

Reducing violence in the night-time economy

Effective interventions for tackling alcohol-related violence.

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4 mins read

Targeting locations or situations with a high risk of violence generally, such as the night-time economy, is likely to also have an impact on violence against women and girls (VAWG). The following initiatives have been shown to be effective in tackling alcohol-related violence.

Increased police presence

Targeted police enforcement

Evidence from a systematic review (McGuire and others, 2020) suggests that police measures that target specific licensed premises with violence problems in collaboration with local agencies are more effective at reducing alcohol-related violence than measures that do not include collaboration. For example, see the [**TASC project**](#).

Untargeted measures that heighten officer presence in and around licensed premises, as well as increased monitoring of licence law violations, in general have a mixed impact on police-recorded assaults and violence.

- Strong evidence

Multi-level community interventions

Evidence from a recent systematic review (McGuire and others, 2020; Jones and others, 2011) suggests that the most effective programmes involved engagement with stakeholders – for example, license holders – combined with enforcement where the stakeholders share the same objectives as the police.

The types of components included stricter enforcement of licensing laws, community information campaigns, training for bar staff and door staff, and police engagement of licensees in considering aspects of bar management that can reduce risks. Research includes a three-year evaluation

across Europe of the Stockholm Prevents Alcohol and Drug Problems (STAD) model (Quigg and others, 2019), which includes multi-agency planning, community mobilisation, strengthened law enforcement and responsible beverage service training (Braun and others, 2000).

The evaluation focused implementation of the STAD approach in three drinking environments – licensed drinking environments (nightlife, festivals and sports events), home drinking and public drinking environments (streets, parks and beaches). It found that there is potential for the effective transfer of the model to a different drinking setting, with the pilot interventions associated with addressing factors that promote the harmful use of alcohol.

Community mobilisation was found to be critical for successful development and implementation of the interventions. For a discussion of how to effectively engage communities, see the article by Ure and others (2021), [**How can communities influence alcohol licensing at a local level?**](#)

- Strong evidence

Project Vigilant

A combination of increased uniformed and non-uniformed officers focused on perpetrators of VAWG in the night-time economy was initially piloted by Thames Valley Police and is currently being evaluated.

[**Read the full description of the project.**](#)

- Untested

Citizen patrols

‘Citizen patrols’ is a generic term that refers to a range of different models of the public voluntarily carrying out patrols in local areas. The theory is that the presence of guardians could help to identify and support vulnerable individuals and deter perpetrators.

Evidence of their effectiveness in reducing VAWG is currently limited. Research suggests that alcohol consumption is a predictor of target-selection in cases of unwanted sexual attention (Kavanaugh, 2013).

Models include the following.

Street pastors

Street pastors are church-run and provide outreach service to users of the night-time economy, often in partnership with the police. Research on street pastors and other citizen patrol models has tended to focus on implementation issues, so their effectiveness in reducing crime overall is unknown, although there is some limited evidence that they improve perceptions of safety (Swann and others, 2015).

- Limited evidence

Drinkaware Crew

The Drinkaware Crew are specially trained staff who work in pubs, bars and clubs to reduce drunken anti-social behaviour among those between 18 and 24 years old. They are employed by venues to identify vulnerable individuals within the venue(s) and promote a positive atmosphere.

An evaluation of the Drinkaware Crew initiative and a version adapted to a music festival context suggests that the impact did not reduce crime within the venues studied (Garius and others, 2020). However, there were limitations with the data, as 'lower-level' sexual crime is especially subject to under-reporting and recording practices (Office for National Statistics, 2017). It was not possible to draw final conclusions in relation to the impact of the Drinkaware Crew initiative, but the potential for impact was evident.

- Limited evidence

Shomrim

Other examples of uniformed patrols carried out voluntarily by citizens that work in partnership with the police include [Shomrim in Northwest London](#).

- Untested

Other night-time economy interventions

Bar staff training

While evaluations have shown no evidence of bar staff training having an impact on responsible serving or on alcohol consumption (Jones and others, 2011), the 'Safer bars' scheme (Graham and others, 2004) found that staff training using the three-hour training (see Braun and others, 2000) to prevent and de-escalate bar-room violence, as well as identifying environmental risk factors, had a modest effect on reducing aggression. However, the effect was lower when there was a high turnover of managers and of door and security staff.

- Moderate evidence

Publicity campaigns

Many publicity campaigns to reduce unwanted sexual behaviour and sexual violence in the night-time economy have been aimed at giving safety messages to women to reduce their risk and have been criticised as putting the responsibility for sexual violence purely onto women (Carline and others, 2017).

There are some examples of campaigns targeted at men and boys, such as the 2008 Rape Crisis Scotland outdoor publicity campaign, '**This is not an invitation to rape me**'. While an evaluation found it had good awareness, there is no evaluation of its impact on attitudes or behaviours.

In addition, the recent Police Scotland campaign '**Don't be that guy**' aims to reduce rape, serious sexual assault and harassment by having frank conversations with men about male sexual entitlement.

- Untested

Tags

Violence against women and girls