

10.9 Police and licensees working together curb violent incidents in Cardiff

Findings A [major project in Cardiff](#) will inform attempts elsewhere to control violence and disorder related to licensed premises.

Led by police, from June 2000 the multi-agency TASC project sought to prevent alcohol-related violence and disorder in Cardiff's main nighttime entertainment areas. A continually updated database of incidents was used to target police action and to persuade high-risk establishments that they had a problem. Another key achievement was the creation of a local licensees' forum which liaised with police and championed the business case for a safer city centre. Also effectively implemented were police visits to advise managers of their obligations and to promote violence prevention. The project enforced an existing obligation to hire only trained and registered door staff and introduced a new training and supervision scheme, though enforcement was undermined by concerns over potential legal challenges. Less successful in the short-term were attempts to influence licensing and planning decisions or to counter the competitive and financial pressures driving the policies of large club or pub chains.

The database revealed a 4% decrease in incidents of alcohol-related violence from the 12 months before the project started to the 12 months after. Routine police records recorded a 2% drop in assaults in the targeted areas but an 8% increase elsewhere in South Wales. Such statistics were used to estimate that over its first year the project prevented 100 violent incidents. If (highly likely) at least one would have been very serious, the initiative paid for itself.

However, unlike the number of alcohol-related incidents, the number of *people* injured and especially those seriously injured rose substantially in the project areas. There may also have been a disproportionate rise in alcohol-related non-violent disorder. That this does not indicate a failing in the TASC strategy is suggested by the micro-examination of particularly problematic premises where it was most actively and comprehensively implemented. Here there were large falls in disorder incidents, injuries, and serious injuries.

In context The potential for increased violence is apparent in the rises in drinking and disorder in the targeted areas, but this potential seems to have been held back by the project. Improved procedures are likely to have inflated the number of incidents and injuries recorded during the project, especially serious injuries, making any

before-after reductions all the more significant. The initiative's impact appears to have been weakened by planning and licensing decisions which increased the density of drinking outlets in the city's major violence hot spot. Excluding this area, the number of violent incidents fell by 15%. Measures which embedded change in management and staff practices and in logistics such as improved taxi access had a lasting impact – not the case for police operations which for a period simply targeted certain streets. Projects such as this can take years to engineer system-wide changes. In particular, well enforced, management-supported bar staff training can reduce excessive drinking and disorder, but training began only as the one-year evaluation was coming to an end.

LINKS Nuggets [9.5](#) [4.13](#) [1.10](#)
Just say no sir, issue 9

Experience elsewhere is that bar staff training, licensee forums which commit members to curtail drunkenness, and regular police checks reminding managers of their obligations, can all reduce violence. Such measures are most effective when backed by the credible and well publicised threat of legal or regulatory action. Where (as in the study area) licensing and planning decisions remain market and economy driven, projects to ameliorate the fallout face an uphill struggle.

Practice implications Cardiff provides a model for other alcohol-based entertainment areas. Regardless of the interventions built upon it, the construction of an incidents database drawing on police and health sources is a key element. These can be used to make the case for intervention, to target those interventions, and to adjust the strategy or motivate participants through 'real-time' evidence of impact. The appointment of senior police officers dedicated to the project created momentum and coherence in the policy and practice areas most susceptible to police influence. Also generally effective was the dual approach of bringing the industry 'on side' by appealing to the professionalism of managers and their staff and developing their expertise, whilst reinforcing the possibility of sanctions. Such projects must, however, be treated as long-term investments with the achievements of earlier stages being used to extend support for the project, which in turn extends its reach and creates extra benefits.

Featured studies Maguire M. *et al.* [Reducing alcohol-related violence and disorder: an evaluation of the 'TASC' project](#). Home Office, 2003. Download from www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/index.htm.

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