Identifying drunkenness and preventing sales of alcohol to intoxicated customers in Manchester

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Executive Summary and Recommendations

Across the UK, drunken anti-social behaviour in city centre nightlife demands large police resources and places heavy burdens on local authorities, health services, businesses and communities. In order to tackle alcohol-related problems in nightlife in the city of Manchester, a wide range of innovative measures have been implemented to improve the management of bars and nightclubs, create safer night time environments, and help revellers get home safely after a night out. Whilst such measures have shown success at reducing alcohol-related violence (e.g. Wheater et al, 2005), and have been recognised nationally as good practice in managing night time environments (Strategy Unit, 2004), there is growing recognition that excessive drunkenness itself needs to be tackled if long term prevention is to be achieved. Despite the fact that the service of alcohol to intoxicated individuals is illegal, the high levels of drunkenness seen in town and city centre nightlife across the country suggest that this law is often not upheld. Identifying intoxication and refusing service to individuals who are drunk can be difficult for busy bar servers, yet there is no recognised guidance and no current requirement for bar staff to be trained in this matter. Further enforcement of the law preventing service to drunks can be complicated for police, as illegal sales can be difficult to both detect and prove.

In order to explore the service of alcohol to intoxicated individuals among bar staff in Manchester, the Centre for Public Health at Liverpool John Moores University was commissioned by Greater Manchester Police City Safe team to conduct a survey of bar servers working in the city (n=87 analysed questionnaires). A second, smaller survey was also undertaken of police (n=15) working in Manchester’s nightlife environment to identify current perceptions and practice in enforcing alcohol service laws. This report provides the findings of both surveys and discusses their implications.

Key findings

Bar servers
- A quarter (26.5%) of bar servers had received no training in alcohol service from their current employer. The majority of those who had received training reported this to have been in-house training whilst 12.0% had undertaken an external training course.
- Less than half (41.0%) of participants had received specific training in service refusal, whilst the vast majority of other participants had been instructed by their employers not to serve drunk customers. However one in ten of those working as bar tenders had received no information from their employers on this issue.
- Over half (59.8%) of respondents knew that service of alcohol to drunk people was illegal, yet a quarter thought serving drunk customers was simply part of their job. Those who had received service refusal training were more likely to know service to drunk people was illegal and less likely to consider it part of their job.
- Half of all participants would serve drunk customers with more alcohol at least occasionally. Those who knew such service to be illegal were more likely to say they would never serve a customer they thought was drunk, whilst those who believed such service was simply part of their job were more likely to report serving drunk customers.
- Less than half of bar servers held the personal belief that drunk people should be prevented from buying alcohol; 53.0% believed it depended on the circumstances.
- Bar tenders relied predominantly on physical signs to identify drunkenness in customers, particularly slurred speech and being unsteady on their feet.
- The threat of a fine and the availability of clear guidelines on dealing with drunk customers were the two most commonly selected factors that bar servers believed would make them less likely to serve drunk customers.
- The majority of bar servers had themselves binge drank in the past week.
Police

- Most police officers surveyed had received some form of guidance (53.8%) or training (35.7%) on recognising drunkenness. Correspondingly, over two thirds (70.6%) believed recognising drunkenness to be fairly or very easy.
- The most common method used to categorise someone as being drunk was the identification of physical signs of drunkenness; namely slurred speech, being unsteady on their feet; loudness; having glazed eyes; and smelling of alcohol.
- Half of respondents reported using a checklist of signs of drunkenness to categorise someone as being drunk; other tests such as sobriety and breath tests are rarely used, with several officers stressing the importance of experience in recognising drunkenness.
- If participants saw excessively drunk people leaving a bar or nightclub, the majority stated that they would speak to the licensee/manager/door supervisors about the incident. However, excluding officers working in licensing, less than half would inform the licensing department of the incident and three participants would take no action. All licensing officers stated they would organise a licensing visit to the venue.
- Barriers to taking action against the service of alcohol to drunk people were: being unsure of the powers available; lacking a clear definition of drunkenness; and having insufficient evidence to prove someone was drunk.
- Just under half of participants believed it is feasible for police to enforce laws against the service of alcohol to drunk people. The use of plain clothes police officers was most frequently mentioned as the best method of doing this. Of the remaining participants, concerns about enforcement centred on the issue that there were too many venues and drinkers to enforce laws efficiently.
- Participants highlighted stricter enforcement and penalties, undercover operations and increased visits to licensed premises as methods they believed would most help to prevent illegal alcohol sales to drunks.
- The majority of participants felt that police required additional guidance on licensing legislation and enforcing laws preventing sales of alcohol to drunks. They largely did not feel that guidance on identifying and defining drunkenness was necessary for police, but did believe that bar staff required such guidance.

