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Assessing the UK Football Policing Unit funding of football banning orders in times of policing austerity

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Abstract

This article examines how austerity measures have affected football policing units in UK, with a specific focus on the use of UK Football Policing Unit (UKFPU) funding for football banning orders. The research utilizes semi-structured interviews with football police officers and examines publicly available Home Office data. Austerity measures were found to be restrictive to operational deployments at football matches, reducing opportunities for early intervention, liaison-based policing, and evidence gathering. The findings offer limited support to previous research into UKFPU funding, in that it is a target driven process.

However, new accounts are emerging which show that officers are rejecting the idea of funding for banning orders, and that reform is needed. This could be in the guise of UKFPU funding being utilized for other football policing activities that are aimed at preventing disorder, and engaging supporters into positive behaviour change.

Keywords: football banning orders; austerity; UKFPU funding; football policing

Introduction

This paper considers how police forces in England and Wales are utilising funding from the UK Football Policing Unit (UKFPU), specifically for football banning orders (FBOs) in times of austerity for policing. The two main topics of austerity and UKFPU funding are examined initially in terms of existing information, followed by a discussion concerning the practitioner views related to these. Lastly, some recommendations are made for how police practice may be developed from this research.

FBOs were initially developed as exclusion orders under the Public Order Act 1986, which prevented an individual who had been convicted of a football related offence from attending matches (James & Pearson, 2018). The Football Spectators Act 1989 added restriction orders to this, where a person convicted of a football related offence was required to report to a police station when regulated football matches were being played abroad (James & Pearson, 2018). The scope of FBOs was increased under the Football (Disorder) Act 2000, which allowed the police to use advanced geographical restrictions, ground entry restrictions, and order banned individuals to surrender their passport and report to police stations at particular points.

FBOs are obtained upon a complaint made by the Chief Constable of a police force, with the court having to be satisfied of two conditions: firstly, that the individual had at any time caused or contributed to any violence or disorder in the UK or elsewhere, and secondly, that there are reasonable grounds for believing that an order would help to prevent violence or disorder at regulated football matches (S14b Football Spectators Act 1989). The period of an FBO obtained under 14b lasts between three and five years.

The introduction of the Act and the stringent powers that it granted the police can be linked to a Labour Government political agenda which focused on preventative control measures against those posing a risk (Hopkins & Hamilton-Smith, 2014, p. 226). The legislation was passed rapidly following the disorder involving England supporters at Euro 2000 in Belgium, where nearly 1,000 fans were arrested and deported from Belgium. Under section 14b the resulting legislation allowed for FBOs to be administered with or without the individual being convicted of a criminal offence. However, despite the media images and political condemnations there were views that the level of disorder at Euro 2000 had been somewhat overstated (Weed, 2001). This led to FBO legislation being regarded as ‘panic law’ with the government response satisfying a moral panic that had been fuelled by the media (Frosdick & Marsh, 2005, p. 171, James & Pearson, 2006).

FBO terms and conditions have attracted criticism for being too draconian, as have the police for using these powers disproportionately (James & Pearson, 2006; Hopkins & Hamilton-Smith, 2014, p. 223, James & Pearson, 2015, The Football Supporters Federation, 2018). Moreover, claims have been made that FBOs are being inconsistently administered in Magistrate’s courts (James & Pearson, 2006), and questions asked over their compliance with the Humans Rights Act (Pearson, 2005, James & Pearson, 2018). James & Pearson (2018) are particularly vociferous in their assessment of FBOs, stating that FBOs are being used far beyond their original intention and calling for the use of ‘super FBOs’ to be curtailed. In addition, Stott, Pearson & West (2019) suggest that low level club bans are being used on supporters where there is not sufficient evidence for an FBO. Although the government stance remains clear, with FBOs cited as part of the preventative strategy in annual Home Office reports on football offences (Home Office, 2018), there remains scepticism on the overall effectiveness of FBOs. Reduction in violence at major tournaments following Euro

2000 has been attributed in part to other policing methods, and not the extensive use of FBOs (Stott & Pearson, 2006; James & Pearson, 2018). At Euro 2004 in Portugal, for example, the police approached crowd control using more discreet and less confrontational means than used in previous tournaments based on liaison and early intervention (Stott & Pearson, 2006).

