

2026 REPORT

**BLACK
LIVES IN
MUSIC**

RACE EQUALITY IN MUSIC EVENT LICENSING



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PROJECT REMEL

A MESSAGE FROM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

This report is the collective voice of artists, promoters, venue owners, and communities who have been silenced for too long. What you will read here is only a snippet of the body of evidence we have gathered, and our work is far from over.

I am deeply grateful to the many voices that contributed to this work and have done so with remarkable courage. I thank you, and I honour you. Your testimonies are powerful. They are not simply data insights, they are lived realities. They are the stories behind every closed venue, every cancelled show, every opportunity lost.

I hope this report makes you feel heard. This report stands as evidence that what you've been saying all along is real. And more importantly, I hope it leads to lasting change because reform is overdue, and it's essential for justice, for creativity, and for the future of our culture.

Licensing doesn't just affect a few artists or a handful of events. It touches every part of the music ecosystem from the young artist trying to get their first gig, to the promoter building a platform for emerging talent, to the local venue that brings life to a community. When licensing decisions are shaped by racial bias and overpolicing, it suffocates creativity, stifles entrepreneurship, and blocks economic opportunity.

It limits who gets to perform, who gets to work and who gets to build generational wealth through culture. It denies entire communities the right to express themselves freely and to

contribute to the very heartbeat of this city's nightlife. And in doing so, it holds back not just individuals, but the growth of the entire music and night-time economies that make London one of the world's greatest cultural capitals.

We have included several evidence reviews alongside this report, each one uncovering more of the systemic inequalities that have gone unchallenged for far too long. I invite you to explore them, to read the voices behind the statistics, and to understand the weight of what has been endured.

To music industry leaders, to those in government, in local councils, and in the Metropolitan Police Service, you now know what's happening.

This is your opportunity and your responsibility to act. To create a licensing system rooted in fairness, transparency and equality. To build trust where it has been broken. And to ensure that the next generation of artists, no matter their race or background, can create, perform and thrive without fear.

Change will not come from words alone. It will come from courageous, consistent and accountable action. The time for that change is now.



Charisse Beaumont
Chief Executive,
Black Lives in Music

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For over 100 years, Black and South Asian people working in the UK live music industry have spoken out about discrimination, profiling, and the systemic barriers they face.



And for just as long, those experiences have been ignored, dismissed, or buried under claims that there's "not enough evidence."

The REMEL Report brings that evidence.

This landmark research exposes how live music licensing in London disproportionately targets Black and South Asian artists, promoters, and venues. It reveals how concepts like "safety" and "risk" are racialised and weaponised to shut down events, block access to stages, and silence creativity.

This report highlights the enduring impact of Form 696, which was scrapped by Sadiq Khan in his first term as Mayor of London in 2017. The evidence presented in this report outlines the patterns and the mechanisms that block access to stages, audiences, and opportunities. Not because of a lack of ability or professionalism, but because of who people are and the music they represent. These patterns restrict opportunity, stifle creativity, and harm livelihoods.

We find that:

- Current risk assessments and licensing policies, rooted in the legacy of Form 696, unfairly scrutinise Black and South Asian genres, artists, and audiences.
- "No Promoted Events" clauses, such as the City of London's Model Condition 2, operate as blanket bans on third-party promotions, effectively excluding Black and South Asian promoters from the borough.
- Temporary Event Notices (TENs) are more likely to be refused in London's most diverse boroughs, restricting opportunities for Black and South Asian-led events.
- Licensing acts as a cultural gatekeeper, determining which artists and entrepreneurs are allowed to perform, build audiences, and grow their careers.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There is a significant **economic impact** as a result of this disproportionality:

£141
MILLION

An estimated £127 million to £141 million in lost live music spend annually in London¹

£650
MILLION

Over five years, at least £650m in foregone spend would be expected, impacting the entire economy.

We also examine the mental health impact and cultural silencing that comes with repeated exclusion.

The evidence shows that these impacts have led to displacement, loss of opportunity, and an unequal system that holds the entire music ecosystem back.

We recommend licensing reform, fairer processes, greater accountability, and consistent, transparent decision making.

The REMEL Report builds on Black Lives in Music's groundbreaking 2021 report, *Being Black in the UK Music Industry*, but goes further by lifting the lid on a system that has rarely been challenged and urgently needs to change.



¹ Key inputs to this estimate are the proportions of events that have been affected, estimated by a small number of music venue promoters, and booking agents. Section 3.1 describes the approach to arriving at this range. Nevertheless, the authors consider the range to be plausible given all the other evidence presented in this report.

Justine Simons OBE

Deputy Mayor for Culture and the Creative Industries, Chair of REMEL Steering Group

"London's music scene is one of our greatest strengths, but this report shines a spotlight on the deeply concerning challenges facing Black and South Asian-led music events. We must all work together to tackle the unacceptable inequalities uncovered by this report and ensure all music businesses can thrive on a fair and equal footing. The Mayor is committed to doing all he can to help, and his new licensing powers from Government will give us a say in local policies and support our capital's nightlife, as we continue to build a better London for everyone."



Naomi Pohl

MU General Secretary

"The Musicians' Union is proud to stand behind the REMEL Report's findings. As a core project partner, we committed to addressing racial inequalities in live music licensing, and holding those with the power to make positive change to account. Music made by and for communities from the Global Majority hold huge cultural value in the UK, and it is vital that all relevant parties work to ensure these communities are treated fairly within licensing processes. The cancellation of live music events due to racial inequalities means the loss of work opportunities for underrepresented musicians, the loss of platforms for cultural expression and the loss of access to different musical styles and genres for audiences."



Mark Davyd

CEO, Music Venue Trust

"This is the most important piece of research on barriers to culture that the live music sector has been handed in years, and everybody working in it should read the whole thing rather than the summary. The evidence is careful, it is substantial, and it asks all of us who make decisions about licensing, programming and funding to look honestly at our own part in it. Music Venue Trust will be responding to it in full, and we would encourage every venue, promoter, local authority and police force to do the same."



Tom Kiehl

UK Music Chief Executive

"REMEL's findings that Black and South Asian-led events are being cancelled, restricted and shut down at significantly higher rates than white-led events is highly alarming and poses a direct threat to the future prosperity of our world-leading sector. No individual, community or venue should ever be racially profiled, which is why we join REMEL's call for a licensing system that is based on fairness and facts, not prejudice."

"The UK music industry contributes an incredible £8 billion to the economy and supports 220,000 jobs, but without a transparent, evidence-based licensing model that works for everyone we risk causing untold damage to vital musical hubs across the country and undermining their cultural and economic power."



Michael Kill

CEO NTIA / Chair IPSA

"The REMEL report confronts an uncomfortable reality our industry has faced for too long. An exclusionary culture remains within parts of licensing, policing and local authority decision making, disproportionately impacting music cultures supported by Black and South Asian communities.

We cannot accept a system where genres, promoters, venues or audiences are viewed differently because of the music or communities they represent. When perceptions of risk replace evidence, we do more than restrict events. We restrict opportunity, suppress talent and undermine the cultural and economic potential of our cities.

We must educate where understanding is lacking, challenge institutional behaviours and root out prejudice and discrimination wherever they influence decision making. Diversity cannot be celebrated publicly while systems behind closed doors disadvantage cultures that make our night time economy so powerful.

These music cultures are fundamental to our industry's future. They develop artists, entrepreneurs, promoters and venues, build audiences and contribute to the cultural tapestry that will define the United Kingdom for generations.

For London to remain a global destination for music, culture and nightlife, we cannot exclude talent or suppress cultural expression through outdated attitudes and disproportionate licensing and enforcement.

REMEL gives us evidence, recommendations and a platform for change. The industry must now work alongside authorities, communities and policymakers to create a system that protects public safety without prejudice, enables responsible businesses to thrive and gives every culture the same opportunity to succeed.

The measure of this report will be whether, in the years ahead, we can point to real change and confidently say that talent, creativity and opportunity are no longer determined by your colour, background, community or the music you champion."



James Joseph

Chair, Black Lives in Music & Trustee of World Heart Beat London

“Fair licensing should protect venues and the public; it should never become a barrier to culture, creativity or equality. As both Chair of Black Lives in Music and a Trustee to a Live Music Venue and Studio, I understand the responsibility venues carry around safety, licensing, compliance and commercial risk. But those responsibilities must be applied fairly, transparently and proportionately.

No venue owner should feel that programming Black or South Asian artists, promoters or audiences brings an additional regulatory risk to their licence or their business. When that perception exists, whether through inconsistent practice, disproportionate scrutiny or fear of enforcement, the consequence is not only discriminatory — it changes who gets booked, who gets invested in and ultimately whose music gets heard.

There is also a compelling economic argument for change. Fair and proportionate licensing gives venues the confidence to programme more broadly, invest in new artists and audiences, and build sustainable businesses. Diverse programming is not a risk to the live music economy; it is one of its greatest strengths. A fairer licensing system will create stronger venues, greater cultural participation and a healthier, more ambitious live music industry for everyone.”



Sam Mathys

Cabinet Member for Culture, Nightlife, Resilience and Business Standards

“Culture shouldn’t have to fight to prove it belongs. REMEL shows what happens when licensing treats Black and South Asian-led events as a risk to be managed rather than a part of London worth protecting and the cost, to artists, venues and communities, is one we can’t afford to keep paying. This has to change, and boroughs like Hackney are ready to be part of that change.”



David Martin

CEO, Featured Artists Coalition

“An artist’s ability to perform, reach audiences and build a sustainable career should never be determined by discriminatory assumptions about their genre, background or audience. Yet artists continue to face disproportionate barriers created by licensing and policing decisions that too often treat particular forms of music and their fans as inherently higher risk.

The REMEL report provides vital evidence of the damage this causes, as well as practical recommendations for building a fairer, more transparent and evidence-based system. The industry and policymakers must now act on those recommendations. Artists should be judged on their work—not restricted by prejudice.”



Philip Kolvin KC

Leading Licensing Barrister, Visiting Professor Westminster University School of Law, Society and Popular Culture and Patron of Institute of Licensing

"The central lesson from this meticulously researched and presented report, that black and South Asian-led events are disproportionately cancelled, restricted, or blocked compared to white-led events, is one that must galvanise policy and decision makers to change. In the light of this report, all police and licensing authorities should review their practices and assumptions, to ensure parity of treatment and to release the full potential of this important creative sector."



Makeda Bennett- Amparbeng

Founder/Creative Director of SDS Entertainment

"The removal of Form 696 meant tackling a systemic barrier placed on our creative future. The form was only one part of the story—the underlying culture surrounding it was the other. Racial disparities in producing Black music events were still taking place; the mission was only half done. Which is why REMEL is so important. It further reinforces why our community's voice is so vital at all levels of the industry to ensure history does not repeat itself. This is more than just a report that's been produced— it is a call to action to turn these recommendations into lasting, systemic change the sector is in need of."



Jon Collins

CEO, LIVE

"This report sets out all too clearly the long-term barriers and challenges faced by Black and South Asian people in London's live music industry. It highlights how a skewed perception of risk leads to over policing and inconsistent and disproportionate licensing decisions and evidences the personal and economic cost that follows. As LIVE we were honoured to offer our support throughout the REMEL process. And as LIVE Trust, we are supporting positive action to tackle the challenges identified via Black Lives in Music's LIVE Pathways, a 12-month pilot that addresses inequality of opportunity for people coming through the live music pipeline. That commitment to positive action needs to be adopted by all partners in this project and every organisation and institution that can have an impact."



Annabella Coldrick

Chief Executive, Music Managers Forum

"Music managers are on the frontlines when live events face last-minute disruptions, bearing the financial, operational, and reputational burden on behalf of their artists. For managers working with Black and South Asian talent, particularly in genres unfairly targeted as 'high risk,' opaque licensing decisions create unacceptable barriers to building a sustainable live career. The MMF fully supports Black Lives in Music and the launch of the REMEL report. We need a live sector built on fair, transparent, and evidence-based licensing processes, ensuring every artist has equal access to the stage without unjustified friction."



Cameron Leslie

Chair on behalf of the London Nightlife Taskforce

“The REMEL report is an important and timely contribution to the future of London’s night-time economy. London’s global reputation as a vibrant, creative city has been built on the extraordinary diversity of its people and communities, and Black and South Asian artists, promoters, venues and audiences have played a fundamental role in shaping the culture and identity of our city after dark.

We must ensure that the systems supporting our night-time economy work fairly for everyone. Licensing, policing and risk assessment should be transparent, proportionate and grounded in evidence, and we must continue to challenge outdated perceptions and practices that can create unnecessary barriers for particular communities or genres of music. Public safety, cultural vibrancy and economic opportunity are not competing ambitions. London must deliver all three. The independent London Nightlife Taskforce welcomes REMEL’s focus not only on identifying the challenges, but also on providing practical solutions. The real value of this work will be in what happens next, turning its recommendations into meaningful action, building greater trust between communities, venues, licensing authorities and the police, and ensuring that London remains a place where creativity and enterprise can thrive.

Importantly, this report also provides a foundation from which the London Nightlife Commission can benchmark progress and focus on the key actions needed across the capital. It gives us an opportunity to ensure that cultural, social and economic value are given equal consideration, regardless of colour, gender or background.

Protecting the diversity of our night-time economy is not simply about preserving what makes London special today. It is about creating a fairer environment and the right conditions for the next generation of artists, entrepreneurs, venues and communities to shape what London becomes tomorrow.”



Kwame Safo

Co Founder, BLACMEX

“The whole journey and focus of REMEL is vital to the growth of our music scenes into full fledged music industries. The lack of transparency on licensing and policing over the years has created a precarious environment for Black, Asian and global majority grassroots musicians and promoters working already in a disadvantaged system. I’m proud of the hard working individuals across the sector and at Black Lives in Music who have identified this as an important component in the sustainability of the music industry”



Paul Adams

CEO, Institute of Licensing

“The findings of the REMEL report present an opportunity for all those involved in licensing to reflect on how we can continue to build public confidence in licensing decision-making. Effective licensing depends on balancing public safety with the social, cultural and economic benefits that events bring to our communities.

Across the licensing profession there is a shared commitment to fairness, evidence-based decision making and continual improvement. By encouraging open discussion and greater understanding, this report can help inform positive progress and support a licensing system that is transparent, proportionate and accessible to all.

The Institute of Licensing looks forward to working with partners across the sector to help promote good practice, strengthen trust and ensure that licensing continues to support safe, vibrant and inclusive communities.”



PROJECT REMEL

Project REMEL (Race Equality in Music Event Licensing) was established in **July 2023**

Project REMEL (Race Equality in Music Event Licensing) was established in July 2023 following a joint letter from the Musicians' Union (MU) and Black Lives in Music (BLiM) to the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan. The project is a multi-agency initiative aimed at addressing racial inequities in the licensing and policing of live music events across London.

The project brings together a broad coalition of stakeholders, including the Greater London Authority (GLA), Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), UK Music, LIVE, the Musicians' Union, and a diverse network of artists, promoters, venue operators, and community representatives. Its formation responds to a substantial and well-documented concern that Black and

South Asian artists, promoters, and venue owners in the music industry experience disproportionately high rates of event cancellations, license refusals, and policing interventions.

These structural inequalities both inhibit cultural expression and entrepreneurship and limit access to economic opportunity within London's creative and night-time economy. Project REMEL is committed to generating a fairer and more transparent licensing landscape, ensuring the capital's live music sector reflects the diversity, talent, and potential of its communities.

**RACE EQUALITY
IN MUSIC EVENT
LICENSING**

**MULTI- AGENCY
INITIATIVE**

**ESTABLISHED
IN 2023**

**ADDRESSING
RACIAL INEQUITIES**



Project REMEL seeks to facilitate systemic change through the following strategic aims:

- Collecting and analysing data both quantitative and qualitative on the lived experiences of Black, South Asian, and ethnically diverse stakeholders navigating licensing and enforcement systems.
- Challenging racial disparities in licensing and policing practices through robust scrutiny, accountability mechanisms, and oversight structures.
- Developing a consistent, city-wide framework for licensing policy and procedure, supported by training, guidance, and standard-setting for licensing officers and enforcement personnel.
- Establishing structured forums for dialogue between communities, police, councils, and the music industry, with the aim of building trust, improving practice, and facilitating long-term reform.
- Ensuring the ethical and proportionate use of data, particularly in decision-making processes relating to licensing or policing powers.
- Identifying and applying good practice from other UK cities and international models to inform London's approach to equitable licensing.

Project REMEL forms a critical strand of the Metropolitan Police Service's Race Action Plan, which seeks to establish a policing model that is equitable, transparent, and reflective of London's diverse communities.

It also aligns with the GLA's 24-Hour London strategy, UK Government licensing taskforce sprint and Mayor of London's new night life commission which advocates for an inclusive, thriving capital where cultural and economic participation is accessible to all.

Through cross-sector collaboration, evidence-informed research, and inclusive stakeholder engagement, Project REMEL aims to dismantle barriers within the live music licensing system and foster an environment where creativity, culture, and community can flourish across London.

KEY FINDINGS

1 Restrictions and Cancellations

Black events are disproportionately cancelled, restricted, or blocked compared to white-led events.

2 Economic Impact

The economic impact of excluding Black and South Asian events is significant with an estimated £127–£141million lost in London annually in live music spend, and a projected loss of more than £650m in total spend over five years.

3 Accountability Concerns

Black promoters frequently have events shut down with little or no explanation, leaving no path for accountability or appeal.

4 The Legacy of Form 696

The legacy of Form 696 persists, with current risk assessments systematically singling out Black and South Asian live music events and imposing punitive surveillance and heavy conditions without credible evidence of increased safety risk.

5 Genre-Based Scrutiny

Afrobeats, Hip Hop, Drill, R&B, and Dancehall flagged as “high risk,” while Indie, Pop, and Rock genres face little scrutiny.

6 The “Mob” Narrative

Media fuels criminalisation with Black events framed as “mobs” or “chaos,” shifting blame from institutions onto communities.

7 Opportunity Restrictions

Temporary Event Notices (TENs) are more likely to be refused in London’s most diverse boroughs, restricting opportunities for Black and South Asian-led events

8 Unsupported Intelligence

Unverified intelligence, including superficial online searches, is routinely used to justify heightened scrutiny of Black and South Asian events, reinforcing racialised assumptions of risk.

9 Forced Closure

Many white-owned venues are supported back into business after incidents, while Black venues are forced to close.

10 Zoned Out

Black and South Asian events are being pushed out of central London by restrictive licensing, gentrification, and planning policy.

11 Compliance as a Barrier

Inflated security, insurance, and compliance demands fall hardest on Black and South Asian events.

12 Mental Health Impact

Mental health impact is relentless as cancellations, surveillance, and financial strain are driving burnout among Black and South Asian entrepreneurs.

METHODOLOGY

This research uses a combination of mixed methods to explore how licensing, regulation and enforcement affect London's live music sector, with a particular focus on the experiences of Black and South Asian artists and event professionals.

The study included:

- ✦ Surveys
- ✦ Focus groups
- ✦ Semi-structured interviews
- ✦ Freedom of Information (FOI) requests
- ✦ Industry stakeholder workshops
- ✦ Desk-based research

The research was commissioned through an open and transparent tender process, with the successful research partner selected by a panel including representatives from the Greater London Authority (GLA), the Musicians' Union and Black Lives in Music.

While the project faced challenges, including limited access to official data and refusals to share information from some public bodies, every effort was made to ensure findings were robust through cross-checking evidence and incorporating a wide range of perspectives.

Some of the limitations are as follows:

- The lack of consistent race disaggregated data across licensing and enforcement systems.
- Non-standardised reporting formats across boroughs.
- The absence of centralised economic data on the UK's music licensing ecosystem.
- Systematic rejection of data requests from the MPS.

Nonetheless, the findings provide valuable insight into patterns of racial disparity and highlight areas for further research.

This research was conducted in line with the principles of informed consent, anonymisation and transparency. Where information was unavailable or withheld by public institutions, this has been clearly acknowledged within the report.

Every effort was made to ensure the findings were robust through evidence, community engagement and independent scrutiny. As a result, this report provides one of the most comprehensive examinations to date of how licensing systems shape the experiences of racially diverse communities in London's live music sector.

A detailed methodology can be found on [page 130](#)

INTRODUCTION

The Black and South Asian music and entertainment scene in the UK is a powerful and transformative force, deeply embedded in the nation's cultural life.



From underground clubs that support new talent to major arenas that showcase global stars, this vibrant community has played a key role in shaping British identity, creativity, and social connection. Grounded in the histories of migration, diaspora, and resistance to marginalisation, Black and South Asian music has transformed British popular culture and created important spaces for expression, innovation, and economic opportunity. However, despite its cultural influence and commercial success, this sector still faces deep systemic and institutional barriers that limit its growth. Discriminatory practices continue to hold back Black and South Asian artists, entrepreneurs, and audiences. These challenges are especially clear in the ways regulation, licensing, and policing interact with race in the night-time economy.

“No matter the nuances and inconsistencies in the licensing process, Black and Brown faces will consistently get the short end of the stick.”

– James Joseph, Venue Owner



For this reason and to maintain best practice, this report places emphasis on the personal reflections of Black and South Asian musicians, promoters, event organisers and others who are the most at risk stakeholders here. Drawing on these accounts, as well as our survey data, this report highlights how race continues to determine who is supported, who is scrutinised, and who is excluded. Licensing remains a space where institutional racism is reproduced, not through explicit bans or policies, but through routine processes that quietly uphold inequality.

In this report, the terms Black and South Asian and Black and Brown may be used interchangeably, particularly within quotes, reflecting the language used by participants and within the wider cultural context.

The report first sets out a brief overview and review of key legislation frameworks, licensing processes and guidance which is expanded upon in section 10.

The subsequent sections explore the experiences of artists, promoters and others involved in the live music events landscape through the following key themes.

01

Overview and Review of Legislative Frameworks

1.1 The Licensing Act 2003

The Licensing Act 2003 (LA 2003) is the main law that governs the sale of alcohol, entertainment, and late night food in England and Wales. It was introduced to simplify an outdated system by combining several license types into one and moving licensing powers from magistrates' courts to local councils. This change was meant to make the process more flexible and accountable to local communities.

However, the Act was shaped by two conflicting goals: encouraging longer trading hours and a relaxed "café culture," while also trying to reduce alcohol-related harm and disorder. The Act's four main objectives are: preventing crime and disorder, ensuring public safety, preventing public nuisance, and protecting children from harm. Each carries equal importance and must guide all licensing decisions.

Local councils are responsible for managing the process, including setting policy, reviewing applications, enforcing conditions, and handling objections. While this local control allows decisions to reflect community needs, it also creates the risk of inconsistency, bias, and overregulation. Critics argue that the focus on preventing harm has overshadowed the goal of supporting cultural activity, particularly for diverse and community-based operators in the night-time economy. As a result, a law meant to promote modernisation and flexibility has often ended up reinforcing a culture of restriction instead.

1.2 Licensing Process for New Premises Applications, Full Variations and TENs

Below we outline the process for New Premises Application, Full Variations and Temporary Event Notices (TENs) according to the Licensing Act 2003. The licensing process begins upon receipt of a New Premises license, Full Variation, or Temporary Event Notice. The statutory consultation period is 28 days for premises licenses and 3 working days for TENs.

1. Initial Processing and Research

Applications are logged and a full background review is undertaken, examining police systems covering from a minimum of 12 months up to 5 years, including Police National Computer (PNC) checks on the applicant, Designated Premises Supervisor, and Premises license Holder (PLH).

2. Due Diligence and Engagement

Additional checks are performed via Companies House and open-source intelligence. Partnership engagement includes consulting with responsible authorities, local events teams, neighbourhood policing teams, and ward officers. Internal advice may be sought from legal and licensing supervisors, and site visits are arranged where appropriate. Applications are assessed in the context of local risk, including cultural, community, or historic sensitivities.

3. Assessment and Representation

Once all checks are complete, a decision is made on whether to submit a representation (objection). If police object, a hearing must be held within 20 working days (or 10 for a TEN). Even during this period, mediation and negotiation with the applicant may continue.

4. Decision-Making

The final decision is made by the Licensing Sub-Committee, which may grant, amend or refuse the application.

The diagram below outlines the process followed by the Metropolitan Police when considering premises license applications, variations and Temporary Event Notices (TENs).



10 Application Engagement

Speak to applicant & arrange a meeting preferably at a Police station. Carry out a site visit

11 Risk Consideration

Consideration to Borough risk (cultural, community and or historic significance) Will SLT require oversight/ involvement
TTCG Pacesetters

12 Advice

Once all checks complete, decision will be made as to whether a representation is necessary. Advice may be sought from Borough Licensing Supervisor, CLT, DLS and or all

13 Mediation

If Police Object hearing held within the 20 working days (10 working days TEN) of objection. Mediation & negotiations can continue

14 Decision Made

Decision made by Licensing Sub-Committee whether to:

- Grant application
- Amend the application
- Refuse

The licensing process in England operates on two levels: national and local.

The licensing process in England operates on two levels: national and local. Nationally, the Licensing Act 2003, overseen by the Secretary of State for Home Office, sets the legal framework for licensing across the country. At the local level, if someone wants to apply for a license (for example, to sell alcohol or host events), they submit an application to the Licensing Authority, typically the local council. This triggers a public consultation period where the community and relevant bodies can have their say.