Recommendations

- Measures should be taken to raise awareness of the law regarding the sale of alcohol to drunk customers, its purpose and its enforcement in Manchester.
- Bar staff training that includes service refusal skills should be encouraged. Police and other agencies should work with licensees and bar managers to ensure they have the knowledge, skills and materials required to provide basic training to all staff, both at induction and throughout the course of their employment. The use of recognised bar server qualifications should also be promoted.
- The development of guidance for bar servers on recognising drunkenness and understanding and enforcing licensing legislation should be considered.
- The development of specific guidance for police officers on licensing legislation should be considered.
- Work to enforce laws on the sale of alcohol to drunk individuals is relatively new and little evidence is available on how police can best approach this. Evidence of what does and does not work effectively should be shared to enable the most effective approaches to be adopted.
- Regular police visits to licensed premises should be undertaken to ensure licensees, managers and staff are aware of licensing and related legislation, that they are complying with such legislation and that they are aware that offences will be penalised.
- Communication systems between police working in city centre nightlife and licensing officers should be strengthened to enable intelligence on bars and nightclubs to be shared effectively.
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1 Background

Excessive alcohol consumption and drunkenness are linked to a wide range of health and social problems, including anti-social behaviour and violence (Hughes et al, 2004; Bellis et al, 2006). Alcohol can reduce drinkers' self control and ability to process information, and can increase confidence and risk taking behaviour. Intoxicated individuals can consequently be more likely to resort to aggression in confrontation, while their vulnerability can make them easy targets for crime. Research conducted in the UK and abroad has found people who drink to intoxication are more likely to have been involved in violence (Matthews and Richardson, 2005; Swahn et al, 2004), while injuries sustained in violence can be more severe if alcohol is involved (Hutchison et al, 1998). Other factors linking alcohol and violence include the type of setting in which people drink. For example, bars and nightclubs that are poorly maintained and permissive of drunkenness experience higher levels of violence (Graham and Homel, 1997), as do areas that contain greater densities of drinking venues (Norström, 2000).

Over the last two decades, many town and city centres in the UK have experienced rapid growth in their night time economies. In Manchester, capacity in licensed premises in the city increased by 250% between 1996 and 2000 alone. As in many areas, this growth typically involved youth-focused late night bars, often with limited seating, playing loud music and with a preference towards sales of bottled alcohol. Such factors in drinking settings can make conversation difficult, give patrons few places to put drinks down, and enable alcohol to be served more rapidly, all contributing to increased alcohol consumption. Further, as the number of drinking venues in an area increases, so can competition between venues for customers, potentially leading to cheaper alcohol prices and drinks promotions.

Alongside changes in nightlife environments, alcohol consumption among young people increased during the 1990s. Although it now appears to have stabilised, young people who drink in town and city centre nightlife currently report very high levels of consumption on a night out. For example, a survey of 18-30 year olds visiting bars and nightclubs in Liverpool found their estimated consumption on a usual night out in the city to be an average of 16 units for women and 24 units for men (Hughes et al, in press). For both sexes this is over five times the recommended daily limits (3 units for women and 4 units for men - binge drinking is commonly classified as drinking more than double these limits).

Drunkenness among individuals in nightlife areas may seem like a habitual consequence of the night time environment yet the law states it is illegal to sell alcohol to people who are intoxicated (see box). While the government has introduced fines for selling alcohol to individuals who are intoxicated, little information is currently available on server practice or knowledge regarding alcohol sales and customer intoxication. This study aims to examine the service of alcohol to intoxicated individuals among bar staff working in Manchester’s nightlife, including their experiences, practice, knowledge and training.

Sale of alcohol to a person who is drunk is an offence under The Licensing Act 2003. The Act provides for fines of up to £80 to be imposed on bar staff who serve, or attempt to serve, drunk people with alcohol or who knowingly permit such sales to take place. It applies to “any person who works at the premises in a capacity, whether paid or unpaid, which gives him the authority to sell the alcohol concerned”, including personal license holders and designated premises supervisors.
2 Methods

A short questionnaire was developed to explore alcohol service practice, knowledge of alcohol issues and levels of training among bar servers in Manchester (see Appendix 1). Questionnaires were distributed to bar servers via two methods. Firstly, staff at Manchester Metropolitan University distributed the questionnaires to students currently or recently working in bars in the city and requested them to snowball the questionnaires to other colleagues and friends working as bar servers in the city (n=44 completed questionnaires returned). Secondly, researchers from the Centre for Public Health visited bars in Manchester and asked staff working in the venues to complete the questionnaires. Completed questionnaires were collected one to three hours later by researchers (n=59 questionnaires collected). Thus, responses were received from 103 bar staff working in Manchester.

Data were entered into a dedicated database using SPSS version 14 and analysed. For the purposes of this report, only data from respondents who were current bar servers (84.5%; 87 respondents) have been analysed to provide an up-to-date picture of bar service in Manchester.

3 Findings: Bar Server Survey

3.1 Sample characteristics

Half of the sample were male (51.7%) and the mean age of respondents was 24.5 years (age range 18-41). Over half (59.3%) worked in a late night bar, 44.2% in a pub, 29.1% in a restaurant, 16.3% in a nightclub and 3.5% in a hotel or café bar. Three quarters of respondents (78.2%) worked in venues in Manchester city centre, with others working in suburbs or surrounding towns. Over two thirds (69.0%) were bar tenders with a third holding positions with more responsibility (e.g. bar supervisors or managers). Over half (57.0%) had held their bar employment for 12 months or more.

3.2 Training

Participants were asked if their employer had provided them with any training regarding the sale of alcohol. The majority (61.4%) had received in-house training and 12.0% had undertaken an external training course, yet a quarter (26.5%) reported having received no training in their role. Those working as bar supervisors or managers were more likely to have received some form of training (Figure 1). External training courses reported by participants included BIIAB courses, the National Certificate for Personal License Holders, and brewery-run courses. Some of those who had received in-house training provided

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1 These figures do not equal 100% due to many individuals reporting their place of work as being of more than one specific type (e.g. a pub with a restaurant).
details on its content, and this ranged widely from training on licensing objectives, age verification and service refusal, to advice on using common sense and wine tasting.