Austerity and Football Policing

In October 2010, the government announced austerity measures across the public sector, including a 20% cut in police funding in England and Wales from 2011 to 2015 (HMIC, 2013). Between 2010 and 2018 police officer numbers in England and Wales dropped by approximately 21,000. The impact of austerity on front line policing has been the subject of much debate, particularly in the media, with politicians and senior police officers disagreeing over the link between officer numbers and levels of crime (see Weaver & Pidd, 2019, Quinn, 2019). Interested bodies such as the Police Federation have been outspoken in condemning cuts to police services, claiming that the police are in crisis and the public are being failed as a result (Dearden, 2018). Research by Brogden & Ellison (2012, p. 64) suggests that the impact of austerity on policing is particularly complex to determine whilst Smith (2016) contends that austerity should be regarded as an opportunity for the police to streamline and become more efficient. There have been claims made in the media by senior officers that the police are not investigating crime due to austerity measures (Bell & Box, 2019). Reductions in funding and resources have led to challenging decisions for senior officers on what will be investigated (Brain & Owens, 2015). Police forces have considered how their departments are structured in attempting to find effective allocation of resources (Loveday, 2015, p. 120) and have increasingly needed to draw upon the most effective and financially efficient crime reduction methods across their activities. Although many have commented on the impact of austerity on policing in a broader sense, there is a lack of research considering the specific

impact on the policing of football matches. The policing of football is a key area of policing, with estimates suggesting that the cost of policing football matches is £48 million annually (Hansard HC. Deb., 2019). Therefore, the impact on achieving civil FBOs and football policing in general merits further investigation.

Deputy Chief Constable (DCC) Mark Roberts is the national strategic lead for policing football, and has been particularly outspoken in the media about there being fewer officers available for football policing, particularly inside stadia, claiming that ‘resources are being stretched to the limit’ (Kopczyk, 2018). This reduction in officers policing football would appear to be in contradiction to the current Authorised Professional Practice (APP) which suggests that home and away Dedicated Football Officers (DFOs) and spotters should be deployed to all matches (College of Policing, 2018). Clearly, police forces need to be pragmatic about this guidance and consider the evidence base and rationale for deployment. For instance, whilst the guidance may be appropriate for weekend fixtures, it may not appear to be the best use of resources to send police spotters to long distance midweek away games that are low risk and have a small number of fans attending. Contemporary research into football policing suggests that police forces should be taking a more liaison-based approach to managing risk supporters (Stott, Hoggett & Pearson, 2012, Stott, West & Radburn, 2018, Stott, Pearson & West, 2019). Through this there needs to be an increase in the use of specialist resources whose purpose is liaison with supporter groups, and not solely focused on evidence gathering in support of securing FBOs (Stott, Pearson & West, 2019). Stott, West & Radburn (2018) suggest that by utilising specialist resources to conduct a liaison-based approach, this could de-escalate public order situations and potentially lead to a reduction in police resources being deployed to football matches. A complicating factor is the lack of clarity around what a risk supporter is (James & Pearson, 2018), with police forces

using the broad definition of someone “posing a possible risk to public order or antisocial behaviour, whether planned or spontaneous, at or in connection with a football event” (College of Policing, 2018). This broad definition could lead to a larger number of supporters being termed as risk supporters.

This growing body of research challenges police forces to break with orthodoxy and develop new ways of deploying football policing resources. However, given the current financial constraints the UK police finds itself operating in, there is unlikely to be an increase in the number of resources that are specifically dedicated to policing football, even if it may help to reduce resource commitments and disorder in the long term. This situation will develop over the coming years as overall police numbers may be set to increase with the recent announcement to recruit an extra 20,000 police officers (Home Office, 2019). Nevertheless, with other resource intensive crime types such as ‘county lines’, child sexual exploitation and gang violence, there is internal competition for the appropriate allocation of police resources (den Heyer, 2014). However, football policing has an advantage that other areas of policing do not, with the potential for extra UKFPU funding.

UKFPU Funding

The United Kingdom Football Policing Unit (UKFPU) is funded by the Home Office and carries out a number of functions in relation to overseeing the policing of both domestic and international football (College of Policing, 2018). Very little information is available on the public facing ‘GOV.UK’ website or elsewhere about the UKFPU or about how they fund police forces for the application of football banning orders (FBOs). Freedom of information (FOI) requests have been used to reveal that the total amounts allocated to police forces from

the UKFPU for funding FBOs are as much as £963,100 each year (Home Office, 2013). The funding process entails police forces bidding for an amount which is based on the number of FBOs they are aiming to issue that season. The process is monitored and funds paid depending on how many FBOs are issued (Home Office, 2013). Further funding is available for operations connected to achieving FBOs, such as post-match investigations.

