcement process and it needs to be looked at in its context because that on its own will not stop people selling alcohol to folk under age. But one of the things that is very obvious in a campaign like this is if there is a failure then it's an ideal opportunity to properly educate licensees about the responsibilities and you have got them at a time when they are more likely to listen... a big part of this is down to a question of supervision and training then you are not necessarily going to cure that by having prosecutions. You are going to have to have the education there as well... That education message has to get across and prosecution as the kind of ultimate deterrent has value because people still see that, there is still stigma undoubtedly attached to a criminal prosecution.”*

## **4.6 VIEWS OF KEY LOCAL GROUPS**

### **4.6.1 Background information**

Three focus groups were convened in April and May 2007 with licensing board, community council and Fife Drug and Alcohol Team (DAAT) members. It was decided to convene these groups separately, and not to mix the respondent type in the three groups. Only three or four members attended each group. It is also important to note that the respondents acknowledged that they did not have a great deal of awareness or information concerning the way the alcohol pilot was conducted as a whole. However, licensing board representatives had knowledge of individual cases, and other groups were also able to comment on specific events or observations in their areas or related to their work.

### **4.6.2 Impact on the work of the key local groups**

The pilot had not resulted in a great increase in the work of the groups in question, although the different licensing boards had considered test purchase failures at their hearings and various subgroups of the Fife DAAT had had contact with the pilot at different phases, for example, due to the issue of volunteer recruitment. However, respondents from all groups were able to give their views in relation to the impact of the pilot on licensees, the police, young people and the criminal justice system as a whole.

*“... It was important that the board members had the opportunity to have an introduction to the scheme... And the judiciary... they were quite happy that we could deal with incidents where the police... the first (test failure) would be a warning, if they were caught again then they would bring that incident to the board so the board could take an independent decision on whether to suspend the licence or not...”*

*“It increased (workload) quite a bit because hearings sometime take quite a bit of time and in one situation we have had to then try and cope with a hearing being suspended because the individual couldn't attend...”*

Licensing Board Group

### **4.6.3 Links between the different groups, procurators fiscal and the police**

The different groups participating in the discussions reported few dealings with each other in relation to the pilot. However, all of the groups had experienced at least limited contact with the police, who had been informing members of any significant developments and also received feedback from the groups themselves, for example, in relation to places where young people were congregating with drink or outlets that were perceived as selling to those under the age of 18 years. Limited, if any, contact with the procurators fiscal was reported.

### **4.6.4 Impact of the pilot**

The focus groups addressed the impact of the pilot on the practice of licensees, as well as alcohol-related anti-social behaviour of young people and drinking cultures more generally. The general consensus was that the pilot had made most impact on licensees, as they had been forced to tighten up their retail practice and had become more aware of their responsibilities. Training of staff was now said to be a greater priority for licensees. In

addition, it was reported that public awareness of the issue had increased as a result of the pilot, and more calls were being received to alert the police that a particular outlet was selling alcohol to the under 18 age group.

In terms of impact on anti-social behaviour involving young people, and the drinking culture of young people in Fife, the pilot was viewed as having a limited impact at best. Examples were given of places or outlets where young people used to gather, but had moved on once the licensees had tightened up their practice or the police had targeted the youths themselves. However, the overall view was that in such circumstances young people were going elsewhere to drink, and that they were managing to access alcohol from other sources. It is important to note that every group perceived that there was an increase in the number of adults acting as agents for young people and purchasing alcohol as a result of the pilot.

*“Well before we had groups and it was always seven o’clock on a Saturday night you got them coming along, and you could see them actually standing outside the licensed premises... You don’t see them standing outside the shops in the same way. There might be still situations where they will get people to go in and buy alcohol for them...”*

*“It hasn’t stopped the under age drinking though, it is still going on in corners, in the public park, in the station gardens and other places like that...”* Licensing Board Group

*“I find that any experience I’ve had with it, it’s the older youths that are making the purchase ...and supplying the others on the street ...”*

*“... the issue has been addressing the selling of it, not the getting it, I don’t believe that the youth access to alcohol has been significantly restricted to assess any positive benefit within the community.”* Community Council Group

*“One of the groups I am involved in has the local licensee from X... sitting on the group. And they actually saw it as quite a positive thing because I think some of the licensees were sick fed up of all getting tarred with the same brush. ...they were quite pleased to see maybe some of the less reputable ones being challenged through this...”* Fife DAAT Group

#### **4.6.5 Perceptions of success of the pilot**

Not all of the respondents felt able to give a view as to the overall success of the pilot as they were unaware of the impact on sales of alcohol to young people or instances of alcohol-related crime. Those that did offer an opinion thought that the pilot had been successful, it had tightened up the practice of licensees in the area and had resulted in improved training programmes for staff, as well as increased requests for proof of age information, and there was an increased awareness of problems related to alcohol and young people among the general public. The licensing board representatives also thought that bar and shop staff were now aware that someone responsible had to be at the point of sale at all times, and that more outlets had adopted an over 21 years of age sales policy for alcohol.

Negative factors were also noted. As has been said, most respondents thought there was little or no evidence that young people’s drinking patterns had altered. Adults acting as purchasing

agents were also perceived as being more common as a direct result of the pilot. Respondents also stated that the pilot had been very resource-intensive for the police, although the unique demands placed on the police as a result of the blanket coverage necessitated by the pilot was acknowledged. On the whole, though, the pilot was viewed as being successful even if the view was that test purchasing alone would not solve problems related to young people's consumption of alcohol.

#### **4.6.6 Future of alcohol test purchasing in Scotland**

The respondents thought that there was merit in other areas adopting test purchasing. The pilot in Fife was viewed as being successful overall, and indeed one of the concerns expressed in the groups was that test purchasing should continue as it was thought likely that some licensees would revert to their previous practice if it were dropped or used sporadically after the pilot. In addition, a few comments were elicited calling for the extension of test purchasing to allow it to cover scenarios in which either 'agents' were acting for young people or licensees were asking for proof of age, knowing that only test purchasers would tell the truth in such circumstances. Although the general awareness-raising element of the pilot was noted, the general view was that test purchasing took up a lot of police time and other areas should use it in more of an intelligence-led way.