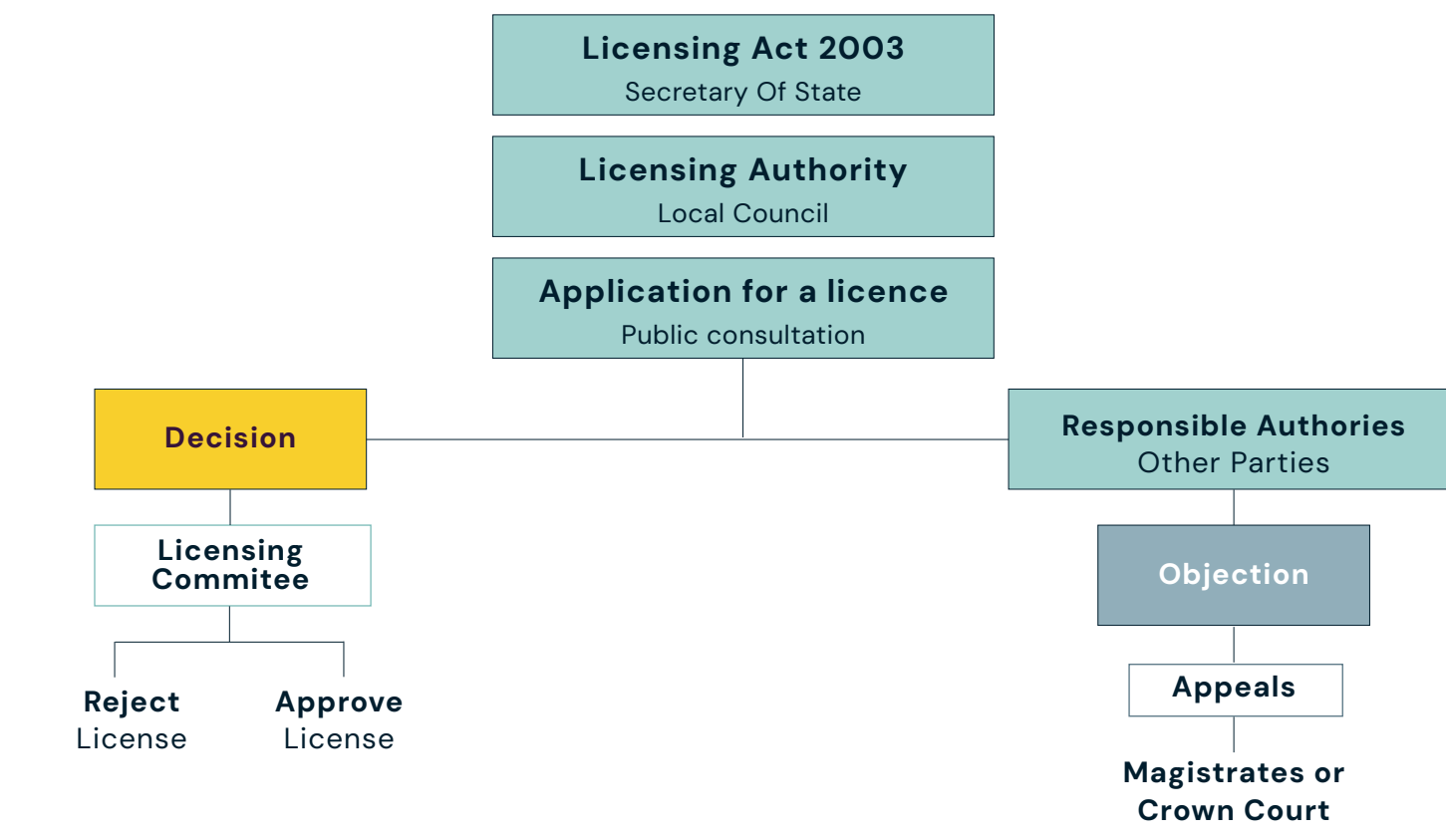
Following this, the process may take **one of two routes**

Route One

If there are no objections, the Licensing Committee considers the application and makes a decision, they may grant or refuse the license.

Route Two

If there are objections from Responsible Authorities (like police, fire services) or other interested parties, the matter can be escalated. The applicant or objectors may lodge appeals, which are handled first by the Magistrates' Court and, if necessary, by the Crown Court.



A Temporary Event Notice (TEN) can be withdrawn by the individual giving the notice, and this will not count towards the number of TENs that can be submitted per applicant.

A council cannot refuse a TEN unless the police or environmental health department object to it. These authorities must make an objection within 3 days of receiving the TEN, and can only object if they think the event could (a) lead to crime and disorder, (b) cause a public nuisance, (c) be a threat to public safety or (d) put children at risk of harm. If an objection is made, the licensing committee will hold a hearing no later than 24 hours before the event. At a hearing, the committee will either approve, add conditions or reject the notice.²

The only reason the police may object to a TEN is if they have determined that the crime prevention objective of the Licensing Act 2003 would be undermined if the event were to go ahead. The licensing authority will issue a counter notice if it is considered necessary for the prevention of crime and disorder.

² [gov.uk/find-licences/temporary-events-notice](https://www.gov.uk/find-licences/temporary-events-notice)

02

Systemic Discrimination in Licensing Practices and Genre Profiling

2. Systemic Discrimination in Licensing Practices and Genre Profiling

"I've definitely been involved in enough events particularly with Black artists or predominantly Black music fans, or crowds where the presence or the hoops that you have to jump through to get your event to even happen felt massively excessive compared to other events."

– B2, Venue Operator, London



Across the UK's live music and nightlife sectors, licensing has become a tool through which systemic discrimination is sustained. While licensing frameworks claim to operate on neutral, evidence-based assessments, the experiences of Black and South Asian promoters, artists, and venue operators show that these frameworks are shaped by racial bias, harmful assumptions, and disproportionate scrutiny.

Promoter Executive 3 stated, *"It's just the illusion that because it's a Black or Asian event, it's going to be trouble. So, because there's going to be trouble, we want more security. Even if they don't know the artist, it doesn't matter about the artist. It just matters about you. It just matters about your face in front of them."* That same promoter shared how on several occasions, he sent a white colleague to handle negotiations simply because he knew the response would be more favourable.

Authorities often place unfair extra rules on events run by Black and South Asian organisers. These include demanding more security, asking for unnecessary paperwork, or even rejecting events completely, even when there has never been any trouble before.

Beyond logistics, this kind of gatekeeping also affects how cultural value is understood. Black and South Asian promoters are regularly asked to justify or explain their music, artists, and audiences in ways that their white counterparts are not. "I had to sit on the phone with

[redacted venue] and break down [redacted artist] lyrics to them and say to them, 'Do you think this incites sex or this incites violence?' Cuz the only thing you have to worry about is that people leave here and go and want to have sex. There's nothing. I had to literally get his lyrics up and play them music to the point where they felt stupid because there's nothing about [redacted artist] that incites violence," said Agent, Executive 2.

The result is a system that punishes cultural expression instead of supporting it. Promoters learn quickly which genres are "safer" to lead with. Executive 10 explained: "Leading with certain genres e.g. Reggae or Dancehall is likely to lead to more representations/objections than if an event is positioned as bringing together the community to enjoy a variety of genres." DJ/Promoter, Creative 3 recalled *"I remember the venue straight up telling me, 'If we're going to have Urban music, Hip Hop, that kind of thing, we'll need to bring in extra security and I'll have to fill out a risk assessment form.'"*



Genres such as Grime, Drill, Dancehall, and UK Rap are treated with suspicion, even when all standard procedures have been followed. One experienced programmer shared a similar experience and stated that even within the same genre, white artists are more likely to be accepted without question, while their Black counterparts are met with concern:

“You can book David Rodigan for an event and everything’s hunky dory. You present Saxon or Robbo Ranx or somebody like that who are there from similar culture, you get a totally different reaction. You get a totally different treatment. I’ve experienced that recently, where I’ve been on a panel recommending DJs for an event and as soon as most of the white DJs playing Dancehall were put on the table, everybody was fantastic. Yep, the police will like this and so forth. And I know a lot of those decisions are made based on police and licensing officers.”

– Creative 7, DJ/Promoter, London



In the case of the Aquarium venue, closure followed a large Afrobeats event where issues occurred outside the premises. Although the venue stopped non-ticket holders from entering and internal crime rates were low, the genre itself was described as a “crime generator” in police submissions. Michael Kill stated:

“The reason the Aquarium ended up closing down was because of issues that happened outside the venue but those incidents were almost blamed on the genre of music being played inside. It was seen as a mismanagement issue, even though what happened was completely out of their hands... And what we pointed out was that if you actually look at the proportion of crime associated with the Aquarium as a venue, and then compare that to the overall levels and percentages of crime across London, the numbers at the venue are well below those wider rates. So the question was always, why is there an issue with the Aquarium, when the entire Metropolitan Police Service with far greater powers can’t even control those wider city wide proportions?”

– Michael Kill, NTIA



These figures suggest that certain genres and communities face constant over policing, not through official rules but through informal restrictions. The regulatory system bends to fit rumours, stereotypes, and fears, while still appearing to follow proper procedures. In reality, unverified information becomes a tool for controlling culture, deciding which events are allowed and under what conditions.

“What the police will do is they will scare a venue into that there’s going to be gang violence, there’s going to be a rival gang, there’s going to be an attempt on somebody who’s due to be there. They will just they will scare them and they will say verbally, if this event happens and it has an issue, we are going to push to shut your venue down”

– Creative 8, DJ/Promoter, London



“The other thing that was really challenging was how, on many occasions, we’ve seen police trying to steer things so that Black music culture events just don’t happen.”

– Michael Kill, NTIA, London



2.1 The Surveillance of Black Artistic Expression

Project Alpha was launched in June 2019 with funding from the Home Office, with the stated aims of intelligence gathering through social media. The project has faced several concerns since its inception, including comparisons with the much criticised Gangs Matrix. Evidence from existing FOI responses available on the Metropolitan Police website, identified through our research for this report, revealed that three of the people referenced as participants in public consultations around the scheme reported that no such consultation took place, suggesting that the implementation of the scheme has lacked scrutiny and accountability.³

It is stated that the analysis of online spaces, such as social media, music sharing or gaming platforms, is based around anything which “breaches community guidelines or user agreements, glorifies gang mentality and is linked to specific crime (including inciting, goading, bullying and revelling in the serious injury, death or murder of another)”.⁴ A key element of the scheme is the MPS catalogue of ‘gang-related’ music – known as Operation Domain.

Since the launch of Project Alpha, the Met police have worked with social media platforms to remove around 100 UK Drill music videos that pose “risk and harm”. Most notoriously was the removal of music by rappers Skengdo and AM, who have been subjected to these forms of censorship and have publicly stated:

“They have imposed something that will give us a criminal record just for making music. But there’s just no evidence that censorship is actually going to stop any crime. It’s a very, very weak argument”.⁶



³ thejusticegap.com ⁴ college.police.uk

Does Project Alpha disproportionately police Black musicians?

Freedom of information request (O1.FOI.24.035805) has gathered information on the Metropolitan Police’s relationship with YouTube and the removal of Drill/Rap music. The FOI had 9 data points (below), however the Met only disclosed some of the requested information. The information released by the MET shows that, since 2023, 60% of all videos removed by Project Alpha were by Black performers, and that almost 40% were videos by people aged 18–24.

This shows that the scheme has disproportionately impacted those who are young and Black. ⁷

The 9 FOI questions and responses were;

- 1 The number of drill/rap music videos the Met requested the removal of, from YouTube, since September 2020, broken down by year.

The disclosed information provided by the Met does not record whether the content is specifically drill or rap music, as this is a ‘subjective description’. However, the majority of information would be considered as being from these genres or other similar genres and subgenres.

- 2 The number of Drill/Rap music videos successfully removed from YouTube, at the Met’s request, since September 2020, broken down by year. ⁸

	April 2020 to March 2021		April 2021 to March 2022		April 2022 to March 2023	
	Referred	Removed	Referred	Removed	Referred	Removed
Youtube	101	99	148	133	367	315

A separate Freedom of Information request however shows an inconsistency in the data. FOI O1.FOI.23.027950 also asks for the removals of Drill/Rap videos the Met have requested the removal of and successfully removed since 2020, and suggests a much higher level of surveillance than the above data; ⁹

5 capitalxtra.com 6 capitalxtra.com/news/ 7 met.police.uk/foi-ai

YouTube Referrals	Referrals	Removals
2020	125	124
2021	510	493
2022	1825	1636
Total	2460	2253

- 3 (Returning to 01.FOI.24.035805) A list of all those Drill/Rap videos removed from YouTube, at the Met's request, since September 2020, broken down by year.

Withheld under Section 40 – Personal Information

- 4 The number of Drill/Rap video content indexed by the Met since September 2020, broken down by year.

There are currently 417 music videos indexed by the MPS, all of which have been captured within the last 12 months. Unless it is relevant to a criminal investigation, retained material is automatically deleted after 12 months to ensure compliance with both Human Rights and data retention legislation.

- 5 The names of the “key channels” the Met is working with to reduce the likelihood of threat, harm and risk being generated.

Withheld under Section 21 – Law Enforcement

6 The amount of funding secured for the running of Project Alpha, and the source of funding, since its inception – broken down by year.

The Home Office have provided funding to MPS Project Alpha between 2019 and the current date as follows:

April 2018 to March 2019	£93,885
April 2019 to March 2020	£1,292,838.00
April 2020 to March 2021	£1,746,661.00
April 2021 to March 2022	£3,197,167.00
April 2022 to March 2023	£3,338,451.00
April 2023 to March 2024	£1,418,468 to date

To date

£1,418,468

7 The number of police staff and officers that make up the Project Alpha team – broken down by year since its inception.

The number of police staff and officers funded on Project Alpha each year is as follows, actual numbers of officers and staff in post fluctuates throughout the year:

April 2018 to March 2019	0
April 2019 to March 2020	17
April 2020 to March 2021	17
April 2021 to March 2022	38
April 2022 to March 2023	40
April 2023 to March 2024	42

8 In June 2023, it was reported that since February 2023 age and ethnicity data has been recorded “where identifiable” by Project Alpha officers.

a. Please provide percentage breakdowns of age groups (0 to 10, 11 to 17, 18 to 24, 25 to 30, 30+) and ethnicity data as recorded by Project Alpha officers since February 2023.

Age	Percentage %
0 to 10 years	0
11 to 17 years	14.8
18 to 24 years	38.2
25 to 30 years	24.5
over 30 years	22.5

Ethnicity	Percentage %
White – North European	21
White – South European	5.7
Black	60.7
Asian	9.1
Oriental	0.4
Arabic/ Middle Eastern	3.1

“Sometimes there was credible intelligence, and sometimes there wasn’t, some of it was just hearsay. For example, because someone was seen singing a certain song in a YouTube video, it would raise concerns. But personally, I would never rely on just one clip just because a group, possibly associated with a gang, is seen singing a rapper’s track doesn’t mean much in itself. That sort of thing can happen anywhere.”

– Licensing Officer, London



For a detailed account on The Surveillance and Criminalisation of Black Artistic Expression see **Appendix L:** Surveillance by Stealth – Risk, Monitoring and the Racialised Control of Nightlife Culture

2.2 Genre as Risk Proxy

Beyond single events, the targeting of entire music genres is another form of unfair policing. Genres with Black cultural roots such as Grime, Drill, Dancehall, and Afrobeats are not only heavily regulated but also labelled as “high risk” in public discussions. As outlined in Appendix B, Asake’s Brixton show was internally flagged as “high risk” due to its genre profile, despite no previous safety concerns. This was not an isolated case.

Grime and Drill events across London are frequently cancelled based on vague, unverified police intelligence. Lawyer Gareth Hughes said described the nature of this intelligence with critical clarity:

“Sometimes it’s just based on a Google search.

– Gareth Hughes, Licensing and Planning Barrister



This pattern is made stronger by how British media often talks about Black music. Genres like Drill, Grime, Afrobeats, and Bashment are repeatedly linked to ideas of risk and disorder. News headlines often describe these styles as connected to crime, treating Black cultural expression as a danger to public safety and city life.

The Sun (2023):

“Drill night pulled after fears of gang violence” – conflating musical content with criminal association, presuming audience conduct without evidence.

Metro (2022):

“Council urged to shut down bashment night amid public disorder concerns” – the use of “urged” and “concerns” reflects a pattern of pre-emptive suspicion, not incident based intervention.

Daily Mirror (2022):

“Afrobeats club night faces ban over security risk” – again, no past incident is reported, only the implication that genre equals volatility.

This “genre plus policing term” pattern (for example, words like “fears,” “risk,” or “intelligence”) has become a common media shortcut for cancelling events linked to Black music. Headlines rarely include facts such as arrest numbers, incident reports, or past safety records. Instead, they use emotional language that suggests trouble, creating a sense of disorder without evidence. As Hall and others (1978) explained in their study on moral panic, this kind of framing turns certain cultural groups into “folk devils” – people to be feared rather than understood.

As shown in the licensing review by Lambeth Council,¹⁰ these tactics have serious long-term effects within institutions. For example, Afrobeats was labelled “high risk” at Brixton based only on its genre, not on any proof (Lambeth Council, 2023). Hughes’ experience in cases further shows that such classifications often rely on unverified online information. This supports Angela McRobbie’s idea of “amplification by association,” where cultural forms are criminalised not because of what actually happens, but because of imagined links to violence.

¹⁰ Lambeth Council Licensing Sub-Committee Review of O2 Academy Brixton Premises license (2023)

In this kind of system, Black culture becomes nearly impossible to include in mainstream venues. Hosting such events often attracts police attention, higher insurance costs, damage to reputation, or licensing problems. It is a structure where risk is assumed rather than demonstrated, and where culture is treated as criminal by default.

The media's role in this goes beyond dramatic headlines. It reflects deeper assumptions that influence licensing, enforcement, and even funding. Through repeated narratives, suspicion becomes part of the system and fear turns into policy. As Notting Hill Carnival CEO Matthew Phillips explained:

"Carnival doesn't cause violence, it provides relief from it... It reminds us what joy feels like when it's real and when it's free."

– Matthew Phillips, 2025 ¹¹



2.3 Perceived Informal Policing Pressures

Licensing and police authorities often rely on unverified or hidden information to pressure venues and event organisers. Instead of following official legal procedures, interviews and focus groups show that police often use vague warnings, express general safety concerns, or hint at possible damage to reputation. This pressure causes many organisers to cancel their own events. In the end, venues are left to carry the blame for risks that were never properly proven or reviewed.

Participants described a repeated pattern of informal interference. Phrases like "we advise against" or "we've received intelligence" are not direct orders to cancel, but they create a situation where events are quietly shut down with no official record. Promoter Ben Ryan explained, "The police didn't say we're going to shut down the event. They said let's make a plan... What do you want to do?" Although such discussions may seem cooperative, many organisers felt they were a way for police to avoid responsibility, leaving promoters to deal with higher costs, programme changes, or cancellation.

This "intelligence" is often vague and unsupported. Venue Operator B2 described a surprise visit from police officers who were

"taking pictures... looking around... trying to find issues." They raised concerns simply because an artist was from West London, suggesting there could be a "postcode war" between areas. B2 said this claim was "completely unfounded."

These experiences are common. Many organisers said that events featuring Black music, such as Garage, Afrobeats, or R&B, are assumed to attract unruly crowds or gang related problems. "Why would people come to the venue without a ticket?" B2 asked. "They never say this about any other style of music." Despite little or no supporting evidence, these assumptions often decide whether an event is allowed to take place.

"The expectation is that we will have potentially arches, dogs... even when there's no known issue."

– B2, Venue Operator, London



¹¹ Phillips, M. (2025) Public Address at Carnival Launch Event.

Michael Kill, CEO of NTIA, described this regulatory environment as one of “underhand processes.” He said police often avoid formal bans but still “threaten the venue operator with the potential of action if there were complications.” Reflecting on what happened after Form 696 was abolished, he noted that the police claimed they had stopped blocking events, but in reality, “It was a false economy... They just found different ways.”

See Appendix L: Surveillance by Stealth – Risk, Monitoring and the Racialised Control of Nightlife Culture for more information

2.4 Structural Inequalities in the Licensing Ecosystem

Black and South Asian promoters often enter this system at a disadvantage. Many do not have access to legal advice, struggle to get insurance, or are excluded from key industry networks. Unlike larger, white led organisations with established reputations and trusted relationships, Black and South Asian organisers are often treated with suspicion. They are frequently expected to follow unfamiliar procedures, with little or no guidance or support.

This problem is made worse by the lack of clear data on who holds event licenses. Without information on race or ethnicity, it becomes difficult to expose inequalities or demand fairer treatment. The result is an industry that remains largely one sided, where certain music genres and audiences are regularly seen as risky, while others are easily accepted.

DJ and promoter Executive 5 explained how different genres are treated depending on who is involved and their connections with authorities: “...and he’s got a great relationship with the council and the police. So, whenever I mention Amapiano, whenever I mention Afrobeats, there’s a little bit more... softness towards it. He’ll be like, ‘Yeah, we could probably do that.’ But if I say UK Rap, if I say Drill, if I say Grime, any of those words are met with a face of, ‘Don’t know what that’s going to bring.’”

This reaction is not unusual. The way Black and South Asian led events are judged often has less to do with their actual safety plans and more to do with stereotypes about culture. Even when there is no proof of danger, certain

genres, names, or communities are treated as risky based on assumptions. Promoter A3 called this “lazy, racist policing,” questioning how such flawed ideas can be used to assess risk. She also described watching officials draw false conclusions from isolated incidents:

“In all honesty, from what I’ve witnessed, I think there was lazy policing before. They literally see one plus three and they’re trying to make two, and that’s not how it works. Maybe something happened at a certain event and this DJ was on the bill, but that DJ might not have had any affiliation at all.”

– A3, Promoter, London

Even when a reason is given for refusing an event, it is often unclear or repeated from past cases. Promoters are frequently judged not on their own track record but through guilt by association. Tour Manager Executive 6 explained: “For those of us lucky enough to be presented with a reason, often it’s one of those reasons, whether there’s evidence for it or not. It could just be a name that was associated with an event that happened previously. And just because it happened once, they expect it to happen again. You’re not given a chance to right those wrongs or not even right them, because maybe you had nothing to do with it in the first place.”

These stories show more than individual frustrations. They expose a licensing system that allows institutional racial bias to continue. Without stronger accountability, clearer standards, and a fairer understanding of what cultural risk means, these inequalities will keep shaping the experiences of Black and South Asian creatives trying to grow their careers and communities in live music.

2.5 Safety and the Misuse of Crime Statistics

In my view, one of the principal challenges within the licensing framework is the manner in which police data is applied. Statistical correlation is too often presented as causation. A spike in crime “near” a venue becomes, in argument, crime “caused” by the venue. This distinction is vital.”

– Philip Kolvin KC



Licensing authorities are increasingly using broad, area wide crime statistics to justify their actions for intervention, even when there is no evidence of problems at a specific venue. This changes the system from one based on proven facts to one driven by caution and speculation. The impact is not equal. It disproportionately affects independent and minority led venues, which already face unfair challenges in how culture is produced and regulated. The cases of the Blue Note Jazz Club and the Colour Factory show how decisions based on general crime stories can lead to unfair penalties. Such actions deepen existing inequalities, damage trust in public institutions, and restrict access to cultural spaces for communities that already receive limited support.



2.6 Case Study: The Blue Note Jazz Club

Objections to the Blue Note's license drew heavily on area wide crime statistics.

The Licensing Authority cited crime levels in the broader West End Cumulative Impact Zone (CIZ), claiming they were “nine times greater than the rest of the city” (Westminster City Council, 2023a¹²). However, no disaggregated data specific to 42–49 St Martin's Lane, the premises under review was submitted. A ward councillor publicly disputed this framing, noting that the specific address “suffers from relatively low crime rates” compared to surrounding streets (Westminster City Council, 2023a¹).

Despite this, the Metropolitan Police suggested patrons “may become victims of crime” if the venue were to open late, yet no evidence was presented to support that claim. There were no cited incidents, complaints, or patterns of

anti-social behaviour attributed to the location or the operators. Instead, objections relied on precautions in which risk was inferred rather than demonstrated.

What was striking was the lack of alignment between the assumptions in the policy response and the actual nature of the venue. The National Jazz Archive submitted a written statement during the review process, noting that audiences for Jazz clubs are typically older, ticketed, and seated. These characteristics differ markedly from those usually associated with late night alcohol led venues. Their intervention raised important questions about how licensing logic fails to account for genre, format, and audience profile in meaningful ways. (National Jazz Archive, 2023).¹³

The Blue Note case reflects a broader concern expressed by many stakeholders throughout this study that licensing decisions often operate through generalised fear rather than context led assessment. By relying on speculative crime narratives, authorities can effectively sanction venues without clear justification.



**LICENSING DECISIONS
OFTEN OPERATE THROUGH
GENERALISED FEAR**

¹² Westminster City Council. (2023a). Licensing Sub-Committee Minutes: Application for 42–49 St Martin's Lane, WC2N. London: Westminster Council.

¹³ National Jazz Archive. (2023). Representation to Westminster Licensing Sub-Committee regarding Blue Note Jazz Club.

2.7 Case Study: The Colour Factory

The Colour Factory case shows how regulators overreacted

Enforcing rules too harshly without proper evidence or real risk, driven more by suspicion than facts. Despite having strong safety measures in place, including ID scanners, a dedicated welfare team, and the presence of a medic at all late night events, the venue faced severe and highly public enforcement (Roman Road LDN, 2023a).

After a fatal stabbing took place outside the venue and after event hours, the Metropolitan Police moved to suspend its license under Section 53A of the Licensing Act 2003. This happened even though police confirmed that the weapon had never entered the venue and that the Colour Factory team had fully cooperated with the investigation (Tower Hamlets Licensing Sub-Committee Minutes, 2023).

In the days following the incident, police put a large blue sign to the venue's entrance, publicly stating that a murder investigation was underway. Although technically accurate, the sign caused a misleading impression that the fatality had occurred within the venue itself. This amplified media portrayals of culpability and generated significant public alarm (Roman Road LDN, 2023a).

The venue eventually kept its license but with extra conditions. However, the consequences of this enforcement were serious. The Colour Factory lost around £40,000 in revenue, spent £15,000 on legal fees, and had to make staff redundant. In contrast, the police's legal costs of about £46,000 were paid with public money. These figures show how independent, minority-owned venues carry a much heavier burden when faced with aggressive regulation.

This response is even more concerning when compared to the leniency shown towards non-Black-owned venues in similar or worse situations (see Section 3.6: Proportionality: City of London's "No Promoted Events" Clause).

Although the Colour Factory was eventually cleared, the case shows how unfair enforcement can cause lasting damage to people's reputations, emotions, and finances. It also reveals a wider problem where public institutions face no real consequences for their mistakes, leaving those with the fewest resources to carry the financial burden.

Other examples of the misuse of crime data such as incidents involving weapons discovered in public areas near venues, or assaults occurring after attendees have left the premises are documented in [Appendix A](#).

"There is no suggestion that the weapon was within the premises at any point."

– Tower Hamlets Licensing Sub-Committee Minutes, 22 Feb 2023 ¹⁴



¹⁴ Tower Hamlets Licensing Sub-Committee Minutes, 22 Feb 2023

2.8 When the Audience Becomes the Risk

For South Asian promoters, the historic barrier was often not an objection to a particular artist or genre, but the assumption that the audience itself represented a threat.

Participants described a period in which venues were reluctant to accept bookings from South Asian promoters because they anticipated disorder between different communities, religious groups or young people travelling from different parts of London. These assumptions were not always connected to current, event specific intelligence. Instead, previous incidents were used to characterise future events expected to attract a broadly similar audience. One participant recalled a period when Bhangra nights were no longer accepted by a major London venue and stated that it took approximately seven or eight years for the scene to “clear its name.”

This illustrates how a single incident, or a small number of incidents, can create long-term reputational consequences for an entire cultural scene. The burden of proving safety is then placed on promoters and communities collectively, rather than on authorities to demonstrate that restrictions remain necessary and proportionate.

“I think Asian audiences have now amalgamated into like the mainstream audience. So you don’t really get that many Asian only nights or whatever, or Asian orientated nights. So there’s just been a shift in in Asian culture. So you know, whereas 20–30, years ago, you wouldn’t see many Asians in mainstream clubs... they frequent the mainstream club, so it’s less of an issue.”

– Creative 2, London

The evidence also raises a difficult question about the apparent improvement in the treatment of South Asian events. Participants observed that explicitly South Asian nightlife has become less common as younger South Asian audiences increasingly participate in mainstream nightlife. Reduced scrutiny may therefore reflect cultural assimilation and the declining visibility of South Asian specific events, rather than fundamental reform within licensing and policing.

“... I can’t ever see the police or the council having Black, Asian promoters, club owners interests at heart. I honestly can’t. That’s the bottom line. I think this country, especially London, there’s almost a war on nightlife.

– Creative 9, London



The comparison with Black music events is also notable. While the specific assumptions may differ, both experiences demonstrate how racialised risk can operate through inherited perceptions of artists, genres and audiences.

The South Asian experience therefore reinforces a central REMEL finding that licensing and safety decisions must be based on specific, current and transparent evidence not inherited assumptions about ethnicity, geography, religion, genre or audience.