Despite the abundance of academic research into FBOs, there has been very little consideration of how police forces are funded by the UKFPU. Hopkins (2014) conducted a study using qualitative interviews with police officers to examine how they apply for FBOs, and their utilisation of UKFPU funding. Hopkins found that police officers construct narratives that are favourable towards the use of FBOs, but that they are inconsistent in their application of FBO legislation. This supports previous research suggesting that there is variability across police forces in how FBOs are administered (Pearson, 2005, James & Pearson, 2006). Hopkins suggests that there is pressure on police officers to achieve targets and therefore obtain more FBOs, as this generates a source of revenue for police forces from UKFPU funding. As a result, he terms the police use of FBOs as a ‘banning order industry’ (Hopkins, 2014). Bevan & Hood (2006) highlight concerns that the implementation of targets across the public sector will lead to individuals altering their working practices to meet these targets. In a policing context, this target driven culture was particularly prevalent under the New Labour government, and can have a negative effect on both the public and police officers (Guilfoyle, 2013, pp. 148-149). Although the process of the UKFPU funding FBO applications predates austerity measures, given Hopkins’ findings, police forces could actively seek FBO funding to help offset the impact of austerity. This paper provides an updated assessment of UKFPU funding for FBOs in the context of the impacts of austerity.

Methods

The primary data for this research was obtained through semi-structured interviews with six current DFOs and one recently retired DFO who all had responsibility for policing of football clubs within their force area. Their combined remits covered five police areas and 14 clubs across England and Wales, as well as different geographical force types with varying levels of workload in terms of the number of arrests that were linked to their football clubs (see table 1).

Police force area	Participant	Number of clubs and leagues	Average arrests per season (last 4 seasons)
Police force 1 Smaller rural force	DFO 1 DFO 2	2 clubs in League 2	3
Police force 2 Large urban force	DFO 3	1 club in Premier League 1 club in Football Conference	28
Police force 3 Medium sized semi-rural force with large urban areas	DFO 4 DFO 5	1 club in Premier League 1 club in League 1 2 clubs in Football Conference	57
Police force 4 Large semi-rural force with large urban areas	DFO 6	2 clubs in League 1	14
Police force 5 Large urban force	DFO 7	1 club in Premier League 3 clubs in Championship 2 clubs in League 1	197

Table 1 – representation of clubs and leagues by participants

Due to the nature of the topic, participants were anonymised and given a label of DFO 1-7. In addition to this, the names of football clubs, police forces and any other sensitive data have been redacted from the research. The interviews principally sought to seek the views of DFOs on the following topics: attitudes towards FBOs; views on the UKFPU funding, how they utilised it and how this manifested in their practice of obtaining FBOs; and the impact of austerity on football policing. The interviews with the DFOs typically lasted around 30 minutes, were digitally recorded, and transcriptions created prior to a coding process which allowed for an interpretation of issues that were common to all the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The Home Office collate data annually on the number of football related arrests and FBOs issued, which was reviewed as part of this research (see figure 1). This provided an indication of trends in the number of arrests and FBOs since the year 2000. In addition to this, the amount of funding provided by the UKFPU to police forces was sought. This information is not publicly available other than through Freedom of Information (FOI) data that has been published on the Home Office website which only shows the funding information up to the 2012/13 season. Therefore, an FOI request to the Home Office was submitted in an attempt to establish the level of funding between the 2013/14 and 2018/19 football seasons, as well as if any funding is provided for activities that are not connected to achieving FBOs. Analysis of the Home Office data is presented in figure 2. FOI requests can be effective in social science research, but the processing costs of the requests may sometimes limit the findings (Walby & Luscombe, 2017).

There are limitations to the study, for instance only 15% of football clubs in the top four tiers of English football, as well as 11% of the 43 police forces in England and Wales are covered by this research. This study however covers more football clubs and is comparable in terms of the number of police forces covered in previous research on the topic by Hopkins (2014). The research population is a particularly hard to reach group and so engaging further participants is problematic. The number of participants in the study and range of police forces and clubs can be seen as representative of the research population with the results being extrapolated more widely, however with caution as there are a number of views from DFOs that the study was unable to capture. As the participants were police officers, their narrative is generally favourable towards policing in general. Further research could consider narratives from supporters who have been banned or fan groups, such as the Football Supporters Federation.

