

Getting drunk safely? Night-life policy in the UK and its public health consequences

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Abstract

AbstractIssues. Pubs, bars and nightclubs are central features of recreational night-life in the towns and cities of many countries. The last two decades have seen UK towns and cities regenerated through the provision of night-life environments aimed at servicing youth-focused monocultures typified by heavy drinking, loud music and dancing. Such changes in night-life settings have created major problems with management of alcohol-related violence.**Approach.**We examine what policies and interventions have been implemented to reduce violence in public night-life environments. We critically appraise the outcomes of such measures and whether they simply create environments in which it appears safe for people to routinely get drunk while displacing violence and adding to health and social problems elsewhere.**Key Findings/Implications.**A variety of initiatives have been put in place to reduce violence and alcohol-related harm in night-time environments. These include changes to licensing laws, high profile policing, late night transport security, street lighting and closed circuit television camera networks. In some circumstances, the evidence for their effectiveness in containing night-life violence is relatively good. However, such approaches can also reduce incentives to stay sober, potentially act as a mechanism for displacing violence into surrounding areas, and divert public monies to city centre drinking environments at the expense of services in local communities.**Conclusion.**We argue that a public health approach to night-life is required which addresses drunkenness rather than pandering to the economic benefits of excessive alcohol use and managing any violence that is on public display.

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