Individuals were also asked what advice their employer had given them regarding the sale of alcohol to intoxicated customers. Half (50.6%) had been instructed not to serve drunk customers, while a further 41.0% had been provided with specific training on service refusal. The remaining seven respondents had been given no advice on the service of alcohol to drunk individuals, six of whom had also not had any other training regarding the sale of alcohol (two of these individuals had been working in their current bar server role for over twelve months). Bar managers and supervisors were significantly more likely to have received service refusal training (Figure 2). Overall, there were no significant differences in training between those having worked for less than 12 months and those having worked for a year or more.

3.3 Experience of drunkenness and alcohol-related problems in bars

The questionnaire asked individuals to indicate how frequently they saw drunk customers and a range of anti-social behaviours in their bar whilst they were working. Only one respondent reporting never seeing drunk customers whilst at work; half (57.0%) reported seeing drunk customers on some shifts, 22.1% on most shifts and 19.8% on all shifts. Figure 3 shows how frequently respondents reported seeing underage drinkers, arguments and fights among customers whilst they are at work. Few respondents reported seeing these behaviours frequently, although most did see them on at least some shifts whilst working.

3.4 Alcohol service knowledge and practice

More than half (59.8%) of respondents knew that the service of alcohol to intoxicated individuals was illegal, while 6.1% believed it to be legal. This shows that a large proportion of bar servers (including a fifth of managers and supervisors) did not understand the law on alcohol service to drunk people and in fact a quarter (24.4%) of all respondents believed serving drunk customers was simply part of the job. Individuals who knew this practice to be illegal were significantly less likely to report it as being part of the job (8.2% compared with 48.5% of those who did not recognise service to drunks as illegal, P<0.001). The proportion of participants who knew service of alcohol to drunk people to be illegal increased with the level of training received, and with the level of advice given by employers on serving alcohol.

![Figure 2: Advice given by employers on the service of alcohol to intoxicated customers](image)

![Figure 3: Frequency of seeing anti-social behaviour whilst at work](image)
to drunk customers (Figures 4 and 5). Correspondingly, the proportion of respondents who believed service of alcohol to drunks to be simply part of their job decreased with both training and advice on service to drunks provided by employers (Figures 4 and 5).

Overall, half of respondents (51.2%) reported that they would never serve alcohol to a customer who they believed to be drunk. However, the remaining half were less strict about alcohol service to intoxicated customers, with 39.5% stating they would sometimes serve them and 9.3% that they would usually or always serve them. Managers and supervisors were significantly more likely than bar tenders to report never serving drunk customers (22.2% compared with 61.0%, P<0.005). Although differences in propensity to serve drunk customers between training groups were not significantly, in general those who had received service in training refusal or undertaken an external training course were least likely to report willingness to serve drunk customers (Figure 6). Individuals who knew the serving drunk customers was illegal were significantly less likely to report serving drunk customers (34.7% compared with 69.7% of those who did not know it to be illegal; P<0.005), while those who thought this practice was just part of their job were significantly more likely to serve drunk customers (95.0% compared with 33.9% of those who did not think it part of the job, P<0.001).

* Please note figures involved in some training categories are low. Numbers involved in these analyses are: Training on alcohol service: no training, n=22; in-house training, n=50; external training n=10. Advice on service of alcohol to drunk customers: none, n=7; told not to serve, n=42, provided with training in service refusal, n=32.

**Figure 4: Beliefs on service of alcohol to drunk people, by level of training on alcohol service provided by employer**

**Figure 5: Beliefs on service of alcohol to drunk people, by employers’ advice to participants on such service**

**Figure 6: Proportion of respondents who would serve alcohol to drunk customers at least occasionally, by employer training / advice**

* Please note figures involved in some training categories are low. Numbers in these analyses are: Alcohol service training: no training, n=22, in-house training, n=51; external training n=10. Advice on service of alcohol to drunk customers: none, n=7; told not to serve, n=42; provided with training in service refusal, n=34.
To measure bar servers’ own opinions on the service of alcohol to drunk people, they were asked whether they personally thought people who were already intoxicated should be prevented from buying more alcohol. While 44.6% believed drunk people should be prevented from buying alcohol, the majority (53.0%) thought it depended on the circumstances (the remainder believed drunk individuals should not be prevented from accessing more alcohol). Individuals who believed drunk people should be prevented from buying more alcohol were significantly more likely to report never serving drunk customers (75.7% compared with 32.6% of those thinking it depended on the circumstances or should be allowed, \( P<0.001 \)). Importantly, those who knew alcohol service to drunk people was illegal were significantly more likely to hold the belief that it should be prevented (61.2% compared with 21.2% of those not knowing it to be illegal, \( P<0.001 \)). Further, most of those who had undertaken external training courses on alcohol service believed service to drunk people should be prevented (Figure 7), as did over half (54.5%) of those who had received training in service refusal (compared with 40.5% of those being advised not to serve drunk customers and just 14.3% of those given no advice on such service). Older individuals (aged 25 and over) and those working as supervisors or managers were also more likely to think service to drunk people should be prevented.