Results and Discussion

Austerity and Football Policing

According to the participants, austerity was found to have impacted football policing, as well as an indirect impact on football clubs. There were clear issues about the availability of resources to be present at football matches, and police forces deferring low level offending to football clubs to reduce their workload.

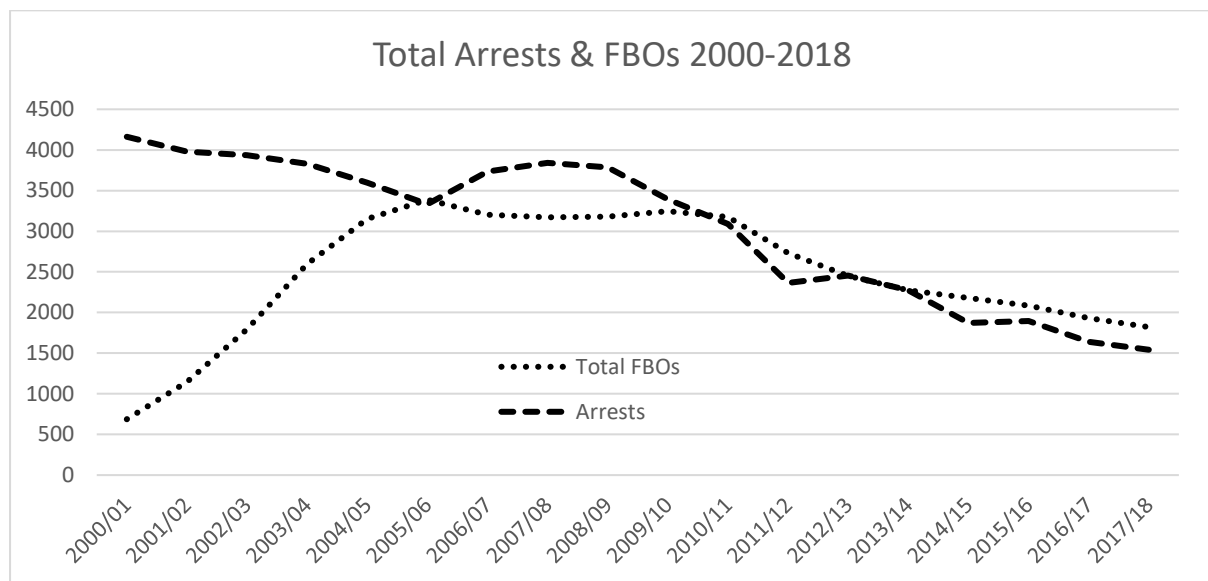


Figure 1 – Football related arrests and FBOs from 2000/01 to 2017/18 seasons (data source – Home Office)

Figure 1 shows that there has been a steady decrease in the number of arrests and FBOs since the start of austerity measures in 2010. An explanation for the reduction in arrests could be that less disorder is occurring, however football arrest figures can be regarded as an unreliable indicator of overall disorder levels (Frosdick & Marsh, 2005, p. 37). This is in line with a decrease in overall arrest numbers, which are not necessarily indicative of crime trends (Home Office, 2017). Another factor, as suggested by DCC Mark Roberts, is that there are fewer resources working at football matches. Therefore, it is logical to think that there will be fewer arrests, because police numbers can be intrinsically linked to arrest numbers (Bradford, 2011). What is less clear though is how much policing tactics have developed over the last

ten years, adopting a more liaison-based approach as advocated in current literature (Stott, Hoggett & Pearson, 2012, Stott, West & Radburn, 2018, Stott, Pearson & West, 2019). By the nature of adopting an approach that is focused on de-escalation and liaison, a potential by-product would be the reduction in the number of arrests. Further research is required to establish the exact impact of a liaison-based approach on the number of arrests.

The number of FBOs has also decreased steadily each season since 2009/10, which is likely to be the case as a result of fewer arrested individuals who can then be subject to an FBO application following conviction under 14a of the Football Spectators Act 1989. It is worth noting that in the data released by the Home Office there is no distinction between the number of FBOs obtained via the 14a or 14b method. This limits the understanding that can be derived from this data, as a greater number of 14b FBOs would indicate police proactivity as opposed to reacting to criminal offences. Nevertheless, there are a number of possible explanations for the reduction in the number of FBOs. This could be because there is less football disorder, although those involved in football policing such as DCC Mark Roberts are suggesting the opposite. It could be because of fewer resources being deployed to football matches, or improved policing methods, such as a liaison-based approach, or a change in the attitudes of police officers that Hopkins (2014) suggested spoke favourably about FBOs.

