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Most important career path

Professor Mark Bellis is Director of the Centre for Public Health (at Liverpool John Moores University), a World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre for Violence Prevention. He also directs the North West Public Health Observatory, the lead UK observatory for public health intelligence on alcohol, drugs and violence. Mark heads a team of academics and health professionals undertaking national and international projects addressing alcohol and drug use, violence, sexual behaviour, nightlife health and public health intelligence. He co-founded the international Club Health network in 1998 and is currently an active member of the Healthy Nightlife Toolbox and Club Health European projects, and UK lead for the European research network IREFREA. He represents the European Public Health Alliance on the EU task force on youth-specific aspects of alcohol, is UK Focal Point on Violence and Injury Prevention to the World Health Organization and is a founding member of the WHO Global Violence Prevention Alliance (VPA). He is also a member of the Medical Research Council's College of Public Health Experts and has acted as expert advisor on alcohol and drug use to the Department of Health, WHO, the United Nations and the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction.

Title of presentation

Safer Nightlife - It's not what you do, it's the way that you do it?

Description of the contribution

Bars and nightclubs are central features of recreational nightlife in the towns and cities of many countries. The last two decades have seen UK towns and cities regenerated through the provision of nightlife environments aimed at servicing youth-focused monocultures typified by heavy drinking, loud music and dancing. However, such changes in nightlife settings have created major problems with management of alcohol-related violence and anti-social behaviour at night. A variety of initiatives have been put in place to reduce violence and alcohol-related harm in night time environments. These include high profile policing, the location of security staff at late night transport points, additional street lighting, closed circuit television camera (CCTV) networks and public help points. In some circumstances, the evidence for their effectiveness in containing violence in nightlife environments is relatively good. However, such approaches can also reduce incentives for people to stay sober, potentially act as a mechanism for displacing violence into surrounding areas, and divert public monies to city centre drinking environments at the expense of services in local communities. Here we examine the evidence for what does and does not reduce alcohol-related harm and violence in public nightlife environments. However, we also critically appraise whether such measures simply create environments in which it appears 'safe' for people to routinely get drunk while displacing violence and adding to health and social problems elsewhere. We argue that a public health approach to nightlife is required which addresses drunkenness rather than pandering to the economic benefits of excessive alcohol use and managing any violence that is on public display.