

LEICESTER, LEICESTERSHIRE
& RUTLAND

Preventing Serious Violence in the Night Time Economy

VRN Briefing No.9

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Introduction

Each year the Violence Reduction Network produces a Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA) which provides a comprehensive assessment of serious violence across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR). The SNA draws upon local and national data to provide an overview of the nature, extent and geography of serious violence in LLR, along with the profile of perpetrators and victims of serious violence ([7](#)).

A key finding from the Strategic Needs Assessment is that a third of serious violence across LLR is committed during the hours of 22:00 – 04:59. This briefing aims to provide partners with recent data on serious violence which occurs in the night time economy and more specifically, the nature, extent and hotspot locations of this problem.

As the Violence Reduction Network has a particular focus on young people (under 25), the similarities and nuances in the offences committed by under 25 years old and by those over 25 years old will be highlighted throughout this report.

The definition used for the purpose of this briefing report is:



This briefing was produced by the Violence Reduction Network with support from Lewis Rich who conducted research as part of his post-graduate degree at the University of Leicester.

Nature and Extent of Serious Violence in the Night Time Economy

Over the past five years, the volume of offences which took place between 10pm – 5am has increased, leading to a peak in the 2021/22 financial year.

When looking at the nature of serious violence in the night-time economy (NTE), data shows that the majority of offences were within the ‘Assault with Injury’ group and is mostly made up of ABH (actual bodily harm) offences. It should be noted that ABH is the least serious offence within the ‘Assault with Injury’ group and typically involves less serious injury. This is followed by ‘Robbery of Personal Property’ making up almost 10% of offences during these hours.

Specifically for under 25s, the second highest group is ‘Assault with Intent to Cause Serious Harm’ offences which are reported in a greater proportion than seen in the data for all ages, indicating that under 25s are more likely to be involved in a higher-harm offence.

Offence	All ages	Under 25s
Assault with Injury	83.6%	86.5%
Robbery of Personal Property	9.7%	4.8%
Assault with Intent to Cause Serious Harm	5.8%	7.3%
Robbery of Business Property	0.9%	1.4%

Table 1: Proportion of serious violence offences in public places between 2200 – 0459hrs involving all ages and suspect/offenders aged under 25 by offence group (October 2021 – September 2022) across LLR (Source: Leicestershire Police)

Timing of Serious Violence in the Night Time Economy

Month of the Year

The chart below shows the rate of public-place serious violence committed between 22:00-04:59 between September 2019 and September 2022. The data shows each cohort follows a similar trend of peaks and troughs (noting the impact of Covid-19 from March 2020 onwards and the closure of the NTE). Prior to Covid, December 2019 showed the greatest rate of public-place serious violence. Following the easing of lockdown restrictions and the reopening of the NTE, peak months of July, October and December 2021 were identified.

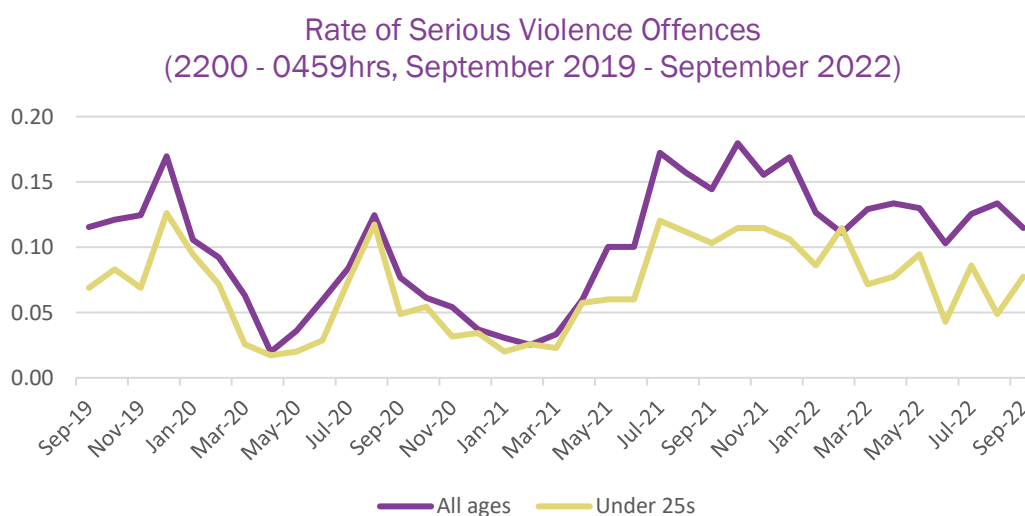


Figure 1: Rate of serious violence offences in public places between 2200 – 0459hrs (September 2019 – September 2022) across LLR (Source: Leicestershire Police)

Day of the Week

For both cohorts, the data shows a greater distribution across the weekend, starting to increase on Friday and peaking on Saturday and Sunday. The combined total of public-place serious violence from Friday to Sunday makes up approximately 70% of the total number of offences committed from Monday to Sunday.

