



Evaluating Later or Expanded Premises Hours for Alcohol in the Night Time economy (ELEPHANT): Progress Update, 26th March 2025

Recap of Study Aim:

To understand and evaluate the introduction, operation and impact of later trading hours for late-night licensed venues in Glasgow and Aberdeen and to consider implications for licensing policy and practice.

Recent Opening Hour Changes in Scotland:

In Aberdeen, local licensing policy changed to permit bars to apply for the same late night trading hours as nightclubs. At least 38 premises had their licensed hours extended by 1-2 hours.

In Glasgow, a pilot programme allowed nightclubs to apply to open to 4am (instead of 3am), under certain conditions, and 10 premises initially took up the extra hour.

Study Progress & Emerging Findings

What policies hit the 'sweetspot' – protecting public health and on-trade premises? We held workshops with policy experts and did scoping reviews of published studies to identify what policies are most likely to be a win-win for public health and the licensed trade. Our conclusion was that policies to increase the price of alcohol in shops, especially minimum unit pricing, were most likely to meet the definition of a sweetspot policy. You can read this paper [for free here](#).

How to local statements of licensing policy (SLPs) handle opening hours? We analysed 366 local SLPs from all local authorities in Great Britain to understand local approaches including their interpretation of licensing laws and guidance. This paper was submitted in December 2024 and has had a positive review. Led by Dr. Megan Cook, Stirling/La Trobe, it is on track to be published by summer 2025.

How & why did the policy changes happen? We have completed analysis of documentation from Glasgow and Aberdeen (obtained through FOI) to understand the rationale for the changes in policy and the process of change. Paper led by Dr. Rachel O'Donnell, Stirling, to be submitted to journal imminently.

What impact did the changes have, based on stakeholder experiences? We have completed and analysed 39 interviews with frontline services, licensing and trade stakeholders and will report on impact on services, businesses, and staff resulting from the changes. Paper led by Dr. Gemma Mitchell, Stirling due to be submitted in Spring 25.

What impact did the changes have on ambulance call-outs and crimes in each city? We have completed our analysis separately for each city and have found some significant effects which will be submitted to a journal and reported at the Kettil Bruun Society (KBS) conference in Glasgow in June 2025. Paper led by Dr. Nurnabi Sheikh and Prof. Jim Lewsey, Glasgow.

What happens in late night venues which have been awarded the extra hours? We have completed observations in 15 venues across both cities to see how the extra hours work in practice in terms of how busy the venues are, who is there, how customers and staff are behaving. The paper, led by Prof. Carol Emslie, GCU, will be presented at the KBS conference in June 2025 and submitted shortly afterwards.

What do the public think about later trading hours? We have completed focus groups with the public, including residents and venue-goers to understand their views on later hours. We met with each group twice, providing them with information both on how people enjoy later trading hours as well as how they can put pressure on services, and explored their views. Dr. Karen Maxwell, GCU, is preparing a paper on their views on the later hours, and Dr. Isabelle Uny, Stirling, is preparing a paper on public views on the future of the night-time economy more generally. Both papers are due for submission in summer 2025.

Further papers will report on the impact of the 1am bar pilot in Glasgow, and on the following:

- Economic impacts of the later trading hours.
- The long-term impact of the later hours on the NHS and health inequalities.
- Changes in the location of harms
- Media coverage of the local policy changes.
- Modelled impact for other cities.

For further information, please contact:
Prof. Niamh Fitzgerald, niamh.fitzgerald@stir.ac.uk

FUNDED BY

NIHR | National Institute for Health and Care Research