Respondents were asked whether they would be more or less likely to serve customers in a range of different circumstances. Figure 8 shows the responses of those individuals who would serve drunk customers at least occasionally. There was a general consensus amongst respondents that they would be less likely to serve drunk customers who were aggressive, already causing trouble or known to be troublemakers. However most respondents agreed they would be more likely to serve a drunk customer if they were a friend, whilst a third would be more likely to serve someone they found sexually attractive and a quarter if the customer was in a group.
The questionnaire contained a list of signs that may be used to recognise drunkenness and participants were asked to identify which of these they would use to identify a customer as being intoxicated. The most common reasons selected were physical signs of drunkenness; slurred speech (94.2%), being unsteady on their feet (86.0%) and loudness (76.7%). Fewer participants reported identifying someone as drunk through alcohol consumption levels including the amount of alcohol they had sold them (57.0%) and the amount they had seen them consume (43.0%). Other methods of recognising customer intoxication reported by participants included abusive behaviour, incoherence, dilated pupils/red or glazed eyes, and vomiting.

To gauge alcohol service quantities, participants were asked whether they would serve a customer a drink containing more than three shots of spirits. Encouragingly, few participants stated that they would serve such large measures in one glass. A quarter said they would serve between four and five units in one glass, while less than 10% would serve more than this.

3.5 Preventing drunkenness and related problems

Bar servers were asked to indicate (from a list provided) who they believed was responsible for preventing drunkenness and related problems within their bar. The majority believed this was predominantly the responsibility of staff working at the bar (managers, 88.1%; bar staff, 83.3%; door staff, 73.8%). Interestingly, only a third (31.0%) believed this was the responsibility of customers themselves, whilst only a quarter (25.0%) thought it was a responsibility of police.

When asked to indicate from a list provided which measures would make participants less likely to serve drunk customers, the most frequently cited reasons were the threat of a fine (70.0%) and clear guidelines on when and how to refuse service (65.0%). Support from managers and other staff and threat of job loss were also important, yet the presence of management and the provision of actual training were selected by fewer respondents (Figure 9). Individuals who had received training in service refusal were more likely to believe this to be important in reducing their likeliness of serving drunk individuals.

3.6 Alcohol at work and personal consumption

Encouragingly, the vast majority (82.5%) of bar servers reported that their employers did not provide incentives to staff for selling more alcohol. However one in ten said their employers provided free drinks to staff who achieved high sales and 5.0% provided cash incentives for additional sales (with 2.5% reporting other types of incentives). The majority of participants (87.8%) also reported that their employers did not permit them to drink alcohol while they were working.
At the end of the questionnaire, bar servers were asked if they had personally consumed alcohol in the previous week, and if so how much they had drank on their heaviest drinking day. Nine in ten (92.0%) participants reported having drank alcohol in the week prior to completing the survey; 4.6% had not drank and 3.4% did not answer the question. The vast majority of those who had drank in the last week reported consumption levels on their heaviest drinking that were above the recommended daily limits (94.3% men, 97.2% women), and over four in five had binge drank (82.9% men, 86.1% women). Almost a quarter of men (22.9%) and a third of women had consumed more than their entire weekly limits on their heaviest drinking day.

4 Findings: Police Survey

4.1 Sample characteristics

In order to gain an understanding of police officers’ views and practices regarding drunkenness and related law enforcement, a second short survey was developed and disseminated to police officers working in Manchester’s nightlife (Appendix 2). The questionnaire was completed by 17 police officers (15 Police Constables and two Sergeants), of whom eight worked specifically in Licensing. The mean length of service with Greater Manchester Police was 11.5 years. The majority (11) of participants were male, and their mean age was 38 (33 for women and 40 for men).

4.2 Identifying drunkenness

To gauge perceptions amongst police of drunkenness at night, participants were asked what proportion of the public using the city centre they believed would be drunk at certain times. By midnight, all participants believed that at least half the public in the city centre would be drunk and by 3am, all believed that more than half would be drunk. Police officers were asked who they believed was responsible for preventing drunkenness and related problems in nightlife, by selecting from a list of options. All respondents believed bar staff held this responsibility, while the majority also believed that licensees (94%), door supervisors (82%) and customers themselves (82%) were responsible. Only half (53%, n=9) believed police held this responsibility. Some respondents included additional comments that local and national government and society as a whole needed to take more responsibility for alcohol problems.

Police officers were asked if they had been provided with any training or guidelines on how to identify people as being drunk. Only five participants (36%) reported having received training although half (53.8%, n=7) had been provided with guidelines; only two participants had received both training and guidelines, meaning that the majority of participants had been provided with some level of support in recognising drunkenness (three respondents did not answer these questions). Correspondingly, most participants (71%) believed that recognising drunkenness was fairly or very easy. Only one participant considered recognising drunkenness to be difficult and this individual had received neither training nor guidance on this matter (the remaining participants were neutral, believing recognition of drunkenness to be neither easy nor difficult).

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2 This was measured by asking individuals to detail the quantity of different drink types they had consumed on this day, and drinks were calculated to units at: one pint or bottle of beer = 2 units; one glass of wine = 2 units; one single shot of spirits = 1 unit; one bottle of alcopop = 1.5 units.
3 Three units for women and four units for men.
4 Defined here as having consumed more than double the recommended daily limits.
Participants were asked to indicate from a list the signs they used to identify a person as being drunk. Being unsteady on their feet and having slurred speech were used by all participants to identify drunkenness in an individual. Most participants also selected the other options of having glazed eyes (94%), loudness (94%) and rowdy behaviour (71%). Participants were asked to note down other signs they used to recognise drunkenness, and nine (53%) independently stated that they used the smell of alcohol on a person as a sign of drunkenness.