There were clear issues over resourcing, with DFOs commenting that they would like to have extra police officers available at matches, for example:

“I struggle for spotters. Morale on area is very low. Officer numbers are very low, so I get push back from area commanders saying no you can’t have them.” (DFO 6)

Spotters play a key role in the policing of football, performing an intelligence gathering role to support evidence for FBOs, as well as liaison with football clubs and supporter groups

(College of Policing, 2018). Whether this could be due to austerity, or a more localised issue around resourcing there are consequences of police forces limiting the use of spotters, including potential reductions in the number of arrests and subsequent FBOs. Their absence can lead to a lack of intelligence and insufficient evidence for pursuing FBOs, which may provide a further explanation as to why there has been a reduction in the number of FBOs overall. This reduction in resources policing football was suggested as a nationwide problem by DFO 6, which, if the case, may explain why DCC Mark Roberts is stating that the amount of disorder is increasing even if the arrest and FBO figures do not indicate this. Further research and analysis of police deployments is required to understand this issue in more detail. A further issue in the reduction of spotters deployed to fixtures is the potential for early intervention in low-level criminality and anti-social behaviour, something that DFO6 had appeared successful at:

“What we’re doing is preventing it, putting spotters in the right location...so look at the disorder figures, what have we had?” (DFO6)

This may explain the reluctance DFO6 is experiencing in having spotters released for football deployments when area commanders decide that there is no longer a significant threat and risk. This should be cautioned against for police forces however, because research suggests that a liaison-based approach may reduce disorder (Stott, Hoggett & Pearson, 2012, Stott, West & Radburn, 2018, Stott, Pearson & West, 2019). Once disorder levels are low, maintaining a consistent police presence at fixtures may help to prevent disorder from reoccurring.

Austerity was not reported by DFO7 as having such a profound impact on police force 5 in this study, a large urban police force. The volume of work was significant enough that they were able to self-fund a dedicated banning order officer from their UKFPU funding.

However, it is worth noting that in police force 5 there were more football clubs and higher rates of football related criminality and public order issues on a routine basis that merited police resources being utilised for football policing. This approach of resources being allocated based on threat and risk is in line with the previous literature by den Heyer (2014) and Loveday (2015) which suggests that in times of austerity, resource allocation becomes a key consideration.

Police forces can charge football clubs for providing resources for the policing of matches (s.25 Police Act 1996). However, the 2017 legal case of Ipswich Town FC v Suffolk Police resulted in a narrowing of resources that the police are allowed to charge for, by only being able to cost recover resources that are deployed within the footprint of the stadium (National Police Chiefs' Council, 2018). Although there is variability to this due to stadia design, this would usually mean inside the actual stadium itself. This research found that alongside the broader impacts of austerity there may also be a reduction in police funding of football operations arising from the Ipswich Town ruling on cost recovery for policing football. This was reflected in some of the comments by the DFOs in the study:

“In an ideal world I would make the clubs more responsible for the behaviour of their fans... [the clubs] very much have an attitude, no disorder in our ground” (DFO 1)

“Not our footprint not our problem.” (DFO 2)

“And literally wipe their hands with it, and it’s a constant battle trying to charge.” (DFO 1)

“Less resources at all of their fixtures, it’s the norm now. There’s a lot less, with the Ipswich ruling in relation to SPS [Special Police services] what we can and can’t charge for, you’ve got to be so careful now.” (DFO 6)

This lack of police resources deployed to football fixtures is not just a local problem. DCC Mark Roberts, the national strategic lead for football policing, notes that: ‘we’re not able to adequately cover the costs of putting officers into the grounds and that’s having an impact on our ability to make sure people stay safe’ (Sky Sports News, 2019). The combination of

austerity measures and football clubs paying less to police forces for Special Police Services may result in the effect of fewer officers being in a position to make arrests, gather evidence in support of FBOs and perform a liaison role with supporters. Further research is required to understand exactly how Special Police Services, and in particular the latest Ipswich ruling impacts on football policing operations.

