Alcohol sales restrictions 'are helping to cut number of hospital admissions'

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## **Study into alcohol control policies comes as figures show drink-fuelled crime costs the economy £11 billion a year, and a further £7.3 billion in lost productivity**

ontrolling the number of outlets that can sell alcohol in a certain area can lead to fewer hospital admissions, research suggests.

Councils are able to create cumulative impact zones (CIZs) to control the number of new places selling alcohol in a bid to cut crime and anti-social behaviour.

Now researchers have found that such policies can lead to a small reduction in drink-related hospital admissions.

CIZs are sometimes called "saturation zones" or "stress areas" and are places where no new drinking establishments will be allowed, and existing premises can be be stopped from staying open for extra hours.

The new study, published in the Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health, found that annual hospital admission rates were 2% lower than expected in areas with the most restrictive policies.

The experts said alcohol misuse costs the NHS in England alone an estimated £3.5 billion every year.

Drink-fuelled crime costs the economy £11 billion a year, and a further £7.3 billion in lost productivity.

The researchers assessed the alcohol licensing policies made to 326 local authorities between 2007/8 and 2011/12.

In 2007/8, 118 out of 319 (37%) operated some form of active alcohol licensing policy, one in five of which also included CIZ for new premises.

By 2014, a further 63 councils had adopted active alcohol licensing policies.

The team looked at hospital admissions and after taking into account factors that may affect the results, such as deprivation and drink-fuelled crime, licensing policies were linked with fewer drink-related admissions between 2009 and 2015.

The largest effects were seen in those local authority areas operating the most comprehensive policies.

In these, drink-related hospital admissions fell by 2% every year.

The experts, including from the School of Health and Related Research, University of Sheffield, said: "These analyses contribute to the available evidence on the effectiveness of population level alcohol licensing policies specifically for England, and are the first to demonstrate that the intensity with which selected alcohol licensing policies are implemented and scrutinised is related to measurable reductions in alcohol attributable hospital admissions."