When asked if they used any specific tests to identify drunkenness, checklists of such physical signs of intoxication were the most commonly used (53%, n=9). Only one respondent reported using a sobriety test to identify drunkenness and only three using breath tests. Where police officers provided details of ‘other’ methods of identifying drunkenness, most indicated that they used their experience. The questionnaire asked participants which method of identifying drunkenness was most feasible for use in the night time environment; a sobriety test, a breath test or a different method. A breath test (n=6) was a more popular choice than a sobriety test (n=3) although there was no clear consensus, with communication and experience being provided as ‘other’ options.

4.3 Responding to drunkenness

Participants were asked to identify from a list the methods they used when dealing with people who are excessively drunk. The most common responses did not involve sanctions; 94% would advise the individual to go home, 88% would warn them about their behaviour and 82% would check they were safe. Just under two thirds indicated arrest as a measure for dealing with excessive drunks, 41% indicated fines and 18% cautions. However several participants noted that their action would depend upon the individual’s behaviour. When asked specifically what they would do if they saw an excessively drunk person leaving licensed premises, the most common responses (identified from a list) were to speak to the door staff (n=13) or licensee/owner (n=12) about the incident. Four of the nine non-licensing participants stated they would inform the licensing department of this, while all of the licensing officers (but no non-licensing officer) indicated that they would organise a licensing visit for a later date. Three participants said they would take no action.

4.4 Addressing service of alcohol to drunk people

Additional questions were asked of those individuals who worked specifically within licensing, whose work would routinely take them inside licensed premises (n=8). These questions were designed to identify how such officers would deal with an incident involving service of alcohol to intoxicated individuals. Three individuals reported having observed the service of alcohol to drunk people whilst working (one respondent did not answer this question). All licensing officers were asked what they would do if they did witness an intoxicated individual being served alcohol. The majority stated they would explain the law to the bar server (n=7) and the owner/licensee (n=6), while five stated they would explain the law to all bar servers. Four stated they would issue a formal warning to the bar server and three quarters a formal warning to the owner/licensee. Five individuals stated they would issue a fixed penalty notice to the bar server and three individuals would issue one to the owner/licensee. All participants reported that they would organise a licensing visit to the premises at a later date.

Participants were asked if there were any factors that would stop them from taking actions, and provided with a list of possible factors and an opportunity for writing their own. Two individuals specifically stated that action must be taken, and consequently selected no reasons for not acting. Of the remaining six, five indicated that they were unsure of the
powers available to them, four that the lack of a clear definition of drunkenness was a
barrier, and half that insufficient evidence to prove someone was drunk would prevent
action. One stated that taking action may not be a priority.

Half of the participants working in licensing had been involved in enforcement work to
address the service of alcohol to drunk people in Manchester. This included high profile
policing in licensed premises, plain clothes operations to detect illegal alcohol service, and
work to highlight the issue to licensees within pub and club watch meetings.

All participants (including non-licensing officers) were asked how feasible they thought it was
for police to enforce laws against the service of alcohol to drunk people in licensed premises.
Just under half (n=8) thought it was feasible, five were neutral (neither feasible / not feasible)
and four thought it was not feasible. Of those who thought it was feasible most provided
comments, including that use of plain clothes police would be most appropriate. Comments
provided by those who were neutral centred around the fact that there were too many
licensed premises and too many drinkers to monitor effectively. The only comment provided
by the ‘not feasible’ group was that such service was too difficult to prove.

An open question invited participants to suggest how they thought police could best enforce
laws against alcohol service to drunks. The most commonly raised issues were:

- stricter enforcement against premises and individuals who break alcohol service laws,
  including license reviews, license removals and large fines;
- Covert police operations in licensed premises to detect illegal sales; and
- Increased enforcement visits to license premises.

A separate open question then provided participants with the opportunity to suggest what
methods they thought police could use to gather evidence against the service of alcohol to
drunks. The key measures identified here were: use of CCTV, both by police officers (e.g.
body mounted head cameras) and in licensed premises; mystery shopper or test purchasing
operations; and covert police observations.

Participants were asked whether they believed any additional guidance is needed for police
or bar staff on a list of issues. For police, the majority of participants felt that additional
guidance is needed regarding licensing legislation (82%) and the enforcement of laws on
alcohol service to drunks (65%). However, fewer participants believed police need additional
guidance on identifying drunkenness (41%) and on defining drunkenness (29%). Conversely,
the vast majority of participants believed that guidance on identifying (94%) and defining
(94%) drunkenness was needed for bar servers. All participants believed individuals working
as bar staff also required guidance on licensing legislation and the service of alcohol to drunk
people, whilst 82% believed they needed guidance on enforcing the law regarding the sale of
alcohol to drunk people.

Limitations
The sample size for the police survey is limited and therefore findings should be treated with
care. Between the time of this study being commissioned, the police questionnaire being
developed and consequently completed, there have been national movements towards the
enforcement of alcohol sales to drunk individuals. These have included Home Office led
undercover police operations in bars and nightclubs across the country.
Discussion

Despite the fact that the law forbids service of alcohol to intoxicated individuals, this law is often ignored and rarely enforced. Ensuing drunkenness in town and city centres at night is linked to anti-social behaviour, violence and accidents, and consequently demands large police, health service and local authority resources during and beyond nightlife hours. This study has shown that many bar servers working in Manchester are willing to serve alcohol to drunk customers at least occasionally. However, the majority of bar servers surveyed had not received specific training in service refusal skills and many did not recognise service to drunk individuals as being illegal.

