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'Give us the real tools to do our jobs': views of UK stakeholders on the role of a public health objective for alcohol licensing

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Abstract

Objectives

This study ascertains the views of UK stakeholders on the actual, and possible, impact of a public health licensing objective in their day-to-day work.

Study design and methods

Twenty-eight interviews were conducted with members of public health teams who were actively engaged in alcohol licensing in their local area between 2017 and 2019. Six teams were based in Scotland (where there is a public health licensing objective) and 14 in England (where there is no similar objective).

Results

Scottish participants reported that while challenges remained in applying the public health licensing objective, progress had been made and the objective was beneficial to their work. Participants in England felt that an objective would increase the legitimacy, value and impact of their contributions. In both Scotland and England, constructive relationships between PHTs, licensing authorities and other key stakeholders were developing suggesting that PHTs could have a sustainable and positive role in licensing.

Conclusions

In many Scottish areas, the alcohol licensing system is evolving to take constructive account of its public health objective. In England, PHTs that have invested resources in engaging in this area have demonstrated an ability to work effectively within licensing systems. Strong support for the adoption of a public health licensing objective among these PHTs adds weight to calls for the UK Government to reconsider its previous decision not to introduce such an objective.

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