Combining the hour of the day and day of the week, the greatest volume of reported offences occurred between 22:00 Saturday night through to 03:59 Sunday morning.

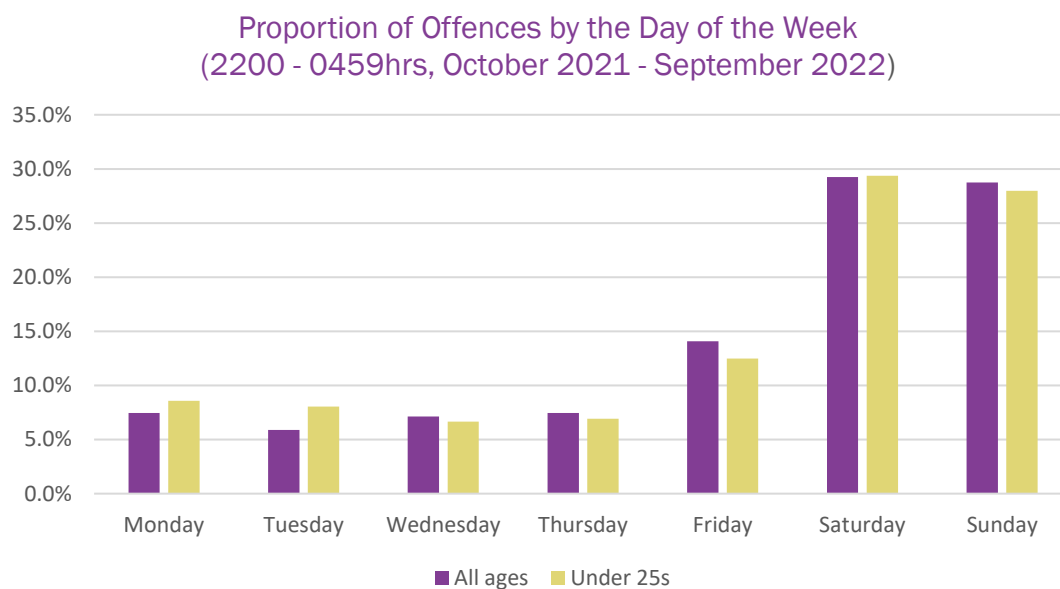


Figure 2: Proportion of serious violence offences in public places between 2200 – 0459hrs involving all ages and suspect/offenders aged under 25 by day of the week (October 2021 – September 2022) across LLR (Source: Leicestershire Police)

We see similar trends within health data:

- A&E attendances for violence-related injuries have a higher rate between the hours of 21:00-21:59.
- Ambulance data reveals a peak between the hours of 22:00-23:59 for assault-related callouts with a general increase in rates between 19:00-00:59.