2.9 Licensing Decisions Affecting South Asian Music and Cultural Programming

REMEL identified a small number of licensing decisions involving South Asian music, cultural festivals and events where live or recorded music formed a central part of the activity.

The cases included Afghan community celebrations, Tamil weddings, Punjabi live music and Gujarati cultural programming. South Asian music was rarely identified by genre within the official licensing record. Instead, it was commonly described through broad categories such as “live music”, “recorded music”, “dance”, “weddings” or “community events”.

This makes it difficult to establish whether licensing decisions affected Bhangra, Bollywood, Punjabi folk music, Tamil music, garba, dhol, qawwali or other South Asian music traditions.

Formal premises license review				
Borough	Venue	South Asian music or cultural connection	Grounds for review	Outcome
Barnet	Paiwand Events Community	Afghan community events, family celebrations and weddings involving music. The specific genres were not recorded.	Repeated complaints that loud music continued beyond permitted hours, alongside crowd-management, security and recurring license-compliance concerns.	Premises license revoked.

Paiwand Events Community was the clearest formal review identified in which South Asian community music and celebrations formed part of the premises’ activity.

However, the official record did not identify the music being played. The activity was regulated through broad references to loud music, events and weddings rather than through any meaningful cultural or genre description.

The review resulted in revocation following an extended pattern of complaints and non-compliance. Nevertheless, the loss of the license also removed a space used for Afghan and wider community celebrations.

Other licensing decisions involving South Asian music

The following cases were applications for new or time limited premises licenses rather than formal reviews. They are therefore presented separately.

Borough	Venue or event	Music and cultural programme	Licensing process	Outcome
Hillingdon	Grant View	Live and recorded music connected to Tamil weddings, celebrations and community events	New premises-license application	Granted with extensive conditions and reduced closing hours.
Hounslow	Takaa Tak Restaurant and Banqueting Suite	Live music, recorded music and dance within a South Asian banqueting programme	New premises-license application	Granted with modified hours, a noise limiter and additional conditions.
Ealing	Punjabi Desi Mela	Punjabi cultural festival involving live music and community performance	Time-limited premises-license application	Granted with extensive security, searching, crowd-management and noise conditions.
Brent	Rangeelu Gujarat	Gujarati cultural festival involving live music, recorded music and dance	Time-limited premises-license application	Granted with agreed conditions and reduced entertainment hours.

South Asian music was generally permitted but heavily conditioned

Across the cases identified, South Asian music and cultural activity was not routinely refused.

Grant View, Takaa Tak, Punjabi Desi Mela and Rangeelu Gujarat were all permitted to proceed. However, approval was commonly accompanied by reduced hours or extensive conditions relating to:

- ✦ Security personnel;
- ✦ Searches of attendees;
- ✦ CCTV;
- ✦ Capacity;
- ✦ Noise limiters;
- ✦ Sound monitoring;
- ✦ Dispersal;
- ✦ Event-management plans;
- ✦ Restrictions on operating and entertainment hours.

Punjabi Desi Mela received particularly intensive security requirements, including searches of attendees, significant security staffing, dog handlers, surrounding-area patrols and noise monitoring.

These conditions may have been connected to the event's size and weaknesses identified in the original event plan. The available evidence does not establish that the requirements were imposed because the event was Punjabi.

However, the scale and cost of the conditions provide a legitimate basis for comparison with similarly sized festivals and music events.

A license being granted should not automatically be treated as evidence that an event experienced no licensing barrier. Conditions may increase costs substantially and can determine whether a community promoter is financially able to proceed.

The central data problem

The clearest finding is that South Asian music is largely invisible within licensing records.

The reviewed decisions commonly described activity as:

- ✦ **Live music;**
- ✦ **Recorded music;**
- ✦ **Dance;**
- ✦ **Weddings;**
- ✦ **Banqueting;**
- ✦ **Community events;**
- ✦ **Cultural festivals.**



These categories do not reveal what music was being programmed. As a result, public records cannot show how often particular South Asian genres are:

- ✦ **Included in license applications;**
- ✦ **Subject to police or responsible-authority representations;**
- ✦ **Restricted through conditions;**
- ✦ **Refused;**
- ✦ **Prevented through a Temporary Event Notice counter-notice;**
- ✦ **Affected by a license review or revocation.**

Without consistent genre and cultural-event data, it is impossible to assess the cumulative impact of licensing decisions on South Asian music.

What the evidence shows

The identified cases suggest that South Asian music and cultural events were often enabled to proceed through negotiation, modified hours and conditions.

However:

- ✦ One Afghan community events venue lost its premises license following repeated breaches;
- ✦ Tamil and South Asian banqueting music was permitted under extensive operating conditions;
- ✦ Punjabi live music was permitted with intensive security and searching requirements;
- ✦ Gujarati cultural music was permitted after representations were resolved and entertainment hours were reduced.



**SOUTH ASIAN MUSIC
AND CULTURAL
ACTIVITY REMAIN
LARGELY INVISIBLE**

However, it does demonstrate that South Asian music and cultural activity remain largely invisible within licensing datasets. This makes it difficult to understand the overall impact of licensing decisions, identify potential disparities or carry out meaningful equality monitoring. South Asian music is also frequently regulated without being properly identified.

Most of the identified music and cultural applications were granted. However, permission was frequently dependent on reduced hours, detailed operating plans, extensive security and significant noise-management requirements.

Licensing authorities should record meaningful information about music and cultural programming, including:

- ✦ Music genres;
- ✦ Cultural event type;
- ✦ Whether the programme is live, recorded or DJ-led;
- ✦ Anticipated audience and capacity;
- ✦ Conditions specifically attached to music;
- ✦ Responsible-authority representations;
- ✦ Final and interim outcomes;
- ✦ The estimated cost of required security and mitigation.

This would allow London to determine whether Bhangra, Bollywood, Tamil music, Punjabi music, garba, dhol, qawwali and other South Asian traditions are experiencing particular barriers.

Impact on Bangladeshi Music and Nightlife

The Brick Lane Cumulative Impact Zone covers Banglatown, the historic centre of London's Bangladeshi cultural and hospitality economy. Although there is no evidence that the policy explicitly targets Bangladeshi music, it creates additional barriers for new venues and businesses seeking alcohol licenses, later hours or permission for regulated entertainment. Applicants must demonstrate that their proposals will not add to existing crime, disorder or public nuisance, often requiring specialist advice, security arrangements and noise-management measures.

Recent licensing records show applicants emphasising that they will not provide live music or removing entertainment from applications to reduce the risk of refusal.

Section 9.3 of Tower Hamlets' Cumulative Impact Assessment Policy 2024–2027 states that the policy "reverses the presumption in favour of granting an application". Where a relevant representation is received, applicants must demonstrate that their proposals will not adversely affect the licensing objectives.

This may require specialist advice, security arrangements and noise-management measures that smaller community led businesses and promoters may struggle to afford.

This suggests a chilling effect that may occur before a formal decision is reached and therefore remains invisible in refusal statistics. It may particularly affect smaller Bangladeshi restaurants, promoters and cultural organisations seeking to develop regular performances, DJ nights or contemporary British-Bangladeshi music events.

The result may be to preserve Bangladeshi culture principally through restaurants and occasional daytime festivals, without supporting the permanent venues and recurring events needed for a sustainable music nightlife. Existing licensed operators are also advantaged over new community led entrants, which must overcome the cumulative-impact presumption.

Tower Hamlets does not publish licensing outcomes by venue ownership, promoter ethnicity, musical genre or cultural programming. The scale of any disproportionate impact therefore cannot be quantified, revealing a significant gap in equality monitoring.

**THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT
GAP IN EQUALITY
MONITORING**



03

The Cost of Entry – Economic and Cultural Erosion

"It's held so many incredible Black promoters, artists, and aspiring venue owners, Black people we rarely see represented, because they're simply not allowed to put on events. This hasn't just stifled individuals, it's stifled the economy... countless individuals have been denied the chance to become financially independent through music."

– Executive 9, Event/Stage Manager, London



Black music has historically been a major financial driver of the UK music industry.

According to the UK Music 'Black Music Means Business' Report (2026), an estimated £24.5 billion of the UK's £30 billion recorded music market over the past 30 years has come from Black music genres, representing over 80% of the total market, with British artists contributing approximately £11.94 billion of this figure.

Alongside this, the UK's live music sector is itself a highly lucrative space, generating £6.1 billion according to the LIVE Music Report (2024).¹⁵

However, despite the clear commercial power of both Black music and the wider live music economy, structural barriers continue to limit who benefits from this success. Many Black and South Asian promoters face disproportionate challenges in securing licenses and running events, with decisions often shaped by racial bias. This can lead to delays, costly security requirements, or cancellations altogether.

These figures point to a deeper imbalance, while Black music underpins a substantial share of the industry's revenue, Black artists are not proportionately positioned to thrive within its most profitable segment. Live performance is now one of the primary drivers of income and long-term wealth in the music industry, yet limited access to venues and events restricts artists' ability to fully monetise their work and grow their audiences.

This creates a significant gap between the wealth Black music generates and the wealth Black artists are able to retain.

Of the UK's £30 billion recorded music market

£24.5 Billion

from Black music

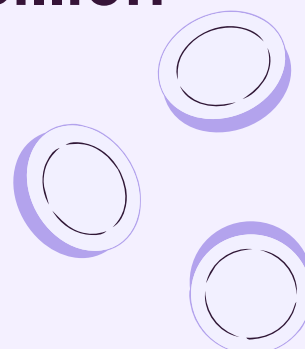
Black music genres of total market

Over 80%



UK's live music sector

£6.1 Billion



¹⁵ LIVE'S Annual UK Live Music Report (2024) www.livemusic.biz/news/live-aos-annual-uk-live-music-report

When Black and South Asian promoters are blocked by restrictive or unequal licensing practices, it does more than disrupt individual events: it cuts off access to the most lucrative part of the industry. In effect, a market that heavily profits from Black music continues to generate billions, while systemic barriers prevent many of its originators from fully participating in and benefitting from that success.

This issue is further intensified by the structure of the industry itself. The employment landscape within music and the wider creative sectors is highly dependent on freelance and self-employed work.

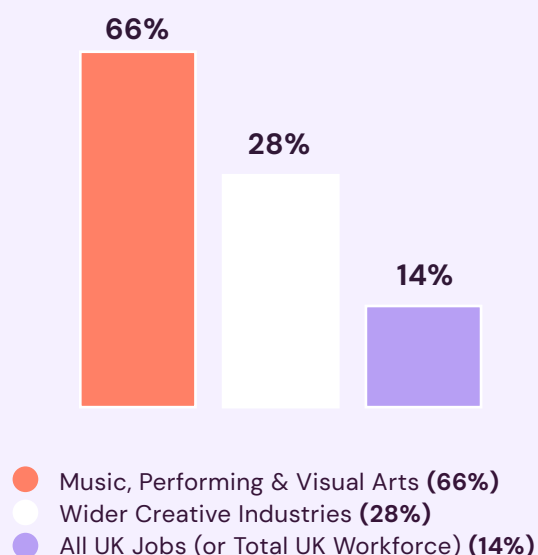
According to the House of Lords Library and Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (2025), the “Music, Performing and Visual Arts” sub-sector has one of the highest rates of self-employment in the UK economy at around two thirds (66%), compared with roughly 28% across the wider creative industries and 14% of all jobs in the UK.¹⁶ While this reflects the sector’s entrepreneurial nature and flexibility, it also makes workers particularly vulnerable to disruption.

When live events are blocked or shut down, it harms everyone involved including artists, venue owners, freelancers and even local businesses who rely on the footfall. Promoters, especially Black men, often face extra financial pressure due to inflated security costs or insurance demands, which are rarely explained or justified. These barriers stop people from building businesses, earning a living, and creating long-term careers. As a result, these barriers do not just hinder individual events, they restrict sustainable income, business growth, and long-term career development within the industry.



MUSIC, PERFORMING AND VISUAL ARTS SUB-SECTOR HAS ONE OF THE HIGHEST RATES OF SELF-EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK ECONOMY

Proportion of Self-Employed Workers Across UK Sectors



¹⁶ House of Lords Library: Creative industries: Growth, jobs and productivity (2025) www.lordslibrary.parliament.uk

3.1 Economic Analysis – Calculating the value of the Black and South Asian live music scene in London

Establishing the size of the market

Detailed data on the live music industry in London can be hard to find. While the recorded music sector has centralised granular reporting, for the purpose of album and singles charts, the live music sector does not report as frequently or in as much detail. As such, this methodology relies on proxies from the recording sector to provide an estimate of the live music valuation.

Starting with the UK Music Hometown Glory report ¹⁷ (previously branded Here, There and Everywhere) ¹⁸ which provides insight into live music destinations and offers an insight into London’s market share. The report measures domestic and international tourism activity and breaks down the national spend on live music by region. That report notes that the total spend at London’s live music scene was £2.7bn in 2024, up from £2bn in 2023. 27% of total UK spend in 2024 took place in London, a small reduction in London’s share from 30.5% in 2023. ¹⁹ It is important to note that total spend does not equate to the value or economic contribution of the sector to London’s or the UK’s total national income (or GDP).



The British Phonographic Industry (BPI) is the trade body that represents the recorded music sector. The BPI publishes annual statistics on the national music industry, including a breakdown by musical genre. ²⁰

While genre is far from a perfect proxy for race, there is limited published information available without selecting a proxy. Since the purpose of this research is to consider the events most likely to be affected by policing – which does fall in line with genres that are predominantly Black and South Asian music – we considered it an acceptable starting point. From the list of 15 published genres, we selected Hip Hop, Rap, R’n’B and Reggae as a proxy for the share of Black and Asian music. While there are artists of all races making music across all genres this is the best proxy available and offers a conservative estimate of the contribution of Black and Asian music as it does not capture incredibly popular Black and Asian artists in the Pop genre, such as Beyonce, or British pop talents like Jake Issac and JERUB. Based on the macro genres published by the BPI, and by combining the genres detailed above, an indicative national market share of total spend is 27% of all recorded music consumption in 2024. ²¹

London’s live music scene total spend



Taking £2.7bn as the total spend of the live music scene in London, the challenge is to ascertain what proportion of that spend was generated by the Black and South Asian artists.

17 www.ukmusic.org 18 www.ukmusic.org/wp-content/
19 Estimates of the total value of the live music market vary, but in 2023 UK live music trade body LIVE's 2024 paper UK Live 2023 estimated the total consumer spend on live music to be £6.1billion. Applying the 30.5% share from the UK Music paper would give £1.86b annual spend in London.
20 covver.com/magazine 21 Hip Hop/Rap 15.7% + R&B 10.6% + Reggae 0.7% = 27%

If London was to perfectly reflect the national share then the value of the live music spend would be an estimated £0.73bn. However, given the diversity of London, it is much more likely that London outperforms the national average. That reflects both the larger audience for the music in London and the concentration of creative Black and South Asian talent in the capital. According to the 2021 UK Census, 46.2% of London's population is Black, South Asian or mixed-race, which is the highest share of any region reported in the UK Census. Moreover, when looking at the distribution across the UK 33% of the UK's South Asian population, 49% of the Black population and 29% of the mixed-race populations live in London.²²

At 46.2%, London's population share of Black, South Asian or mixed-race population is more than double the national average of 16.2%.²³ Multiplying the established 27% genre national share by 2.5x would be excessive since demographic shares do not necessarily translate to shares in the music industry. Nevertheless, it is clear an adjustment is needed so that our estimate better reflects London's demographic reality. In the absence of precise information about genre shares across London an additional uplift of 50% (1.5x) has been applied to the national genre share in an attempt to better reflect London's more diverse demographic and music scene.²⁴

With this 50% uplift the share of Black and Asian music increases to 41%. Therefore, the estimated spend on Black and South Asian live music taking place in London in 2024 would be **approximately £1.1bn in 2024.**

46.2%

Of London's population is Black, South Asian or mixed-race

£1.1 Billion

Estimated spend on Black and South Asian live music taking place in London in 2024



²² www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity

²³ www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity

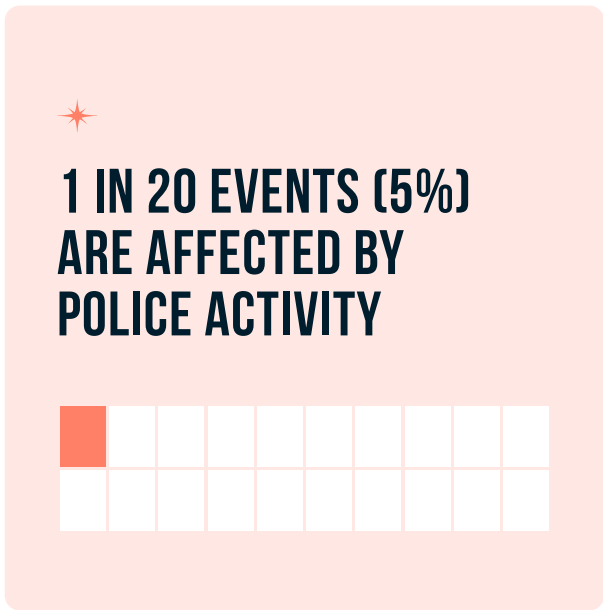
²⁴ www.ukmusic.org/wp-content

Accounting for distortions to Black and South Asian consumption

Having estimated the potential live music spend on Black and South Asian music, we now consider what might have been if there were no concerns around policing these events.

This takes place in two stages. The first is to consider the events that were planned but that did not take place due to these concerns. The second is to consider when events still took place, but with a Black or South Asian artist removed from the line up.

In order to determine the impact, we need to understand the proportion of events affected. To do this we asked various active London promoters of varying sizes (who are broadly responsible for taking the financial risk on live music events) how often they were affected by police activity. Following conversation with these experts, it was agreed that a conservative estimate would be that 1 in 20 events (5%) is affected by police activity.



Measuring the impact of police intervention: Displacement and cancelled events

The BLIM survey (6 February to 6 June 2025) asked music professionals what happened when the police became involved in events. Of the occasions reported where the police were involved ahead of the event, in 46% of instances the event did not take place with the venue staying closed.²⁵ This has a clear negative impact on the economic output of the sector.

We spoke to a small number of London based live music experts (promoters, venues and booking agents, across large and small venues) who estimated that 1 in 20 (5%) of events are affected. The reason we spoke to venues – rather than only promoters and agents – is that the venue often plays a key role in selecting talent at the grassroots level.

With 1 in 20 (5%) of events estimated to have been affected, and with almost half (46%) of venues not operating as a direct result, that means that about 2.3% of events are estimated not to have taken place. As such, the estimated foregone spend as a result of events not taking place would have been in excess of £25million in 2024.



There are also costs of cancellation that need to be covered. Our survey showed that three in four event organisers experienced financial losses as a result of the event cancellations.

25 After being asked not to programme a Black and Asian artist, have you done any of the following? (n=38)

26 Did you lose any income or incur other financial losses due to this cancellation? (n=37)

78% of event organisers who experienced event cancellations had sold tickets before the cancellation took place.²⁷

Moreover, 77% of them had paid some costs ahead of the cancellation, and over half (54%) had paid in full.²⁸ It should be noted that the sample sizes of respondents to the survey are relatively small. Nonetheless, in the absence of robust data on these variables, they will be used to provide an estimate of potential financial losses.

When asked to quantify the costs the average financial loss was £5,000 with the largest reported loss £20,000.²⁹ This does not capture the lost revenue or profit, just the financial downside as a result of event cancellation.

86% of those respondents who experienced cancellation also felt they experienced reputational damage as a result.³⁰ 43% said that it led to cancellation of other work.³¹ When asked for specific examples of harm, examples ranged from the loss of profit and brand reputation to getting rid of equipment to cover costs and in another instance selling the car that was used to run the business. one in five reported having laid off staff or not renewing freelance staff as a direct result of cancellation.³²

The £25.3 million presented earlier represents foregone spend when the venue did not open for an evening.

In some cases within the remaining 54% of occasions, a venue might replace a performer from the line up in order to go ahead. 39% of the time performers were replaced by someone else from the Black and Asian music communities, while 15% of the time they were replaced by someone of another background. The displacement of revenue from replacing Black and Asian performers with white performers is estimated to have cost the Black and Asian community £8.4m in 2024.

Estimating the number of times where displacement occurred is a challenge, not least because many conversations about which talent to book will take place without any data at all. There will be no record of how many times someone was considered but quickly discounted because of the perceived additional risk. The statistics above describe the occasions where Black and Asian performers were actively booked and still were replaced by other performers.

27 Thinking about the most recent cancellation, had you sold tickets for this event at the point of cancellation? (n=12)

28 Thinking about the most recent cancellation, had you already paid all or some of the costs associated with hiring technical staff for the event? For example, lighting and sound technicians. (n=14)

29 Thinking about the most recent cancellation, what was the approximate financial cost to you or your business for having this event cancelled? (n=13)

30 Do you feel that your professional reputation was damaged by this cancellation? (n=14)

31 As a direct result of this cancellation, have you lost further business or contracts? (n=14)

32 As a result of this cancellation, have you made any employees redundant or terminated a contracted freelancer? (n=10)

Measuring the impact of police intervention: Missing events

The greater impact of policing is that it prevents events from starting. Almost four in five respondents (79%) would put on more Black and South Asian music events if there was a reduced risk of police intervention.³³ The survey did not ask the extent to which new events would take place if concerns about policing were reduced. As such, we again asked our London experts (promoters, venues and booking agents) who estimated that a 10% uplift in events would be realistic in a scenario where the risk of police intervention was significantly decreased. This 10% uplift is modelled as a likely scenario alongside a “low” scenario (5% uplift) and a “high” scenario (15% uplift).

When considering the size of London’s Black and Asian live music sector, a 10% increase in activity is estimated to result in **£109.4m** additional spend in 2024. This is in addition to the **£25.3m** of harm from event cancellations, giving a net downside (i.e., foregone spending) of **£134.5m**. There is a further £8.4m of spend being diverted away from Black and South Asian music communities owing to police intervention.

For comparison, in the low scenario, the expected (5%) uplift is estimated to bring an additional £54.7m spend. Combined with the lost earnings from event cancellations (£25.3m) this would total £80m lost spending, as well as the displaced spending of £8.4m.

In the “high” scenario, where live music activity from Black and Asian artists increases by 15% there is an estimated £164.1m in additional spend. This would be in addition to the £25.3m of harm calculated for the cancelled events, totalling £189.4m in potential loss. As with other scenarios, this does not include the displaced £8.4m calculated above.

Returning to the mid-case scenario, we estimated that a continuation of this reality could in theory lead to a loss in spend in the Black and South Asian music communities of more than £650m over the next 5 years, which would impact the entire economy. This figure does not account for either inflation or expected growth in the live music sector during those five years; for example, the sector grew by 25% between 2023 and 2024.³⁴

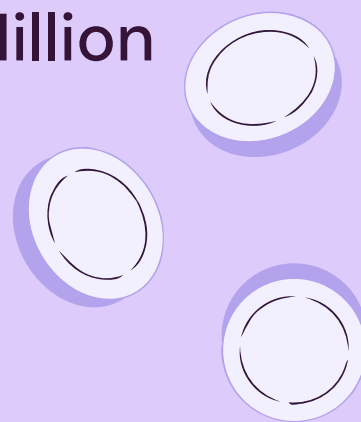
Direct harm caused by event cancellations.

£25.3 Million



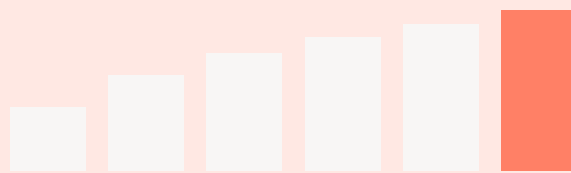
Spending diverted away from these communities due to police intervention.

£8.4 Million



Total estimated lost spend over the next 5 years if current conditions persist.

>£650 Million



³³ Would you put on more Black or Asian music events if there was less risk of police intervention? (n=114)

³⁴ www.ukmusic.org/wp-content/

Missing impacts, not just missing a show

The ability to perform creates a structural issue within the scene. Performances are a moment to promote an artist and build connections online as well as the audience attending the event in person. These are crucial for artists at all stages, but especially at the earliest stages of their career.

As such, the absence of opportunity to perform live doesn't just impact that one event on that one occasion. The subsequent event doesn't benefit from the word-of-mouth marketing, the online buzz on social media from people who attended, the merchandise sales that have both a financial and marketing upside, and the reputational growth of having performed at or sold out a key venue.

Managers, Agents and Promoters: The impact beyond the events

This harm is not limited to the artist. If we break down the chain of people who benefit from an event it's clear that the impact is significant for managers, agents and promoters.

Cost and revenue splits can vary significantly by the reputation of the artist, venue and the contractual arrangements. By way of example, if an event at the 2,000 capacity O2 Shepherds Bush was to be sold out at £32.50, this would result in lost earnings for the Artist of £16,000, but also for the Agent of £6,500, the artist's manager £2,900, the Promoter and Venue a combined £32,500 and the ticketing company would lose £9,750 in fees. There would also have been £39,000 in show costs, including hire of equipment, session musicians and more.

Promoters work on a very tight profit margin and as such the impact of a cancelled show is hugely significant to their whole business. The increased risk of cancellation can make Black and South Asian shows unprofitable or simply not worth the risk. The increased threat of cancellation makes it much riskier for promoters to specialise in Black and South Asian music.

The consequences for the agent and managers are perhaps the most impactful to the scene. Having Black and South Asian managers be in a position to build their careers on managing predominantly Black and South Asian talent is essential for a healthy and

authentic music scene. Where these events are disproportionately likely to be cancelled or disrupted it encourages Black and South Asian managers and agents to diversify their portfolio of artists to mitigate that risk. It might also mean that Black and South Asian talent are forced to work with agents and managers from outside the scene who have a lower risk profile. The threat of a cancelled event doesn't just impact the one event, but it disrupts the incentive structures for the whole sector and holds it down.

Staying with the mid-case scenario we can consider the overall impact of that missing £129–£141 million spend would have helped build the ecosystem around Black and South Asian music, supporting artists but also booking agents, promoters and managers who specialise in those scenes. The impact of over policing is significantly holding back the Black and South Asian commercial music scene in London.



3.2 Licensing Bias and Disproportionate Shutdowns

"The only real reason these events get cancelled at the last minute is this sense of fear, 'Are we fully prepared for this?' Venues feel it because their licenses are on the line. The Met feels it too, almost instinctively. But that fear comes from a deeper issue, a lack of understanding and a breakdown in the system that's been there for a really long time. At the end of the day, no one wants to put themselves in a position where their license or reputation is at risk. So instead of working through it, they just shut it down."

– Makeda Bennett-Amparbeng, Promoter, London



Licensing bias and uneven enforcement continue to be major barriers to fair access in the UK's live music scene for Black and South Asian organisers. In our focus groups, participants described the financial and emotional strain of having events cancelled by licensing authorities or police, often just days or even hours before they were due to take place. These cancellations usually happen without clear reasons or any way to appeal, yet the impact is severe.