It was also stressed that test purchasing alone would not solve the problems related to alcohol and young people. Therefore, a joint approach incorporating education of licensed trade staff, increased parental responsibility in order to restrict young people's access to alcohol and other wider issues, such as increasing the price of alcohol and limiting special offers in supermarkets and other outlets, were proposed. As a few group members feared the criminal courts might become clogged up with licensees who had failed test purchases a system which incorporated fixed penalty fines was also put forward. The licensing board members also said that boards in other areas of Scotland should adopt a similar hearing system to the one they employed during the pilot, and they also hoped that other areas would allow licensing boards to arrange such hearings before the case had been dealt with by the criminal justice system.

*“Because in dealing with the hearing we are again dealing with a different situation. We were dealing with whether it is reasonable to consider that that person is not a fit and proper person to hold a licence and how long to suspend the licence. And that's been dealt with before it goes to court. But we are entitled to do that according to the criminal justice system. Now I don't know whether the rest of Scotland might say the same.”*

*“They might say we will wait until it goes to court first, and then bring...but we felt that this was the right way to deal with it in the (area of Fife)”*

Licensing Board Group

*“And I have heard of instances where licensees are asking everybody no matter whether you are 15 or 55, your age. And they know...if you are 15 and you say you are 18 then you are not part of the test purchasing process, so I have heard instances of that. And I suppose my only concern would be the need to make sure we keep it kind of fresh if you like, or else people are going to find ways around doing some of these things...”* Fife DAAT Group

## 4.7 TEST PURCHASE DATA SHEETS

### 4.7.1 Background information

In total, 900 data sheets completed by police staff who had taken part in test purchase visits from June 2006 to April 2007 were analysed by the research team. It is possible that a number of data sheets went missing – police final totals suggest that 916 visits took place – although the number missing is likely to be very small as researchers did not count data sheets, if for example, the shop was no longer open or two first test purchase visits were conducted by mistake. Table 4.13 demonstrates that very similar percentages of off sale (51%) and on sale premises (49%) were visited. About 40% of the data sheets were submitted by Central Division.

Table 4.13 Test purchase attempts by police divisional area

Type of outlet:	Police Divisional Areas			Frequency N (%)
	East N (%)	West N (%)	Central N (%)	
Off licence	3 (1.5)	7 (2.1)	7 (1.9)	17 (1.9)
Licensed grocer/shop	52 (25.9)	140 (41.2)	158 (44.0)	350 (38.9)
Supermarket	14 (7.0)	41 (12.1)	38 (10.6)	93 (10.3)
Public House	128 (63.7)	139 (40.9)	150 (41.8)	417 (46.3)
Nightclub/'Fun' pub	4 (2.0)	13 (3.8)	6 (1.7)	23 (2.6)
<b>TOTAL</b>	201 (100.0)	340 (100.0)	359 (100.0)	900 (100.0)

In terms of the 900 data sheets:

- 11% of outlets (n=98) had been interviewed by ScotCen researchers during the baseline evaluation phase before the test purchase test took place (presumably the other two premises interviewed at baseline either were no longer selling alcohol or were missing data sheets)
- About 62% (n=560) of attempts utilised the services of female volunteers
- About 13% (n=119) of licensees said that they had an 'alcohol sales to over 21 year olds' policy.

### 4.7.2 Test purchase visits

Although 900 data sheets were submitted to the research team, it is important to note that no test purchase attempt took place on 42 of these occasions for a variety of reasons including:

- The outlet concerned no longer sold alcohol or was closed during the visit
- The police officers decided that there was a possible risk for the safety of the volunteers (e.g. gangs of youths at the door of shop or bar), rowdy atmosphere in bar
- The licensee recognised one of the police officers conducting the visit.

In total, the data sheets covered 858 test purchase visits that culminated with an attempted purchase of alcohol (see Table 4.14). The vast majority of attempts (81%) were first visits to shops and bars, with 132 premises being subject to a revisit at the end of the pilot. The ‘other’ category was mostly comprised of premises that were reported as selling alcohol to young people as a result of intelligence received by the police. These were often revisits, but in this instance a failed first test was not the major reason for the repeated test purchase test. Most of the analysis below will focus on the first test purchase visits, as these are arguably the best assessment of the pilot exercise. Once an outlet has been visited as part of a test it tends to have an impact on the retail practice of the staff and they are probably less likely to fail the follow-up test purchase visit.

Table 4.14 Test purchase visits by type of licensed premises

Type of test purchase test:	Type of outlet		Frequency N (%)
	Off sales N (%)	On sales N (%)	
First visit	350 (79.0)	342 (82.4)	692 (80.7)
Revisit	61 (13.8)	71 (17.1)	132 (15.4)
‘Other’ visit	32 (7.2)	2 (0.5)	34 (4.0)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>443 (100.0)</b>	<b>415 (100.0)</b>	<b>858 (100.0)</b>

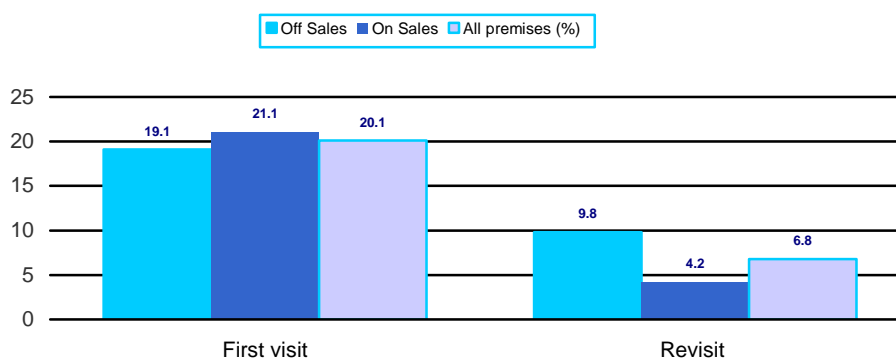
### 4.7.3 Outcome of test purchase visits

Table 4.15 shows that in total about 18% of all test purchase visits resulted in volunteers being sold alcohol. However, the percentage of outlets that failed the first test purchase visit was slightly higher, with one in five of shops or bars selling alcohol to volunteers. This table also suggests that there should have been 139 revisits; it is likely that there was misreporting of revisits as ‘other’ surveillance-related visits or a few data sheets went missing.