Distribution of Serious Violence in the Night Time Economy

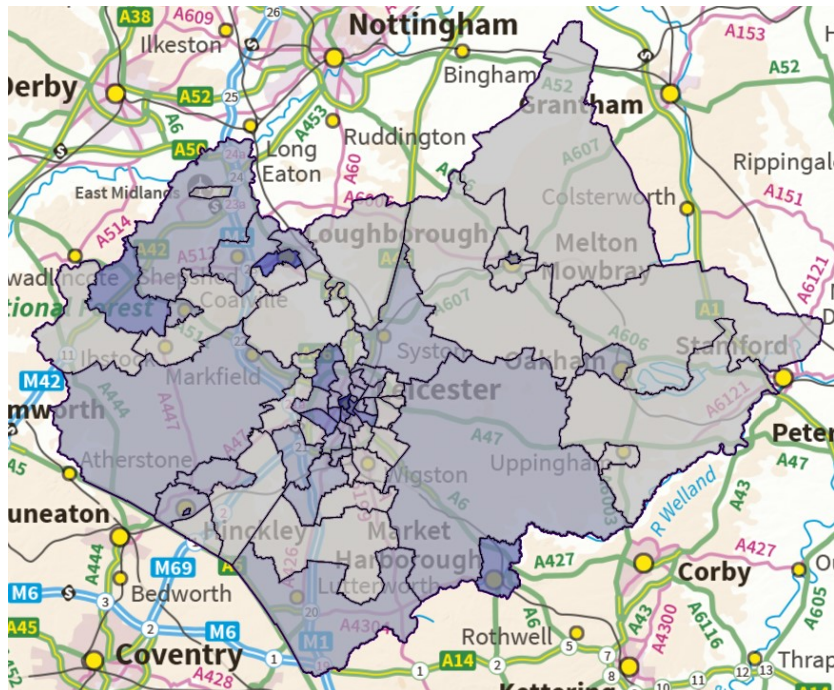
In terms of where serious violence within the NTE is most likely to take place, Central Leicester makes up the majority public-place serious violence with approximately 40% of all offences at this time of day across LLR. This is followed by Charnwood and East Leicester.

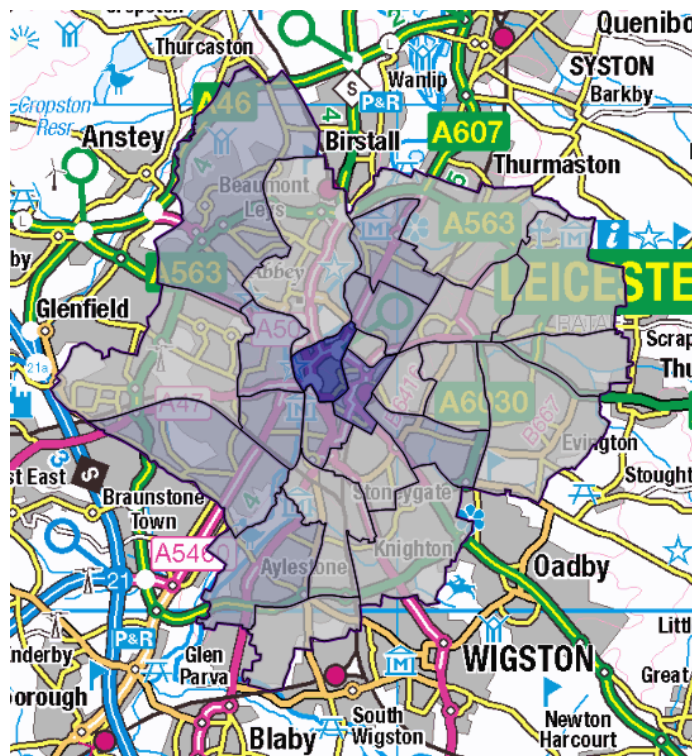
Neighbourhood Policing Area	All Ages	Under 25s
Central Leicester	41.9%	39.5%
Charnwood	13.9%	14.1%
East Leicester	8.6%	9.5%
Hinckley & Blaby	7.4%	7.2%
West Leicester	7.3%	6.9%
North West Leicestershire	6.9%	8.4%
Harborough and Wigston	5.1%	5.2%
Melton and Rutland	4.6%	5.8%
South Leicester	4.2%	3.5%

Table 2: Proportion of serious violence offences in public places between 2200 – 0459hrs involving all ages and suspect/offenders aged under 25 by offence location (October 2021 – September 2022) across LLR (Source: Leicestershire Police)

To aid the targeting of preventative activity, we are providing a series of maps which identify key hotspot locations during the night time economy.

Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland





Profile of Perpetrators and Victims of Serious Violence in the Night Time Economy

Police data reveals that those aged 20-24 are most at risk of being a victim of public-place serious violence across LLR between 2200 – 0459. The next age group most at risk is those aged 15-19. Analysing the individual ages reveals the greatest proportion of victims at this time of day are aged between 18-24 with the peak being 19 years old.