Promoters spoke about investing months of unpaid work and personal funds to make their events happen, covering costs such as venue hire and DJ fees to flyer design, advertising, and logistics. As one promoter explained:

"You can't insure yourself for something like this. You might have worked on it for three months or more, doing all the flyers, all the promo yourself and then it's just gone. No apology, no compensation, just a huge loss."

– Executive 3, Promoter, London



"The reason why some of these costs are so high is also due to the number of staff it takes to host an event". Creative 7 recalled "You're losing money because you've still got these things to pay. Everyone else has done their job. So you've still got your bar staff, you still got your security... They've turned up to work. They haven't done anything wrong..." this highlights how cancellations affect an entire ecosystem of workers and service providers, not just the event organisers.

Participants also emphasised the racialised nature of these shutdowns. Creative 9 recalled: "People understood why I pulled it. We were being singled out. The police knew the DJs were Black, knew the crowd would be Black and that's what triggered it." In another case, a Soulful and Afro House boat party that had been fully approved was later subjected to a police-led DJ vetting process immediately after the flyer went live. "Everything was fine until they saw the line up," Creative 3 explained. "Then it was over." Executive 1 recalled having their event cancelled four days before it was set to begin: "We were cancelled four days out, you're talking we lost £150-180k especially when your tickets are £50-60 and so forth, you can easily start racking up that with production and everything else and deposits that you've paid out."

Financially, these shutdowns amount to losses in the range of several thousand pounds, "easily a grand down, every time," said Creative 8.

Beyond the immediate financial hit, these shutdowns damage reputations, strain relationships with venues, and reduce long term viability for independent event producers. Trust in licensing bodies and local authorities is severely undermined. As Creative 10 put it, "It's draining both financially and mentally."

Taken together, these practices amount to more than individual setbacks. They form a clear pattern of structural exclusion. Events led by Black and South Asian creatives face a much higher risk of being shut down at short notice, making it difficult to maintain businesses, build careers, or contribute to the wider economy. Each cancellation represents not only a financial loss but also a denial of economic and cultural participation in one of the UK's most successful creative industries.

One promoter reflected on their experience of a cancellation and the money that was lost:

"One night in particular, we're talking a loss at minimum somewhere from like £7 to £10K cuz obviously you've already got stuff in. We've already done production. Can you kind of hold this like we'll come back or circle back in a certain date and in certain in some instances we just have to pay up"

- Executive 3, Promoter, London



3.3 Reputational Damage and Informal Blacklisting

"In the UK where your credit rating goes down... You know, you walk into any financial institution and you know, you've got to say who you are. They then do their due diligence checks and then come back and say, "Well, hold on. You had this event was shut down by the police or this event was shut down by the Licensing board"

- Executive 3, Promoter, London



The experiences shared in this research reveal excessive and inconsistent security related costs placed on Black and South Asian-led events. These costs cause more harm than just a single night's financial loss. Promoters often reported being charged inflated fees for policing, stewarding, and surveillance, with little explanation or consistency in how those costs were set.

When events are cancelled or perform poorly because of these financial pressures, the effects can be long lasting. As promoter Executive 7 explained, "Well definitely a lot of money was lost... and going into other venues, it was difficult because obviously that name then follows you." This kind of informal blacklisting happens behind

the scenes, driven by reputation and internal conversations rather than any formal process or evidence.

Several participants stressed that the more lasting damage was often to their reputation. "One of the damages that is overlooked is your reputation," Executive 9 said. "That goes on not just tomorrow, but the day after and the day after and it goes on for years." Executive 7, "It puts my event at risk, my business, my livelihood, and it also puts the opportunity to socialise at risk for the communities I serve." In an industry where trust and relationships are everything, reputational damage can quietly shut doors for years, making it even harder to recover or grow.

There are also practical knock-on effects. Shutdowns and cancellations can undermine a promoter's creditworthiness and make it harder to sustain a business. Executive 3 explained, "Not only are you losing your reputation, but also you are losing your credit rating. Especially with ticket companies... every time you cancel and give money back, you then become untrustworthy." The situation is made worse by modern payment systems. If ticket holders request chargebacks before refunds are processed, the financial blow can be immediate.

These combined pressures create a climate in which those already facing higher levels of scrutiny find themselves pushed out. Rather than being able to recover and reinvest, many are forced to step away, not because of any failure in planning or safety, but because the risks placed upon them are simply too great. As Executive 5 put it, "Not everybody has like, you know, £20–30 grand down the back of the sofa. So generally you do go to secure your event on the basis of, in some cases, your house."

Over time, this pushes talent out of the industry and deepens existing racial inequalities in who has access to opportunity and growth. It is not just individual careers that are affected, but

the wider culture and economy that rely on the creativity, leadership, and entrepreneurship of Black and South Asian communities.

One promoter shared their experience of struggling to get an official reason for a cancellation in writing, explaining how this lack of clarity made it harder to manage expectations around rescheduled dates:

"It's then trying to get that official cancellation term put in writing as to why has it been cancelled?... That's what they kind of will push on the reschedule dates. So, therefore, it's not an actual loss. So, therefore, the tickets sales can roll over. But again, sometimes you don't even have a venue nor a date to push that on to and obviously it has a knock on effect on the fan base because they're like, "What the hell?" They spent their money. Like it's not a good look for the artist."

– Executive 9, Event/Stage Manager, London



Cost Barriers

Promoters and venue operators consistently report that Black and South Asian-led music events are charged inflated operational costs, often with no formal risk assessment to support them. Cultural bias is effectively turned into financial pressure through excessive demands for security and police presence.

Creative 10 recalled being charged £10,000 for police presence, while another was asked to cover the cost of 26 officers at £56 per hour, despite there being no history of incidents and only vague intelligence cited. "There's no way that show would have been profitable," the promoter reflected. Another described being billed an additional £5,000 for security alone.

"They were charging like five grand for security. It was a lot of money because we were promoting the events ourselves. It wasn't all online like it is now...we had street teams, flyering, posters. Plus, we were paying deposits for the artists we were booking..."

– Creative 3, Promoter, London



Private security requirements also tend to increase without clear justification. Events that would typically require around 25 security staff have, when featuring Black music acts, been subjected to demands for anywhere between 55 and 90 personnel, making them financially unviable. Several promoters have shared similar experiences of inflated costs tied to Black or Asian-led events. Executive 7 reflected: “For a Wembley show, we were paying £15,000 above the standard for security. It’s done on a P&L. It’s done on a profit and a loss. So, the artist is now absorbing £15k extra cost.”

The burden of absorbing additional costs was mentioned by an agent who explained:

“So, let’s say an artist is guaranteed £15,000 for the show, but the actual cost of putting it on comes to £20,000. They’re already investing £5,000 of their own money just to make it happen. Their mindset shifts they’re no longer performing to make a profit, they’re performing just to break even or stay visible. Yes, there’s income, but the outgoings are often much higher. Add in any extra, unexpected costs often imposed unfairly and the break-even point rises even more. So even if they sell out the show and technically qualify for a higher payout, once the costs are deducted, they might still walk away with less than the guarantee. In fact, the promoter often ends up losing money.”

– Creative 3, Promoter, London



The difference in how Black and South Asian-led events are treated compared to those led by white organisers was a recurring theme across interviews. Many participants described the inconsistent standards applied by venues, especially in culturally diverse areas. One promoter explained that venues such as the O2 Academy in Shepherd’s Bush, despite being based in diverse communities, often reject Black music events or attach unfairly high security costs as a condition for approval.

Even large, professionally-managed festivals are not exempt. One festival celebrating Black music and culture faced security costs of £100,000, far higher than comparable events held at the same location. Participants linked this to the genre and the racial makeup of the audience, not to any evidence based risk. One described it as a system where the mere appearance of risk, often based on online images or artist names, leads to inflated costs. “You could get increased security costs on the [redacted artist] show,” noted

Executive 10, “and that’s just someone Googling his picture and making an assumption.” These practices act as a hidden form of economic exclusion. Events are not directly banned but are made logistically or financially impossible to run. Police intelligence, which is often unverified, becomes a tool for discouraging organisers and forcing them to pay additional costs. One promoter described planning a show at the O2, only to receive an unexpected £10,000 security bill two weeks before the event, with no prior discussion or explanation.

The impact goes beyond finances. Creative potential is also limited, as money that should fund production quality instead goes towards inflated security costs. “If I’m paying £15,000 extra towards security, that’s £15,000 I could have invested in lighting or staging,” Creative 9 reflected. These pressures ultimately restrict artistic expression and make Black and South Asian-led events harder to sustain.

3.4 Barriers to Growth and Platform for Rising Talent

"With events shutting down and the night-time scene shrinking, I wouldn't say things are getting any better. In fact, it's made it harder for people who might've considered becoming promoters or putting on events. It's like where do you even start now? Where do you go to do those smaller events that help you climb the ladder?"

– A1, Venue Operator, London



Another consequence of heightened policing at Black and South Asian events is the loss of crucial opportunities for artists to build momentum in their careers. These early interventions disrupt the discovery of new talent and limit long-term growth before artists can gain wider recognition. As Creative 6 put it, "We're losing the opportunity to showcase some of the diverse talent across Black and South Asian music culture because of the attitudes towards policing." Creative 2 echoed this concern: "The discovery of new talent isn't happening at the same pace, and you can feel that drop in audience engagement and fanbase connection. Without a doubt, we're losing something vital in that process."

Building a lasting career in the industry brings its own challenges. Several contributors spoke about the difficulties emerging artists face when trying to move beyond the early stages of success. Agent, Executive 2 explained, "There are certain acts that keep having to use places like

Indigo at The O2 not because they want to, but because that's the only venue that'll take them. And they're worth more tickets than that."

Michael Kill from NTIA pointed to a concerning slowdown in the development of emerging talent:

"A lot of these young artists like AJ Tracey, J Hus, and others we're starting to see a slowdown in the talent pipeline. The discovery of new talent isn't happening at the same pace, and you can feel that drop in audience engagement and fanbase connection."

– Michael Kill, NTIA



Echoing this concern, one venue representative reflected on the pressures faced by artists still on the rise:

"I think for some, emerging artists, it can feel exhausting, especially because they're on the rise, right? They're not quite established yet, but they're climbing. And venues are key to their success. They take you from doing 2,000 to 5,000 to 10,000, it's your growth spurt. But it can get overwhelming when artists start to worry about how venues are going to receive their audiences."

– B2, Venue Operator, London



The shutdown of entire tours has significant economic implications, not only for artists but for the broader creative economy. Mid-sized tours alone can generate between £400,000 and £1 million in revenue. When these tours are cancelled, it directly undermines the artist's ability to contribute to the UK's GDP, disrupts local job creation across the supply chain, and weakens a vital segment of the live music industry. The table below highlights the average revenue from one show across major arenas.

Indicative Revenues and Costs	Shepherds Bush	Kentish Town Forum	O2 Academy Brixton	OVO Arena Wembley	The O2
Capacity	2,000	2,300	4,921	12,500	20,000
Number of Shows	1	1	1	1	1
Ticket Price	£32.50	£32.50	£32.50	£75.00	£75.00
Assumed sell through	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Total ticket revenue	£65,000	£74,750	£159,933	£937,500	£1,500,000
Ticket fees as % of Face Value	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%
Ticket fees	£9,750	£11,213	£23,990	£140,625	£225,000
Indicative Venue Spend as % of Face Value	30%	30%	30%	30%	30%
Venue non-ticket revenue	£19,500	£22,425	£47,980	£281,250	£450,000
Indicative Merch Spend as % of Face Value	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%
Artist non-ticket revenue	£13,000	£14,950	£31,987	£187,500	£300,000
Indicative show costs as % of Face Value	60%	60%	60%	60%	60%
Show costs	£39,000	£44,850	£95,960	£562,500	£900,000
Total event revenue	£107,250	£123,338	£263,889	£1,546,875	£2,475,000

Assumptions					
Gross Artist %	80%	80%	80%	80%	80%
Promoter %	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%
Agent %	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%
Net Artist %	90%	90%	90%	90%	90%
Manager %	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%

Financial Outcomes					
Ticket fees	£9,750	£11,213	£23,990	£140,625	£225,000
Gross Artist Revenue	£65,000	£74,750	£159,933	£937,500	£1,500,000
Promoter and Venue	£32,500	£37,375	£79,966	£468,750	£750,000
Agent	£6,500	£7,475	£15,993	£93,750	£150,000
Manager	£2,925	£3,364	£7,197	£42,188	£67,500
Artist Take Home	£16,575	£19,061	£40,783	£239,063	£382,500

Economic Analysis – REMEL report 2025

Collapse of Artist Ecosystems Due to Venue Closures

“A lot of those mid size venues are no longer here... it’s just that the whole scene has collapsed. And so you’re kind of competing to get into three or four venues, and you’re not going to get into them unless you’re a major promoter.”

– Creative 2, Promoter, London



These repeated cancellation of Black and South Asian-led events, especially during a time of financial uncertainty, reflects a wider trend contributing to the decline of music venues across the UK. As these spaces close, so do the opportunities for artists to grow their careers, reach audiences, and remain visible within the cultural landscape. According to the Night-time Industries Association,³⁵ between March 2020 and December 2023, 396 nightclubs closed, approximately three every week. This represents nearly a third of all such venues across the country.

The impact of a cancelled event goes well beyond the night itself. As highlighted earlier, for many Black and South Asian artists, these shows are crucial moments to earn a living and build a following. Without them, artists lose momentum,

and the broader infrastructure around Black music begins to crumble. Creative 2 described it as a chain reaction that’s left the industry struggling to stay afloat: “It’s damaged the music industry. People don’t say it out loud, but we’ve been scraping by. Just making do. And that’s what’s dragging this whole thing down.”

Venues that once relied on the popularity of Black-led events have largely disappeared. Brixton Academy, Stratford Rex, and Shenolas were among those identified as key cultural spaces supported by Black music audiences. “The Black music scene has kept the inner-city venues alive for over 40 years,” the same promoter reflected. This is not only happening in London; it’s affecting cities across the UK. The reasons given for some of these closures have only added to the frustration. Some venues,

³⁵ Night-time Industries Association www.ntia.co.uk/ntia-

such as Lime Bar and Silk & Spice, were repeatedly advised by police to cancel events based on vague warnings or “intelligence” that rarely came with evidence.

This has hit independent promoters the hardest, especially those who built their platforms without industry support. “White promoters weren’t doing the numbers Black promoters were,” Creative 9 said. “We were and still are culturally invested in our music. Not following trends. Not chasing the charts. And we got treated differently. And now, what do you see? Clubs are closing down. And honestly? When I hear it, I think, well, it serves them right.”

Losing these inner-city venues is about more than losing event spaces. It represents the quiet disappearance of the cultural work that has powered Britain’s nightlife for decades. What’s being lost is not only space, but the legacy of creativity, community, and identity that helped shape British music as we know it.

3.5 The Hidden Economics of Risk Assessment

“Venues face standard objections to Temporary Event Notices (TENs) if they mention certain music genres or cultural events linked to Black or South Asian communities.”

– D4, Venue Operator, London



“We needed to go through a year-long appeal just to extend operating hours for Black/Brown programming, despite being a celebrated part of local regeneration.”

– A1, Venue Owner, London



Venue risk assessments, while formally intended to ensure public safety, have increasingly become a way to restrict Black and South Asian cultural events. On paper, the licensing process appears neutral, testimonies from those working in the sector reveal a different picture.

Promoters and venue operators consistently report informal police interventions that begin as soon as tickets go on sale, particularly for events expected to attract majority Black or South Asian audiences. Venue Owner B2 described how they were contacted just hours after announcing a rap concert, receiving a warning that “any incident would risk license review,” even though their venue had no history of trouble. Executive 10 said, “Police interactions often involve verbal threats of license review before events even happen, especially if the event is expected to

attract a largely Black/Brown crowd.” These verbal warnings, although off the record, have serious consequences. They can lead to costly extra security, inflated insurance premiums, or even full cancellations.

This kind of pressure has created a culture of fear and caution. Venue operators, already under financial strain since the pandemic, are growing more reluctant to book events that might be seen as risky. “There’s less room for risk now and policing parties know that,” Executive 9 explained. When events are cancelled at the last minute, the financial damage can be worse than if the event had gone ahead. As venue owner A1 put it, “As a venue a last minute cancellation is going to cost more if the event doesn’t go ahead. I mean, we’re talking we could talk about £10,000 a night, because of that particular night because

that's our revenue, you know, and we might miss out on doing particular nights."

To avoid these losses, many venues are shifting away from diverse programming and instead leaning towards events they believe will attract less scrutiny. This shift is being driven from the top. As Creative 5 observed, "They're like, why are we doing this when we could just do another event and make the same amount of money? Less stress, same cash. More Rock gigs."

Even when a venue secures a license, it doesn't guarantee viability. Venue owner D4 explained, "You may get the license, but the conditions might mean that actually it's not as viable as a business as it should be or it's not as profitable an event as it should be which again limits your then your ability to do more to invest further, to maybe open that next venue, to maybe put on that next event, to expand your site, to build your business."

Faced with these potential losses, many venues prioritise minimising risk over supporting artistic or cultural diversity. This creates a growing economic disincentive to host events linked to Black or South Asian music or audiences. At the ownership level, decision makers increasingly favour genres seen as safer or less controversial..



Use of Intelligence

"The police were just saying if you're going to do anything in there, you need to pay for our the police presence and and it was almost like you know it was just easy money for them. £3-4K is a big setback. You feel like you're obligated to pay them the money and if there's any little incident that happens outside, but you've now paid for police... because they're going to deal with it and 9 out of 10 they let the situation escalate before even trying to do anything. So you still end up being tarnished with a bad reputation anyway."

– Executive 7, Promoter, London



For many Black and South Asian promoters, police “intelligence” has become a catch-all justification for cancellations, inflated costs, and reputational damage. These claims are rarely transparent but heavily influence licensing and venue decisions. Whether it’s Grime, Drill, or international acts, promoters describe a consistent pattern: full compliance with security and paperwork, followed by last minute interventions presented as non-negotiable.

Requests for additional information not expected by their white counterparts are common in the experience of our interviewees. Executive 6 described a Drill event where all artist details, including government names and birth dates, were submitted in advance as required. Yet, just ten days before the event, it was cancelled.

Initially, police were believed to be responsible. Later, the explanation shifted, Executive 6 was told the venue now required a police presence, or that licensing concerns linked to an unrelated past incident meant the venue no longer felt comfortable hosting. “We’re talking two different genres, two different demographics,” they explained, “but the excuses just kept coming.”

This lack of clarity is not limited to genre specific events. In another case, a sold-out show for [redacted artist] was allowed to proceed only after the Creative 6 paid £10,000 for police presence, based on unspecified “intelligence” received the week before. Despite paying the fee, they noted that officers allowed minor incidents outside the venue to escalate before intervening. The damage, however, still fell on the promoter, whose reputation was left tarnished.

It is evident that the use of “intelligence” serves less as a true safety measure and more as a barrier to entry. Promoters are often forced to bear high costs without explanation or recourse, and some argue this is contributing to a wider decline in major Black and South Asian-led events, especially on dates like New Year’s Eve. When asked why an event has been cancelled, the answer is frequently final: “It’s intelligence. We can’t discuss it any further.” Without transparency, due process, or accountability, promoters must operate in an uncertain environment where following the rules provides no assurance of protection.



**IT IS EVIDENT THAT THE
USE OF “INTELLIGENCE”
SERVES LESS AS A TRUE
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3.6 Economic Marginalisation of Black Genres

Licensing pressure and enforcement practices have not only caused financial strain but forced a shift in the nature of musical programming.

Licensing pressure and enforcement practices have not only caused financial strain but forced a shift in the nature of musical programming. Promoters describe how line ups are now curated for perceived safety. For instance, choosing mainstream or apolitical acts over culturally specific ones, in an attempt to avoid cancellation. As Executive 10 put it, "I've always tried to do conscious, culturally positive Reggae... but to keep [redacted venue] alive, I've had to start booking artists that don't even align with my values."

This shift narrows artistic expression and limits identity on stage. Promoters are left trying to meet the expectations of licensing bodies rather than the needs of their own communities. In some cases, that means booking white or "neutral" DJs just to show the event won't be seen as a risk, even if those artists have no real connection to the music or the people in the room. For Black promoters and performers, it's a double standard. They face extra scrutiny, while white peers are often assumed to be a safer bet.

This pattern mimics earlier instances of genre erasure. When UK Garage grew in popularity, it was pushed out of venues and heavily policed. Creative 7 said, "Garage was massive... then the police shut it down. People had to rebrand themselves. Wiley and them had to call it Grime to make it work." Some artists managed to adapt and carry on. But many more were cut off before their careers could take shape. "There's a generation of kids that would have become the next Wiley, the next Dizzee but they never got the opportunity."

This marginalisation extends beyond individual artists and promoters. It restructures the live

"Garage scene was killed off... because of the early days of 696 when they were shutting down Garage events around the UK"

– Creative 8, DJ/Promoter, London



music economy itself, altering what kinds of music are heard, who gets to perform, and which audiences are served. A creative explained the constraints placed on musical selection in certain venues: "We've all been there, the manager comes over, keep it light and fluffy, play the commercial stuff type thing. So, you're not satisfying your audience."

The financial strain adds another layer. As mentioned earlier, events led by Black and South Asian communities often carry heavier financial burdens. These costs force organisers to raise ticket prices just to break even, but in doing so, they risk pricing out the very audiences the events are meant to serve. Executive 10 explained:

"That's why we see, if you look at like Dancehall or for an example, or even some of the Afrobeat stuff, that's why the tickets are so more expensive. Like there's a lot of factors that go into the fact that the artists are travelling from abroad, and some of their fee expectations are a lot higher in general. But also, when you when you're being charged triple your security costs, you have to cut it, then ends up affecting the consumer."

– Executive 10, Promoter, London



Meanwhile, larger companies with more financial resources, legal teams, and corporate insurance are far better equipped to absorb these costs or fight cancellations. Independent promoters, on the other hand, face far greater risk. Executive 7 put it plainly: “The independent Black promoter doesn’t get the same opportunity to recover... they don’t have Live Nation’s insurance or the legal buffer... if they get cancelled, they’re done.” This unequal footing creates a system where corporate players can still operate freely, while smaller, culturally rooted organisers are pushed out.

The financial impact also affects the future of the

industry. Executive 9 emphasised this concern: “Without a doubt I think the biggest worry is what the decline of future revenue is where the biggest concern is. So, as we start to see artists start to dwindle and grassroots promoters start to drop out because of the cost base, the future cost is not just going to be in revenue, it’s also going to be in talent.”

When young artists cannot get booked, small promoters cannot afford to take risks, and audiences feel excluded, the cultural ecosystem loses its ability to regenerate. This leads to a structural weakening of the pipeline that develops new sounds, builds loyal fanbases, and preserves cultural memory.

3.7 Cost to the Local Economy

Stakeholders consistently report that rather than enabling cultural celebration, the system is often structured to impede it, particularly when the event focuses on Black or South Asian culture. As Creative 10 put it, “Operators too often find the system is designed to stop them rather than enable a celebration of Black/Brown culture.”

When events are cancelled or licenses denied, the impact goes far beyond promoters and artists. Venues, sound technicians, security staff, food vendors, hospitality workers, and local businesses all suffer direct financial losses. For example, Ben Ryan highlighted that around 1,500 people can be employed in some capacity for a single major event day. “That’s 1,500 people without work that day and all the people involved leading up to it, so it has a massive potential economic impact.” Jon Collins from LIVE noted, “10,000 people at a show spend a million pounds in the local economy.” These figures are not theoretical; when Brixton Academy was forced to close, surrounding pubs and shops lost an estimated:

£500,000 per week in trade ³⁶

The economic fallout worsens over time. Each cancelled or denied event disrupts artist earnings, stalls career progression, and undermines the viability of promotion as a

profession. Live performance remains a key source of income for most artists and DJs, so when licensing barriers exclude them from line-ups, entire pathways for advancement vanish. The loss also echoes through the local ecosystem: communities are denied moments of gathering, cities lose opportunities for cultural tourism, and potential revenue often amounting to tens or hundreds of thousands of pounds is simply not generated.

The need for reform is clear like Executive 9 argued, “The cost to the local economy and community of licenses not granted should be a required consideration within the licensing process.” Without structural change, the current system will continue to undermine not only racial equity in culture but also local economic resilience and recovery.

The cancellation of a single event, especially on vague or discriminatory grounds, can be devastating. For Black and South Asian promoters, even those with years of experience, one lost show can mean financial collapse, reputational damage, and a permanent exit from the industry. “Even as someone who’s been in the game for years, one cancellation could end your promotion forever,” said promoter, Creative 5. These are not isolated setbacks; they are career ending blows. Without institutional support, insurance protections, or meaningful avenues for appeal, many find themselves with no way back.

³⁶ www.morningadvertiser.co.uk

3.8 Black and South Asian Culture Powers the Night-time Economy

"You go to other non-Black electronic events, no one's really buying drinks like that. Then you've got this community that comes to dance, to have fun, and they're spending. It's a no brainer. Sometimes, it's just about breaking that barrier."

– Creative 7, Promoter, London



Black and South Asian-led events are not only culturally vital but also powerful economic drivers within the night-time economy. Promoters, artists, and venues from these communities regularly attract large crowds, generate strong bar sales, and support surrounding businesses. From Amapiano to Bhangra to Grime, these genres draw audiences that stay late, spend actively, and create vibrant cultural experiences. Yet despite their clear economic value, these events continue to face disproportionate scrutiny, inflated costs, and limited access to opportunity.

The financial impact is undeniable. Venue operators who initially resist hosting Black or South Asian-led events often shift their stance once they witness the commercial returns. As

Executive 8 shared, "We smashed the bar and suddenly it was, 'What dates do you want?'" Another promoter recalled the shift in attitude following an Amapiano show at [Redacted venue] "They were fussing about the logistics, staff were stressed because everyone wanted to be on stage. It was clearly their first big Black event. You could feel the apprehension. But now [Redacted venue] keeps chasing more Amapiano bookings, and it's simple, bar spend." These events consistently outperform expectations in terms of audience engagement and bar revenue but only after breaking through barriers rooted in racialised assumptions. Executive 10 described having to rely on a white counterpart just to be taken seriously: "We had to use a white counterpart to get us in the door and they listened to them separately and came in, we did

"We know about those sort of venues but the ones that kind of sit across multi-genres or would lean themselves more aesthetically or culturally or location wise to a Black music event. The interesting thing that they'll face is that Black music events have a much higher bar spend than any other event. And so the business case is to host Black music events but then they face the issues that you know from licensing..."

– Executive 2, Promoter, London



Black and South Asian creatives are sustaining nightlife while having to constantly prove their legitimacy in a system that often undervalues them. With venues under pressure and the sector still in recovery, this is not just a cultural or moral issue, it's an economic one. For the UK night-time economy to thrive, meaningful inclusion of Black and South Asian communities is not optional, it's essential.



04

Weaponising Media Narratives Against Black Events

In contemporary Britain, the regulation of Black cultural life extends well beyond formal policing.

It occurs discursively through the media, in headlines, across radio soundbites and comment sections where language itself becomes a tool of control. As participants in this study repeatedly observed, Black cultural events are not only over policed in operational terms, they are pre policed and post-judged in narrative terms.

