

Project Details	
Project Code	MRCPHS26Br Attwood
Title	"Nudging" alcohol consumption: Developing interventions to encourage drinkers to reduce alcohol consumption by switching to no/low alcohol alternatives
Research Theme	PHS
Project Type	Dry lab
Summary	Our environment shapes our behaviour. Understanding this relationship can uncover novel ways to encourage people to live healthier lives. This project will use choice architecture frameworks (process of designing environments to present choices in different ways) to explore how spaces that provide alcohol (e.g., pubs, restaurants) may be adapted to encourage switching from alcohol consumption to no/low-alcoholic alternatives. This will include literature scoping, discussion with stakeholders (e.g., patrons, publicans), experimental research and field trials, with a primary aim of advising policy and practice on how alcohol-providing premises can be best designed to promote positive population health.
Description	<p>Alcohol consumption is deeply ingrained in social activities in many countries around the world. Excessive and chronic levels of consumption carry significant health harms. However, due to this ubiquitous consumption, much of the health burden associated with alcohol consumption comes from long-term moderate to heavy use of alcohol in individuals who are not dependent and may not realise the health impact of their consumption.</p> <p>Changing alcohol consumption behaviour can be very difficult to initiate and sustain, due to it being an embedded behaviour perceived as providing support or social facilitation. No or low alcohol alternatives have been on the market for decades, but there has been a recent upsurge in the number and quality of products on the market. This means that reducing individual level consumption by switching some alcohol drinks to no/low alternatives may be an opportunity to improve population health.</p> <p>While this creates an opportunity for behaviour change, breaking habits and creating motivation to do so remains a challenge. Individual level interventions are costly and can be ineffective, particularly when trying to reach people who are not already motivated to change behaviour. Alternatively, embedding interventions within microenvironments where people consume alcohol (e.g., bars, restaurants), provides opportunity for low-cost reach and effectiveness. To encourage healthier behaviour (in this case switching from alcoholic to no/low-alcoholic alternatives), choice architecture frameworks can be used to design spaces that “nudge” individuals to make healthier choices, without limiting freedom of choice.</p> <p>The choice architecture approach has also been shown to reduce alcohol sales in field research. In a recent study, we recruited 14 public houses all of which served non-alcoholic beer but did not serve it on draught at front of bar. Over 8 weeks, these public houses replaced an on-draught alcoholic beer with a non-alcoholic on-draught alternative for half of the study (4 weeks) and conducted business as normal (no on-draught non-alcohol beer) for the remaining weeks (randomised schedule). The</p>

	<p>primary outcome was sales data, and across venues we found a mean reduction of 4% in alcoholic drinks sold, along with an increase in sales of non-alcoholic alternatives (De-Loyde et al. 2024)</p> <p>This studentship will build on this work by exploring other intervention possibilities with a broader aim of providing guidance on how alcohol-selling premises may be best designed to reduce high levels of alcohol consumption and intoxication. To ensure that any outcomes could be implemented, the student will engage with key stakeholders including local authorities (licensing teams) and venue managers to ensure interventions are feasible before conducting intensive effectiveness testing. There would be a focus on understanding how effects generalise to different types of venue, including those in areas of different levels of deprivation to understand how interventions could be tailored or optimised for high-risk groups and to reduce health inequality.</p> <p>This studentship offers broad training opportunities due to the range of research and supporting activities. Key areas of activity would include a literature review to identify existing efforts that could be replicated or embedded in our own interventions. Significant engagement with stakeholders is required to ensure any proposed intervention is feasible, and has potential to be effective. This will include substantial PPIE with alcohol consumers including co-design if appropriate (e.g., if intervention requires development of educational or advertising materials). The student will therefore spend the first part of the PhD exploring existing research and identifying opportunities for intervention that will be tested in latter part of studentship (e.g., online study or pilot field study). The student will be able to shape their PhD in a number of ways.</p> <p>Primarily they will use their learning and the available literature to shape the nature of the intervention(s) and the physical site in which they would like to embed it (e.g., public house, restaurant, festival). They can also decide the scope of the translational pathway they wish to pursue. For example, they could choose to focus on one intervention and progress through to a field trial, or design multiple and explore interactions in smaller scale experimental studies, where future larger-scale testing could be developed as Fellowship applications at the end of the PhD.</p> <p>The team have a strong track record of choice architecture work, including involvement in a large Wellcome Trust award (Behaviour change by design: generating and implementing evidence to improve health for all), and intervention development and evaluation. This range of experience and expertise provides the student with the flexibility to steer their PhD in ways that interest them and supports their future career.</p>
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