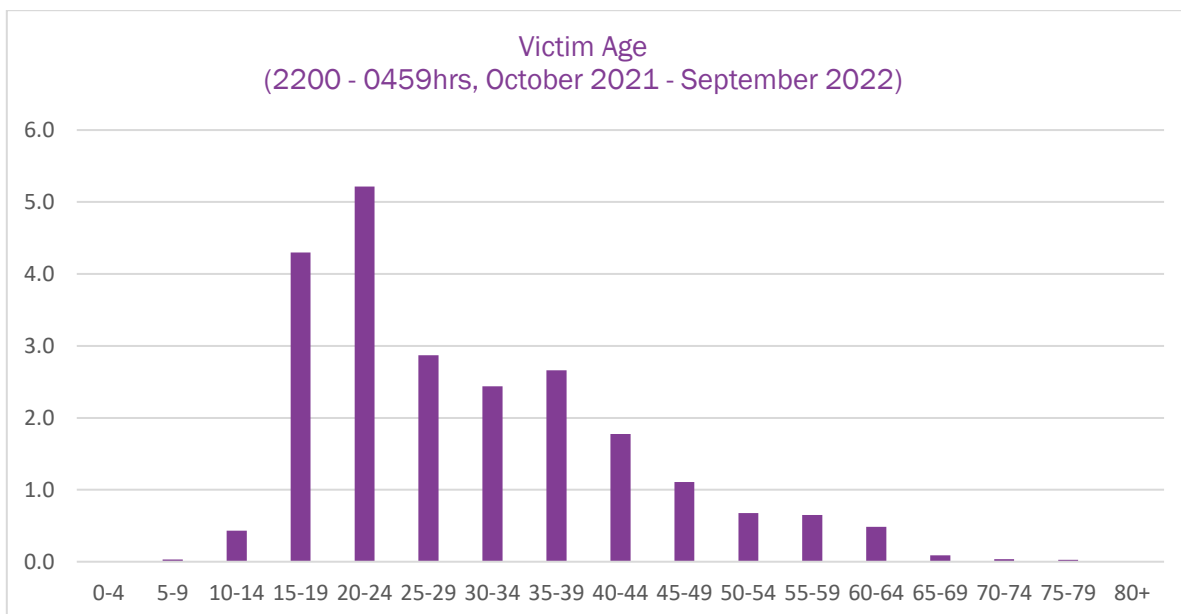


Figure 4: Rate (per 1000 population) of victims by age group (at date of offence) for serious violence offences committed between 2200 – 0459hrs in public places across LLR (October 2021 - September 2022) (Source: Leicestershire Police)

The chart below shows the ages of suspected perpetrators and identifies 20-24 as the peak age group, closely followed by 15-19. Looking at the individual ages, the greatest proportion of suspected perpetrators are aged between 18 – 23.