A further impact of austerity is the police deferring low-level offences to the football clubs, as opposed to dealing with it themselves, as identified by DFO 3:

“[Speaking about a youth who had been caught with pyrotechnics at a fixture] The police budgets are going to get tighter and tighter...So we had a flare...got him, bang to rights, ‘oh we’re not going to deal with him because he’s 15, you can deal with him’”. (DFO 3)

This is indicative of the police service having to ‘screen out’ and not investigate a greater number of crimes, as is the national trend. If the police are deferring this sort of work to football clubs on a wider scale, then it is likely to mean there are fewer arrests and subsequently fewer FBOs. A football club managing an intervention with an individual can still provide compelling evidence as part of a 14b FBO application at a later date if the individual does not subsequently moderate their behaviour. However, the impact of austerity here may actually result in a positive change in helping people to desist from criminal behaviour before it escalates further. Despite the concerns from Stott, Pearson & West (2019) about clubs issuing stadium bans for low level offending, it could be beneficial as it may lead to less criminalisation, particularly for young offenders, and the intervention may reduce the likelihood of reoffending (Robinson, 2014, p. 217, Case & Haines, 2015, p. 110). In order for this to be an effective option, there needs to be suitable support in place for the football clubs to manage these interventions, particularly from the football authorities. The police also need to be engaged with this process and supportive towards clubs, without necessarily taking

ownership, as previous research suggests that frequent police contact can have the effect of amplifying the offending behaviour (Lemert, 1951; Wiley et al., 2013). When the DFOs were posed questions around additional work they would like to do, they spoke about a desire to have effective partnership working with football clubs, but there were frustrations that they did not necessarily have the time and resources to devote to this:

“The time to be able to work with our clubs in the community would be ideal”.
(DFO 5)

However, it was evident that not all football clubs were fully engaged in the process of partnership working:

“In an ideal world I would make the clubs more responsible for the behaviour of their fans...<football club> over the years have not wanted to know”. (DFO 1)

UKFPU Funding

The Home Office do not publicly release data on the amount of funding that the UKFPU provide to police forces each season, so an FOI request was submitted to the Home Office to establish the amount of funding provided from the 2013/14 season onwards. This request was rejected by the Home Office due to cost grounds, this is despite it being identical to a previous request that is published on the Home Office website. This is particularly concerning, as public money is being utilised for the pursuance of FBOs without details of the level of funds being readily made available to the public. It also means that this study has been unable to establish the long-term trend in UKFPU funding, which one would expect to have decreased with austerity and in line with a reduction of the number of FBOs. The only other available public data is a parliamentary written question response where policing minister Nick Hurd states that £521,000 of funding is available to the UKFPU for FBOs during the 2019/20 football season (UK Parliament, 2019). Records from the 2008/09 to 2012/13 seasons are displayed on the Home Office website, following the submission of a

separate FOI request from an unknown source (Home Office, 2013). These amounts are displayed in figure 2.