Table 4.15 Outcome of test purchase by type of visit

Type of visit:	Result of Test Purchase		Frequency N (%)
	Purchase made N (%)	Purchase refused N (%)	
First visit	139 (20.1)	553 (79.9)	692 (100.0)
Revisit	9 (6.8)	123 (93.2)	132 (100.0)
‘Other’ visit	3 (8.8)	31 (91.2)	34 (100.0)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>151 (17.6)</b>	<b>707 (82.4)</b>	<b>858 (100.0)</b>

Figure 4-D Percentage of premises failing test purchase tests by type of outlet



During the first test purchase visits similar percentages of off and on sale premises sold alcohol to young people (see Figure 4-D). Six shops and three bars or clubs sold alcohol to

volunteers during the revisit, and three other shops failed the test when they were targeted as a result of intelligence received during the pilot. In total, when all types of visit are considered, 18.1% and 17.2% of on and off sale premises respectively failed the test purchase tests.

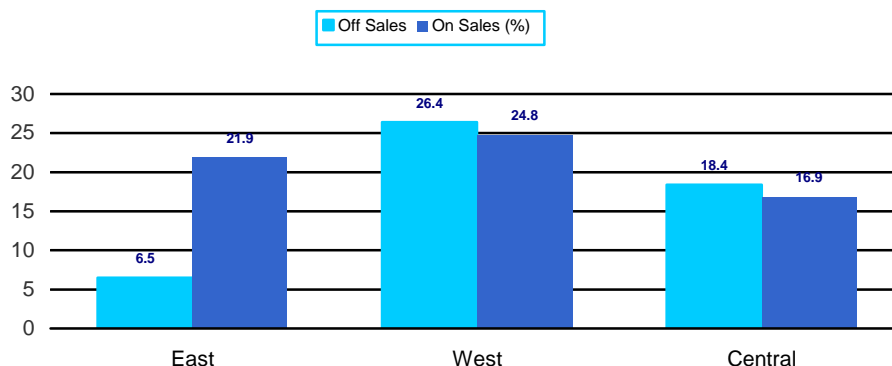
Table 4.16 demonstrates that sales of alcohol to volunteers during the first tests were higher in the Western area of Fife as opposed to the other two areas combined (25.6% vs 17.2%;  $P < 0.01$ : *i.e. the probability that the difference observed is real is greater than 99%*).

Table 4.16 Licensed premises failing first test purchase by police divisional area

Area of Fife:	Result of Test Purchase		Frequency N (%)
	Purchase made N (%)	Purchase refused N (%)	
East	27 (16.2)	140 (83.8)	167 (100.0)
West	61 (25.6)	177 (74.4)	238 (100.0)
Central	51 (17.8)	236 (82.2)	287 (100.0)
<b>TOTAL</b>	139 (20.1)	553 (79.9)	692 (100.0)

Figure 4-E demonstrates that there was very little difference between the on and off sales sector in terms of test purchase failures in West and Central Fife. The on sale sector, though, was much more likely to sell alcohol to volunteers in Eastern Fife (21.9% vs 6.5%;  $P < 0.01$ ). Indeed, despite the fact that the lowest level of sales to volunteers was observed in Eastern Fife, the level of sales in its on sale premises was greater than the percentage of achieved sales in either sector in Central Fife.

Figure 4-E Percentage of premises failing first test purchase by police divisional area



At outcome a higher percentage of male volunteers was sold alcohol during the first test purchase visit when compared with their female counterparts (23.2% vs 18.2%, see Table 4.17), but this was not statistically significant. Male volunteers obtained higher level of sales in Eastern and Central Fife, indeed the increased percentage of sales to male volunteers in Central Fife was statistically significant (24.2% male vs 12.6% female;  $P < 0.05$ ).

Table 4.17 Premises failing first test purchase visit by sex of volunteer

Sex of volunteer:	Result of Test Purchase		Frequency N (%)
	Purchase made N (%)	Purchase refused N (%)	
Male	60 (23.3)	197 (76.7)	257 (100.0)
Female	79 (18.2)	356 (81.8)	435 (100.0)
<b>TOTAL</b>	139 (20.1)	553 (79.9)	692 (100.0)

Figure 4-F shows that higher percentages of premises sold alcohol to volunteers during first test purchase visits as the pilot progressed. Sixteen percent of outlets sold alcohol to volunteers in the first phase of 2006 compared with 25% of premises in 2007 ( $P < 0.05$ ). It is possible, therefore, that after the initial publicity licensees were not as prepared for the test purchase visits in 2007 as they were at baseline.

**Figure 4-F Percentage of premises failing first test purchase by date of visit**

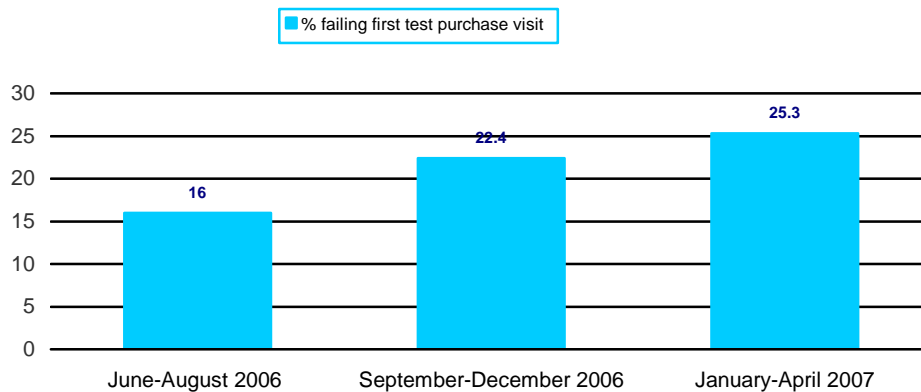


Table 4.18 shows that junior sales or bar staff were more likely to sell alcohol to volunteers during a first test purchase visit than more senior staff. Indeed, they were almost twice as likely to fail the first test purchase test when compared with the licence holders themselves ( $P < 0.01$ ). The ‘other’ category tended to be family members or cases in which the officers concerned were unsure as to the level of seniority of the staff.