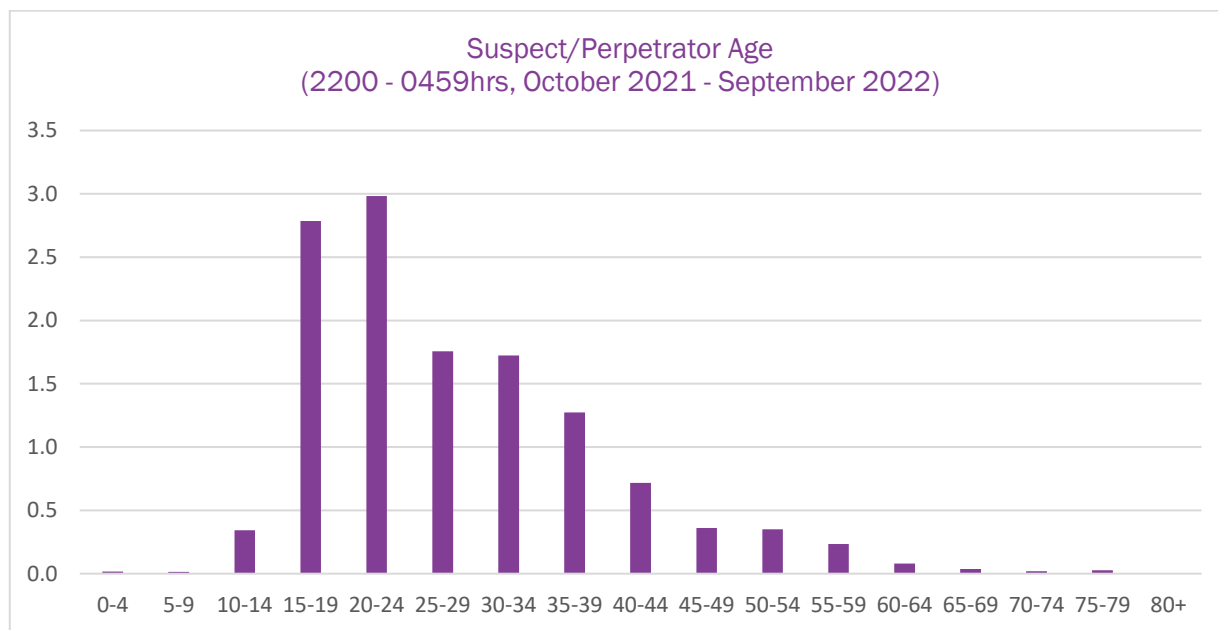


Figure 5: Rate (per 1000 population) of suspected perpetrators by age group (at date of offence) for serious violence offences committed 2200 – 0459hrs in public places across LLR (October 2021 - September 2022) (Source: Leicestershire Police)

The table below shows the proportion of males and females for victims and suspects/offenders. Both cohorts show males making up the majority but a greater proportion of males are committing offences compared to being the victim. It should also be noted that females make up a significant minority of both cohorts. Similar proportions are also noted when looking at individuals aged under 25.

Gender	Victims (All Ages)	Suspects/Offenders (All Ages)
Male	70.0%	83.2%
Female	30.0%	16.8%

Table 3: Proportion of victims and suspected perpetrators under 18 by gender for serious violence offences committed between 2200 – 0459hrs in public places across LLR (October 2021 - September 2022) (Source: Leicestershire Police)

Table 4 below provides a breakdown of the areas where victims and suspects/offenders who are involved in public-place serious violence within the NTE. Both cohorts report similar proportions across each area with Charnwood, East Leicester and West Leicester being in the top three areas. For victims, Charnwood makes up the greatest proportion (17.3%) and for suspects/offenders, the greatest proportion reside in West Leicester (17.7%).

Neighbourhood Policing Area (Residency)	Victims (All Ages)	Suspects/Offenders (All Ages)
Charnwood	17.3%	15.0%
East Leicester	16.2%	16.4%
West Leicester	14.1%	17.7%
Hinckley and Blaby	13.0%	10.7%
Central Leicester	11.1%	8.1%
Harborough and Wigston	8.7%	8.8%
South Leicester	7.3%	7.3%
North West Leicestershire	6.9%	8.8%
Melton and Rutland	5.4%	7.1%

Table 4: Proportion of victims and suspected perpetrators by residency (Neighbourhood Policing Area) for serious violence offences committed between 2200 – 0459hrs in public places across LLR (October 2021 - September 2022) (Source: Leicestershire Police)

Preventing serious violence in the NTE

Implementing high quality, evidenced-based interventions is key to preventing and reducing serious violence. There is a growing body of evidence on effective interventions and approaches for tackling serious violence within the NTE and this section provides an overview of the programmes which show most promise.

The Causes of Serious Violence in the NTE and Interventions which Tackle Them

There is no single cause of serious violence but rather it arises from a complex interplay between a wide range of risk factors operating within and across individual, relationship, community and societal domains. While many of the drivers for serious violence within the NTE overlap with other forms of violence, there are some factors which are specific to the NTE setting.

Graham (2009) developed a situational crime prevention model (see Figure 6) to explain the causes of serious violence within the NTE and to highlight the potential opportunities for prevention activity.

