



School for Public Health Research @ LSHTM (SPHR@L)

SPHR@L Seminar Series: 2014-2015

A talk by **Dr. David K. Humphreys**
University of Oxford

Wednesday, 11th March 2015, 5:15-6:30pm; Reception to follow

G9 (Faculty Meeting Room), LSHTM, 15-17 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9SH

Abstract

Preventing harm with alcohol licensing: can we generate evidence from policy?

Alcohol licensing is a potentially powerful tool for responding to health and social concerns associated with alcohol misuse. For several centuries, alcohol licensing has been deployed to control the physical availability of alcohol to prevent alcohol-related harm. Yet, despite alcohol licensing's long history, rigorous examinations of its impact are scarce, frustrating the development of new evidence-informed licensing policies. In this talk, I will discuss attempts to evaluate the most recent major change to licensing policy in England and Wales—the Licensing Act (2003). Contrary to traditional restrictive controls, the Licensing Act proposed to reduce violence and disorder by removing restraints on regulated opening hours for licensed premises, potentially *increasing* the physical availability of alcohol. We treated the removal of trading-hour restrictions as a natural experiment to test competing theoretical principles about the relationship between alcohol availability and violence. The Licensing Act is characteristic of many recent preventive initiatives in alcohol policy that have been designed without reference to robust evidence. While there is a dearth of evidence to draw on in designing new licensing policies, there are opportunities (often missed) to learn from these initiatives when they *are* implemented. Where an evidence base is absent or inconsistent, greater effort must be made to monitor and evaluate the impact of experimental policies, placing greater emphasis on the generation of evidence from both national and local alcohol policies.

Dr. David Humphreys is an Associate Professor of Evidence-Based Intervention and Policy Evaluation. He is interested in understanding how aspects of the built and social environment can be changed to help improve health and wellbeing and reduce social and physical harms. Much of David's research has focused on investigating the effects of large-scale environmental or social policy interventions.