

Wirral Drugs Strategy

2023-2027

A four-year vision to reduce drug-related harm in Wirral.



Contents

Foreword	2
Introduction	3
Our Vision	4
Wirral Drugs Strategy - Our Vision Our Mission	5
Where We Are Now	6
Priority 1 Building a positive culture to reduce drug-related harm	7
Priority 2 Preventing children, young people and families from being affected by drugs	9
Priority 3 Strengthening our excellent treatment and recovery system	11
Priority 4 Reducing health inequalities for people who use drugs and preventing drug-related deaths	15
Priority 5 Working together to reduce drug-related crime and harm in Wirral	17
How we will measure success	19
Working alongside other strategies	20
Delivering this Strategy	21

Foreword

This Strategy is our response to the National Drugs Strategy, 'From Harm To Hope' and Dame Carol Black's in-depth report on the damage that drugs cause to our society. It's not a starting point - but builds on a long foundation of innovative work and collaboration to reduce drug related harm in Wirral.

Reducing drug related harm in Wirral will improve health and wellbeing, reduce health inequalities, improve the lives of children and young people, protect local communities, support our local economy and support the success of our local regeneration programmes.

In the past two years we've seen a revitalisation of this work, with Wirral receiving investment from Project ADDER along with Merseyside Police as part of the vanguard of the National Drugs Strategy.

We are coming together with this Strategy to signal how we are going to work collaboratively over the next four years, and what our long-term vision is for reducing the harm that drugs cause in our communities.

Wirral has a strong track record of working together to reduce drug-related harm, with an outstanding treatment provider, a range of innovative organisations to support people in recovery, and joint working between

all parts of the system – be that youth justice and Merseyside Police, Probation, or our local health and care services. In focus groups with people with lived experience of drug use, we often hear how positive people's experience of the Wirral treatment and recovery system was, in comparison to their experiences elsewhere.

This doesn't mean that there isn't work to be done. We know that there are many people who are dependent on drugs who our system isn't reaching. There are children and young people exposed to the impact of drugs from a young age, be that parental drug use, or by being exploited by the criminal gangs that control the drugs trade – and we see the impact of the drugs trade on our communities, making them feel less safe. Ultimately we are seeing people in Wirral die from drug use, a tide we are determined to turn around.

As the Chair of the Wirral Combatting Drugs Partnership, I'm proud to be presenting this Strategy, which has been produced with input from a wide range of partners, most importantly including people with lived experience of drug use.

The Wirral Combatting Drugs Partnership, has reinvigorated long-standing local collaborations, and we are collectively determined to deliver this Strategy in order to reduce the impact of drugs in Wirral. To support the delivery of this Strategy we will develop an implementation plan outlining priority actions, key milestones, risks and mitigation measures (including resource and financial risks) for the forthcoming year which will be owned by the Wirral Combatting Drugs Partnership.



Dave Bradburn
Director of Public Health Wirral
Chair of Wirral Combatting Drugs Partnership

Introduction

Wirral is fortunate to have an outstanding treatment and recovery system.

The 2021 National Drugs Strategy sets out a 10-year ambition to reduce drug-related harm. This Strategy is Wirral's response, and sets out how we will work together, led by our Wirral Combatting Drugs Partnership, to reduce the harm that drugs cause in our communities.

The national strategy has 3 key aims:

- Breaking drug supply chains
- Delivering a world-class treatment and recovery system
- Reducing the demand for drugs

National Drugs Strategy Investments

As part of the National Drugs Strategy, Wirral was selected as an 'accelerator' area, for early enhanced investment. Wirral received additional funding 2021/22 and 2022/23, focusing on strengthening our treatment system. Wirral Council will receive significant further investment in 2023-25. Our Strategy will help shape the spend of these investments locally.

Along with Wirral Council, Merseyside Police has received funding under the National Drugs Strategy through to 2025 to strengthen the join up of enforcement activity with treatment and recovery.

Why a Wirral Strategy?

All local areas have been asked to build their own plans to tackle drug-related harm, recognising the importance of local solutions and knowledge.

Wirral is fortunate to have an outstanding treatment and recovery system, with a wealth of experience. We also have a larger than average number of people who use drugs, many of whom have been using drugs for a long time, with high rates of physical and mental health problems. It is vital we build local solutions to local problems.

Our Strategy sets out our vision for uplifting communities and enabling all people in Wirral to live healthier lives free from the harmful impacts of drugs. We will do this by focusing on a few key priorities.

Throughout all our work prevention will be key, as will our vision for a positive narrative for recovery, combatting the stigma associated with drug use, and strengthening the voice of people with lived experience.

Our vision

We want all people in Wirral to be able to live healthier, happy lives, free from the harmful impacts of drugs.

We will turn this vision into a reality by focusing on the following five key priorities which, by working together, will make the biggest difference in reducing drug-related harm for everyone and to help reduce health-inequalities within Wirral:

Our Priorities

- 1** Building a positive culture to reduce drug-related harm
- 2** Protecting children and young people.
- 3** Strengthening our excellent treatment and recovery system.
- 4** Reducing health-inequalities and reducing drug-related deaths.
- 5** Working together to reduce drug-related crime and harm in Wirral.



Wirral Drugs Strategy - Our Vision Our Mission

Our Vision

We want all people in Wirral to be able to live healthy, happy lives, free from the harmful impacts of drugs.

Our Mission

We will turn this vision into a reality by focusing on five key priorities which, by working together, will make the biggest difference in reducing drug-related harm for everyone and to help reduce health-inequalities within Wirral:

Priority 1

Building a positive culture to reduce drug-related harm

- Enhance the voice of people with lived experience.
- Combat the stigma faced by people with lived experience.
- Adopt Trauma Informed Care.
- Run culturally adaptive and inclusive services.
- Build and share positive messages about treatment and recovery.
- Upskill our wider system to support people who use drugs and those in recovery.

Priority 2

Protecting children and young people

- Ensure work to reduce drug-related harm for children and young people has strong profile and is well integrated with wider children and young people relevant programmes and adult workstreams and related strategies.
- Give all children and young people high quality drug education.
- Strengthen joint support for families with a drug use need.
- Strengthen safeguarding for children and young people at risk from drug-related exploitation.

Priority 3

Strengthening our excellent treatment and recovery system

- Expand the capacity of our treatment system.
- Increase treatment quality.
- Focus on prevention and early intervention.
- Build our system-wide support, related to housing, education, employment and training.
- Provide a range of treatment options according to need, including for those with the longest history of drug use.
- Better integrate our treatment and recovery system.
- Further integrate our recovery within Wirral communities.
- Harness the positive impact of recovery in our communities.

Priority 4

Reducing health inequalities and reducing drug-related deaths

- Improve the underlying health of people who use drugs and prevent ill-health.
- Improve accessibility of health care with flexible, tailored provision.
- Work jointly to improve care for people with co-occurring drug-use and mental health needs.
- Increase and improve the engagement of those who use drugs with Wirral's wider health and care system.
- Collaborate to prevent drug-related deaths.

Priority 5

Working together to reduce drug-related crime and harm in Wirral

- Build a whole system approach to drug-related crime and harm.
- Strengthen diversionary pathways.
- Build partnership working to stop the exploitation of vulnerable people.
- Improve joint training and learning and develop a consistent approach to enforcement.
- Improve continuity of care from prison back into the community.

Where We Are Now



2,982

Wirral Ways
clients in treatment
54% are opiate clients



45%

of opiate clients in Wirral
are **aged over 50**
compared to 25% nationwide



77%

of opiate clients **live in**
the most deprived areas
in Wirral



7x

Wirral opiate clients
over 45 are 7 times more
likely to have COPD



1,300

clients are **parents** with
46% having children
living with them



88%

of people completing treatment
no longer have a housing need



3,090

people **use opiates** and/or
crack cocaine in the Wirral
(estimate)



1,263

opiate and/or crack
cocaine users in the Wirral
are **not in treatment** (estimate)



121

drug related deaths
from 2019 to 2021,
increasing each year



205

drug misuse hospital admissions
from 2018 to 2021 in those **aged**
15-24. Higher than national rates



76%

A survey of drug using **13 to**
19 year olds found that 76%
primarily used cannabis



35%

of people **on probation** need
support for drug use



Priority 1

Building a positive culture to reduce drug-related harm

Wirral has a strong track record of collaborating to reduce drug-related harm, with the newly established Wirral Combatting Drugs Partnership able to draw on and cement existing relationships. However, there are still challenges that we need to work together on to reduce the impact of drugs on our communities, reduce the barriers to recovery currently faced by people, and ensure we protect the next generation from drug-related harm.