**Table 4.18 Premises failing first test purchase visit by status of shop or bar staff**

Person at selling point:	Result of Test Purchase		Frequency N (%)
	Purchase made N (%)	Purchase refused N (%)	
Sales/bar assistant	109 (22.9)	366 (77.1)	475 (100.0)
Manager	9 (15.5)	49 (84.5)	58 (100.0)
Licence holder	16 (11.8)	120 (88.2)	136 (100.0)
Other	4 (80.0)	1 (20.0)	5 (100.0)
<b>TOTAL</b>	138 (20.5)	536 (79.5)	674 (100.0)

Notes to table \*Don't know/Can't say = 18.

There was little variation noted in the level of test purchase failures occurring in premises which had ‘over 18’ or ‘over 21’ policies. Similarly, premises which had been interviewed by researchers prior to test purchase visits had a similar level of sales to those which were not part of the baseline interview phase. When first test purchase visits are considered, proof of age documentation was requested on about 77% of visits ( $n = 541$ ). As would be expected, no sales resulted when shop or bar staff asked for proof of age documentation. In 90% of cases ( $n = 125$ ) sales of alcohol to volunteers resulted when proof of age materials were not requested. Presumably, in the remaining 10% of cases the person serving took the view that the volunteer was either under the age of 18 years or asked the volunteer directly for their age.

Table 4.19 suggests that licensed staff who had heard the radio adverts providing information about the alcohol pilot in Fife were much less likely to sell alcohol to volunteers compared with staff members who were unaware of the radio features (16% vs 33%; P<0.001). However, about 23% of the staff members in premises in which initial visits took place were unsure as to whether they had heard the adverts or not, and it might be argued that those who have just failed a test are less likely to say that they have heard relevant adverts. Although 57% of shop and bar staff targeted during the pilot for a first visit said that they had heard the adverts, this ranged from 47% of staff in Eastern Fife to 61% of staff in Western Fife (P<0.01). It should be noted that the highest percentage of test purchase failures occurred in Western Fife, despite having the highest reported level of awareness of the radio advertising.

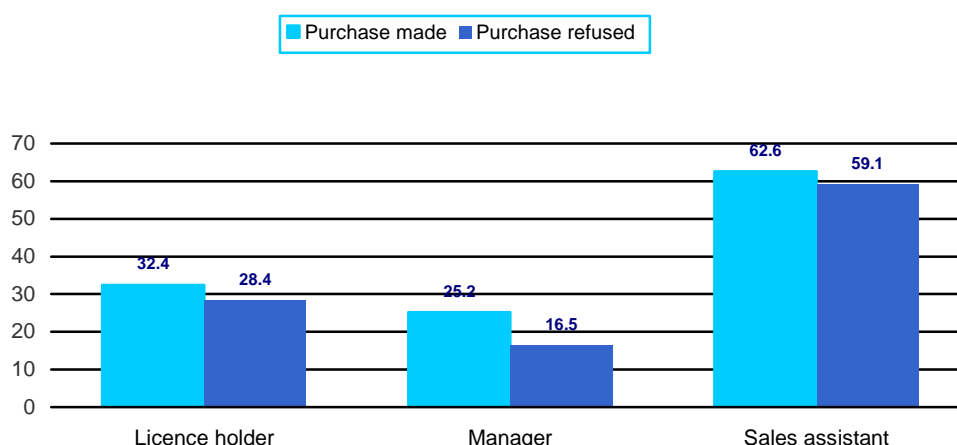
Table 4.19 Premises failing first test purchase visit by awareness of radio advert

Heard radio adverts?:	Result of Test Purchase		Frequency N (%)
	Purchase made N (%)	Purchase refused N (%)	
<b>Yes</b>	65 (16.4)	332 (83.6)	397 (100.0)
<b>No</b>	44 (33.1)	89 (66.9)	133 (100.0)
<b>Don't know/Can't say</b>	30 (18.5)	132 (81.5)	162 (100.0)
<b>TOTAL</b>	139 (20.1)	553 (79.9)	692 (100.0)

#### 4.7.4 Aftermath of test purchase visits

After the test purchase had been completed, the police officers involved either charged staff if a test failure had resulted or informed staff members that they had passed the test purchase test. Figure 4-G shows that junior assistants or bar staff were most likely to be informed, as they were most commonly at the point of sale, but that more senior members of staff were also informed if they were available when a test failure resulted. However, the interviews with licensees at impact and outcome show that the licensees were aware that a test purchase had taken place in their outlet, regardless of whether their outlet had passed or failed the test.

Figure 4-G Premises failing first test purchase by persons informed by police



## **5. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION**

### **5.1 VIEWS OF LICENSEES**

In total, 230 licensees were interviewed during the baseline, impact and outcome phases of the evaluation. All areas of Fife were represented in the research phases. Also, almost all of the licensees interviewed at baseline had not yet been targeted by the test purchase pilot, whereas the interviewees at impact and outcome had all been subject to a recent test purchase visit. At outcome, 42 interviewees were based in shops or bars that had failed the initial test purchase visit.