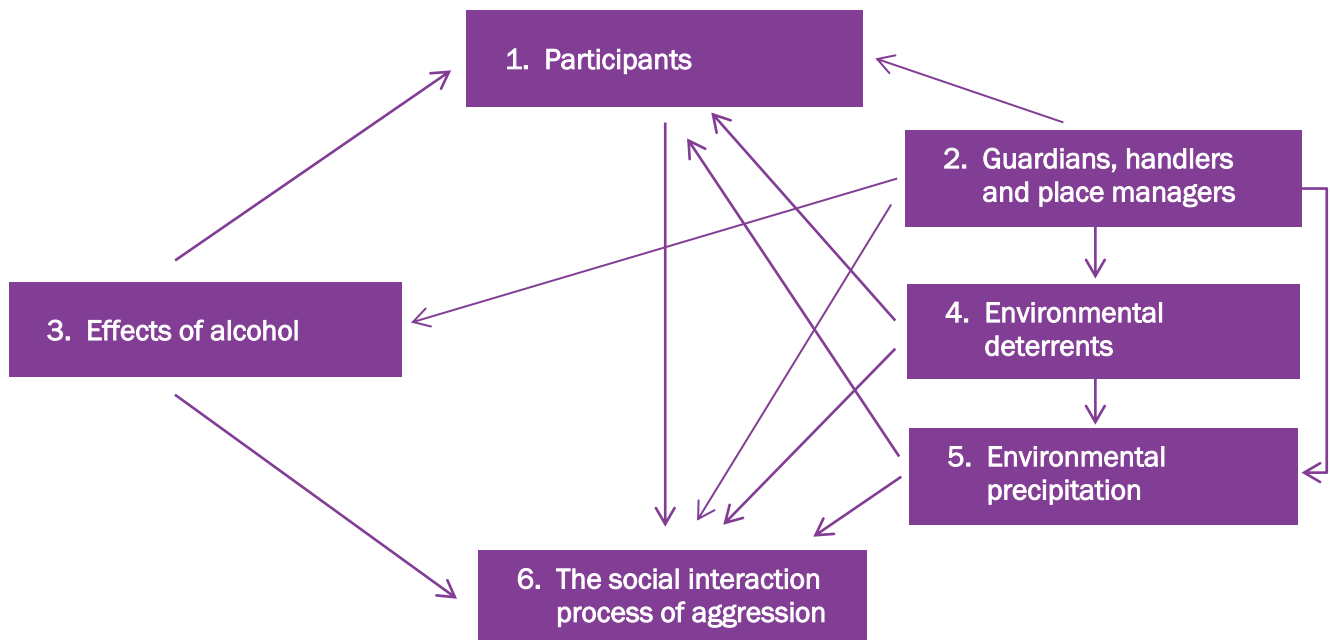


Figure 6: A situational crime prevention model for preventing alcohol-related violence (Graham, 2009)

The following provides a brief overview of the six conditions which can increase the risk of serious violence in the NTE. It also includes a number of evidence-informed approaches and interventions which can mitigate these situational factors and reduce the likelihood of serious violence taking place.

1. Willing and Unwilling Participants

One of key theories which seeks to explain offending is Routine Activities Theory which was developed by Cohen and Felson (1979). This theory argues that crime occurs when there is a coming together of a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of a guardian to prevent a crime occurring.

It could be argued that the NTE as a social context, has a higher proportion of ‘motivated offenders’ with Graham (2009:103) suggesting that there are more parties who are ‘equally willing to engage in aggression’ (Graham, 2009:103). Most often these are young males (as suggested by the data above), who can accept and endorse serious violence within the NTE as a result of ‘male honour, face saving, group loyalty, and fighting for fun’ (Graham and Wells, 2003:560).

2. Guardians, Handlers and Place Managers

As highlighted in the visual above, there are a number of actors within the NTE whose actions or inaction is thought to facilitate or inhibit serious violence. Building on the Routine Activities Theory (Cohen and Felson, 1979), the absence of an external deterring actor can encourage serious violence within the NTE. In the context of NTE, these actors and the potential role they can play in preventing violence are:



Figure 7: Guardians, Handlers and Place Managers – from the Situational Crime Prevention Model for Preventing Alcohol-Related Violence (Graham, 2009)

Research has shown that those licenced premises which do not prioritise crime and violence prevention activity – such as proactive venue maintenance and strict adherence to licensing responsibilities – often have high levels of violence (Burgason *et al.*, 2017).

Effective interventions which build upon this theory include bystander training for staff working within the NTE. For example, a recent evaluation of the ‘Good Night Out Campaign’, which involves the delivery of training to licensed premises, found that staff reported improved knowledge on sexual harassment and violence and confident levels in intervening when they observed incidents.

Find out more about the ‘Good Night Out Campaign’

Similarly, a visible police presence is also thought to have a positive effect on reducing violence, working best when targeting hot spots and specific times, with an optimal period of presence being around 11-15 minutes (Dau *et al.*, 2021).