Although most bar servers included in this study had received some level of training for their current role, for most this was in-house training which varied widely in content. Those who had received specific service refusal training showed less propensity to serve drunk customers, were more likely to recognise such service as being illegal and were less likely to consider serving drunk people to be simply part of their job. They were also more likely to hold the personal belief that drunk people should be prevented from accessing more alcohol. Without taking training into account, there were strong links between knowledge and beliefs of alcohol service, and between such factors and alcohol service. Thus participants who recognised service of alcohol to drunk people as being illegal were more likely to hold the personal belief that it should be prevented, whilst those who personally believed it should be prevented showed less propensity to serve drunk customers. These findings suggest that service refusal training would be beneficial in improving bar servers’ knowledge, beliefs and practice in preventing drunkenness amongst customers. Encouragingly, most of those surveyed here who reported working in positions of responsibility had undertaken such training, and correspondingly they were less willing to serve drunk customers and had better knowledge and beliefs surrounding sales of alcohol to intoxicated individuals. A key issue faced by managers in training staff is the often rapid turnover of staff working as bar tenders. Providing bar staff with a handbook covering issues on licensing laws, the harms associated with excessive alcohol use and responsible server practice at induction, and ensuring such a resource is available for staff whilst at work, would help bar servers improve their own knowledge and skills on alcohol service in the wake of training. Such a resource has been developed in Manchester through the ‘Calling Time’ brochure.

Whilst service refusal training was linked to better knowledge and refusal amongst bar tenders, even amongst those who had received such training there was some confusion about the law and some willingness to serve drunk customers. This survey did not explore the quality of training received by participants, nor how they perceived the training, and this may affect individuals’ receptivity to training. Other factors that may influence individual’s practice following training could include managerial practice and attitudes in their place of employment, support from other staff, confidence, and perceived impact of service refusal on factors such as safety, hassle and tips (see below). However, a major factor in individual’s propensity to serve drunk customers can be their ability to recognise drunkenness and determine whether a customer is actually intoxicated. There are no specific guidelines to assist bar servers in recognising when customers are too drunk to be sold more alcohol, and the confusion surrounding this issue can make both service refusal and enforcement of the law difficult. Respondents to this study reported using physical signs of intoxication to recognise drunkenness in customers rather than other factors linked to alcohol consumption levels. Other research conducted in Cardiff (Perham et al, 2007) has suggested that staggering gait is the most reliable measure of intoxication, particularly when combined with slurred speech, and these signs were the two most commonly used amongst bar staff in Manchester. The Cardiff study suggested that recognising physical signs of drunkenness may be difficult in a busy bar environment, and our findings in Manchester concur with this.
Consequently, as well as training, environmental design in bars may be useful in helping bar staff to identify physical signs of drunkenness, including ensuring bar areas are well lit, quiet enough for bar staff to hear customers, and kept clear of excessive crowding.

The sale of alcohol to intoxicated individuals is not a problem limited to the UK and studies conducted elsewhere have identified a number of risk factors for service to drunk customers. In the US, for example, where sale of alcohol to drunk people is also illegal, studies have used professional actors to feign drunkenness and found the majority of purchase attempts to be successful (Lenk et al., 2006, Toomey et al., 2004). Factors associated with increased propensity to sell alcohol to obviously drunk patrons in these studies included display of alcohol promotions, longer length of employment among staff, and younger age of server. Venues that held regular staff meetings were less likely to serve pseudo-intoxicated customers. A different US study that surveyed bar staff of their propensity to serve drunk customers found a range of different factors associated with this practice, including being young, perceiving service refusal as a hassle or as producing fewer tips, having less concern about penalties for serving drunk customers, and personally drinking to intoxication (Reiling and Nusbaum, 2006). Further research is needed in the UK to explore the relevance of such risk factors among British bar staff.

A final important issue identified by the bar server survey in Manchester was the high levels of personal alcohol consumption reported by bar servers. The majority of participants had drank more than double the daily recommended limits in the week prior to survey and many had drank more than their entire weekly limit on their heaviest drinking day. Although few participants reported being allowed to drink whilst at work, spending long periods in drinking environments may impact on individuals’ alcohol consumption, for example through drinking after work or socialising with staff and customers outside working hours. Data from the Office for National Statistics (Romeri et al., 2007) show that individuals working as publicans and bar staff have the highest rates of alcohol-related mortality. Consequently, employees in bars and nightclubs are an important target group for health interventions delivering information, advice and support on alcohol issues. Such interventions could be usefully combined with training in other alcohol issues, including service refusal, to provide bar servers with the skills and knowledge required to protect both their and their customers’ safety and health.

Laws surrounding the sale of alcohol to drunk people will only work if they are adhered to, and this means ensuring that servers are aware of the law and that the law is enforced. Until recently, the service of alcohol to drunk customers has largely not been a police priority and few offences have been detected and penalised. However, moves at both national and local levels have meant police officers are focusing on enforcing this law. Our survey of 17 police officers in Manchester suggest that additional guidance on licensing legislation and enforcing this law is required amongst police working in nightlife environments. In general, participants felt that detecting drunkenness was not difficult, with most relying on their experience in classing someone as being drunk, or using a checklist of physical indicators of drunkenness. However, in order to prosecute an offence of serving alcohol to a drunk person, police need to ensure they have appropriate evidence available that the individual was actually drunk. Thus several police officers (here from licensing) indicated that they were unsure of the powers available to them in enforcing this law, that drunkenness was difficult to determine and that there were problems in obtaining the evidence needed to prosecute when an offence was detected. Consequently guidance would help police officers know what options were available to them when dealing with drunk customers in licensed premises and also enable them to collect appropriate evidence.