At outcome, there was clear evidence that the knowledge and awareness of test purchasing and the alcohol pilot had increased among licensees, with very few respondents stating that they knew little about the subject. At the start of the pilot there had been a major effort to inform licensees about the pilot via launch events, visits from police officers and media coverage. However, the evaluation suggests that the major learning associated with test purchasing among licensees took place when their outlets were subject to actual test purchase visits. This view is also supported by the fact that relatively few revisits resulted in sales, and most respondent types in the evaluation thought that licensees had increased staff training and tightened up their practice after the first visit.

Licensees' views of test purchasing as a measure did not appear to be as popular at outcome as they were at baseline. However, even allowing for the fact that 42 licensees at outcome represented outlets that had failed the test, 87% of all interviewees at outcome still perceived that test purchasing was at least 'quite a good idea'. In comparison, existing proof of age card schemes were thought to be 'quite a good idea' by three-quarters of respondents, suggesting that test purchasing compared with existing card schemes is preferred by licensees as an enforcement measure. However, as is pointed out below, in terms of restricting alcohol sales to young people licensees favour utilising test purchasing and a national card scheme in tandem. It is also important to note that the pilot had an effect on the reported behaviour of licensees, with all but one respondent stating that they would always ask customers for proof of age information if they had doubts that they were of an appropriate age to purchase alcohol.

Training of staff appeared to have increased at outcome; this was especially the case in the on-sale sector. Almost three-quarters of licensees now stated that they gave their staff at least 'quite a lot of training'. Only one respondent reported giving no training to staff members. It is important to note that the police, procurator fiscal and focus group respondents all felt that licensees had increased staff training as a result of being subject to a test purchase visit. Licensees themselves reported staff attending training courses, new training policies drawn up and a mixture of formal and informal measures utilised to assist staff develop good practice in relation to selling alcohol to young people.

The licensees were asked how likely it would be that their outlets would be targeted again after being visited during the test purchase pilot. Despite the fact that the pilot was at an end 90% of interviewees thought that they would be subject to test purchasing in the future. If this is a true reflection of the licensees' views it suggests that the pilot had impacted on both licensees' knowledge and behaviour and this was likely to be maintained for some time. However, in the absence of any test purchasing activities in their outlets it is a moot point as

to how long this impact on knowledge and practice would last. (In the pilot, though, Fife police did continue to utilise test purchasing as a standard enforcement tactic as the legislation introduced to cover the pilot was still in place.)

The most popular measure among licensed staff at baseline and outcome to reduce sales of alcohol to those under the age of 18 years was for test purchasing to be utilised in combination with a robust, nationally-accepted proof of age card scheme – 53% of respondents expressed this view. Given the fact that test purchasing was also proposed as the favoured way forward combined with other measures, at outcome 57% of licensees called for test purchasing to be part of a future enforcement regime. Also, almost one-half of interviewees who had failed the test purchase visit still called for the introduction of test purchasing as part of the enforcement armoury. Over one-quarter of respondents thought that a national proof of age card scheme alone was the best way to help restrict sales of alcohol to young people. At outcome it is worth noting that 13% of licensees perceived that there should also be increased surveillance work carried out by police to help support the licensed trade. Although there is no real support among licensed trade staff for either the status quo or test purchasing as an isolated activity, the licensees throughout the pilot have suggested that alcohol test purchasing in tandem with a national proof of age card scheme should be adopted to help restrict sales to those under the age of 18 years.

At outcome, all of the licensees interviewed were aware that their premises had been subject to a test purchase visit. Assuming that a proportion of these interviewees were not on the premises during the actual visit, this shows that more junior staff were informing them that a test purchase had taken place. In the sample of interviewees, the group at the point of sale who failed the test most frequently were junior shop or bar staff. The data supplied by Fife Police after they completed test purchases support this view. It also stresses the importance of training to assist more junior staff, and reflects a concern which will be addressed below that young people are more likely to sell alcohol to their peers, and arguably staff members should be 18 years if they are entitled to sell alcohol.

Despite the fact that most interviewees (76%) said that the test purchase visits were not very obvious to staff, the majority of these visits resulted in the outlet passing the test. Although the majority view was that the test purchase had not been obvious, 82% of licensees able to express an opinion reported that the visit had been conducted fairly. Ten respondents who were licensees in premises which failed the test said that it had been carried out unfairly, especially because the test purchasers looked older than 16 years of age. Again, though, this critical view of the conduct of the pilot was only expressed by a minority of licensees, and most of those that failed the test admitted the offence, and usually that the fault lay with the sales person.

Those interviewees who represented test purchase failure outlets were much more likely to state that they had made changes to their retail practice as a consequence of the pilot. However, the responses from licensees and other key informant groups does suggest that most licensees, regardless of the result of the test visit in their premises, had at the very least tightened up their retail practice and had become more aware of their responsibilities as a result of the pilot. Arguably, it was the blanket approach of test purchasing adopted during the pilot that was responsible for such an impact, as the publicity and media coverage might not have had a great impact on first time failures, whereas revisit failures were few.

## **5.2 VIEWS OF VOLUNTEERS AND PARENTS**

Six volunteers and their parents were interviewed at baseline and impact, with a different cohort of five parents and volunteers interviewed at impact and outcome. The 11 volunteers represented both genders as well as the three police divisional areas of Fife.

When the views of all of the volunteers and parents interviewed for the pilot are taken into account it is clear that they experienced very few problems throughout the pilot, and the volunteers would be willing to take part in such activities again. Indeed, these respondents did not stop participating in the pilot of their own accord, but usually when they reached the age of 17 years. In addition, the contact between the police and the volunteers was reported as being exceptionally positive, from initial recruitment, through the briefing to going out on test purchase visits. The volunteers and parents interviewed at outcome were unable to suggest any ways in which test purchasing activities could be improved. As a result, if other areas are to adopt test purchasing of alcohol it would seem sensible for them to employ as similar a method as possible as the one Fife Police utilised when dealing with volunteers and their parents.

## **5.3 VIEWS OF POLICE RESPONDENTS**

Four members of police staff were interviewed at impact and outcome. They were selected in order to reflect both strategic and operational viewpoints of the pilot, as well as to cover the different police divisional areas in Fife.

At outcome, the police interviewees were very positive about the pilot, its impact on licensees and their dealings with volunteers and parents. Licensees were perceived as reacting well to the pilot, and even to first test purchase failures, in the main. It was reported that licensees had improved their training function and had reviewed their retail practice as a result of the pilot, and it was a minority of licensees who had responded negatively to the pilot and to the fairness of the test purchasing. This view is supported by the responses of the licensees themselves outlined above. The police respondents also shared the view that test purchasing allied with a national proof of age card scheme should be adopted across Scotland in the future.

The police interviewees reported few problems related to the pilot. They did think that it had been a very labour-intensive exercise, and had been overly bureaucratic in its early phases. However, most problems had been addressed at the start of the pilot, and few if any modifications to the approach utilised in Fife were proposed to improve test purchasing elsewhere in Scotland. Indeed, these modifications tended to address issues that arose in the pilot but which were beyond its scope. Thus, it was said that test purchasing had resulted in an increase in the number of adults acting as ‘agents’ and purchasing alcohol for young people, and future activities might have to address this. In addition, the pilot had shown that young people at the point of sale were more likely to sell alcohol to their peers, and a call was made for a change in the law so that no-one under the age of 18 years would be allowed to sell alcohol in the future. The general view, though, was that there was considerable merit in rolling out the pilot as it had operated in Fife in other areas of Scotland.

## **5.4 VIEWS OF PROCURATOR FISCAL**

A fiscal with knowledge of the pilot from its developmental phase through to its impact on the criminal courts was interviewed at outcome.

The fiscal reported that one of the main reasons for the success of the pilot was that it had sought to educate and inform licensees, and had not aimed to maximise the number of licensees facing criminal proceedings after failing test purchase visits. As the fiscal had formed the view that few licensees were deliberately flouting the law in terms of alcohol sales to young people, it was stressed that support and the provision of information to licensees should be part of the enforcement programme, and the test purchasing pilot had been conducted in this way. At outcome, seven separate people (four licence holders and three employees) had been or were in the process of being prosecuted in relation to alcohol test purchasing failures at four separate licensed premises.

The interviewee stated that any problems that had arisen in the pilot, such as a lack of information being submitted in follow-up police reports, had been swiftly remedied. Indeed, the close working relationship adopted by the fiscal and Fife Police during the pilot was praised by the respondent and thought to be worth replicating elsewhere if and when alcohol test purchasing is implemented across Scotland. However, the interviewee did think it important that other areas also attempted to inform and educate licensees as part of their test purchase activities, as was the case in Fife, and counselled against the adoption of an immediate surveillance-led test purchasing regime operating in isolation. The fiscal also stressed that the ultimate deterrent of criminal prosecution should exist for any licensee who was thought to have broken the law in terms of alcohol sales to young people, if such a case were in the public interest.

## **5.5 VIEWS OF KEY LOCAL GROUPS**

Three focus groups were convened at outcome with members of licensing boards, Fife Drug Alcohol and Action Team (DAAT) and local community councils. With the exceptions of test purchase failures that reached the licensing boards, these groups had not had many direct dealings with the conduct of the pilot. As a result the respondents did not always have a great deal of knowledge of the pilot or how it had been running in Fife.

However, the respondents did argue that there were benefits in other areas adopting test purchasing. The pilot in Fife was thought to be successful overall, it had impacted favourably on licensees and their practice and had increased public awareness of the problems of alcohol sales (and its consequences) to young people. As was the case with other key respondent types above, the groups called for test purchasing to be used as part of the enforcement process, and for it to work alongside and not in conflict with the licensed trade. On the contrary, however, it was also stated that less scrupulous licensees would revert to old ways if test purchasing were to be used as part of a one-off drive, with no follow-up visits at later dates. Similarly, the extension of test purchasing activities to address scenarios in which either ‘agents’ were acting for young people, or licensees were asking for proof of age but still selling alcohol if the person claimed to be over 18 years of age. Limitations of test purchasing operating in isolation were also noted by these groups, and its likely effect on

drinking cultures was thought to be minimal, compared with wider issues such as the relatively cheap cost of alcohol at present.

## 5.6 TEST PURCHASE VISITS

At outcome the research team analysed 900 data sheets provided by Fife Police after test purchase visits had been attempted. The bulk of the analysis focused on the first test visits in which a purchase was actually attempted (n=692), as first visits are the best gauge of the retail practice of shop and bar staff.

During first test purchases 20% of premises failed the test purchase visit. Given the publicity launch, the media coverage and pilot information events for licensees, as well as actual visits to bars and shops carried out by police officers, the fact that one in five premises failed the first visit is arguably quite high. It is also important to note that on and off sale outlets of all types (apart from off licences) failed first test purchase visits. However, only 7% of premises failed the test purchase revisit, suggesting that the first visit had a great impact on the practice of shop and bar staff. In total, taking all types of test purchases into account, 17.6% of shops, bars and nightclubs failed the test. Due to the fact that licensees were often not on the premises during test purchase visits, police were only able to inform about one-third of licensees immediately after the test that they had been subject to a visit. However, interviews with 130 licensees at impact and outcome demonstrate that those that represented premises that had failed or passed the test were aware of the visit and its result.

Test purchase failure during first visits was related to:

- Area of Fife (26% failed in Western Fife compared with 16% in Eastern Fife). Eastern Fife does tend to be an area of higher socioeconomic status and is a more rural environment compared with the other areas of Fife, which might explain its relatively low level of test failure. It is possible that the increased level of test purchase failure also observed between Western and Central Fife might be due to pre-existing cultural aspects, with a drinking culture predominating in Western Fife whereas higher levels of use of other drugs is noted in Central Fife, according to previous police experience in dealing with incidents in these two areas. This might result in a culture in Western Fife in which alcohol sales to young people are more common due to increased demand. It is also possible that there was a 'volunteer effect', as occurred in the tobacco pilot, with specific volunteers in different areas achieving higher rates of alcohol sales.
- 'On' versus 'Off' Sales (Eastern Fife only: 22% of on sales failed compared with 7% of off sales). It is difficult to explain why this pattern of sale occurred in Eastern Fife.
- Sex of volunteer (Central Fife only: 24% of male volunteers were sold alcohol compared with 13% of females).
- Advancement of time after launch of pilot: (25% of outlets failed in 2007 compared with 16% of outlets between June and August 2006). This suggests that awareness of the pilot decreased over time after the launch period, and that being targeted as part of the scheme greatly increased licensee knowledge and awareness (see licensee interviews above).
- Junior staff being at the point of sale (23% of junior staff failed compared with 12% of licensees). This demonstrates the importance of training of staff, and might also reflect the view expressed by police interviewees that young people are quite likely to sell alcohol to their peers.
- Awareness of radio adverts. Those that claimed to have heard these adverts were much less likely to fail the test. However, almost one-quarter of licensed trade staff were unsure

as to whether they had heard the adverts or not, and it could be argued that those who fail test purchase tests are not as likely to say that they have heard radio adverts.

## **5.7 IMPLICATIONS OF THE ALCOHOL TEST PURCHASE PILOT**

The main aim of the research was to review the operation of the test purchasing pilot in Fife in relation to the safety and suitability of the operating procedures, the impact of the initiative, the views of those involved, and whether the test purchasing of alcohol could be effective while protecting the safety of the young people involved in the scheme and taking cognisance of the views of the licensed sector.

The evaluation also addressed whether or not the procedures in place worked or whether they needed to be adapted for future test purchasing exercises. However, after consideration of the conduct of the pilot and the publication of the interim report in February 2007 the decision was taken to allow other areas of Scotland to adopt alcohol test purchasing in the future. Therefore, the final report is able to offer some guidance as to how the roll out of test purchasing might be managed across Scotland, as well as issues test purchasing might not be able to address and which might need further consideration in the future.

It should be noted that an overall assessment of the impact of the test purchase on the consumption of alcohol by under 18s in Fife was not within the scope of the research. However, the evaluation of the pilot can help answer several important and related questions. These questions were raised and formulated after discussions within the project steering group, consideration of the implications of the tobacco test purchase pilot and through an inductive process when the research team analysed the data. The key questions are:

*Would it be possible to carry out test purchasing operationally across Scotland?*

Yes, although the particular demands of the evaluation meant that the process was very time consuming for Fife Police, all test purchasing activities were carried out very smoothly and with little difficulty. It is likely that other areas of Scotland would not have to adopt blanket coverage of licensed premises, although this approach has its own benefits (see below). It is difficult from this pilot alone to assess how alcohol test purchasing might transfer to more urban or rural settings in Scotland, but the pilot experienced no difficulties in any area of Fife, and the tobacco test purchase pilot operated in urban and rural environments and was perceived as being very successful across the board.

*Might other issues help explain test failures and the responses of licensees?*

The evaluation gathered the views of licensees in the on and off sale sectors in different areas of Fife, and also analysed test purchase failures by a number of key variables. It was evident in the licensee interviews in particular that the respondents represented different ethnic backgrounds, although only one interview refusal in the entire evaluation appeared to be related to language difficulties. However, when the test purchase data sheets and interviews with licensees were examined, the factors which tended to influence response or retail practice were the category of outlet, the area of Fife, the member of staff at point of sale and progress of time after the initial launch of the pilot. Ethnic diversity did not appear to influence responses at all, and would be difficult to assess in any case as the numbers involved in the licensee interviews would be relatively small. The higher level of sales that occurred in Western Fife, however, may reflect the relative deprivation and drinking culture that exist in that particular area.

*Would alcohol test purchasing have to operate in a radically different way when it is implemented in other areas of Scotland?*

No, in most respects, although this might depend on the approach taken across Scotland. However, there would appear to be merit in adopting the procedures utilised by Fife Police in that the pilot ran very smoothly. For example, the recruitment and training of volunteers could be carried out in a similar fashion; both volunteers and parents praised the conduct of Fife Police and the operation of the pilot. However, it is likely that other areas would not have to cope with the unique demands of the pilot exercise, and would not target such a high percentage of outlets or return evaluation data sheets to a research team.

*How effective was the publicity launch?*

In that the level of test purchase failure increased as time progressed after the first wave of publicity, it is likely that the launch had an immediate but relatively short-lived impact. However, knowledge of test purchasing and awareness of the pilot among licensees did increase over the course of the pilot, but this appeared to be due to the licensed premises being subject to test purchase visits. If other areas attempt a similar publicity launch, including press, radio and television features, licensee information events and individual visits to licensees, it is likely that there will be some impact on the views and practice of licensees in the short term, but that this will not be maintained without the introduction of a more extensive test purchasing scheme. However, it is also possible that different information and awareness-raising techniques might have a greater longer-term impact than was observed during the pilot in Fife.

*Would alcohol test purchasing reduce sales to underage young people?*

The results of the pilot would suggest that sales to volunteers increased (in terms of first test purchases) as time progressed, but licensees were much less likely to sell alcohol to volunteers once they had been subject to a first visit. It is probable that the pilot therefore did impact on licensee retail practice in relation to all young people, and certainly an increase in the number of adults acting as 'agent purchasers' for young people was noted in the outcome phase of the research. However, it is difficult to assess the impact of the pilot in the longer term, and as was the case with the tobacco pilot the effect of an enforcement regime which includes test purchasing can only emerge over a longer period of time when and if it becomes a permanent and widely-known feature of the licensed trade environment. This pilot also shows that the education and training of licensed trade staff, which was said to increase as the pilot progressed and especially after a first test purchase failure, is vital if alcohol sales to young people are to be reduced.

*Did the pilot result in a decrease in anti-social behaviour among young people in Fife?*

There is no evidence that the pilot had any impact on alcohol-related crime incidents involving young people. Given other societal and cultural factors, as well as the fact that there were no control areas included in the evaluation, it would have been very difficult to equate any decrease in crime statistics involving young people under the influence of alcohol with the operation of the pilot in any case.