Hot spots policing

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Locations with higher levels of crime and violence are known as ‘hot spots’. Hot spots tend to form in small locations such as sections of streets or parks, areas around train stations, shops, pubs or clubs. Research shows that 58% of all crime happens in the top 10% of places with the most serious crime. Hot spots policing identifies locations where crime is most concentrated and focuses policing resources and activities on them. There are two main approaches to policing hot spots:

- Problem-oriented policing (POP), which aims to understand the root causes of crime in hot spot locations. It involves designing and implementing tailored interventions to reduce crime.
- Increased police presence, which aims to deter offenders from committing crimes in hot spot areas by increasing either the number of visits or the amount of time police officers spend in the hot spots.

An example of a project which sought to increase uniformed and non-uniformed officers to tackle perpetrators of VAWG in the NTE can be accessed [here](#).

Research suggests that hot spots policing can reduce violence crime by 14%, overall offending by 17%, drug offences by 30% and property crime by 16%.

3. & 4. Environmental Deterrents and Precipitators of Aggression

Another key criminological theory which has helped to explain offending is Situational Crime Prevention (Clarke, 1995) which underpins points 3 and 4 in Graham’s (2009) model. This theory suggests that the ways in which public spaces are designed and managed can exacerbate or inhibit the commission of crime including violence.

Graham (2009) and Wortley (2001) highlight a number of considerations for the design and management of NTE environments which could reduce serious violence:

1. Increasing the perceived risk of being caught and punished
 - Increased or visible CCTV
 - Sufficient numbers of staff to consistently enforce rules
2. Making crime less rewarding
 - Removing or barring those who cause harm

3. Making modifications or effectively managing situations to reduce the potential for conflict (e.g. avoiding bumping, spilled drinks and other unwanted contacts)
 - Limiting opportunities for and dispersing crowding (e.g. at bars, taxi ranks or takeaways)
 - Improving ventilation
 - Reducing vertical drinking
 - Reducing activities which encourage competition (e.g. playing pool)
 - Reducing noise levels
 - Improving street lighting
 - Pedestrianising highstreets
 - Investing in street-based entertainment (e.g. street performers)

5. Alcohol

There are two key ways in which alcohol can act as a driver for serious violence within the NTE:

Pharmacological Effects

While drinking does not result in violence-related behaviour for the majority, it does increase the risk of an individual becoming involved in serious violence in the NTE (Wiesmann *et al.*, 2020). This is often compounded by personal characteristics such as irritability or previous involvement in serious violence (Giancola, 2002; Homel and Tomsen, 1992).

Research has shown that alcohol has a pharmacological effect on ‘cognitive, affective and behavioural functioning’ (Miller *et al.*, 2016:2). The Alcohol Myopia Theory (Steele and Josephs, 1990) argues that alcohol narrows attentional focus on to salient cues and reduces a person’s capacity to process meaning from information (Parrott and Eckhardt, 2018). This can lead to distorting ‘benign social signals’ into threatening ones (Miczek *et al.*, 2015:97) and ‘liquid courage’. However, this is also why bystander approaches which seek to distract those who are intoxicated can be effective because it shifts the ‘tunnel-vision’ onto inhibitory cues (e.g. a friend/handler suggesting that they go outside for a cigarette) (Parrott and Eckhardt, 2018).

Drinking Patterns and Availability

Binge-drinking is associated with a higher prevalence of violence (Richardson and Budd, 2006). However, it is those who pre-drink who are most at risk of being violent, with price disparities between venues and off-licenses having a significant effect (Hughes *et al.* 2007). This is compounded by a culture of British ‘determined drunkenness’, whereby intoxication is ‘socially accepted, if not expected’ (Cabinet Office, 2004:23).

Alcohol availability correlates with higher rates of serious violence (Resko *et al.*, 2010). Research has highlighted that the most deprived 20% of postcodes have around three times as many outlets selling alcohol within walking distance (Ashton *et al.*, 2017). There is some evidence to suggest that reducing trading hours and increasing alcohol cost have been found to reduce violence (Wilkinson, Livingston and Room, 2016). However, despite international support for reduced alcohol trading hours resulting in violence reductions, a four-year Manchester-based study found that changes in temporal alcohol availability had no relation to changes in violence (Humphreys and Eisner, 2014).

Intervention: Reducing the Strength of Alcohol

One intervention which involved reducing the strength of alcohol has been found to lead to reductions in assaults, ASB, and alcohol-related hospital admissions. Alcohol was limited after midnight at which point no drinks over 3.3% ABV can be sold, essentially ruling out all wines and spirits, and most beers.