The police officers participating in the survey provided a range of suggestions regarding what they believed to be the most effective way of enforcing laws preventing the sale of alcohol to
drunks. These included undercover police operations (which have recently been undertaken in many areas through Home Office initiatives); stronger penalties against offenders, both bar servers themselves and the premises in which they work; and more regular police visits to licensed premises to conduct checks. Regularly visiting licensed premises provides police with opportunities to ensure licensees and managers are up to date with licensing legislation and to remind them both of their responsibility within the law, and of enforcement activity being undertaken by the police, such as undercover operations. Evidence from other police enforcement activity (e.g. underage test purchases) backs up the need for this, suggesting that enforcement can effectively increase compliance with licensing laws, but that in order for its effects to be sustained, enforcement activity must occur on a regular basis.

In general, police participants believed that staff at licensed premises and customers themselves were responsible for preventing drunkenness and related problems in nightlife. They supported the need for bar servers to have greater guidance on doing this, and on licensing legislation in general. However, service refusal can be difficult and the effects of staff training can be limited by rapid turnover of staff in licensed premises. Therefore, work to improve staff practice in service refusal must be combined with that to ensure the law against alcohol service to drunk people is widely understood and enforced. Such measures are best approached by partnership working between police, licensees and managers of licensed premises, and other agencies working to prevent drunkenness and related harm in nightlife environments.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful for the support of Greater Manchester Police in implementing this study, particularly Sergeants Tim Whittaker, Jan Brown and Steve Greenacre. We are very grateful to all the police officers and bar staff who voluntarily participated in the study. We would also like to thank Dr Phil Wheater from Manchester University for his assistance in recruiting study participants and ethics, and Gayle Whelan, Dan Hungerford and Corinne Harkins for their help in completing the study.

References


Reiling DM and Nusbaumer MR. When problem servers pour in problematic places: alcoholic beverage servers’ willingness to serve patrons beyond intoxication. *Substance Use and Misuse* 2006; 41: 653-668.


Bar Tender Survey

Please complete this questionnaire if you are currently working, or have ever worked, in a bar as an alcohol tender.

All answers are anonymous and we do not ask for the name of the bar you work in. Thank you for your help.

1. What is your age?  
   [ ] Male  [ ] Female

2. What is your gender?  
   [ ] Male  [ ] Female

3. Do you currently work in a bar?  
   [ ] Yes Go to question 4
   [ ] No

   If no, how long ago did you last work in a bar?  
   [ ] Years  [ ] Months ago

   Please go to question 4 and answer the remaining questions based on your last bar job; e.g. read question 4 as ‘what type of bar did you work in?’

4. What type of bar do you work in?  
   (please tick the relevant box/boxes)
   [ ] Pub  [ ] Late night bar
   [ ] Nightclub  [ ] Restaurant
   [ ] Other  
   (please specify)

5. Where is this located?  
   [ ] City Centre  [ ] Town Centre
   [ ] Suburb  [ ] Other

   Please specify area  
   (e.g. Manchester)

6. What is your role?  
   Bar tender  Bar manager  

   [ ] Other  
   (please specify)

7. When do you normally work in this bar?  
   (Tick all that apply)
   Monday  Tuesday  Wednesday  Thursday  Friday  Saturday  Sunday

   Day time  Night time

8. For how long have you worked in this bar?  
   [ ] Years  [ ] Months

9. When you are working, how frequently do you see drunk customers in your bar?  
   [ ] Every shift  [ ] Most shifts  [ ] Some shifts  [ ] Never

10. When working, what signs do you use to decide if a person is drunk? (tick all that apply)

   Unsteady on their feet  Slurred speech  Loudness

   Quantity of alcohol you have sold them  Amount you have seen them drink

   Others  
   (please specify)

11. If customers who you think are drunk order alcohol from your bar, would you serve them? (please tick one answer only)

   [ ] Always  [ ] Usually  [ ] Sometimes  [ ] Never

12. Are you more or less likely to serve a customer who is drunk if they are:  
   (please tick the appropriate boxes)

   A friend  In a group  Sexually attractive  Aggressive

   Already causing trouble  Known to cause trouble  

13. If asked, would you serve a customer a drink containing:  

   [ ] Yes  [ ] No

   4-5 shots of spirits  6-7 shots of spirits  8+ shots of spirits

14. In the last year, what is the most alcohol you have served in a single drink?  

   e.g. triple vodka  

Appendix 1
15. Who do you think is responsible for preventing drunkenness and related problems (e.g. accidents, aggression) within your bar? (Tick all that apply)

- Managers
- Door Supervisors
- Bar Staff
- Police
- Customers
- Other (please specify)

16. What advice has your employer given to you about serving customers who are drunk? (Please tick one answer only)

- None
- Told not to serve them
- Told to serve them
- Provided training in refusing service
- Other (please specify)

17. What would make you less likely to serve drunk customers? (tick all that apply)

- Manager being present
- Threat of a fine
- Threat of job loss
- Provision of training
- Support from managers / other staff
- Clear guidelines on when and how to refuse service
- Other (please specify)

18. How frequently do you see the following behaviours among customers when working in your bar? (Tick the appropriate boxes)

- Arguments
- Drinkers who look underage
- Fighting
- People adding alcohol to others’ drinks without their knowledge