The processes through which events are covered, described, and explained reproduce a broader logic of suspicion that some have termed a “media–securitisation complex” (Fenton, 2012; ³⁷ Gilroy, 2002). ³⁸ Within this discursive machinery, Black gatherings are rarely understood as cultural, joyful, or ordinary. They are framed instead as dangerous, exceptional, or out of control.

This section explores the role of the media in constructing and sustaining racialised logics of risk. Drawing on case studies including the 2022, O2 Academy Brixton tragedy and the annual Notting Hill Carnival, it examines how Black-led events become subject to intensified scrutiny not only in law or licensing, but in language.



Black gatherings are rarely understood as cultural, joyful, or ordinary. They are framed instead as dangerous, exceptional, or out of control.

³⁷ Fenton (2012) ³⁸ Gilroy (2002)

4.1 Case Study: Brixton Academy and the “Ticketless Mob”

Following the fatal crowd crush during Nigerian artist Asake’s performance at O2 Academy Brixton in December 2022

National press coverage quickly redirected attention from operational failures to audience misconduct. Media reports positioned Black crowds as disorderly and criminally inclined, often before any formal investigation had taken place. As headlines declared:



Daily Mail

“Hundreds of ticketless fans storm Brixton Academy”

Daily Mail (15 Dec 2022) ³⁹

London Evening Standard

“Mob tries to force way into gig”

Evening Standard (16 Dec 2022): ⁴⁰

The language of “mob” and “storming” did more than describe; it implied causality and cast blame. It deflected scrutiny away from the venue operator, Academy Music Group (AMG), whose own documentation had categorised the concert as high-risk (Level 4–5).

And legal counsel Philip Kolvin KC, addressed the discursive deflection directly:

We proposed a move away from genre based risk classification towards a more rigorous and artist specific assessment, grounded in factual history rather than stereotype. The licensing sub-committee accepted this new approach, but rightly added an important and binding condition: that future assessments must take into account the Public Sector Equality Duty, as set out under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, thereby ensuring that music genres associated with Black audiences are not suppressed through indirect discrimination.

– Philip Kolvin KC



³⁹ Daily Mail (2022) ⁴⁰ Evening Standard (2022)

4.2 Case Study: Notting Hill Carnival and the Spectacle of Surveillance

Each year Notting Hill Carnival (NHC) faces an excessive level of policing.

In 2025, more than 7,000 police officers were deployed each day, and measures such as live facial recognition (LFR), knife arches, and dispersal zones were used across the area (Appendix C, pp. 2–3). This deployment raises serious concerns about racial bias. Trials of LFR at NHC in 2016 and 2017 were abandoned after 102 false identifications were recorded, disproportionately affecting Black and other Global Majority individuals. Civil liberties groups have strongly criticised the 2025 rollout. Rebecca Vincent of Big Brother Watch stated:



“We know that LFR is less accurate in scanning minority faces... Using it to target attendees of this beloved cultural celebration is particularly sinister. This planned deployment is even more concerning given the continued lack of a legislative basis, leaving police to write their own rules with no accountability or oversight”

– (Vincent, 2025)



These actions are often defended using media reports that overstate the risks or mix up incidents that happen nearby with those that occur inside the event itself. Such headlines reinforce the idea that Carnival is mainly a public order issue. This frustrates organisers, who feel their hard work and cultural legacy are reduced to a discussion about security.

Even with a strong safety record and broad public support (Huffington Post, 2019), Carnival is rarely celebrated in the media. Its ongoing portrayal as a threat justifies increased policing and discourages long-term investment in its cultural infrastructure (Appendix C).

Daily Mail

2025

“Chaos at Notting Hill:
Two dead, dozens injured”

(Appendix C)

BBC
NEWS

5 July 2025

“Facial recognition to be used at
Carnival amid knife crime fears”

(Appendix C)

“I question a lot of the things that are put down to Notting Hill Carnival”

Matthew Phillips, CEO, Notting Hill Carnival, Appendix C



In Comparison to Other Large Scale Events

A 2019 report by HuffPost UK sheds new light on how crime at large UK events is reported, especially when it comes to Notting Hill Carnival. While headlines often focus on arrests or knife incidents at Carnival, the bigger picture, namely, the sheer size of the event is often left out of the conversation.

Notting Hill Carnival is Europe’s largest street festival, attracting at least two million people each year. Yet despite this scale, Carnival is frequently portrayed as uniquely problematic, while other major festivals, some of which report similar or worse crime rates receive far less media scrutiny.

When you adjust for crowd size, the data tells a different story:

NOTTING HILL CARNIVAL

3.76 arrests per 10,000 attendees

GLASTONBURY FESTIVAL

3.1 arrests per 10,000 attendees

CREAMFIELDS:

23.67 arrests per 10,000 attendees

Knife crime at Carnival has become a particularly dominant narrative in press coverage. Yet, as HuffPost reveals, other festivals also see incidents involving knives and weapons.

To put this in context, even though Carnival recorded more stabbings in previous years (15 in 2016, 7 in 2017, and 1 in 2018), its massive attendance dwarfs those of other festivals. Without that context, the numbers risk being misunderstood and misrepresented.

CREAMFIELDS

13 arrests for possession of a blade or offensive weapon

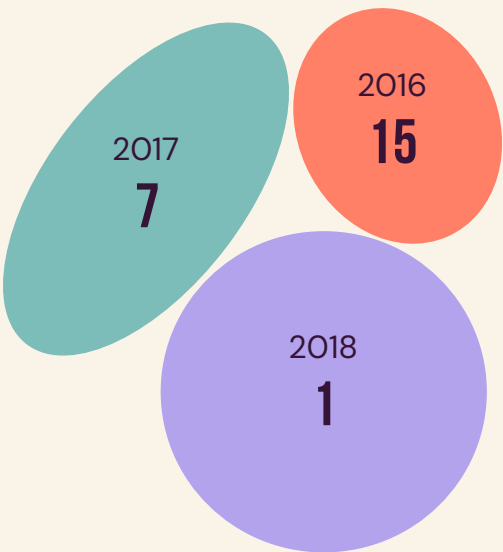
GLASTONBURY

1 arrest each for knife possession and for an offensive weapon

READING FESTIVAL

3 arrests for offensive weapons, 1 for wounding with intent

NOTTING HILL CARNIVAL



When we look more broadly at arrest types across festivals, a pattern emerges:

Glastonbury

Arrests from 2016–17 and 2019, were for offences including:

- 15 assaults
- 1 burglary
- 129 drug offences
- 1 conspiracy to defraud
- 1 possession of a knife
- 1 possession of an offensive weapon
- 10 thefts

Creamfields

Arrests from 2016–18 were for offences including:

- 18 assaults or resisting arrest including 3 assaults on police
- 355 drugs offences
- 13 possession of an offensive or bladed weapon
- 8 thefts
- 1 rape

Reading

Arrests from 2016–18 were for offences including:

- 6 assaults
- 52 drug offences
- 3 possession of an offensive weapon
- 4 robbery
- 1 sexual assault
- 7 thefts
- 1 threat to kill
- 1 wounding with intent

Royal Ascot

Arrests from 2016–18 were for offences including:

- 13 assaults including 1 assault on police
- 1 drug offence
- 6 drunk and disorderly
- 2 forgery
- 3 sexual assaults
- 2 thefts

Serious offences occur across all these events. What differs is not the data, but the narrative. Despite being statistically safer per capita than some festivals, Notting Hill Carnival is consistently singled out, over-policed, heavily surveilled, and disproportionately scrutinised. Suggesting that the issue lies less in the numbers, and more in how they're framed and reported.

For a detailed account see [**Appendix C**](#): Case Study – Notting Hill Carnival.

05

The Racialised Double Standard in UK Nightlife

Across the UK's night-time economy, events linked to Black and South Asian music, culture, and audiences face unfair levels of scrutiny.

This creates a two-tier cultural system: one where events associated with white culture are treated with trust and flexibility, and another where Black and South Asian events are viewed with suspicion, closely monitored, and harshly controlled.



5.1 Proportionality: City of London's "No Promoted Events" Clause

Licensing rules are often seen as neutral tools for public safety. However, certain conditions, such as the "No Promoted Events" clause, create structural barriers, especially for independent, freelance, and Black and South Asian promoters. This rule, part of the City of London Corporation's licensing policy, specifically prevents venues from hosting events that are managed by anyone other than the license holder.

As defined in the Statement of Licensing Policy:

"A promoted event is defined as... [one where] the musical entertainment is provided at any time by a disc jockey or disc jockeys, one, or some, of whom are not employees of the premises license holder and/or the event is... promoted to the general public."

(City of London Corporation, 2022a, para. 58) ⁴¹

Implemented through Model Condition 2 (MC2), this clause effectively bans events that involve freelance DJs or independently organised programming. In practice, it blocks important opportunities for cultural organisers who work outside formal venue employment. This disproportionately affects Black and South Asian creatives, many of whom rely on freelance or collective-led routes to enter London's night-time economy. MC2 reads:

"Promoted events will not be held at the premises... where the musical entertainment is provided by DJs not employed by the license holder, and the event is promoted independently of the venue."

(City of London Corporation, 2022b)

The official reason for this clause is crime prevention, yet the evidence used to enforce it is often unclear. Licensing hearings show that vague judgments of "risk" are enough to trigger MC2. For example, on 1 March 2024, the clause

⁴¹ City of London Corporation (2022b) Pool of Model Conditions. [online] Available at: www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/assets [Accessed 20 Jul. 2025].

was applied to a City venue with no reference to past incidents, purely as a precaution (City of London Corporation, 2024). This creates a broad regulatory tool that limits cultural programming under the guise of preventing potential disorder.

The racial impact of this clause was highlighted at the LIVE Roundtable on Racial Profiling in Licensing and Policing of Live Music (Appendix E), where artists, promoters, and venue operators spoke about MC2's discriminatory effects. One participant noted:

"The meeting heard of a relatively new policy by City of London Police to seek a condition on licenses that would prohibit external promoters from being employed by a venue. This seems designed to block Black/Brown promoters from working in the City."

(Appendix E, 2024, p.3)

Participants emphasised how the clause discourages venues from hosting events featuring racially minoritised artists or genres such as Afrobeats, Dancehall, or Grime. These styles, already heavily policed within licensing narratives, become even harder to programme when additional legal and reputational risks are imposed on venues.

"This is seen as restrictive, limiting opportunities for promoters and, potentially, discriminatory."

Promoter (Appendix E, 2024, p.5)

Even the City's policy guidance under paragraph 60 (MC3), which allows for promoted events subject to risk assessment, places a heavy administrative and reputational burden on organisers. The text reads:

"Where it is considered that operating a promoted event could give rise to issues of crime and disorder it is expected that these matters are to be addressed in the operating schedule."

(City of London Corporation, 2022a, para. 60) ⁴²

In practice, the need to anticipate and manage unspecified risks hits marginalised promoters hardest, those already viewed with suspicion in licensing processes. Participants described an environment where risk management acts as a barrier rather than a tool for inclusion.

Although the clause does not explicitly mention race or music genre, its discretionary enforcement, paired with assumptions about certain genres, leads to outcomes that feel exclusionary and racialised.

In this context, the "No Promoted Events" clause works less as a safety measure and more as a way of filtering culture, deciding who can take part, which kinds of music are accepted, and how access is controlled. Its use shows that licensing acts not only as a regulatory tool but also as a gatekeeper in the city's cultural life.



41 City of London Corporation (2022b) Pool of Model Conditions. [online] Available at: www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/assets [Accessed 20 Jul. 2025].

42 City of London Corporation (2022a) Statement of Licensing Policy 2022–2027. [online] Available at: www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/assets

“That’s what pushed a lot of promoters to start doing events without disclosing the venue address until the night of the dance, just to keep the police off their backs. It felt like we’d gone right back to the 90s, doing warehouse parties all over again. By the mid 2000s, we were back to operating underground, not because we wanted to, but because we had to.”

– Executive 1, Promoter, London



“I know a DJ who was so blackballed, he had to shift into the House scene just to keep working. And funny enough... no problems there. So clearly, he wasn’t the issue. It’s just that he’d once played a Black music event where something happened. Meanwhile, events like Glastonbury where we know there are issues like drug use and overdoses are still given grace. That grace is not extended to Black music events. And that’s what’s so bizarre and unfair.”

– A3, Promoter, London



Numerous reports indicate that Black promoters, DJs, and audiences are routinely excluded from London’s nightlife circuit, often under the guise of “safety” or brand control. As DJ Pioneer stated in 2022, events featuring genres such as Grime, R&B, UK Garage, and Drill are frequently cancelled at the last minute, with venues citing vague safety concerns typically associated with the race of the expected audience (Metro, 2022⁴³).

5.2 Surveillance, Overreaction, and Assumed Criminality

Black and South Asian cultural events are subjected to heightened policing, often without any basis of documented risk.

Promoters recount examples of plain clothed officers attending events, compliance visits framed by suspicion rather than support, and last-minute changes imposed by licensing officers. One agent stated:

“When it comes to Form 696 and risk assessments, I’ve never had to do one for [Redacted Artist]. Never had to do one for [Redacted Artist]. Two hugely popular white artists and let’s be honest, we all know why. It’s only ever requested for Black artists. There’s no question mark there. No doubt in my mind. No one can sit in front of me and seriously say that things have changed. People are out here saying, “It’s gone,” like that solves anything. Sure, the name is gone. But the practice? The mindset? That’s still very much alive. The name of it is gone. This practice is still there.”

– C3, Agent, London



43 Metro (2022) Black promoters ‘being shut out’ of London’s biggest clubs. 21 Feb. Available at: www.metro.co.uk/2022 [Accessed 20 Jul. 2025].

Security, suspicion... That doesn't exist in white spaces

This inequality is even clearer when compared to experiences at events seen as “white-coded.” At those events, audiences often described feeling trusted and relaxed. One attendee, Creative 10, who went to a techno night, shared:

“No one was policing me. No one looked at my wristband. People were saying ‘enjoy your night.’ At Black events, it’s metal detectors, hostile security, suspicion... That doesn’t exist in white spaces.”

– Creative 10, Promoter, London



Even in cases of fatalities, white spaces receive greater leniency:

“We did the [Redacted venue] event and it went off with no problem and we had a crazy number of security and police there and then around that time some other events which were white music events two people died from drugs... and they just got a license review. I just thought to myself, if these incidents had happened at our event or another Black music event it would be shut down immediately.”

– Executive 8, Promoter, London



This double standard is evident in the treatment of drug use. One venue operator shared:

“Drum and Bass nights? We know the crowd is going to be mostly white. We know they’ll be taking drugs. But there’s no pressure to police them like we do for Black events.”

– A1, Venue Operator, London



5.3 Licensing as a Gatekeeping Tool

Much of the racial disparity in nightlife licensing happens behind the scenes, through informal talks, unwritten warnings, and discretionary rules.

One promoter explained:

"It started to become the norm for young Black British artists to perform at venues like The Forum and Brixton Academy. The venues began to feel more comfortable, because we were getting ahead of things, we were being proactive. The real issue was the police. They'd put pressure on the license holder, often on the morning of the show saying, "If this event goes ahead, we'll shut your venue down." It was always verbal, never in writing, always through a personal visit. No paper trail. No proof."

– Executive 7, Promoter, London



This creates a culture of overcompliance and self-censorship. Promoters pay for extra security, dilute event branding, or avoid genres altogether to avoid triggering scrutiny. ID policies are unevenly applied:

"At Black events, no physical ID means you're not getting in full stop. At white events, there's flexibility. They'll find a way. Manual check. Credit card. Whatever."

– Executive 7, Promoter, London



Cultural misunderstanding also feeds into disproportionate outcomes. Artists from regions like Jamaica or West Africa have been denied access to venues without being given the opportunity to modify problematic content:

"I think because the majority of the music was from Jamaica and it's culturally very different, we were like, "Actually, we don't want that taking place. We probably should've said, 'Can you not say X or Y on stage?' **But instead, we just said no.**"

– C5, Licensing Officer, London



Such practices do not simply regulate risk, they manufacture it, using race and genre as proxies for threat.

5.4 Two Tier System

The result is a two-tiered system where Black music and culture are over policed, while white cultural spaces are given the benefit of context and discretion.

Elsewhere, racialised guest list restrictions show the extent of informal exclusion:

"I can look at a Black Rapper's show at Wembley and compare it to what Limp Bizkit did there just this weekend and you can immediately see the difference in security fees. And that's wild, considering Limp Bizkit is a Rock band, with all the connotations that come with Rock including the drug use, the moshing, the chaos... Yet, Black artists are still being charged significantly more for security. That's if the venue even wants to take the show in the first place, because there are venues that just won't, purely based on the type of artist or the crowd they expect"

– Executive 2, Agent, London



Several stakeholders report that genres like indie, punk, and electronic music, typically associated with white audiences, are treated more leniently, even when similar incidents occur. As one promoter noted:

"A fight at an indie night? Police call, 'What happened?' End of story. A fight at a rap night? The whole event gets escalated. There's an added level of risk when you're operating in the Black or Asian music space, a risk that simply doesn't exist when you're putting on what's considered predominantly white music. And that's ridiculously unacceptable in 2025."

– Creative 5, Promoter, London



This is not merely a question of public safety, it is about the cultural terms of belonging.

"It is also about helping people understand that not everyone is going to these events to cause a scene. People are simply going to enjoy the night. It's a music event, whatever kind of event it is, they're there to have a good time."

– B2, Venue Operator, London



5.5 Perceptions of a Double Standard

At UK music venues, incident responses depend on more than just the severity of the event.

Within the industry, there is a recurring perception that factors such as race, class, and levels of institutional support may shape how outcomes unfold. Some stakeholders describe a sense that venues and events connected to well-established institutions are more likely to recover, rebrand, and reopen, whereas Black and South Asian events can face greater difficulty in doing so.

Venues were referenced in conversations about how access to legal support, public backing and advocacy can influence outcomes following serious incidents. At the same time, the closure or disappearance of Black-owned or Black-focused events contributes to a wider concern that access to recovery may not be experienced evenly across the industry.

Licensing and policing practices were also described by some participants as being applied inconsistently across different communities. Several Black and South Asian promoters spoke about experiencing heightened scrutiny, uncertainty around regulations and pressures linked to licensing enforcement. One promoter described how easily events can be disrupted:

"We'd get told, 'You can put it on if you want but if anything happens, we're coming for your license.' That threat alone can end your event."

– Executive 5, Promoter, London

Some promoters also reflected on perceived differences in how nightlife spaces are treated compared with other licensed venues. In particular, participants questioned why certain clubs appeared more vulnerable to closure or redevelopment, while other social spaces remained protected:

"Pubs kick off all the time on weekends. But they don't get shut down like clubs do. And those clubs were our social spaces. Now they're flats."

– Creative 6, Promoter, London

Another promoter recalled the consistency of Black nightlife in central London seven nights a week, peaceful crowds, full venues until licensing pressure wiped it out:

"Every day of the week, packed shows. But one incident and the whole run's gone. Meanwhile, the pubs are licensed to stay open through all kinds of trouble."

– Creative 9, Promoter, London



5.6 Corporate Cloaking and Financial Racism

There is a perception that access to multinational sponsors, established legal teams and influential networks can shape how events are supported, protected and ultimately assessed when challenges arise. In this context, brand recognition and scale are seen as factors that may affect how opportunities are granted and how risks are managed.

For example, when Red Bull hosted 'Culture Clash', some promoters reflected on the level of access and flexibility involved, particularly in relation to international artists and logistics. They questioned whether a similar event, led independently by a grassroots Black promoter, would have been able to navigate the same structural requirements.

"Could you imagine if that was us three trying to do that kind of cup clash on that scale? People that couldn't get into the country before were allowed, because it's Red Bull. They treat independent promoters and corporations very differently."

– Executive 10, Promoter, London



This is what one promoter called 'financial racism' – a form of gatekeeping where legitimacy is conferred through brand recognition and wealth, not fairness.

This perception is also reflected in comparisons between venues with differing levels of institutional connection. The case of Ministry of Sound is frequently referenced in this context, with some suggesting that venues backed by significant resources, networks, or high-level affiliations may be better positioned to navigate regulatory or licensing challenges than smaller, independently run spaces.

"The guy who owns Ministry [of Sound] is a Lord. If something happens there, it's handled differently than if it happens at Dreams or Chimes... it's access, money, and who they know."

– Creative 7, DJ/Promoter, London



5.7 Strategic Whiteness – The Cost of Representation

One way this inequity plays out is through code-switching and "strategic whiteness", the practice of placing white staff at the forefront of event negotiations, licensing meetings, or brand-facing roles to avoid suspicion.

"If you're a promoter with a website showing a 'cosmopolitan' crowd, 70% white, you'll get favourable treatment. If your crowd looks Black? You'll get the police at your door."

– Executive 7, Promoter, London



Whiteness, when visible, becomes a passport to legitimacy. Executive 7 noted that police and council officials routinely judge an event's risk not by its genre or content, but by the perceived racial makeup of the audience:

"I've been to the same venue, two different nights, same staff, same layout. But when it's a Black night, the police come differently. The stakes are higher. The bar prices even change."

– Executive 7, Promoter, London

"We've seen venues that play our music but won't let Black people in. Black girls turned away. Black guys denied entry while the DJ plays bashment inside."

– Creative 2, Promoter, London

What begins as negotiation with licensing often turns to enforcement, with race defining when that switch happens. Even when promoters act in good faith, they're undermined once authorities hear the details:

"As a person? They listened. But once I explained what I was putting on, and who was attending, that's when it all started to unravel."

– Creative 6, DJ/Promoter, London

One venue operator described how even within the same venue different events attract different levels of scrutiny:

"Some events at our venue get no police interest. Others? Police say, 'Go ahead if you want, but expect licensing consequences.'"

– D4, Venue Operator, London

The decision makers, the licensing panels, police commanders and safety experts, often reflect institutional biases, particularly when dealing with Black and South Asian-led events:

"If you're seen to challenge police or licensing, you get blackballed. So even the panels if they're from the industry, they won't defend you."

– Executive 10, Promoter, London

And the relationship with police remains strained:

"We don't have Black and Asian license holders because the relationship with the police is broken. And they're the ones who decide if culture can happen."

– Creative 1, DJ, London

At the centre of these experiences is a deep imbalance that determines who can recover, who receives institutional support, and who is excluded from the cultural economy. This is not just a difference in outcomes, but a difference in trust, networks, and perceived legitimacy.

While venues like Ministry of Sound are given opportunities to rebuild and continue, Black and South Asian cultural initiatives are often denied the chance to fail, the chance to return, and ultimately, the chance to exist. The UK's cultural infrastructure, especially its night-time economy, must confront this inequality. Without recognising how access to recovery is unevenly distributed, discussions of public safety risk serving as a cover for structural exclusion.

06

Gentrification, Displacement and Access

A key consequence of barriers in the licensing process is that it shapes where culture is allowed to thrive.

Many Black and South Asian promoters have been pushed out of well connected, central areas and into venues on the outskirts of cities. This cultural displacement mirrors wider patterns of urban gentrification. But within the live music industry, the impact is specific, it limits visibility, depresses attendance, and disconnects artists from the communities they serve.



6.1 Loss of Central Space and the Push to the Margins

Gentrification has made central locations increasingly hostile to Black-led events. Longstanding venues have closed due to pressure from new residents and inflexible planning decisions. Those that remain, report steep challenges to extend event hours or in retaining originally granted licenses.

"If you look at Brixton now, you can really see the effects. And it's not just there, night-time economies across London have been hit hard. There's been a clear decline in live music and nightlife. Has licensing played a role in that? Absolutely. The future of London's music scene has been pushed out, disproportionately. That's why places like Manchester and Birmingham are now seen as more attractive. People are saying 'why would I try to open a live music venue in London, if I know the police are just going to come down hard on me? Why would I invest or promote here anymore?'"

– C5, Licensing Officer, London



Participants described repeated last minute venue changes as not been driven by descriptive organisers, but disorganisation by authorities pulling licenses without notice.

"They were changing venues every other week... eventually we realised it wasn't them it was the authorities forcing them to move."

– A3, Promoter, London



Across London, planning policy and licensing decisions have increasingly been shaped by gentrification and the influence of newer, more affluent residents. Participants described how these dynamics disproportionately affect Black led events and culturally specific venues, particularly those operating in historically working-class or racially diverse areas.

“There’s a lot of kinds of neighbourhood associations that will also get involved... councils alert them a lot more to these types of events than they would do if I had three violinists on the steps.”

– Executive 9, Promoter, London



Organisers pointed to a growing pattern of councils acting reactively to minor complaints, barbecues, people arriving by car, or amplified music, rather than responding to any serious incident. In some cases, these actions were seen as deliberate attempts to displace or erase certain forms of culture from central areas under the guise of managing “antisocial behaviour.”

“The council would like to get rid of City Splash... not for the headline issues of violence or gangs, but because of the antisocial stuff, noisy gentrified residents...”

– Creative 1, DJ, London



Promoters also described the rigidity of planning boundaries, and how seemingly neutral zoning or noise restrictions often fell along racialised and classed lines. Events in wealthy postcodes could go ahead with ease, while those in working-class areas faced heightened resistance, regardless of incident history or community support.

6.2 Targeted Restrictions and Cultural Double Standards



Many venues serving Black audiences faced stricter licensing conditions or were denied outright. Participants highlighted that genres like Reggae, Grime, or Afrobeat were explicitly cited as problems by licensing bodies.

“They said they didn’t want us to play Reggae because it’s too bassy, it would disturb the neighbours.”

– Executive 10, Promoter, London



“You hear Coldplay through a pub door and no one bats an eyelid. But you play House, Amapiano, or Dancehall and it’s treated as a problem.”

– Creative 9, Promoter, London



Promoters and venue managers described how even established spaces have lost licenses or faced untenable restrictions. Venues were often forced to close following noise complaints, despite music being part of the area’s cultural fabric long before residential developments.

“They ended up having to install tiny little speakers because of complaints from flats across the road... and they weren’t even having parties, just playing background music in a restaurant.”

– Creative 4, Promoter, London



“And then you can look at the local pubs and see how much things kick-off at local pubs on the weekends, but they don’t get that same treatment that we used to get. They’re still allowed to go on and do their thing. Not only the size of the events we used to do, the consistency. We used to have weeklies every day of the week in the city and West End. Like Monday to Monday to Sunday, literally every day you’d have a weekly run that was packed. For the most part, good vibes, no trouble. But obviously, when you’ve got a lot of people in a place with alcohol, there is going to be the odd kerfuffle and just like in a pub on a Friday night. But those pubs were licensed to stay open, but the clubs weren’t.”

– Creative 6, Promoter, London



6.3 Cumulative Impact Zones and the Night-time Economy

Cumulative Impact Zones (CIZs) were introduced under the Licensing Act 2003 to help local authorities manage areas with many licensed premises.

The stated aim was to reduce the combined effects of crime, antisocial behaviour, and congestion that can occur in busy nightlife districts. In a CIZ, the default position is to refuse any new license applications unless the applicant can show that their venue or event will not add to these negative impacts.

In practice, CIZs have become one of the most restrictive policies for new or non-traditional cultural operators. Venues serving Black and South Asian audiences, especially those hosting live music, late-night events, or community activities, are more likely to be refused licenses or renewal within these zones. Focus group participants noted that since CIZs were introduced, license applications are increasingly denied, trading hours are capped, and local authorities are more reluctant to support events that do not fit conventional hospitality models.

“When they started introducing these cumulative impact zones, you know, the police wanted to reduce crime in areas, and I saw that, probably in the last couple of years, which was having a real impact on those businesses. Because actually, far more applications are getting denied.”

– C5 Licensing Officer, London

Rather than supporting adaptation, local authorities often suggested business owners simply “open a restaurant.”

“They wanted to reduce footfall on Friday nights... so now they’re telling people to run restaurants instead of clubs. But that’s not what we do.”

– Creative 3, Promoter, London

In our interviews, a Licensing Officer reflected on how these zones became a proxy tool for discouraging the local night-time economy:

“There are lots of businesses in one area, and there’s quite a lot of crime in that area. So they were trying to reduce the number of licensed premises within that area. So they would say, right, we’re not giving out any more licensed premises licenses because we’ve got X amount of crime and disorder.”

– C5, Licensing Officer, London

These policy decisions contribute to a wider displacement of culture. Neighbourhoods such as Brixton, once cultural hubs, have become sites of extraction where culture is promoted for its vibrancy but access is denied in practice.

“People move to Brixton for the music, but then complain and get the events shut down.”

– Creative 2, Promoter, London

"We don't even get access to those kind of venues. Now, you got to go either on the outskirts of London or into like more specific areas like North London, East London. Like rather than being central, they've kind of pushed us all out of the city and the West End now"

– Executive 1, Promoter, London



These zones continue to influence how culture is policed, managed, and permitted, especially in recently gentrified areas where the preferences of new residents often shape planning and licensing decisions. In this context, CIzs act as a regulatory tool that reinforces cultural exclusion while appearing to promote safety and order.

6.4 Disconnected: in practice and dialogue

Participants described the disconnect between local infrastructure and the needs of a local night-time economy.

Focus groups highlighted how punitive local authority tactics, like ticketing and parking restrictions, function as indirect cultural controls. One festival, for example, was subject to 700 parking fines and £25,000 in road closure fees.

700 PARKING
FINES AND
£25,000 IN ROAD
CLOSURE FEES

"The council is making money off parking fines, but they're also pricing us out."

– Executive 10, Promoter, London



"They said, 'We're not worried about your crowd causing trouble, we're worried they'll get robbed leaving the venue.' That was their justification."

– Executive 7, Promoter, London



In areas like Camden and Chelsea, participants noted a strategic expansion of red routes and permit zones to coincide with the nightlife hours often associated with clubs hosting Black music nights.

As events are pushed to the urban edge, attendees are met with poor infrastructure and limited late-night transport. This contributes to reduced attendance, safety concerns, and a growing sense of cultural marginalisation.

"We had to put on private buses just so people could get home safely."

Executive 8, Promoter, London



"If it's an all night event, they should be telling TFL so more buses run. But they don't. People can't get home safely."

– A1, Venue Operator, London



"The people making these decisions... don't even live in central London. Okay, so they're completely out of touch."

– Executive 3, Promoter/Talent Manager, London



Lack of coordination with transport services marginalises audiences and reduces footfall, impacting late-night events that cater to Black and South Asian communities. One speaker pointed out that the Tube and night buses were less available for events catering to Black or South Asian audiences. Something organisers now routinely factor into planning.

"The tube is less served on Black and Asian events for sure. There are less people that come through on those events and there's a much heavier reliance on buses and private vehicles."

– A1, Venue Operator, London



"Like central London is obviously great for location mainly and transport links and people getting in and out and going home and getting there safely and all the rest of it."

– Creative 3, Promoter, London



This theme of disconnection also extends to the relationship between communities and decision makers. Many participants felt that those making licensing and planning decisions are socially and culturally removed from the communities they regulate. This creates feelings of alienation and injustice, as policies displace diverse communities and limit their access to centrally located cultural spaces.

See Appendix A for a list of venues where licenses have been revoked or applications refused on planning grounds.

"It's one or two houses complaining but that's enough to shut the whole thing down."

– Creative 8, Promoter, London



This disconnect allows a small number of complaints, often racially coded or culturally biased, to shape policy. The long-term effect is a music ecosystem that no longer serves the communities where the creativity originated.

Displacement is not accidental; it is produced through planning, licensing, and regulatory systems that exclude Black and Brown communities while appearing neutral. Participants repeatedly called for licensing systems that are fair, transparent, and aligned with planning and cultural objectives. Anchor venues must be protected, not penalised, for their cultural value.

"If everyone had the same conditions, you'd show impartiality. Right now, it's clear who the system works for and who it doesn't."

– Creative 6, Promoter, London



Within local government, this tension was visible, with some councillors publicly clashing over whether event closures were justified or influenced by cultural bias.

"That then created a whole internal argument amongst councillors... one of them's like to the other, 'you're chatting s***.'"

– D4, Venue Operator, London



07

Workforce Development Gaps

The research uncovered multiple areas for workforce development, both in live music and in policing and licensing.

Promoters, particularly those working within Black and South Asian music scenes consistently highlighted the absence of structured training, industry standards, and accreditation. This lack of professional infrastructure contributes to inconsistency, safety concerns, and reputational vulnerability across the sector. In policing and licensing, there is room to improve cultural awareness, address biases.



7.1 Entry into the live music events industry

The events industry remains highly informal in its training and access pathways. Unless promoters are attached to major institutions, they are left to navigate licensing, compliance, and safety without guidance:

“Unless you’re working with AEG or Live Nation, nobody’s teaching you these things.”

– Executive 2, Agent, London



As one contributor elaborated, there is a gap between ambition and readiness:

“A promoter just wants to do a thing for whatever reason... there’s still people watching money doing events... but they’re not interested in the bigger picture.”

– Executive 10, Promoter, London



This results in uneven standards and a lack of preparedness, particularly for newer or independent promoters. Promoters voiced concerns about how anyone can enter the industry regardless of experience or understanding of professional responsibilities:

“You’re able to be part of this industry with no professional experience and no level of professionalism... something about real lack of professionalism that impacts us all.”

– Executive 9, Event/
Stage Manager, London



This lack of accountability affects the entire ecosystem, and participants proposed clear solutions.

“It could be a thing where it’s not mandatory, because that would be hard to enforce but there’s a qualification, there’s a body you can sign up to... the professionalising of Black music events body, for want of a better title.”

– Executive 9,
Event/Stage Manager,



"Within that there's membership, seminars, educational material, and training. That shows a willingness of a promoter to professionalise their operation. It doesn't prove it's going to be perfect, but it shows... and you have to pay money towards that. That separates people a little bit."

– Creative 6, Promoter, London



Professionalisation is seen not as a fix all, but a baseline for quality and accountability:

"Incidents are going to occur... but for me, it's always about, right, how can we fix it? Why has it gone wrong? Was it not enough security? No ID scanning? Or just a random group that's caused an issue?"

– A1, Venue Operator, London



There have been past efforts to standardise promoter training, but they were inconsistently implemented:

"City of London tried to bring in legislation... you had to get this certification... they made people pay to do these courses... and then didn't enact it."

– Executive 10, Promoter, London



"It must have been... early 2000s. It was a promoters course a level two award for music promoters."

– Creative 5, Promoter, London



These false starts have further eroded trust and contributed to a sense of abandonment among independent and community-based promoters. Without clear standards or protection, Black and South Asian-led events are treated as higher-risk by default, rather than on the basis of fact:

"Venue operators are then left asking if they want to risk their license by proceeding with a Black/Brown-led event."

– D4, Venue Operator, London



"If you are Black/Brown you are more vulnerable and at a disadvantage... your event is more likely to be subject to onerous conditions/requirements and at greater risk of being shut down."

– Events Manager, London



This risk-based framing, when disconnected from training and structural support, reinforces exclusion rather than improving safety.

7.2 Training and Knowledge Gaps in Policing and Licensing

Promoters and industry stakeholders consistently called for comprehensive training for licensing authorities, councillors, and police officers. Participants expressed that entrenched misunderstanding, unconscious bias, and a lack of communication channels contribute to an unstable and often hostile working environment for Black and South Asian-led events.

There is widespread concern that licensing systems are disproportionately used to curtail Black cultural events.

"The licensing system is incorrectly, disproportionately, and inappropriately used to limit their work."

– Creative 3, Promoter, London



"Education is at the root of all of this. To stop the unconscious biasness of seeing something and believing it is like everything else."

– Creative 8, Promoter, London



Training must include cultural understanding, not just legal technicalities:

"Police about doing some training around culture... so they can start to understand... they live in this bubble."

– Executive 10, Promoter, London



As a result, calls for formal education and standardised training are growing. Multiple contributors pointed to a lack of cultural knowledge among enforcement officials as a major cause of discriminatory practices:

"There are people out there... who do not have a racist bone in their body. They're uneducated. They're uneducated to understand the impact that it has on people's lives and the feelings and how deep rooted some of this stuff is."

– A3, Promoter, London



"Getting them to understand exactly what Black or Asian music culture is... it's not about attitudes but behaviours."

– A1, Venue Operator, London



One repeated concern was police ignorance of musical genres, leading to kneejerk risk assessments:

"A lot of people within the Met don't even understand our community's genre... they didn't know the difference between Grime and Grunge."

— Makeda Bennett-
Amparbeng, Promoter, London



"If I don't understand it and I can't control it... then I'd rather remove it. And that's what I see happening on a regular basis."

— Michael Kill, NTIA



Authorities were seen as far removed and disconnected from the operational challenges of nightlife:

"They're so far removed from the realities of actually running a club. They have no idea."

— Creative 6, Promoter, London



Subcommittee licensing hearings were likewise viewed as outdated and out of touch.

"The average age of a subcommittee is 60 years old... we've been in hearings where they're asleep. Actually asleep."

— D4, Venue Operator, London



Many interviewees stressed the need for more diverse and culturally informed voices on licensing panels. "Representation needs to be more diverse," said Executive 9. "It would be nice to have someone who understands culture and understands music... but some of these things are dealt with as a bricks and mortar business." Venue Operator D4 says that even across subcommittees that are somewhat diverse, there is an age of socioeconomic barrier. "Every subcommittee comes with its own barrier that even if you take a positive or negative, you might get the most diverse, but then some barriers on language. So, it's like they all come with their challenges, but one thing they all have is they lack diversity."

Across all testimonies, the message was clear: greater fairness and transparency can only come through genuine understanding, cultural literacy, and equal partnership. This means structural investment in education, not just for promoters, but critically, for those in power.

08

The Impact of Licensing on Mental Health

8.1 Chronic Pressure and Psychological Stress from Licensing Systems

Promoters working in cultural spaces consistently reported mental exhaustion

Promoters working in Black and South Asian cultural spaces consistently reported mental exhaustion, financial pressure, and a profound sense of systemic exclusion. These impacts are not theoretical; they are lived experiences that participants expressed repeatedly.



“What do you think it’s going to do if the damage is done? It’s a psychological damage on you as patrons and promoters. It has a lingering stigma.”

— Creative 10, DJ/Promoter, London



The emotional impact of persistent shutdowns, cancellations, and hostile enforcement leads to anxiety and isolation. This includes reluctance to promote events publicly for fear of scrutiny.

“My financial loss was probably about £3,000... but yeah, I take it as it is... I’m trying to keep my relationships tight with everyone else... you’ve lost the booking. Everyone thought you was doing this... Time was a key factor in losing stuff, not doing other things, by creating flyers, doing all the promotion yourself. So yeah, financially, mentally... draining.”

— Executive 3, Promoter, London



“So, if you even try to invite your friends who may not be... Black, or you’re trying to put the event out to people to come, they’re confused. Why are you not announcing the events?”

— Executive 8, Promoter, London



Promoters detailed the mental toll of carrying out all aspects of event planning alone under uncertain licensing conditions:

This pressure becomes cyclical and demoralising:

“Disheartened and a bit discouraged, because you’re saying, I can’t even put on the event... I can’t even put in more work to be able to make it safer, because I don’t actually know what the safety threat is.”

— Executive 7, Promoter, London



"It's just a constant kind of back and forth, back and forth, back and forth... a tug and a push and pull that then after a while will become extremely tiresome and... is having an impact on the scene."

— Executive 9, Promoter, London



The psychological effects extend beyond isolated events, affecting professional identity and confidence. Promoters feel they must prepare for discrimination as a default condition of their work.

"We're going to do this, but we know we're going to anticipate this discrimination... So, we have to factor that in... you have to do things five times... review things with a fine-tooth comb much more than other counterparts would."

— Executive 3, Promoter, London



A lack of formality and transparency means there is no clear path to resolve grievances and no guaranteed support structures.

"The absence of formal support networks or grievance processes leaves promoters exposed."

— Executive 9, Event/Stage Manager, London



Without accountability or transparency, enforcement feels arbitrary and unpredictable.

"The informal and discretionary enforcement environment causes stress and contributes to an unstable and hostile professional environment."

— Creative 9, Promoter, London



The cumulative result is exhaustion, financial instability, and a perception that the system is stacked against them. The mental health implications of over-policing, systemic bias, and economic loss are significant, particularly where there is no accountability or support system.

"Operators too often find the system is designed to stop them rather than enable a celebration of Black/Brown culture."

— Executive 11, Promoter, London



8.2 Reputational Damage and Workforce Impacts

The lack of formal support networks, grievance procedures, and consistent enforcement practices leaves promoters professionally vulnerable.

Participants described how the informal and discretionary nature of licensing not only disrupts events but also damages reputations in ways that extend far beyond individual shows.



"I think one of the damages that is overlooked is your reputation... that goes on... not tomorrow, that's the day after, and the day after, and it goes on for years."

– Executive 5, Promoter, London



"We've all worked for promoters who've been damaged... When it's not their fault."

– Executive 6, Tour Manager, London



This environment creates instability and discourages continued participation in the industry, particularly for Black and South Asian promoters who are disproportionately affected. The lack of transparency in enforcement makes reputations especially vulnerable to rumour, assumption, or miscommunication.

Beyond individual impacts, the absence of system-level protection and fairness undermines the wider workforce. As one contributor explained, the economic and professional ripple effects of cancellations and restrictions are substantial:

"Live is such a big part of an artist's income, right? So you're not able to tour as an artist or promoters are not able to put on shows that feature artists and obviously DJs. That has a massive economic impact."

– Executive 7, Promoter, London



THE ECONOMIC AND PROFESSIONAL RIPPLE EFFECTS OF CANCELLATIONS AND RESTRICTIONS ARE SUBSTANTIAL



Large scale events involve substantial temporary and contract labour. A single shutdown affects far more than just the headline promoter:

“Promotion and putting on events is a profession that a lot of people can live off of. You know, 1,500 people work on the day of our festival. If they cancel it, that’s 1,500 people without work that day and all the people that work on it leading up to it.”

– Executive 10, Promoter, London



This shows that the cost of enforcement inconsistency goes well beyond individual shows, it affects job stability, income security, and long-term viability of careers across the live events workforce. The findings of this report are consistent with the conclusions of the Casey Review (2023)⁴⁴, which identified the Metropolitan Police Service as institutionally racist and highlighted systemic failures in how policing affects communities of colour.

Licensing decisions for live music events are influenced not just by risk, but by racialised assumptions about culture and safety, often applied through discretionary powers with minimal oversight. When the same institution found to be structurally biased also oversees licensing, the potential for discrimination is amplified.

⁴⁴ Baroness Casey Review March 2023 – www.met.police.uk/SysSiteAssets

09

Licensing Limitations, Transparency and Accountability

A consistent concern throughout our research was the lack of transparency and accountability within the licensing system.

Many interviewees shared that they did not fully understand how the process worked, often receiving unclear or inconsistent reasons for why their events were denied. Several described feeling unsupported and left to navigate a complex system without guidance or recourse.

What may come as a surprise is that even licensing officers acknowledged these issues. Several confirmed that different councils and police apply different standards, and that there is no unified approach to assessing applications. This inconsistency not only adds to the confusion but creates an uneven playing field where outcomes can depend more on location or individual judgment than on any clear or fair criteria. Without standardised processes or accessible appeal mechanisms, many are left with no meaningful way to challenge decisions, learn from refusals, or move forward.



★
**DIFFERENT COUNCILS AND
POLICE APPLY DIFFERENT
STANDARDS, AND THAT THERE
IS NO UNIFIED APPROACH TO
ASSESSING APPLICATIONS.**

9.1 Primary Analysis of TENS data

In England and Wales there have been 906,029 Temporary Event Notices given to the licensing authorities between 2011 and 2022. 1.4% (12,334) of these were withdrawn and a further 0.6% (5,765) were given a counter notice.



Total Temporary Event Notices
Between 2011 – 2022

906,029

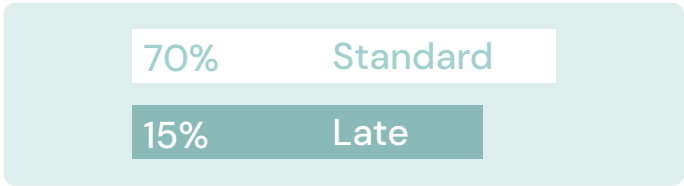
Withdrawn from total

12,334 (1.4%)

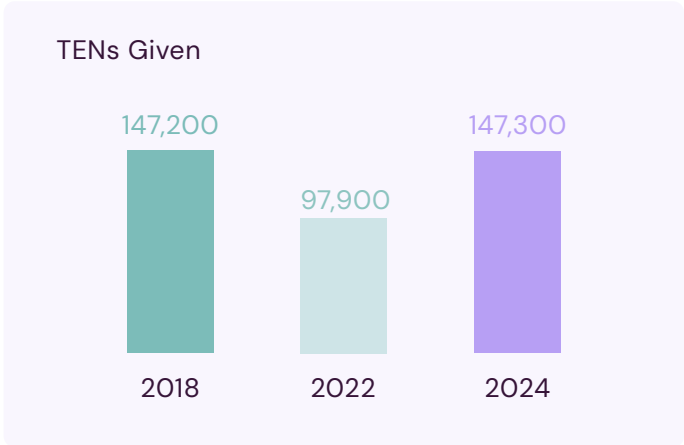
Counter notice from total

5,765 (0.6%)

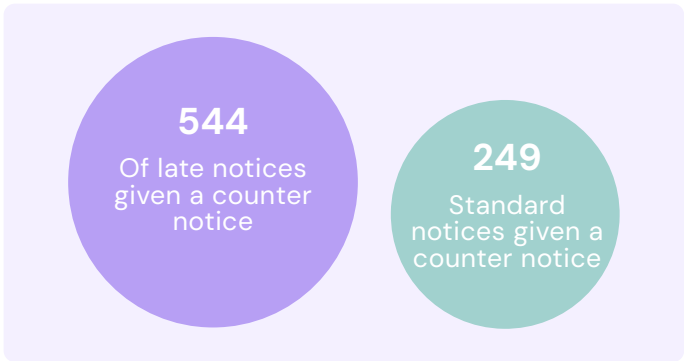
TEN data from 2011/22 is not disaggregated into standard or late, but from 2012 onwards Almost 70% of TEN applications were given in a ‘standard’ way and 15% were given late.



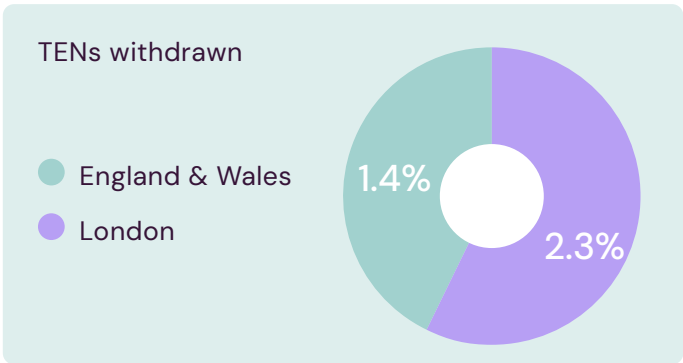
In the year ending 2023–24, around 147,300 TENS were given. Whilst this represents a 50% increase compared with the year ending 31 March 2022 (97,900), the number has returned to similar levels prior to COVID-19 (147,200 in the year ending 31 March 2018). 1.7% (2,346) of these were withdrawn and a further 0.6% (883) were given a counter notice.



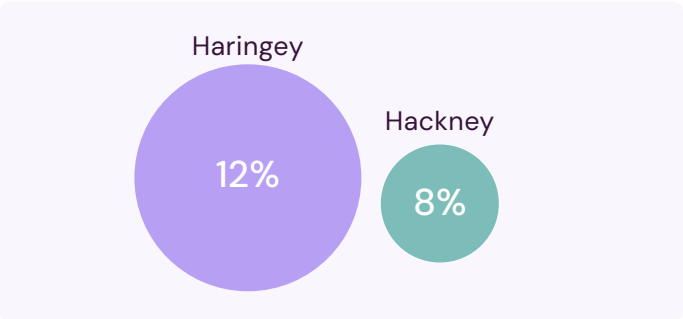
Late notices were more likely to receive counter notice than standard TEN applications, which means that the police or environmental health agency is more likely to intervene under these circumstances. Overall roughly 0.3% (544) of late notices were given a counter notice. Just 0.1% (249) of standard notices had a counter notice.



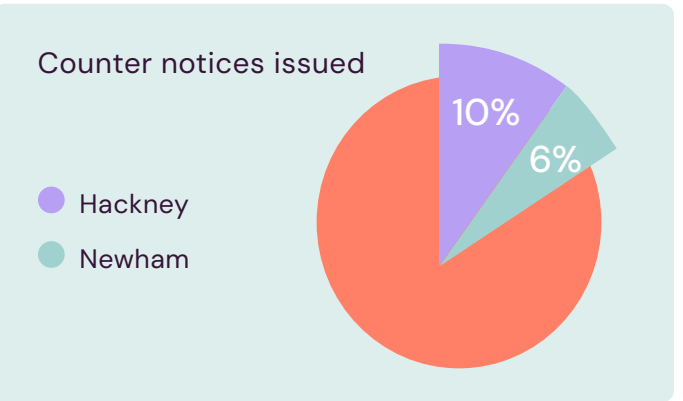
16% of all TEN applications between 2011/22 were from London. Here, TEN notices were slightly more likely to either be withdrawn or receive a counter notice. Overall 2.3% (3,420) of TENS were withdrawn in London, compared to 1.4% in England and Wales. 1.7% (2,513) received a counter notice compared to 0.6% overall.



There is a discrepancy between London boroughs too. Haringey recorded the highest combined proportion of TENS either withdrawn or given a counter notice, at 12%, and the highest proportion receiving a counter notice, at 10%. Newham recorded the next highest counter-notice percentage, at 6%. Hackney recorded 8% combined and 4% receiving a counter notice.



Hackney has had the highest percentage of counter notices issued (10% of all applications), with this being followed by Newham (6%).



In 2023/24, approximately 2.8% of Temporary Event Notices recorded by reporting London boroughs were withdrawn, compared with approximately 1.6% across England and Wales. Around 1.7% of London TENs received a counter notice following an objection, compared with approximately 0.6% nationally.

For boroughs in 2023–24 Tower Hamlets had the highest percentage of counter notices issued (8% of all applications), with this being followed by Enfield (5%). A full Borough breakdown is given below.

Borough 2023–24	Total number of valid temporary event notices given to licensing authority	Percentage of temporary event notices withdrawn	Percentage of Counter notices given following objection	Total Percentage of Applications either withdrawn or given a counter notice
Tower Hamlets	1,170	4	8	12
Hackney	2,002	5	3	8
Westminster	3,495	6	2	8
Kensington and Chelsea	959	6	1	7
Islington	764	3	4	6
Hounslow	432	4	1	5
Enfield	442	0	5	5
Hammersmith and Fulham	679	4	1	4
Southwark	1,618	2	2	4
Haringey	733	2	2	4
Croydon	609	3	1	4
Lewisham	623	1	2	4
Redbridge	257	0	3	3
Greenwich	588	2	1	3
Barking and Dagenham	105	3	0	3
Sutton	273	3	0	3
Brent	393	2	0	2
Camden	1,399	1	1	2
Bromley	769	2	0	2
Harrow	261	1	0	1
Newham	196	0	1	1
Kingston upon Thames	493	1	0	1
Bexley	481	1	0	1
Barnet	441	1	0	1
Hillingdon	342	0	1	1
Richmond upon Thames	921	1	0	1
Ealing	561	1	0	1
Merton	490	0	0	0
Wandsworth	937	0	0	0
Havering	312	0	0	0
Waltham Forest	x	0	0	0
City of London	x	0	0	0
Lambeth	x	0	0	0

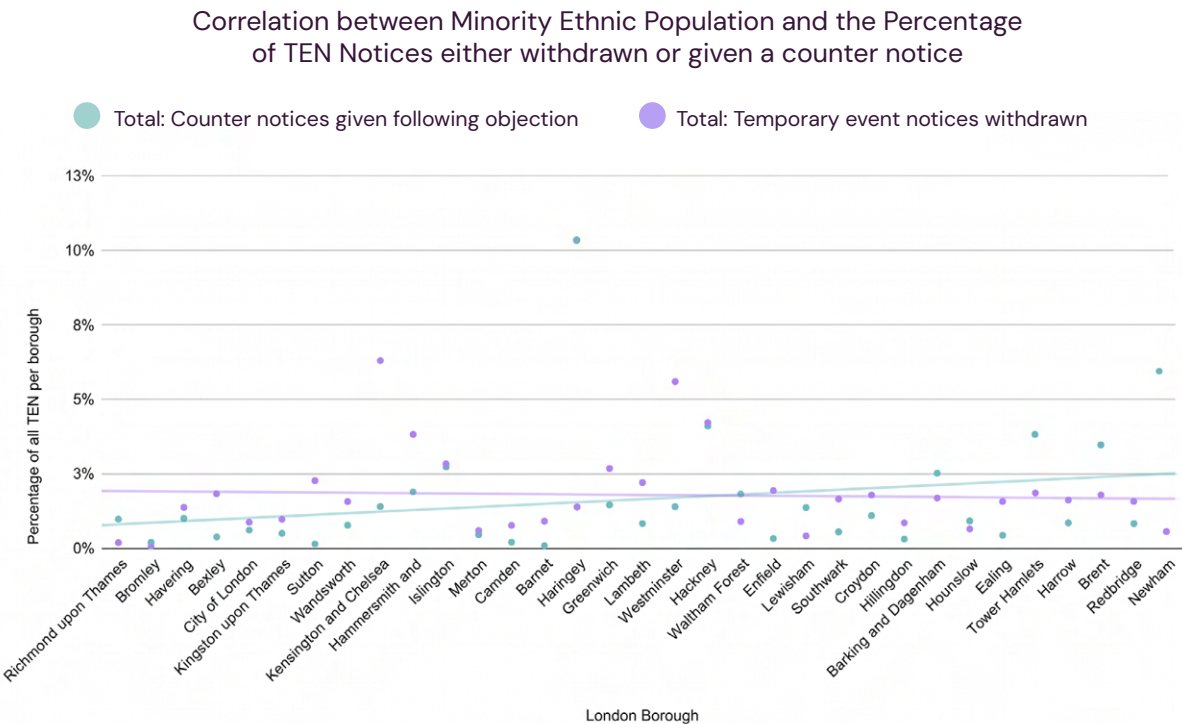
For the 2023/24 reporting year, TENs data is absent from key boroughs, including Waltham Forest, Lambeth, and the City of London. Both Waltham Forest and Lambeth are ethnically diverse and densely populated areas, where licensing activity can have significant community impact. Notably, the City of London is subject to the unique “No Promoted Events” licensing condition, identified in our research as one of the most restrictive and consequential provisions currently in use. The absence of data from these boroughs raises important questions about the completeness of national reporting.

The following graphs shows the correlation between the minority ethnic population of the borough and the outcome of a TEN application.

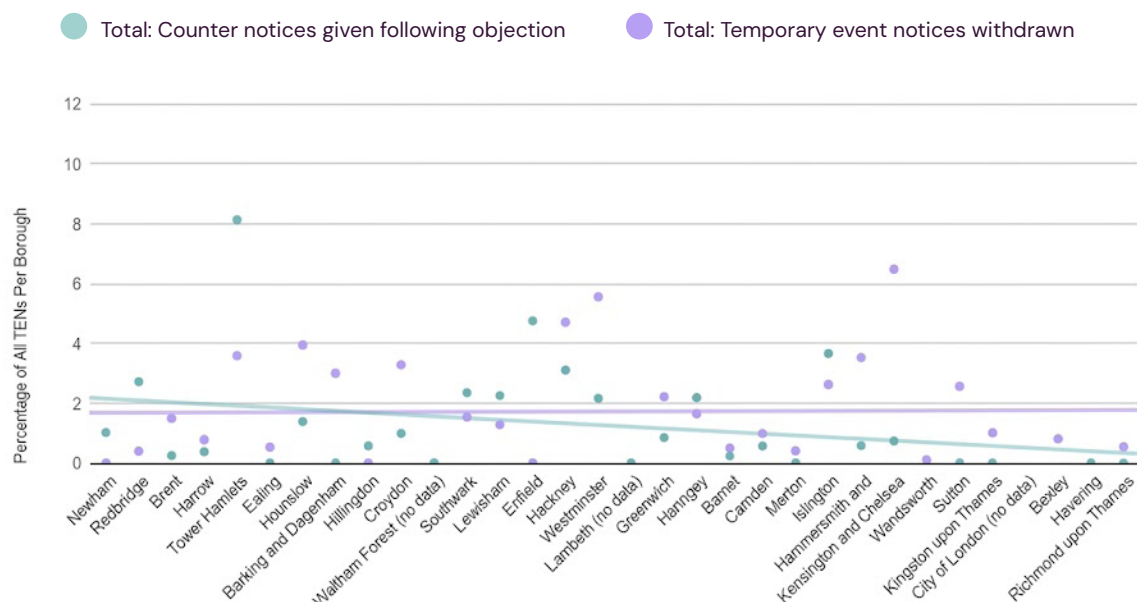
The X axis is ordered from the borough with the smallest global majority population, Richmond upon Thames (20%) ,to the one with the largest, Newham (69%).

The purple line shows the percentage of TEN notices withdrawn, which as detailed above can be done by the individual applicant. This shows a weak negative correlation, meaning that as a borough is more diverse, a fewer percentage of TEN notices conclude with a withdrawal.

However, the blue line shows a positive correlation. This relates to the percentage of TEN licenses which receive a counter notice – these can only be given if the police or the Environmental Health agency believe hosting the event would create a violation of the four licensing objectives. This analysis shows that, as a general trend, the more diverse boroughs in London are more likely to be given a counter notice than less diverse boroughs.



Corrolation between Ethnically Diverse Population and the Percentage of TEN notice with withdrawn or given a Counter Notice 2024



To read more about the licensing process and data captured please refer to Appendix G: Evidence Review: Alcohol and Late Night Refreshment Licensing and Enforcement
A review of license outcomes across London boroughs shows uneven enforcement in areas with high global majority populations, particularly affecting venues associated with Black and Asian ownership are referenced in Appendix A.

9.2 Inconsistencies within Police and Licensing

“MET will have one way of doing things and the licensing might have another way of doing things and the City of London will have another way of doing things and because of how they all operate they don’t actually all properly engage with each other.”

– C5, Licensing Officer, London



Although the statutory licensing framework is the same across the country, practices vary greatly between police forces and local authorities. This lack of consistency was a frequent concern raised by both industry participants and enforcement representatives. For example, the Metropolitan Police and City of London Police appear to operate under different approaches. Without a shared framework, decisions often rely on subjective interpretation rather than consistent standards that consider both safety and cultural value.

This disconnect makes it hard for promoters to know what to expect. In some cases, licensing teams are hesitant to challenge police objections, even when they do not fully understand them. Promoter Makeda Bennett-Amparbeng described the relationship between local authorities and police as “quite divisive,” adding, “I think the local authorities are scared of the police... they’re scared to go against the police.” This power imbalance often leaves smaller promoters particularly vulnerable. “I hear it all the time when license applications go in,” she explained. “They drop at the last minute and then you find out that policing have interjected and shown that there is a risk... and people decide to drop out, particularly independent promoters that just haven’t got the money to pursue it.”

Bennett-Amparbeng continues, noting the impact of short notice decisions in situations where more notice could have resulted in conditions being met.

“The bare minimum I would want to see is... if local authorities... have an issue with you that is dealt with in a timely manner. So at least... you could turn around, you could change a date, you could manoeuvre. But... nothing has ever been transparent and I don’t think that’s coming anytime soon.”



One of the more frustrating aspects of the licensing process revealed through our research is how informal it can be. Several contributors noted that decisions about Black-led events often happen behind closed doors, with little to no written record. “A lot of the stuff that happens with Black music is never in writing,” Executive 4 shared. “It’s always on the phone... never official.” This lack of documentation makes it nearly impossible to challenge decisions or even fully understand why they’ve been made.

Resourcing also plays a role in shaping how events are viewed. Overnight events, which are common in electronic and Black music scenes, are seen as risky simply because fewer police are available to cover them. As Venue Operator A1 put it, “There’s not many police on the overnight... naturally because electronic music goes on till 3, 4, 5 a.m., that’s when they’ve got the least amount of available resources. We kind of get the disdain from the police, that it’s an ‘us’ problem but actually it’s the police problem, that they don’t have the resource.”

What’s also striking is how often police objections are accepted without challenge. “If the police put in an objection, it’s normally likely that the subcommittee will go with the police,” Venue Operator D4 said. “That’s a standard thing.” This dynamic leaves promoters with few options, especially when facing objections that may be based more on perception than fact. Unless you’re familiar with the web of licensing law and procedure, it’s incredibly hard to push back.

Ultimately, what emerges is a system marked by confusion and a lack of shared accountability. Without a clear, transparent, and culturally informed framework, decisions are left to discretion and influenced by unspoken norms.

9.3 Inconsistencies between agencies

“They’re doing it a lot with festivals and they’re doing it with nightclubs. If they can’t get you on the violence aspect, then they try to take another angle which could be underage, it could be drugs, it could be the parking, it could be environmental health, complaining about food outside, noise abatement. So, they tried to take a multi-pronged approach where they sort of hassle people and like we’ve had instances of promoters being hassled based on issues to do with noise but also these issues to do with parking and that’s been an excuse to take away someone’s license or oppose the license.”

– Executive 10, Promoter, London



While many organisers enter the licensing process expecting to deal primarily with licensing authorities or the police, they often find themselves interacting with other departments such as environmental health, fire safety, building control and highways. This multi-agency involvement leaves many feeling lost, juggling last-minute requests, overlapping demands, and a growing list of expenses. Participants describe a process of development and/or escalation – where an interaction with one department leads to another becoming involved.

The process often starts with the police, but organisers say it doesn’t take long before other departments or agencies are involved, sometimes even before any formal decision-making happens. Venue Owner D4 describes a domino effect where if one agency doesn’t find an issue : “The police are the first people we have to deal with. But there is this cahoots between police and environmental health.” D4 further explained “Then lo and behold, the next day we’ve got the fire service coming down checking... to make sure that all the fire exits are right.”

Noise is one of the most common objections raised. Public nuisance has become a vague, catch-all concern that can be hard to contest, especially when it’s not always clear what the expectations are in the first place.

Despite efforts to follow all the rules and do things by the book, some organisers still find themselves held in limbo. In the end, what comes through is the sense that organisers aren’t up against one clear system, but several, each with their own rules and assumptions. What should be a straightforward process laid out by the Licensing Act, becomes a game of endurance, and those who just want to run safe, well-managed events are often left making difficult decisions about how to move forward.



**WHAT COMES THROUGH
IS THE SENSE THAT
ORGANISERS AREN’T
UP AGAINST ONE CLEAR
SYSTEM, BUT SEVERAL**

9.4 Inconsistencies between Boroughs

Given the inconsistencies between local authorities, police and environmental health outlined in the previous section, it is no surprise that London boroughs also operate in the same level of confusion.

Whether it was dealing with councils, police, or venue licensing, many contributors spoke about unpredictable and unclear processes that seemed to shift depending on where an event was taking place.

Local authority attitudes can be shaped by borough boundaries, rather than community needs. Venue Owner D4 recalled a conversation with a police superintendent: “[He] said, ‘Well as long as it’s happening in Islington and it’s not happening in Hackney that’s all right by me.’” That lack of collaboration and cohesion can have serious consequences. A promoter Creative 4 shared an experience where an under-18s concert in Wandsworth was nearly shut down, even though every precaution had been taken. “We did all the due diligence checks... Salvation Army, standby medics... qualified adults who can deal with underage people... and they tried to cancel the event up until nearly an hour before.”

Across London, organisers described being left in the dark. In Brixton, promoter Creative 2 recalled being told they couldn’t book a major DJ because he was “banned from playing in Brixton.” The promoter was left confused by the vagueness of the claim. “We ended up not even putting him on the flyer... and then him playing as a special guest. He’s a huge guy.”

Camden Borough, in particular, was flagged by several contributors as difficult to navigate. Agent, Executive 4 said “Camden seems to have some sort of issue with Grime or

Bashment genres... their licensing seems to be a lot more strict.” Executive 6 stated “it’s very it’s trying to get an understanding as to what are Camden’s actual rules.”

The confusion around rules and roles is a running theme. Executive 4 described trying to put on a Drill event in London. “We planned for another one this year, [and we] signed with the venue... two weeks out we were told the security cost [has] increased... then about 10 days out we were told yeah, it’s now been cancelled.” The reason kept changing, from police presence to licensing to the venue being hesitant after the Asake incident. “We’re talking two different genres, two different demographics. So it’s just a lot of excuses, it seems to be current.”

These inconsistencies make it very difficult for Live event organisers and promoters to plan events. Executive 9 suggested a way forward:

“So what we really need to do is get to a point where the data parameters are consistent. So there is no messing around. There isn’t some play on a perspective that’s going to work towards your advantage. What we need is data provision that gives an unequivocal position that no one can argue... So, say you’ve had 600,000 people through your door and you’ve had two incidents. Proportionately, you’re actually in a good place, not in a bad place. But what the police do very well is they say, “Well, you’ve had 300 incidents over the course of a year.”

– Executive 9, Event/Stage Manager London



The popularity of a venue or location including the natural footfall that comes with it, needs to be properly understood and factored into decision making as expressed by one interviewee:

"One thing we're looking at right now is footfall versus crime. And, you know, a lot of people being in one space will generate certain crime numbers, etc, and we'll attract that. It's not necessarily the venues they're attracting at, it's the popularity of the venue..."

– Creative 5, Promoter, London



Others shared similar sentiments, emphasising that cancellation of events is not necessarily the issue but the lack of transparency and explanation from decision makers. If there were more clarity regarding this, promoters and organisers would be willing to work with the local authority and policing to ensure safe and enjoyable events for Black and South Asian communities.

"We need transparency and like I have to be held to a certain standard. So I know for example there was a certain rapper who was involved...I think someone attempted to stab him or rob him or something on like a Monday and he had a show at the lower third on the Wednesday. Once that information got to us we had told the lower third about it and we said we're going to postpone the show. His tour manager notified us. We made the decision. We could have made that show go ahead and not tell the lower third. But the responsible thing to do is to go to the venue and be like that... We just want that same transparency back."

– Executive 1, Talent Manager, London



9.5 Cost to Appeal

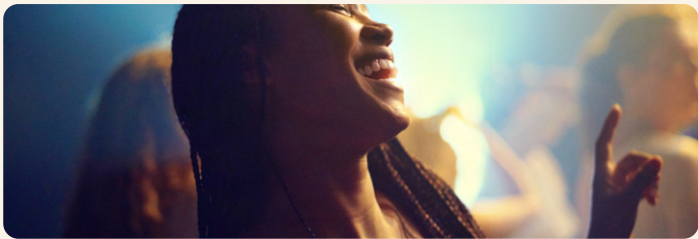
For many Black and South Asian promoters and venue owners, the costs for appealing licensing decisions are simply out of reach.

“What I’ve seen is that Black-owned and South Asian-owned businesses are especially underserved, not just in holding licenses, but in even being able to get them in the first place. A lot of it comes down to socioeconomic background. They don’t have £50,000 to £70,000 to spend on a barrister who can guide them through the red tape” said Executive 3.

Even for those who managed to fight back and ultimately win, the cost of taking a case to appeal was described as crippling “We’ve lost about £40,000 in revenue. We also spent about £20,000 in solicitor fees just to go to a sub-licensing committee,” D4 explained.

This high financial barrier has blocked many from even attempting to challenge decisions, despite the potential cultural and economic benefits of their events. “It’s prevented so many individuals from being financially independent in music. Countless people.” says Executive 9. As Makeda Bennett-Amparbeng reflected, “I wouldn’t say things have improved. If anything, especially when you look at the night-time economy and the way venues are shutting down, it’s clear it hasn’t gotten easier. It’s gotten harder.”

Currently, appeals can be expensive, and complex geared more towards those with deep pockets and legal backing than to small or independent operators. It’s estimated that around 412 licensing reviews in 2024 cost venues about £40,000 each in legal fees, adding up to roughly £16.4 million (Licensing Taskforce Report) ⁴⁵. And yet, many of these cases could have been resolved earlier,



through proper mediation and more supportive processes. There is a call to reduce the cost and complexity of appeals, encouraging open conversations instead of legal battles, and making sure the cultural and economic contributions of underrepresented communities aren’t pushed aside.

£20,000

Amount spent on solicitor fees by “D4”



£40,000

Lost revenue experienced by business “D4” during their licensing appeal process



412

Estimated number of licensing reviews 2024



£16.4 million

Estimated total collective cost spent by venues on legal fees for licensing reviews in 2024.



45 Licensing policy sprint: joint industry and HM government taskforce report www.gov.uk/government/publications/licensing-taskforce-report

9.6 Need for an Independent mechanism

“There should be a task force or a unit... any high-risk events that are deemed to be worthwhile cancelling should fall on the desk of this unit. That unit has people from the community... working alongside licensing... with the objective of ‘how can we make this event happen?’

– Executive 9, Event/Stage Manager, London



A recurring idea across interviews was the need for an independent tribunal or oversight team to ensure greater fairness and consistency in the licensing process. Participants felt this would allow decisions to be reviewed transparently, and reduce the influence of any single department.

Suggestions included a centralised tribunal that could be triggered when there’s disagreement or late objections. “It could maybe be an escalation thing where the police come, they say right your event... is not going to occur, but they have to give you a minimum notice term,” said Executive 10. In their view, any last-minute concerns based on intelligence would need to be properly substantiated and assessed by an independent person “who we can trust and who’s on our side”.

This idea of trusted intermediaries was raised by others. Some suggested a dedicated sector advisor embedded within each police force –someone who understands nightlife, music economies and the challenges of running events. Local Authority representative A4

suggested an extension of existing nightlife advisors in councils. This advisor could also help train officers, some of whom were perceived as unaware of the financial realities of the industry.

Increasing training facilities for those involved in the decision making process could help increase cohesion across departments. While improved understanding and training is important, most contributors made clear that the real goal is an independent tribunal: a body that sits apart from the interests of individual agencies, where decisions can be reviewed fairly, and where no single authority can unilaterally revoke an event. This tribunal would be responsible for granting or rejecting licenses, and importantly, for clearly stating the reasons behind each decision. The aim is not just a fairer process, but a system that builds trust by being accountable, transparent, and grounded in a shared understanding of culture, safety, and economic impact.

9.7 Government Proposal for Change: The National Licensing Policy Framework

The government’s endorsement of a National Licensing Policy Framework ⁴⁶ marks a potential turning point in licensing reform. Framed as a response to burdensome bureaucracy and declining high street vitality, the proposed framework also reflects a growing recognition of the systemic barriers facing culturally diverse operators in the night-time economy. It responds to long-standing calls for a more transparent, consistent, and culturally inclusive licensing system.

⁴⁶ www.gov.uk/government/publications/licensing-taskforce-report

Crucially, the framework's proposed content aligns with several key recommendations made by the 2025 Licensing Taskforce. These include the statutory adoption of a 'necessary and proportionate' test for representations and licensing decisions, and the introduction of an Evidence and Data Protocol both designed to reduce the scope for opaque or unsubstantiated objections. These mechanisms directly address concerns raised in this report about the discretionary and often racialised application of intelligence based licensing decisions, which have historically impacted Black-led events and music genres disproportionately.

The proposed framework also recommends that licensing authorities consider cultural, social, and economic value alongside the four statutory objectives of the Licensing Act 2003. This shift would embed a more holistic, public interest-based approach into licensing decisions, opening up regulatory space for diverse cultural expression and grassroots innovation. The integration of the Agent of Change principle into national planning and licensing policy further demonstrates a commitment to protecting long-standing cultural venues from retrospective disruption by new developments – an issue of increasing urgency for legacy spaces disproportionately located in gentrifying urban areas.

Standardising conditions across local authorities, simplifying application procedures, and streamlining the Temporary Event Notice process are further pillars of the proposed framework. These reforms, particularly when coupled with calls for genre-neutrality, not only reduce administrative complexity but begin to dismantle longstanding informal barriers that have excluded minoritised promoters from access to licensed cultural space. Nevertheless, the success of the National Licensing Policy Framework will ultimately depend on its implementation. Without statutory force or oversight, there is a risk that local inconsistencies, discretionary practices, and institutional biases may persist. To guard against this, the government should adopt the Taskforce's recommendation for the creation of an independent oversight mechanism, such as

a licensing ombuds or review body, to monitor application consistency, adjudicate complaints, and ensure equitable access to licensing systems across England and Wales.

By adopting these recommendations, the National Licensing Policy Framework can serve as a structural intervention capable of rebalancing entrenched inequalities and reviving cultural and economic life across the night-time economy.



LEGACY SPACES DISPROPORTIONATELY LOCATED IN GENTRIFYING URBAN AREAS

10

Licensing, Equality and Cultural Inclusion

10.1 The Equality Act 2010 and Licensing

Under the Equality Act 2010, all public bodies including licensing authorities are bound by the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), as outlined in Section 149. This duty requires decision makers to have due regard to three key aims:

- (a) eliminating discrimination, harassment, and victimisation;
- (b) advancing equality of opportunity; and
- (c) fostering good relations between groups with protected characteristics – including race.

In the context of event and premises licensing, the PSED imposes a legal obligation to ensure that decisions do not indirectly discriminate against racial groups even where policies or risk frameworks appear neutral. Risk assessments that label genres such as Afrobeats, Grime, or Drill as “high risk” without individualised, evidence-based justification can amount to indirect racial discrimination. This is particularly salient given the historical policing of Black music and the legacy of Form 696, which used genre as a proxy for audience risk.

The Brixton Academy licensing review (appendix B) marked the first known instance where a licensing sub-committee embedded the Equality Act directly into a license. As documented in the decision, the committee acknowledged that conditioning event approvals based on vague “high risk” classifications could lead to the exclusion of music genres popular among Black communities, thereby contravening the Equality Act. Condition six of the revised license now mandates that the operator must conduct event risk assessments with due regard to the PSED.

This development sets a legally enforceable precedent. Authorities must now consider whether licensing frameworks and safety classifications are operating in a racially disproportionate manner. The case also raises broader questions about whether licensing teams, in prioritising public order, are meeting their statutory obligations to uphold cultural inclusion and racial equality under UK law.



**CONDITION SIX OF THE
REVISED LICENSE NOW
MANDATES THAT THE
OPERATOR MUST CONDUCT
EVENT RISK ASSESSMENTS
WITH DUE REGARD
TO THE PSED.**

“When I represented the Brixton Academy, a venue long recognised as a cultural landmark in Black British music, we were required to navigate the tragic aftermath of the crowd crush that occurred during a concert by the Nigerian artist Asake. While the case understandably focused on safety and crowd management, it also raised critical questions about how risk is categorised within the licensing framework.

At the time, the operator used a scale that ranked musical genres by perceived risk, placing “Afrobeats” at the most hazardous end of the spectrum, while positioning pop music at the least. This approach, however ostensibly neutral, functioned in practice as a proxy for demographic profiling, with genre labels standing in for assumptions about audience behaviour.

In our submission, we proposed a move away from genre based risk classification towards a more rigorous and artist specific assessment, grounded in factual history rather than stereotype. The licensing sub-committee accepted this new approach, but rightly added an important and binding condition: that future assessments must take into account the Public Sector Equality Duty, as set out under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, thereby ensuring that music genres associated with Black audiences are not suppressed through indirect discrimination.

For me, this was a pivotal moment in licensing practice, a clear recognition that cultural expression must not be curtailed by administrative convenience or unconscious bias, and that public authorities have a statutory duty to approach such matters with both rigour and fairness.

The licensing system should not be a vehicle for cultural censorship, nor should it be disproportionately burdensome to small or community-based operators. Its function is preventive, not punitive. Its orientation should be inclusive, not exclusionary.

Where risk arises, we must meet it with evidence-based mitigation. Where culture flourishes, we must safeguard it, not suppress it under the guise of enforcement.”

– Except from an interview with Philip Kolvin KC (see Case Study 1).



10.2 Section 182 Guidance

The Section 182 Guidance, issued under the Licensing Act 2003, is meant to help ensure consistent and fair interpretation of the law.

Licensing authorities must follow it in their decisions, though they can depart from it if they have a clear and justified reason. This flexibility is meant to balance national consistency with local decision-making. In practice, however, the vague idea of what counts as a “good reason” has led to uneven application, creating uncertainty and reducing fairness.

The Guidance outlines what is expected of licensing authorities, such as considering each application individually, reviewing local policies every five years, and avoiding blanket conditions. It also emphasises fairness, openness, and cooperation with key agencies like the police, Environmental Health, the Security Industry Authority, and Immigration Enforcement. Yet, despite these principles, authorities often apply standard conditions and risk assessments, especially for cultural events. This has created a growing gap between the Guidance’s aims and how it is used in reality. The Guidance also has weaknesses, particularly in how it deals with Temporary Event Notices (TENs). Unlike premises licenses, TENs are more easily challenged at the last minute and offer few chances for appeal or review. This imbalance particularly harms small promoters and grassroots organisers, who depend on TENs to hold their events.

The Guidance also fails to address deep inequalities within licensing bodies. A lack of cultural understanding, limited diversity on decision-making panels, and little to no cultural awareness training have led to unfair scrutiny of racially diverse event organisers. As a result, the licensing system often reinforces a form of racial gatekeeping, where culturally specific

expressions are viewed with suspicion instead of encouragement. Venue owner D4 reflected, citing historical resistance to genres like Drum and Bass and Afrobeats, despite their economic value “They could be incredibly lucrative... but would often come with pressure from the police.” The persistent lack of transparency in how objections are formulated and adjudicated further restricts the ability of applicants to understand, challenge, or appeal decisions that significantly impact their livelihoods and creative expression.

The current licensing process risks reinforcing racial bias by treating culturally specific forms of expression with suspicion rather than support. The ongoing lack of transparency around how objections are made and decided also limits applicants’ ability to understand, question, or appeal decisions that deeply affect their income and creative work.



LITTLE TO NO CULTURAL AWARENESS TRAINING HAVE LED TO UNFAIR SCRUTINY OF RACIALLY DIVERSE EVENT ORGANISERS.

10.3 Resourcing, Overregulation, and Inconsistency

Many of these limitations reflect a broader departure from the spirit of the Licensing Act 2003, which originally aimed to stimulate economic growth and cultural participation through more flexible and locally attuned licensing.

However, the current emphasis on prevention, while critical in safeguarding public interests, has come at the cost of cultural inclusion, innovation, and diversity. Despite licensing being intended to regulate activity within rather than outside of the premises, Section 182 Guidance has increasingly been interpreted in ways that assess perceived risks in the public realm, often shaped by demographic or aesthetic assumptions rather than evidence based criteria.

This drift is exemplified by the emergence of Cumulative Impact Policies (CIPs) – measures embedded in the Guidance that lack a statutory basis within the Act and were introduced without parliamentary oversight. These policies have contributed to venue closures and, by some estimates, a

40%

reduction in licensed premises in certain areas.⁴⁷

Such policy additions highlight the risks of allowing guidance to act as de facto legislation, with significant consequences for local economies and cultural life.

Compounding these structural issues are resource constraints within licensing authorities and police forces. Increasingly, standard conditions are applied as a default, and there has been a noticeable rise in automatic refusals of TENs in the absence of detailed review. This shift has created a negative effect on small-scale event production and cultural entrepreneurship. Disparities in how different local authorities interpret and enforce licensing

rules often influenced by staffing, local politics, or individual personalities further fragment the regulatory landscape and erode confidence in its impartiality.

The prolonged closure of Brixton Academy further underscores the intersection of licensing enforcement and economic impact. As Jon Collins from LIVE argued,⁴⁸

“Brixton lost half a million pounds worth of revenue per week... seven or eight businesses collapsed on Brixton High Street.” Despite two fatalities at an event, many questioned why Brixton stayed closed for 18 months when Manchester Arena reopened within four months after a mass casualty attack. Collins argued this showed unequal treatment and policing priorities aimed at “squeezing the economic position for those businesses.”



The lack of a clear and fair appeals process also adds to the problem. Without consistent rules or evidence standards, licensing decisions can seem arbitrary and unfair, weakening trust in a system that already disadvantages many communities.

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⁴⁷ www.bdonline.co.uk/news

⁴⁸ www.morningadvertiser.co.uk/Article

10.4 Redefining Licensing for Culture and Procedural Integrity

Gareth Hughes, a senior lawyer with extensive expertise in licensing and planning law and Chair of the London Region of the Institute of Licensing, offers a critical perspective on the limitations of the current licensing framework and the need for reform. Hughes engaged in a workshop with REMEL researchers where he argued that the existing regime structured through the Licensing Act 2003 and Section 182 Guidance fails to reflect the cultural, social, and economic realities of contemporary live events and night-time economies.

Hughes identifies a key structural deficiency in the current system; the absence of a clear and nationally agreed definition of the term 'high-risk'. This term, he notes, is frequently deployed without justification and has often been applied to events associated with marginalised communities or certain music genres. Without a working definition, its subjective application enables discriminatory practices in licensing outcomes. Closely tied to this issue is the need to improve evidentiary standards within the licensing process. Hughes criticises how often objections are made using unclear, hidden, or unproven information. He argues that any objections should be backed by clear, fair, and transparent evidence that applicants can see and challenge.