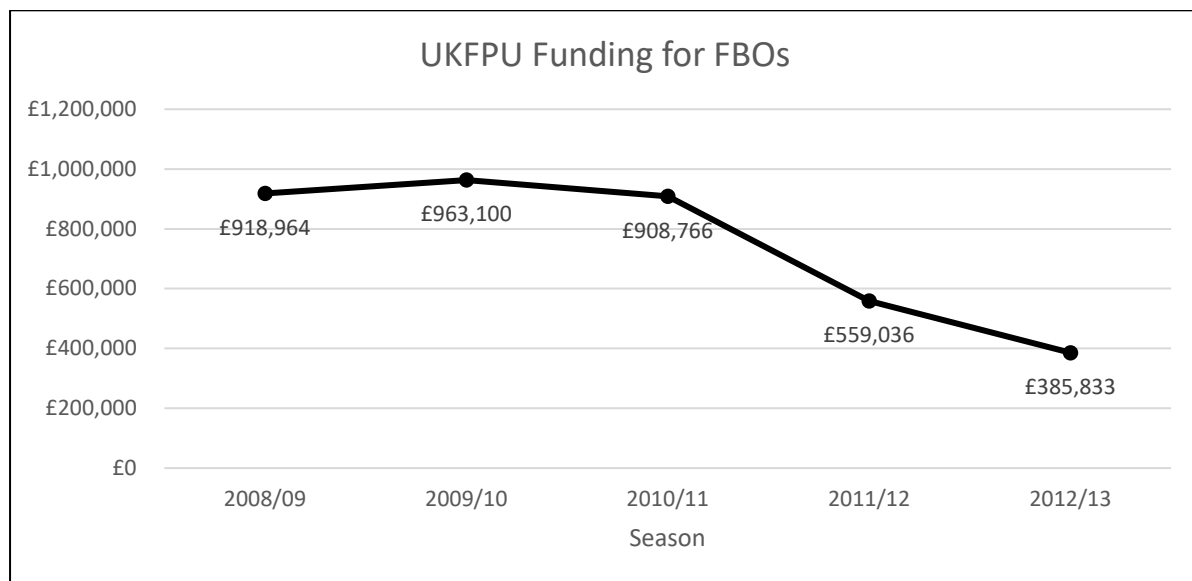


Figure 2: UKFPU funding to police forces for FBOs (data source – Home Office)

The data shows that the amount of funding for FBOs decreased steeply since the introduction of austerity measures in 2010, which correlates with the reduction in the total number of FBOs over the same period. The comments above from Nick Hurd that £521,000 is available for FBOs in the 2019/20 season would suggest that the overall UKFPU funding levels have remained relatively constant since the 2012/13 season. The reasons for overall decrease can only be speculated on, but it is possible that due to austerity this has been dictated by the Home Office, as most departments will have received a reduced budget. It could also be due to a reduction in demand from police forces, which is why there are now fewer FBOs. If the Home Office had provided the requested FOI data, then there could be more certainty around the amount of funding, even if it did not indicate causality of any changes. What is concerning though, is that the Home Office would not clarify in their response if any funding is used this for other initiatives which look to reduce and prevent disorder instead of FBOs.

In contrast to the assertions of Hopkins (2014) that UKFPU funding of FBOs creates a target driven culture, some of the participants were clear that they would not look to issue FBOs unnecessarily, and were highly selective about their use:

“So, if we’ve got a trivial offence, but they’ve never been in trouble before and we’ve managed to get them in front of a court we wouldn’t apply for a banning order because we know we wouldn’t get one. We wouldn’t want to dilute the effect”. (*DFO 1*)

The position taken by DFO 1 could be seen as more in line with the ‘spirit of the legislation’ and may not be representative of all DFOs. This is particularly relevant when there is the additional pressure of UKFPU funding available, and pressure from supervisors to meet targets, something that was prevalent in this study:

“Do you think the police would be more inclined to give him an FBO because there is potentially some funding that might go into that, does that blur things for the police?” (*Researcher*)

“[laughs] Absolutely there is... The colleagues I worked with would totally agree with me... I would never give someone a banning order just because we were getting funding. Would it make me look a bit deeper into them to see if I can find more? Absolutely!” (*DFO 3*)

In contrast, the comments from DFO 3 provides support for the narrative from Hopkins (2014) that the issue of UKFPU funding may unduly influence police officers to apply for FBOs more routinely. DFO 3 goes on to discuss why this may be the case:

“When I go into the police station, it’d be: ‘you need to ban him’, and you were getting voices that were telling you that is what you’ve got to do. And obviously the skippers were ‘there’s three grand, I want him banned’.” (*DFO 3*)

Clearly, DFO 3 identifies there is pressure from immediate colleagues, as well as supervisors to use FBOs. This is commonplace in policing when performance is measured by the use of targets (Bevan & Hood, 2006; Guilfoyle, 2013, p. 143). However, the experiences of other DFOs in the study did not correspond with those of DFO 3:

“The UKFPU thing about funding annoys me. Why should we get funding for banning people? You get forces that get thousands and thousands of pounds for

banning people, why aren't we being rewarded for preventing disorder, for working with the youth and clubs?" (DFO 6)

"[Speaking about their youth project] It's very against the Home Office drive to ban anyone because they don't come out with a banning order, so we don't get funding for it. It's our own pride in not criminalising that generation, it's about education rather than punishment...we spoke twice with the UKFPU saying this in our view is a better way of doing it, and the results are building year on year...so, there is interest from them, but at the moment it is all self-funded." (DFO 7)