- Never
- Sometimes
- Often

19. Do you think serving alcohol to drunk people is: (Tick all that apply)

- Part of the job
- Legal
- Illegal
- Not a good idea
- Not a problem

20. Has your employer provided you with any training regarding selling alcohol? (Tick one answer only)

- No
- Yes, in house training
- Yes, an external training course

If you answered yes, please briefly tell us what this involved

21. Personally, do you think drunk people should be stopped from buying more alcohol?

- Yes
- No
- Depends on circumstances

22. Does your employer ever have reward schemes for increasing sales of alcohol?

- No
- Yes, financial rewards for high sales
- Yes, free drinks for staff with high sales
- Other (please specify)

23. Does your employer allow bar staff to drink alcohol when they are working?

- Yes
- No

24. If you drink, on how many days in the last week did you drink?

25. On your heaviest drinking day in the last week, how much did you drink? (Please write the number of each type of drink you consumed in the box)

- Pints or bottles of beer/lager/cider
- Glasses of wine (175ml)
- Single shots of spirits
- Bottles of alcopops (e.g. WKD)
- Other (please specify): 

Thank you

Centre for Public Health, Liverpool John Moores University, Castle House, North Street, Liverpool, L3 2AY
Tel: 0151 231 4384, email: k.e.hughes@ljmu.ac.uk
### Police - Public Drunkenness Questionnaire

1. What is your rank?  

2. Age?  

3. Gender?  

4. Years of service:  
   a) In the police force?  
   b) With GMP?  

5. How many hours per week do you work policing city centre nightlife?  

6. What is your main role (e.g. licensing, beat/patrol)?  

#### Recognising drunkenness

7. When working in Manchester City Centre’s nightlife, in general, what proportion of the public do you think are drunk at these times?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>No one drunk</th>
<th>Less than half</th>
<th>Half</th>
<th>More than half</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6pm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9pm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 midnight</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3am</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6am</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. Who do you think is responsible for preventing drunkenness and related problems (e.g. accidents, aggression) within nightlife (tick all that apply)?  

- Licensees  
- Door Supervisors  
- Police  
- Customers  
- Bar Staff  
- Other, please specify below  

9. Have you been provided with any guidelines or training on identifying drunk people?  

- Yes  
- No  

- Training  
- Guidelines  

10. Do you think recognising drunkenness is:  

- Very easy  
- Easy  
- Neither easy/difficult  
- Difficult  
- Very difficult  

11. What signs do you use to identify whether a person is drunk (tick all that apply)?  

- Unsteady on their feet  
- Slurred speech  
- Rowdy behaviour  
- Glazed eyes  
- Loudness  
- Other, please specify below  

Appendix 2
12. Do you use either of the following tests to identify drunkenness?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sobriety test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breath test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checklist of signs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other, please specify below</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. Which of these methods do you think is more feasible to administer in the nighttime environment?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sobriety test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breath test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other, please specify below</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Upholding the law**

14. What methods do you use when dealing with excessively drunk patrons (tick all that apply)?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Check they are okay (e.g. no injuries)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warn them about their behaviour</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advise them to go home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine individual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caution individual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrest individual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other, please specify below</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15. If you observe an excessively drunk person inside or leaving a licensed premise, what action would you take (tick all that apply)?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speak to bar manager/license holder</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inform licensing department (police/council)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak to door staff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organise a license visit on another occasion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No action</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other, please specify below</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If you work inside licensed premises (e.g. licensing officer) please answer the following questions. If not, please go to question 21.

16. When working in Manchester City Centre’s nightlife, have you ever observed a bar server serving alcohol to a drunk person?

Yes, every shift ☐ Yes, most shifts ☐ Yes, some shifts ☐ No ☐

17. Typically, what action would you take when/if you observe this?

Explain the law regarding service of alcohol to drunk people to: ☐ ☐ ☐
Provide a formal warning to: ☐ ☐ ☐
Issue fixed penalty fine to: ☐ ☐ ☐
Organise a license visit ☐
Check drunk person is okay (e.g. no injuries) ☐
Advise drunk person to go home ☐
No action ☐
Other, please specify below ☐

18. What are the main reasons that would stop you from taking any action (tick all that apply)?

The lack of a clear definition of drunkenness ☐ Not sure of the powers available to me ☐
Not enough evidence to prove the person is drunk ☐
Not a priority ☐
Other, please specify below ☐

19. Have you been involved in specifically targeting enforcement to address service of alcohol to drunk people in licensed premises in Manchester’s nightlife?

Yes ☐ No ☐

20. If yes, please describe the type of enforcement methods used?
21. How feasible do you think it is for the police to enforce laws against the service of alcohol to drunk people in licensed premises?

Very feasible [ ] Feasible [ ] Neither feasible/not feasible [ ] Not feasible [ ] Not feasible at all [ ]

Please provide comments below:

22. How do you think the police could best enforce laws against the service of alcohol to drunk people in licensed premises?

23. What type of methods do you think the police could use to gather evidence on the service of alcohol to drunk people in licensed premises?

24. Do you think additional guidance is needed for police/bar staff on:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Police</th>
<th>Bar staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes No</td>
<td>Yes No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensing legislation?</td>
<td>[ ] [ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defining drunkenness?</td>
<td>[ ] [ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to identify drunkenness?</td>
<td>[ ] [ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enforcing laws on serving drunk people?</td>
<td>[ ] [ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service of alcohol to drunk people?</td>
<td>[ ] [ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other, please specify below</td>
<td>[ ] [ ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

25. If you have any other comments you would like to make about drunkenness or enforcing laws against the service of alcohol to drunk people please let us know in the space below.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire