

Briefing Note

Title: Alcohol harm in Wolverhampton **Date:** 08.02.2023

Prepared by: Michelle Smith **Job Title:** Principal Public Health Specialist

Intended Audience: Internal Partner organisation Public Confidential

Purpose

To provide the Residents, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Panel with a brief outline of alcohol harm in Wolverhampton and what the Council and its partners are doing in response.

Background

Alcohol is a legal, socially acceptable substance which is seen as an integral part of daily life and is used to celebrate, commiserate, and socialise. Its ready availability from supermarkets and off licences to sports events, cinemas, coffee shops and bars/pubs, creates the impression that alcohol is a normal part of everyday life. In reality, alcohol can be a toxic substance that creates dependence and can cause serious health and social problems.

On a national level, alcohol-specific deaths have risen sharply since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic. In 2021, there were 9,641 deaths (14.8 per 100,000 people) from alcohol-specific causes registered in the UK, the highest number on record and 7.4% higher than 2020 and 27.4% higher than in 2019¹.

Alcohol-specific deaths only include those health conditions where each death is a direct consequence of alcohol (that is, wholly attributable causes such as alcoholic liver disease). It does not include all deaths that can be attributed to alcohol.

What does the data tell us?

In Wolverhampton, data shows us residents are drinking at harmful levels as outlined below:

- During 2020 Wolverhampton had the worst alcohol-specific mortality rate in the UK with a rate of 29.3 per 100,000 population (equating to 70 deaths).
- More recently, indicative alcohol-specific mortality data for 2021 shows 54 deaths have been registered. At this stage, the data remains unverified and therefore, we are unable to provide a ranking against other local authorities, until the full ONS (Office for National Statistics) alcohol-specific dataset is released.

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<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/alcohol-specificdeathsintheuk/2021registrations>

- Wolverhampton's hospital admissions rate for alcohol-specific conditions is 621 per 100,000 population which is considerably higher than England's rate at 587 per 100,000 population.
- Based on estimated prevalence in Wolverhampton, only 1 in 5 people who experience alcohol harm are engaged with alcohol treatment support services. This means there is an unmet need of 82% in the population (nearly 2950 individuals), which equates to approximately 650 individuals in treatment for alcohol dependency.
- For those who are engaged in treatment and support, their recovery outcomes are positive, nearly 45% exit treatment successfully and do not represent (successful completions of alcohol treatment).
- Since 2015, the Wolverhampton treatment completions rate has been consistently higher than the national average. Currently, Wolverhampton are in the top quarter of performance for successful completion of alcohol treatment in the UK and the 2nd in the West Midlands region (behind Dudley).
- A matter of concern relates to the investigation of alcohol-specific mortality data (2018-2020) which shows a significant over representation of deaths in White males (69.4%) and Asian males (26.3%) compared to the local population (male and female) of 60.6% and 21.2% respectively (2021).
- Looking at data for those in substance misuse treatment shows us there is minimal disproportionality amongst the White British population, however, amongst Black and Minority Ethnic groups there is an under-representation in treatment compared to the local population and is particularly evident in the South Asian population.

What are the Council and its partners doing in response to rising alcohol harm?

- In July 2022 the local Drug and Alcohol Strategic Partnership was developed to form a consortium of multi-agency partners working towards the mutual aim of reducing drug and alcohol harm across Wolverhampton. The partnership aligned to the publication of the national drug strategy '*From Harm to Hope: a 10-year plan to cut crime and save lives*'².
- The partnership is currently facilitating the production of a joint strategic needs assessment for drugs and alcohol which in turn informs a local delivery plan (interim draft plan on a page attached at Appendix 1) and equally, is intended to deliver the strategic priorities identified in *From Harm to Hope*.
- In response to the ambitions outlined in *From Harm to hope*, additional government funding has been committed to local authorities during 2022-2025 to reduce substance related crime and death. This additional funding is aimed at increasing the capacity and capability of the specialist substance misuse workforce to ultimately identify and work with an increasing number of individuals at risk of and/or experiencing harm.
- Appendix 1 below details the initial alcohol harm reduction priorities for the drug and alcohol partnership. The plan in its entirety does not encapsulate the whole of the substance misuse work programme, moreover it summarises some of our immediate objectives. The plan outlines some key actions which are all aimed at preventing harm from developing, earlier identification of harm and engagement into treatment and recovery and include:

² [From harm to hope: A 10-year drugs plan to cut crime and save lives - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/107114/From_harm_to_hope_A_10_year_drugs_plan_to_cut_crime_and_save_lives.pdf)

- Improving increased access to high-quality treatment interventions including the development of specialist alcohol clinics in community settings and the expansion of the specialist alcohol team in secondary care.
- Rolling out a citywide extensive programme of Identification and Brief Advice (IBA) training for those working with communities most at risk.
- Improving the quality of screening activity in high-risk groups via frontline services, targeted support services and NHS Health Checks and general patient appointments in GP practices.
- A newly created supported employment programme launching in April 2023 specifically aimed at supporting clients engaged in drug and alcohol treatment into sustainable paid employment. This programme will build on the excellent work already being undertaken to facilitate clients into employment.
- Conducting a bespoke piece of work specifically exploring research insights in relation to high-risk communities including the South Asian population.

Further areas of consideration for the Council and partners

- Consideration of workplace approaches to identification of alcohol harm and subsequent support.
- Ensuring treatment and recovery services are inclusive and representative of all communities.
- Removing barriers to support for individuals with co-existing substance misuse and mental health problems (also known as dual diagnosis). Initial research project is underway.
- Understanding aftercare support offer from wider organisations across the city following exit from treatment services.

Appendix 1 – Reducing Alcohol Harm (plan on a page in draft)