An evaluation of the intervention found that alcohol-related serious violence for the period had a 35% reduction compared to the previous year. An additional positive outcome was that customers were leaving venues at a lower level of intoxication, resulting in greater awareness of their actions and behaviour which increased their likelihood of getting home safely.

Intervention: Breathalysers

One initiative that has been effective in targeting both the pharmacological effects of intoxication and the drinking patterns and availability of alcohol across the UK has been the use of handheld breathalysers by NTE venue door staff.

The #RU2drunk campaign, a collaborative effort from Dorset Police, the OPCC, and Weymouth BID, is an example of this initiative which involved giving breathalysers to door staff to identify intoxicated individuals above a prescribed level set by each venue. This was accompanied by a media campaign, with information and posters distributed around the local area, via local radio, and via social media.

Results from two studies found:

- Violence dropped by 22.5% in the town overall and 39% in the NTE area.
- Two-thirds of survey participants felt that the initiative made them feel safer in the NTE
- Over 77% of survey participants supported the roll-out of the initiative
- Door staff found that customers were calmer when faced with a breathalyser than just door staff making independent judgements
- Door staff felt that breathalysers combatted the sense of injustice many customers feel about being questioned at venue entrances, with readings being 'neutral' and definitive

(Boyd, Farrimond and Ralph, 2018)



6. The Social Interaction Process of Aggression

Another key cause of serious violence in the NTE as suggested by Graham's (2009) model is the social interaction process of aggression which is based upon the Social Interactionist Theory. This theory argues that aggression is not a single behaviour, 'but a culmination of a social process' whereby an offender perceives an insult, acts on it, and 'dominance is asserted' (Graham, 2009:105). This is where social and gendered norms can be especially influential, particularly in relation to the expectation that males must adopt stereotypically aggressive behaviours.

The NTE also makes it more likely that third parties (e.g. friends) will become involved. While third party involvement has the potential to exacerbate the altercation, it can also result in de-escalation through bystander intervention. Research has found de-escalating conflict works most effectively when it's adapted to the specific interactions of the situation at hand, rather than applying a blanket approach to all situations (Ejbye-Ernst, Lindegaard and Bernasco, 2022).

Other Interventions and Approaches

This report has highlighted a number of interventions and approaches where there is evidence to suggest that could be effective at reducing serious violence in the NTE. Importantly, evidence suggests that it is the way that these interventions are implemented which will give them the best chance of succeeding. Evidence from a recent systematic review (McGuire *et al.*, 2020; Jones *et al.*, 2011) found that the most effective programmes involved engagement with stakeholders – such as license holders – combined with enforcement where the stakeholders share the same objectives as the police.

The most effective partnership programmes included components such as stricter enforcement of licensing laws, awareness-raising campaigns, training for venue staff, and engagement with licensees to encourage considerations of environment design and management.

A three-year evaluation of the Stockholm Prevents Alcohol and Drug Problems (STAD) model (Quigg *et al.*, 2019) which incorporated similar components, found that there is potential for the effective transfer of the model to different drinking settings (e.g. home drinking and public drinking environments). It was also found to be associated with addressing factors that promote the harmful use of alcohol.

Finally, community mobilisation was found to be central to the successful development and implementation of the interventions. For a discussion of how to effectively engage communities see the article by Ure *et al.* (2021).

The Table below provides an overview of other commonly used approaches and interventions to prevent and reduce serious violence in the NTE, along with whether there is evidence to support their effectiveness. The information below is taken from the [College of Policing's review](#).

Multi-level community interventions are underpinned by strong evidence

How can communities influence alcohol licensing at a local level?

Name	Description of Intervention	Effectiveness
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 <i>et al.</i> , 2015).	Limited Evidence
Drinkaware Crew	<p>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.</p> <p>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 <i>et al.</i>, 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.</p>	Limited Evidence
Bar Staff Training	While evaluations have shown no evidence of bar staff training having an impact on responsible serving or on alcohol consumption (Jones <i>et al.</i> , 2011), the ‘Safer Bars’ scheme (Graham <i>et al.</i> , 2004) found that staff training using the three-hour training (see Braun <i>et al.</i> , 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	<p>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 <i>et al.</i>, 2017).</p> <p>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</p>	Untested

Name	Description of Intervention	Effectiveness
	<u>invitation to rape me</u> '. While an evaluation found it had good awareness, there is no evaluation of its impact on attitudes or behaviours.	

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