The approaches of both DFO 6 and DFO 7 do not support the assertion of Hopkins (2014), and demonstrate a clear desire to divert offenders and only use criminalisation as a last resort. It may suggest that there has been a change in attitudes in football policing since previous research was conducted, and an appropriate future direction could be the utilisation of UKFPU funding to support projects aimed at diversion. The difficulty (and potential resistance to this) could be the inability to measure and thus quantify police performance in this area leading to targets manifesting themselves in another guise (Guilfoyle, 2013, p. 141). Whilst the police service is operating in austere times, there is the temptation for police officers to seek quantifiable solutions that reinforce the need for their own role (Fielding, 2018, p. 72), as opposed to solutions that may be best for the given circumstance. In essence, FBOs can be used as a means of DFOs demonstrating they are fulfilling their role and trying to reduce disorder. The absence of disorder from football matches may be a more effective way of DFOs demonstrating performance, but naturally there may be concerns that if there is no football disorder then senior staff may look to reallocate resources to more problematic crime areas. By ensuring that DFOs are free from these competing pressures, they may be in a better position to focus on preventative work.

Conclusion and Recommendations

A key finding from this study is that the austerity measures that were introduced in 2010 have manifested in a reduction in the number of resources being deployed to football matches. This is of great concern, as football policing does not appear to be provided with sufficient resources to adopt a liaison-based approach, as advocated by contemporary research (Stott, West & Radburn, 2018; Stott, Pearson & West, 2019). DFOs were reporting issues of being unable to allocate police spotters to football matches sufficiently, which is at odds with national guidance. Football policing operations appear to be receiving decreasing funding levels from Special Police Services following the Ipswich Town ruling, which requires further research to establish the national impact. Official data shows that there are fewer arrests at football matches over the past few seasons, which is likely to be a key factor in the reduction in the number of FBOs being issued. It is also apparent that low level offending is being deferred to football clubs to deal with in some instances, which is in line with police forces giving less attention to minor criminality more broadly.

UKFPU funding appears to have decreased since the introduction of austerity measures in 2010, but the absence of up to date Home Office data in the public domain prevents a more detailed analysis of how this funding is utilised. Potential causes of a decrease in funding could be a result of austerity with fewer police resources allocated to football policing. Alternatively, this could be because of changing police officer approaches to dealing with FBOs. A key finding of the study was that football policing appears to be moving away from the target driven football banning order industry due to UKFPU funding as suggested by Hopkins (2014). There is still evidence that supports the work of Hopkins (2014), by DFOs being pressured by colleagues and supervisors into obtaining FBOs in order to achieve funding, but it is now not perhaps the target driven industry it once may have been. The

majority of DFOs in this study preferred to adopt a more measured approach with a focus on preventing disorder rather than criminalisation and the use of FBOs as a means of securing funding. Some spoke of the desire for UKFPU funding to be more readily utilised for other projects, such as youth interventions. The UKFPU and NPCC need to be using an evidence-based approach (now commonplace in policing) to address football disorder by utilising funding for intervention-based projects and not defaulting to simplistic and measurable FBO funding. A limitation of this study is that a relatively small sample has been used, so further research to establish the effectiveness of an intervention-based approach is required, as this has the potential to be a more suitable method of policing football, which can be replicated nationally, as well as across Europe.

This research makes some recommendations, which are based on the findings from this study, and will assist the progression of football policing in England and Wales:

- The exact impact of the Ipswich town ruling on football policing is still unclear and requires further research to establish this.
- Football clubs dealing with low level offending may prove to be effective, particularly for youth offenders with a short club ban sending an appropriate message, but this requires further research. If police forces are going to engage in this practice, there still needs to be oversight and recording of relevant offences with a community disposal to ensure that there is a structured partnership working between police forces and football clubs.
- Police forces need to allocate sufficient funding and resources for football policing. This includes ensuring that spotters are allocated to matches as per national guidance, albeit with a common sense approach. This will allow for early intervention

opportunities for preventing disorder, as well as evidence gathering to support appropriate FBOs at court.

- The UKFPU, using an evidence-based approach, needs to reconsider how it manages the funding that it provides to police forces. Any funding in times of austerity is likely to be readily welcomed by police forces, but this should be provided for a wider array of policing activities and not just FBOs. This will allow DFOs to focus on preventing disorder, utilising evidence-based practice and not over-relying on FBOs as a solution to football hooliganism or as a means of meeting targets.

Police forces need to consider innovative new ideas for football policing which focus on preventing disorder by engaging with supporters. They need to be allowed the time, resources and funding in order to achieve this, which are scarce commodities in times of austerity.

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