*Should other areas adopt a 'blanket' test purchasing approach?*

The pilot was very labour-intensive for Fife Police, but it is unlikely that other areas of Scotland would attempt to cover such a high percentage of licensed outlets and would instead concentrate test purchasing activities on premises which were believed to be selling alcohol

to those under the age of 18 years. Yet, there appeared to be merit in the approach adopted in Fife. The greatest learning from licensees appeared to take place once their outlet had been subject to a test purchase visit. In contrast, bars and shops visited for the first time tended to be more likely to sell alcohol as time progressed, suggesting that a publicity launch is not sufficient to impact on practice. Also, the evaluation suggests that premises which failed test purchase visits were often places that would have been expected to pass, whereas intelligence-led tests often resulted in no sale of alcohol to volunteers. A way forward for other areas of Scotland might be to target as large a random sample of shops, bars and clubs as possible in the first instance, and then to also employ intelligence-led test purchasing alongside and after this initial wave of visits.

*Would more widespread implementation of test purchasing meet great hostility from licensees?*

On the contrary, the pilot suggests that a majority of licensees favoured alcohol test purchasing to be implemented with other measures, including the development of a robust, national proof of age card scheme. Even those licensees who failed a test purchase visit tended to rate test purchasing, in combination with other measures, as their preferred enforcement approach. There was very little or no support for the status quo or for test purchasing to operate in isolation. As might be expected, a minority of licensees were strongly critical of test purchasing, particularly among the group that had failed a test. However, most licensees thought that the test purchasing visits had been carried out fairly and supported the use of test purchasing in the future.

*Would there be significant problems for volunteers and/or their families?*

On the basis of this pilot exercise volunteers and their parents enjoyed the experience and would be willing to be involved in a similar way again. So few criticisms or concerns were raised by volunteers and parents that it would seem sensible to involve future test purchasers in other areas of Scotland in a similar way to the model utilised by Fife Police. However, at the time of report writing it was impossible to examine the impact on a volunteer of being cited to appear and giving evidence in court.

*Would test purchasing impact greatly on the work of procurators fiscal and the courts?*

The alcohol pilot had little impact on the workload of the courts at the time the evaluation was completed, although three separate cases were pending (also one licensee had offered a guilty plea to three separate charges and had been fined). As a fiscal was involved in the pilot from its planning phases to completion it did create some work for this individual and the fiscal's office. If other areas took the decision to prosecute after a first failure, and not solely after a test purchase revisit failure, the impact on procurators fiscal and the courts is likely to be greater.

*Should test purchasing be implemented in isolation?*

Although there was no suggestion that test purchasing would ever be implemented in isolation, it is clear that licensees would favour alcohol test purchasing to be combined with a robust national proof of age card scheme. It is likely that licensees would find test purchasing to be acceptable if it were to be combined with such an approach, or if the test purchasing were to be conducted in a similar way as to the Fife pilot, with education of licensees forming a key component of the test purchasing exercise. Still, any attempts to adopt test purchasing on its own would not be supported by licensees, or indeed any other key stakeholder group which took part in the evaluation.

*Might test purchasing or the law have to adapt in the future?*

Three issues were raised in the pilot which might have an impact on future test purchasing activities and/or the law concerning alcohol sales to young people. Firstly, it was claimed that some members of shop or bar staff were aware of the test purchasing modus operandi and, in particular, the need for honesty from volunteers, and would refuse to sell to test purchasers who admitted their real age but would sell to other young people if they said that they were 18 years old. If this is indeed a problem or is found to be one in the future it might be necessary for a minority of test purchase visits to allow volunteers to lie about their age, although this also has the potential to antagonise licensees. Secondly, a number of respondents mentioned that adults acting as ‘agent purchasers’ for young people had become much more common in Fife as the pilot progressed. Again, if this is true it might be possible to set up a test purchase scenario in which an adult is seen to buy alcohol for young volunteers in view of staff. However, adults acting as agents in this way is already against the law, and indeed it was said that charges had been brought against individuals in Fife during the pilot for this very reason, without the need for a test purchase scenario. Finally, concern was expressed that young people under the age of 18 years were occasionally responsible for selling alcohol with inadequate supervision. This was thought to be unfair for the individuals concerned, sales to young people were perceived as being very likely in such situations and a proposal was made that only those that were old enough to buy alcohol legally should be allowed to be in charge of its sale.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

The Fife alcohol test purchase pilot progressed very smoothly and with few difficulties. At outcome there was evidence that there is a greater level of support for alcohol test purchasing to be adopted than was the case for tobacco test purchasing during a previous pilot, with a majority of licensees arguing that test purchasing should be implemented more widely, although in combination with a robust national proof of age card scheme, and other measures such as increased surveillance by police and education of retail staff. It is important to note that there was little support for either the status quo or for alcohol test purchasing to be implemented in isolation. It should also be noted that the volunteers enjoyed participating in the pilot and all were willing to take part in future test purchasing activities.

Although the pilot was viewed as being very successful other issues arose which might need to be addressed in the future. It was stated that the pilot had resulted in an increased number of adults being asked to purchase alcohol by groups of young people outside retail outlets. Also, respondents claimed that a few licensees were taking advantage of the fact that test purchasers would admit their real age and would knowingly sell alcohol to young people if they said that they were 18 years old. Finally, the issue of young people having responsibility for the sale of alcohol with inadequate supervision was a cause of some concern, and suggestions were made that the laws concerning alcohol sales might have to be modified.

Therefore, at outcome the general consensus was that the pilot had operated as well as could have been expected, and according to many respondents it had even exceeded expectations. It is likely that the approach adopted in Fife, with licensees being informed of the pilot and offered advice and support after test purchases had taken place, was responsible for its smooth running and the favourable reaction from key interest groups. If other areas adopt a similar test purchasing system this pilot would suggest that there are few grounds for concern, and it is probable that a majority of key stakeholders including licensees, police and volunteers would be quite receptive to the wider implementation of alcohol test purchasing.

