Reducing Harm in Drinking Environments

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Introduction

• Over 65,000 pubs and nightclubs in UK
• Benefits – employment, regeneration, relaxation, socialising, exercise
• But, drinking environments key locations for:
  – Drunkenness
  – Drug use
  – Violence
  – Sexual assault
  – Accidents
  – Drink driving
  – Anti-social behaviour
Alcohol and Harm in Nightlife

- Average alcohol use in a night out in NW England:
  - Females 16 units
  - Males 25 units \( (1 \text{ bottle wine} = 9 \text{ units}) \)
- 1 in 3 have been too drunk to walk in last 12 months
- Nationally, 1 in 5 violent assaults occur in or around pubs and clubs
- Weekend nights, alcohol involved in:
  - 63% driver & 80% pedestrian deaths
  - 70% Emergency Department cases

Current Issues

- Alcohol price discrepancy
  - On and off license
- Preloading
  - Liverpool
  - Half nightlife users preload
  - Average 7 units
  - Already intoxicated
  - Drink greater quantities
  - Greater risk of violence
- Licensing Act 2003
  - Later nights
  - Vast majority of late night drinkers are drunk

Blood alcohol concentration by expected home time
NW England nightlife users

Hughes et al, 2008
Bellis et al, 2010
The role of licensed premises

- High densities of pubs and clubs linked to increased harm
- The way bars are managed, operated and designed is critical
  - prevent or increase problems
- Small number of badly managed premises can account for large proportion of crime
- E.g. Blackpool
  - 10 premises accounted for over half of all violent crime in bars
Environment and Management

• Factors linked to higher drunkennes, violence, crime:
  • Poor cleanliness, shabby décor
  • Crowding, poor ventilation, lack of seating, loud noise
  • Low decorum expectancies (e.g. Drunkenness..)
  • Cheap drinks promotions
  • Aggressive or ineffective staff

• Reducing harm a combination of:
  • Creating safer environments *(Inside and outside bars)*
  • Reducing risk behaviours

• Need to avoid:
  • Creating environments where it is safe to get very drunk
  • Pushing risky and violent drinkers into unmanaged environments
Systematic review of effective approaches

- Conducted as part of the European *Focus on Alcohol Safe Environments* (FASE) project
- Aim was to develop a better understanding of measures that can be implemented locally to reduce alcohol-related harm in drinking environments.
- Comprehensive review of the international literature published since 1990
  - Interventions designed to reduce harm associated with alcohol consumption and delivered in drinking environments
  - Intervention studies using any research design were included
  - Impact on a wide range of alcohol-related harms
Included studies

- Training programmes for servers and managers: 7 studies
- Interventions delivered in drinking environments: 5 studies
- Policing and enforcement: 8 studies
- Reducing underage access to alcohol: 7 studies
- Multicomponent community-based programmes: 7 studies
Evidence summary

• Responsible server and staff training interventions can increase staff knowledge about alcohol and improve serving practices
  • Wider effects on alcohol-related harm are generally small, except where training is made mandatory

• There is limited evidence to support the effectiveness of standalone interventions, such as designated driver programmes
Evidence summary

- There is no evidence to support the placement of age verification devices as a standalone method of reducing underage sales.
  - Combined training and police enforcement has shown some success, but enforcement needs to be applied regularly to maintain its effects
- Evidence for the effectiveness of policing and enforcement approaches are mixed.
  - Some studies have demonstrated increases in alcohol-related harm following policing and enforcement activity, but this may be due to better detection and reporting of problems
  - Targeted enforcement activity in high risk environments has been shown to be a more effective strategy than street policing
Evidence summary

- Multicomponent programmes implemented through strong partnership working at a community level provide the clearest evidence of effectiveness
  - Studies of these programmes have demonstrated reductions in alcohol consumption, drink driving, road traffic accidents, violence and underage drinking.
- The *Stockholm Prevents Alcohol and Drug Problems* (STAD) project in Sweden combined community mobilisation with responsible beverage service training and stricter enforcement of alcohol laws
  - Associated with significant reductions in violent crime
  - €39 saved for every €1 invested in the programme
Conclusions

• Findings of the review show that community-based, multicomponent programmes can reduce alcohol-related harm in drinking environments.

• Differences in behavioural, environmental and cultural factors across drinking environments moderate intervention effectiveness.
  • Effective approaches need to be adapted, implemented and subject to rigorous evaluation in other settings.

• Effective approaches need to be sustainable, which requires a commitment to public health from a range of agencies responsible for safety in drinking environments.
Thank You

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