Another critical theme in Hughes' analysis is the need to address the lack of cultural insight within licensing structures. He argues that licensing panels should include individuals with demonstrated cultural awareness or community representation, to ensure decisions are informed by the lived experience and diversity of the populations most affected. Moreover, Hughes identifies the absence of external accountability as a pressing concern and supports the establishment of an independent appeals board to review disputed decisions, introduce consistency, and increase public confidence in the system.

On the question of institutional responsibility, Hughes makes the case for a transfer of

licensing oversight to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). Given DCMS's remit over arts, culture, and public events, it is, in his view, far better positioned to understand and support the cultural impact of live events, reframing them as public contributions rather than as risks to be mitigated. However, he also stresses that collaboration with the Home Office must be preserved, particularly in relation to enforcement and safeguarding responsibilities. A joint governance or liaison mechanism between DCMS and the Home Office would, he suggests, enable a more balanced, culturally literate, and security-conscious system capable of both protecting public safety and nurturing the UK's diverse cultural and night-time economies.

"In my experience, there are systemic challenges in how licensing operates that go beyond any single issue. At the core is the way risk is perceived and prioritised within the licensing framework. Over the past 20 years, the default approach has been to ask, 'How do we de-risk this?' rather than 'How do we enable activity that contributes to economic prosperity and cultural enrichment in our boroughs?'

This creates tension with other parts of local government, cultural teams, economic development units, and regeneration departments whose role is to support and grow exactly these kinds of activities. The structure of the 2003 Act reinforces this, as its four objectives are all geared toward preventing crime and disorder, ensuring public safety, preventing public nuisance, and protecting children from harm. In practice, this makes the system risk-averse, not enabling...

– Jon Collins, LIVE



There is a growing need to reset how licensing functions, not just in London, but across England and Wales. Compounding this is the fact that the police's influence in licensing has increased, particularly since national responsibility shifted from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to the Home Office, where licensing now sits within an enforcement-led framework centred on alcohol and drugs. This shift has fundamentally altered how licensing is viewed and implemented."

– Jon Collins, LIVE



END MATTER

BLACK LIVES IN MUSIC'S POSITION

Black Lives in Music is not arguing for weaker safety standards.

We recognise the importance of licensing, policing and public safety in protecting artists, audiences, workers, venues and communities. Everyone has the right to enjoy live music in spaces that are safe, professionally managed and effectively regulated.

What this report makes clear is that safety must never be used as a cover for racial bias, cultural misunderstanding or disproportionate restriction.

BLiM is calling for fair, transparent, evidence-based and culturally competent safety standards. Standards that protect people without profiling them. Standards that assess risk through facts, not assumptions. Standards that recognise the value of Black and South Asian music, audiences, promoters and venues as part of London's cultural and economic life.

A fair licensing system should be robust, but it must also be accountable. It should support good operators, challenge poor practice consistently, and ensure that decisions are based on credible evidence, clear reasoning and equal treatment.

Safety matters deeply. The issue is whether safety is being applied fairly.

This report calls for a licensing framework that protects the public while also protecting cultural expression, economic opportunity and racial justice. London cannot be a truly global music city if some communities are treated as a risk before they are treated as contributors.



**BLiM IS CALLING FOR
FAIR, TRANSPARENT,
EVIDENCE-BASED AND
CULTURALLY COMPETENT
SAFETY STANDARDS.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

1 Full and Independent Review of the Licensing System

Commissioned by the Home Office and GLA and led by an independent panel of experts, a full and independent review of the licensing system should be commissioned to examine the extent to which existing policies, procedures, and enforcement practices contribute to racial disparity and inequitable outcomes. The review should assess the role of policing in licensing decisions, including the use of risk-based intelligence and discretionary powers, and evaluate the consistency, transparency, and proportionality of decision-making across local authorities.

Why? Licensing decisions are frequently influenced by subjective interpretations of “risk,” often informed by unverified intelligence and racialised assumptions about particular genres and audiences. These practices have led to unequal access to performance opportunities, loss of income, and erosion of trust between communities, local authorities, and the police. The cumulative effect is a system that, rather than safeguarding the public and enabling cultural participation, too often suppresses creativity and economic potential. A comprehensive, independent review is therefore essential to address these disparities and ensure that the licensing framework operates lawfully, fairly, and in the public interest. A review should determine whether the Licensing Act 2003 continues to fulfil its intended purpose of safeguarding the public and promoting cultural participation, or whether systemic bias has resulted in the unintended exclusion of particular communities and genres.

2 Adopt and Implement the proposed National Licensing Policy Framework

The government should formally adopt and implement the proposed National Licensing Policy Framework to ensure transparent, consistent, and equitable approach to licensing across England and Wales. To safeguard consistency and accountability, an independent Licensing Ombuds or Review Body should be established to oversee implementation, monitor outcomes, and ensure equitable access to licensed cultural spaces nationwide.

3 Embed Equality and Human Rights in Licensing Law

UK Parliament, the Home Office, DCMS, and local authorities should incorporate statutory equalities duties (Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) and human rights principles (Article 23 and Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) into all licensing frameworks and decisions, ensuring racial profiling and cultural discrimination are explicitly prohibited.

Why? Embedding the Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149, Equality Act 2010) and relevant human rights principles into the licensing framework would ensure that cultural discrimination and racial profiling are explicitly prohibited. This would make fairness and inclusion a statutory part of the decision making process, not an optional consideration.

4 Establish Transparent Evidence Standards

The Home Office, Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), and local licensing authorities must require clear, verifiable, and contestable evidence for any objections or restrictions, replacing vague terms such as “high risk” with specific, substantiated concerns, underpinned by a defined and transparent risk framework.

Why? The current lack of transparency allows bias to shape decisions and makes it impossible for applicants to challenge or correct misunderstandings. Establishing clear evidence standards would ensure that all licensing objections and restrictions are based on objective, verifiable, and proportionate criteria, improving fairness and accountability across local authorities. It would also strengthen confidence in the licensing system by making decisions more consistent, reviewable, and legally defensible.

5 Strengthen Oversight and Monitoring of Licensing Disparities

Local authorities should publish annual disaggregated data on licensing outcomes by genre, promoter ethnicity, and audience demographics, with transparency monitored by an independent panel.

Why? The REMEL project has highlighted significant evidence gaps that limit a full understanding of how the licensing system affects different communities. These gaps make it difficult to assess whether the current framework is fair, consistent, and evidence-based. Addressing them through better data collection and monitoring would strengthen both accountability and public confidence in the system.

6 Integrate Cultural Equity into National Licensing Guidance

The Home Office, working with DCMS, should update Section 182 Guidance to embed cultural equality clauses, framing events as public goods with social and economic value, not inherent risks.

Why? Current national licensing guidance (Section 182 of the Licensing Act 2003) focuses heavily on risk management, crime, disorder, and public safety, but gives little weight to the social, cultural, and economic benefits of live events. As a result, many councils interpret licensing primarily as a tool for control rather than as a framework for enabling creativity and inclusion. Licensing policy should explicitly encourage diversity, representation, and inclusion, helping local authorities to balance safety considerations with the cultural and economic benefits of live events. The REMEL report shows that this risk-based approach disproportionately impacts Black-led and grassroots events, which are often viewed as higher risk despite limited evidence.

7 Guarantee Procedural Fairness

The Home Office, Ministry of Justice, and local authorities should introduce a statutory right to response, mediation, and appeal for promoters facing objections, overseen by an independent licensing tribunal or ombudsman.

Why? While the Licensing Act 2003 provides some procedural safeguards such as the right to

make representations at a hearing and to appeal to the Magistrates' Court, in practice these protections are limited, inconsistent, costly and exclude informal interventions that shape many outcomes. An independent tribunal or ombudsman would restore balance, embed accountability, and ensure fair access to cultural production across communities. This would make the system more transparent, accessible, and fair for all promoters and venues.

8 Reform Representation in Decision Making

Local councils and licensing boards should ensure panels include cultural experts, equality officers, and community representatives, with mandatory cultural competence training co-delivered with the EHRC and grassroots cultural organisations such as Black Lives in Music and others.

Why? Licensing decisions are often made by panels that lack diversity or understanding of the cultural sectors their rulings affect. Many decisions appear to be influenced by limited awareness of specific music genres, community contexts, or cultural practices, leading to assumptions about risk and behaviour that disadvantage certain groups. Mandatory cultural competence and anti-racism training, co-designed with organisations such as Black Lives in Music, would help ensure that licensing decisions are informed, fair, and reflective of London's diverse communities.

9 Remove Exclusionary Licensing Clauses

The Home Office and local licensing authorities should repeal restrictive conditions such as Model Condition 2 ("No Promoted Events") and reform Cumulative Impact Zones into frameworks that balance harm reduction with cultural benefit.

Why? Conditions such as "No Promoted Events" and overly rigid Cumulative Impact Zones (CIZs) were originally designed to manage crime, disorder, and nuisance, but in practice they often act as blanket restrictions that limit cultural diversity and penalise smaller, black and community-led events. Future guidance should balance harm reduction with the need to support diverse cultural expression and innovation in the night-time economy.

10 Mandate Cultural Impact Assessments

Local authorities, supported by the GLA and DCMS, should require Cultural Impact Assessments (CIA) for all major licensing decisions, particularly those affecting culturally minoritised groups, to assess risks to heritage, access, and representation. CIAs should be embedded within the existing licensing guidance as a standard requirement for new applications, license reviews, or event restrictions involving live music and cultural programming. Developed in consultation with cultural stakeholders, community organisations, and race equity experts. These assessments must be made public, include stakeholder engagement, and be considered as part of the formal decision-making record.

Why? Licensing decisions rarely account for cultural value or the disproportionate impact of enforcement on Black, South Asian, and racially minoritised communities. The absence of cultural analysis means decisions can undermine access, erode heritage, and displace creative activity

often under the guise of safety or planning. CIAs would evaluate whether interventions reinforce exclusion or support inclusive cultural participation. They would make culture visible within licensing governance and provide a concrete mechanism for transparency, accountability, and equality in decision-making.

11 Align Licensing with Culture and Economic Development

Local authorities, in partnership with the GLA, should synchronise licensing frameworks with borough cultural strategies, planning policy, and economic development objectives to protect venues and enable diverse events.

Why? Licensing decisions often operate in isolation from cultural and economic planning, leading to outcomes that undermine local authorities' own goals around inclusion, regeneration, and creative growth. Aligning licensing with borough cultural strategies and economic development plans would ensure a more coherent policy environment, one that protects diverse venues, supports minority promoters, and treats cultural events as assets rather than liabilities. This integration is essential to prevent the displacement of grassroots culture and to secure long-term social and economic benefits for local communities.

12 Reform Cost Accountability and Appeals

Local authorities, with oversight from the GLA and Local Government Ombudsman, should introduce mechanisms that allow event organisers to recover costs including legal and operational fees when licensing objections or conditions are overturned on appeal. Where objections to cultural events are overturned on appeal, licensing panels should consider cost implications and the economic and cultural impact of procedural error or disproportionate enforcement. The Home Office, MPS, and MOPAC should implement transparent, standardised frameworks for police cost recovery, with tiered, capped, or subsidised security costs for compliant and community-led events.

Why? Enabling organisers to recover costs after unjustified objections provides accountability, deters misuse of regulatory power, and promotes equity in the events economy. Disproportionate event-related costs especially for traffic management, parking, and policing function as de facto economic barriers to entry for Black and South Asian-led cultural events. Without transparent frameworks and accountability mechanisms, such charges risk reinforcing structural exclusion under the guise of neutrality.

13 Expand Access to Capital and Relief Funding

The GLA, DCMS, British Business Bank, and local enterprise partnerships should establish targeted loan schemes, micro-grants, and a dedicated Cultural Events Relief Fund to support cultural entrepreneurs, particularly from historically excluded communities with costs related to venue development, security, licensing, and late-night operations.

Why? Cultural entrepreneurs from marginalised communities face systemic barriers to accessing finance, making it difficult to sustain or scale nightlife ventures. Dedicated funding mechanisms would help redress these inequalities, preserve legacy events, and unlock the social and economic potential of diverse nightlife ecosystems.

14 Enhance Transparency in TENs (Temporary Event Notices)

The Home Office, DCMS and local authorities should extend notice periods, require evidentiary thresholds for objections, and mandate automatic approval with proportionate conditions where objections lack substantiation.

Why? Extending TENs notice periods and requiring evidentiary thresholds would reduce the disproportionate impact of last-minute, unsubstantiated objections often used to obstruct Black and community-led events. Automatic approval with proportionate conditions where objections lack substantiation would prevent the misuse of discretionary power, ensuring that Temporary Event Notices are assessed on evidence, are transparent and protect Black and South Asian-led events from unfair delays or denials.

15 Prioritise Cultural Liaison Within Licensing Restructures

As licensing services undergo restructuring, borough councils and the Metropolitan Police Service under the oversight of MOPAC should prioritise the retention and strategic deployment of trained cultural liaison officers. These roles should be embedded within remaining teams to mediate with promoters, support inclusive risk assessment practices, and foster trust with historically excluded communities. Regular training for officers on cultural competency, bias, and community engagement must be institutionalised, not optional, as part of post-restructure workforce planning.

Why? With licensing departments facing significant cuts, failure to embed inclusive expertise risks deepening existing disparities. Institutional trust can only be rebuilt through consistent, knowledgeable engagement and structures that reflect the diversity of London's night-time economy.

16 Professionalise and Support Promoters

The GLA, Local Authorities, The Metropolitan Police Service, NTIA, Black Lives in Music and industry bodies should establish an accreditation scheme and training pathways for promoters, supported by toolkits, CPD programmes, and professional development funding.

Why? Promoters from Black, Asian, and other underrepresented communities face disproportionate regulatory scrutiny without access to formal support. A recognised accreditation and training pathway would not only legitimise their role within the cultural economy but also equip them with the tools, knowledge, and networks to navigate licensing, safety, and compliance processes on equal footing as well as professionalising the sector.

17 Create Independent Oversight Mechanisms

The GLA, working with the EHRC, community representatives, and an independent Licensing Equality Panel, should audit licensing practices, investigate systemic discrimination, and enforce compliance with equality duties.

Why? An external oversight mechanism would ensure transparency, enforce the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), and hold local authorities and police accountable for discriminatory

practices. Embedding community-led audit and review structures is essential to restoring fairness and legitimacy in cultural governance.

18 Embed Mental Health and Workforce Safeguards

Local authorities, the MPS, and the GLA, working in partnership with cultural community organisations, should mandate annual cultural competency, anti-racism, and unconscious bias training for licensing officers, police units, and councillors.

Why? Licensing and policing decisions deeply affect the mental health and livelihoods of Black and racially minoritised creatives. Embedding cultural competency and anti-racism training ensures that decision-makers understand the lived realities of the communities they regulate, reducing harm, preventing bias, and fostering a more equal and accountable cultural ecosystem.

19 The REMEL recommendations should be implemented in full

The REMEL recommendations should be implemented in full with strategic oversight and coordination led by the Mayor's Night Life Commission. Delivery should be supported by a formal implementation framework, including defined milestones, measurable performance indicators, and cross-agency collaboration between local authorities, the Metropolitan Police Service, DCMS, and industry stakeholders. Progress should be subject to annual public reporting and independent review to ensure transparency, consistency, and accountability across boroughs.

Why? The REMEL findings identify systemic inconsistencies in licensing decision-making, the use of non-transparent evidence, and disproportionate impacts on Black-led events, reflecting a lack of standardisation, oversight, and accountability within the current framework. Without coordinated leadership, these issues are unlikely to be addressed effectively. A centrally led implementation approach would support alignment with statutory duties, including the Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149, Equality Act 2010), improve consistency in the application of licensing objectives, and ensure reforms are operationalised across all boroughs. It would also help rebuild trust with affected communities while unlocking the full cultural and economic potential of London's live music sector.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Borough	32 Local Authority Districts in Greater London.
Cultural/racial profiling	Assumptions made on the basis of association with a particular ethnic, racial or cultural group.
Emerging talent	Early career creatives.
Event	Used to refer to live music activities such as concerts and club nights.
Form 696	A controversial risk assessment form that was used by Greater London Metropolitan police from 2008–2017.
Genre	A way of categorising types of music.
Gentrification	The process of upwards socioeconomic change in an area caused by demographic change of residents, e.g. whiter and/or wealthier residents.
Institutional	Relating to systems, structures or fixed expectations.
Intelligence	Information collected, analysed and used by police in crime prevention, investigation and decision-making.
Licensing	The legal process through which authorities permit and regulate activities such as the sale of alcohol and regulated entertainment.
Night-time economy	Economic and cultural activity taking place during the evening and night, including hospitality, entertainment and live music.
Policing	The maintenance of law and order by a police force.
Programming	Relating to curating arts events.
Promoter/promotions	Relating to organising live music events, where the promoter is the organiser.
Racial bias	Preconceived beliefs, attitudes and expectations about people from a particular ethnic or racial group.
Recovery	The process of overcoming a business setback.
Regulated entertainment	Entertainment activities that require authorisation under licensing legislation, including certain live and recorded music events.
Shutdown	The cancellation of events.
Systemic inequality	Inequalities tied to the way something is run, or that is embedded in a system.
Underground culture	Relates to subcultures, artistic scenes that exist in opposition to mainstream cultures.

METHODOLOGY

This report draws upon a multi-method research design grounded in principles of rigour, triangulation, and accountability. Our aim was to examine the structural, institutional, and experiential factors shaping the live music licensing landscape in London, particularly for Black and South-Asian artists and event professionals. The work combines legal inquiry, desktop research, stakeholder interviews and focus groups, and a survey. It is informed by a desire to foreground the lived experiences of those at the sharp end of licensing and surveillance, while recognising the complexities and opacity of the systems they navigate.

Scope of research

To ensure a rigorous and inclusive approach to this vital research, we launched an open tender process to select a research partner with a demonstrable commitment to racial equity in the cultural sector, particularly within live music. The tender was publicly advertised and guided by transparent selection criteria focused on subject expertise, methodological rigour, and collaborative capacity. We sought candidates with experience in both qualitative and quantitative research, and encouraged partnerships or consortia where appropriate. Final selection was made by a multidisciplinary panel including representatives from the Greater London Authority (GLA), the Musicians' Union, and Black Lives in Music, ensuring accountability, impartiality, and alignment with the goals of the project. Bidding parties proposed their own scope and research design. There was an indicative budget provided as part of this process, and the scope of the research is informed by this practical limitation.

The successful bid proposed the following initial steps:

- ✦ Semi-structured Interviews
- ✦ Focus Groups
- ✦ Industry Stakeholder Workshops
- ✦ Freedom of Information in full
- ✦ Desk-based research
- ✦ Survey

As the research emerged, additional data collection strands were added to address emerging limitations. This primarily took the form of desk-based research. Resource capacity meant that the active data collection through survey, interviews and focus groups focused on individuals working in the live music industry and licensing experts, rather than expanding to include licensing bodies, police and other agencies or sectors.

Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests

Our approach also involved extensive use of the Freedom of Information Act. With legal drafting and oversight provided by international law firm Reed Smith LLP, we submitted over 80 FOI requests to a range of public bodies across Greater London and the UK. All FOI requests were formally submitted and, despite multiple follow-ups and rewordings where necessary, the majority were either partially fulfilled or ultimately rejected.

The consistent refusal by the MPS to release data was not merely a procedural barrier, but a substantive finding in itself, highlighting the lack of transparency that remains a defining feature of the relationship between music professionals and licensing authorities. Although the MPS FOI requests were rejected, we did obtain a limited dataset on TENS and Licensing Reviews in London from the Chief Licensing Officer of the MPS, who is a contributor to the REMEL project. This partial cooperation provided insights that helped triangulate certain patterns in our broader analysis.

Body and description of request	FOI Outcome
Transport for London (TfL) and British Transport Police (BTP): Requests focused on antisocial behaviour reports linked to travel to and from music events featuring Black and South Asian artists.	All rejected.
Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS): Requests focused on disparities in funding, access to licensing support, and the existence of policies aimed at increasing diversity in live music.	All rejected.
Home Office: Requests covered licensing reviews, Temporary Event Notices, enforcement action, internal and interagency guidance on “high-risk” genres, and media influence on licensing outcomes.	All rejected.
33 Local Authorities covering London: Requests covered licensing reviews, Temporary Event Notices, enforcement action, internal and interagency guidance on “high-risk” genres, and media influence on licensing outcomes.	Some partially fulfilled, some rejected
Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) and the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC): data on Knife Crime Prevention Orders, Criminal Behaviour Orders, music event cancellations, police interventions at live events, and internal guidance documents	All rejected.

A full list of FOI requests can be found in [Appendix M.](#)

Desktop Research

To supplement the gaps left by refused FOIs, our team conducted wide-ranging desktop research. A team of eight researchers at King's College London reviewed licensing subcommittee minutes, public risk assessments, local authority websites, news coverage, and other public records. This phase of research helped shape case studies and trace patterns across boroughs and music genres.

Interviews and Focus Groups

Researchers conducted in-depth qualitative interviews and focus groups with 34 participants, comprising music artists, promoters, venue operators, managers, and executives. Participants were selected to ensure diversity across genre, professional role, and career stage. This was done to supplement the data gathered through the survey, and build a more detailed understanding of individuals' experiences.

These included:

- ✦ Artists from a range of genres (e.g., Jazz, Soul, Reggae, Rock, Afrobeats)
- ✦ Professionals involved in live event production and promotion
- ✦ Senior stakeholders in licensing and music regulation, including lawyers, licensing officers, artist managers, and tour managers

All participants were anonymised, and the interviews were thematically coded.

Limitations

There are clear limitations to the data environment in which this research took place. These include:

- ✦ The lack of consistent race disaggregated data across licensing and enforcement systems.
- ✦ Non-standardised reporting formats across boroughs.
- ✦ The absence of centralised economic data on the UK's music licensing ecosystem.
- ✦ Repeated rejection of FOI data requests from the MPS.

Nonetheless, every effort was made to ensure the robustness of findings through cross-referencing, community input, and institutional scrutiny. The findings provide a substantially detailed account of the racialised dynamics shaping music event licensing in London.

There are also limitations in the sampling for survey, interview and focus group components of the research, in that the data comes from self-selecting individuals who chose to take part in the research. This approach can introduce bias, as those with stronger experiences or opinions may be more likely to respond.

The sample is not representative of the wider live music sector, but the aim of the research was not to achieve demographic representativeness. Instead, the focus was on hearing directly from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic professionals whose experiences are often underrepresented in licensing and policing discussions.

As there was no defined population profile or target sample to measure against, it was not possible to weight the data. However, the insights remain valuable for understanding patterns of racial disparity and identifying areas for further, more representative research.

Ethics

This research was conducted according to the principles of informed consent, anonymisation, transparency, and care. Our design foregrounds participant experience as expertise, and recognises the ethical responsibility of documenting racial harm within institutional frameworks. Where data is incomplete, we have acknowledged this directly. Where public institutions have refused to share information, this refusal is itself recorded as a substantive part of the evidence base.

REFERENCES

- 1 Key inputs to this estimate are the proportions of events that have been affected, estimated by a small number of music venue promoters, and booking agents. Section 3.1 (pages 23 – 27) describes the approach to arriving at this range. Nevertheless, the authors consider the range to be plausible given all the other evidence presented in this report.
- 2 <https://www.gov.uk/find-licences/temporary-events-notice>
- 3 <https://www.thejusticegap.com/new-details-revealed-about-met-scheme-to-scour-childrens-social-media-for-signs-of-criminality/>
- 4 <https://www.college.police.uk/article/analysing-gang-related-music-linked-serious-violence>
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- 19 Estimates of the total value of the live music market vary, but in 2023 UK live music trade body LIVE's 2024 paper UK Live 2023 estimated the total consumer spend on live music to be £6.1billion. Applying the 30.5% share from the UK Music paper would give £1.86b annual spend in London.
- 20 <https://covver.com/magazine/bpi-insight/bpi-all-about-the-music-2025/40> (Page 39)
- 21 Hip Hop/Rap 15.7% + R&B 10.6% + Reggae 0.7% = 27%
- 22 <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/bulletins/ethnicgroupenglandandwales/census2021>
- 23 <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/bulletins/ethnicgroupenglandandwales/census2021>
- 24 UK Music recently published a valuation of the impact of Black music in the UK entitled Black Music Means Business (March 2026). Their methodology includes genres born out of the talents of Black artists, including Rock and Pop. They conclude that 80% of value from the last 30 years of recorded music is rooted in Black talent, and we agree. However, the barriers faced by a white musician performing Pop is different to the experience of a Black musician performing Hip Hop. As such, we broke down the UK Music report to consider only their Tier 1 (Black British Music Genres) and Tier 2 (Core Black Music Genres) valuations. When expressed as a % of total national market share Black British Music Genres and Core Black Music Genres combine to be 33.7% of Black Music and 27.52% of all music, reinforcing our separately calculated 27% estimate. There was the option to replace our estimate with theirs, but the annual market share may change significantly year on year, and this would not be captured in the long term approach taken by UK Music.
<https://www.ukmusic.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Black-Music-Means-Business.pdf>
- 25 After being asked not to programme a Black and Asian artist, have you done any of the following? (n=38)
- 26 Did you lose any income or incur other financial losses due to this cancellation? (n=37)
- 27 Thinking about the most recent cancellation, had you sold tickets for this event at the point of cancellation? (n=12)
- 28 Thinking about the most recent cancellation, had you already paid all or some of the costs associated with hiring technical staff for the event? For example, lighting and sound technicians. (n=14)
- 29 Thinking about the most recent cancellation, what was the approximate financial cost to you or your business for having this event cancelled? (n=13)
- 30 Do you feel that your professional reputation was damaged by this cancellation? (n=14)
- 31 As a direct result of this cancellation, have you lost further business or contracts? (n=14)
- 32 As a result of this cancellation, have you made any employees redundant or terminated a contracted freelancer? (n=10)
- 33 Would you put on more Black or Asian music events if there was less risk of police intervention? (n=114)
- 34 <https://www.ukmusic.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/UK-Music-Hometown-Glory-Report.pdf>
- 35 Night-time Industries Association <https://ntia.co.uk/ntia-figures-reveal-extent-of-crisis-uk-nightclubs-struggle-as-dance-floors-nationwide-shut-down/>
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Research Oversight and Governance

The research underpinning Project REMEL is overseen by a distinguished Research Committee comprising experts and practitioners from across the live music industry, academia, and racial justice advocacy. This committee ensures rigour, inclusivity, and ethical integrity in all aspects of data collection, analysis, and knowledge mobilisation.

Research Committee Members include:

- **Paul Broadhurst** – Senior Policy Officer at Greater London Authority; expert in cultural and creative industries policy.
- **Dr. Diljeet Bhachu** – EDI at Musicians Union, researcher and advocate in musicians' rights and diversity in music.
- **Dr. Karen Reece** – Founder of UCAN, Researcher and Advocate for equity in urban arts and funding access.
- **Katrina Ffrench** – Member of Local Authority Licensing Board, Researcher focused on systemic injustice in cultural industries.
- **Elli Brazill** – Founder of Art Not Evidence, Music Industry Executive
- **Nicole White** – Tour Manager
- **Makeda Bennett-Amparbeng** – Manager Of Culture and Development and Promoter,
- **Dr. Nikhaela Wicks** – Researcher, Academic in music, culture, and social justice studies.
- **Charisse Beaumont** – Chief Executive, Black Lives in Music

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