There is growing recognition of the impact of stigmatisation on people who use drugs. Stigma can be a barrier to personal recovery and to accessing services, further damaging the health and wellbeing of people who use drugs.

Stigma needs to be addressed to reduce the barriers faced by people affected by drug use when seeking the support and treatment they need.

People with lived experience of drug use have an important role to play in combatting stigma. Although Wirral's treatment and recovery organisations have a strong track record of promoting the voices of people with lived experience, there is currently no Wirral-wide Lived Experience Network.

We also need to recognise the impact of trauma on people who use drugs. A range of organisations in Wirral have been upskilling their workforces on trauma-informed approaches to care – as a partnership we need to ensure that organisations beyond traditional treatment and recovery services are adopting these models.

In working to change the culture of how we work together to combat drug-related harm, we need to ensure that we build a system that works for all our residents, whatever background they come from, providing bespoke services where needed.



Stigma is a real problem and a barrier to treatment. Drugs is a political football, there's lots of sensationalism in the media, drugs aren't funny, they should be treated as a health problem."

(Focus group participant)

Our long-term vision - we will...

- Ensure that people with lived experience of drug use have a strong and influential voice in all work to reduce drug-related harm in Wirral.
- Work across our communities and organisations to combat the stigma faced by people with lived experience of drug use.
- Continue to build trauma-informed care into our practice across the system.
- Ensure that all people in Wirral are able to access drug use services in a way that is culturally appropriate for them.
- Build and share positive messages around drug treatment and recovery across Wirral.

To achieve this, initially we will...

- Facilitate the development of a Lived Experience Network, supported by all members of the Wirral Combatting Drugs Partnership.
- Build a local action plan to challenge stigma informed by evidence-based interventions.
- Participate in a national pilot scheme to reduce stigmatisation in our health services.
- Connect services and organisations working with people who use drugs to current work around trauma informed care in Wirral and increase our delivery of trauma informed care training.
- Develop a joint communications strategy to create positive messages about drug treatment and recovery in Wirral.
- Continue to support the development of bespoke approaches to tackling substance misuse working with underserved communities in Wirral, including people representing our different ethnic minority communities.



Priority 2

Protecting children and young people

Drug use can have significant impacts on the lives of our children and young people. From the start of life, exposure to drugs in the womb can impact on development, and the impact of drugs on families can expose children to a wide range of adverse childhood experiences.

Drug use in childhood and adolescence disproportionately affects those who are already living in difficult circumstances. Young people using drugs face similar challenges to those we see in adult drug users, including mental health problems, housing needs or support to remain in education or training. Young people may also be vulnerable to criminal exploitation.

Patterns of drug use for young people are different to adults. Cannabis is the drug most commonly used by young people; however, cocaine use may be increasing. While not illegal, vaping is a growing and connected issue for young people.

Young people need bespoke support. A tiered approach with education provided to all young people and more targeted support for those at greatest risk of harm has been shown to be

effective. Dame Carol Black highlighted the need for building capacity in drug services for young people - and increasing the capacity of Response, our young person's drug treatment service, will be an early objective. We also need to ensure that young people on the cusp of adult services receive the support they need.

Delivering this requires co-ordinated efforts across many stakeholders including child and adolescent mental health services, education, social services, treatment and recovery services, and youth justice to name a few. Work needs to be well connected to existing children and young people's programmes, such as Breaking the Cycle, and work on Safer Adolescence. It also requires work that takes into account the family context – improving outcomes for children requires holistic support for families, mindful that young people's drug use can also present a risk to those that care for them.

With the expansion of the remit of new investments to tackle drugs in Wirral to include children and young people and prioritise prevention, this is a priority area for the Wirral Combatting Drugs Partnership.



My son is coming round now... I think he's seen this massive change in me, like the odd slip at the beginning, but I'm hopeful "

I've gotten better, so he has faith in this service because he's seen a difference in me."

(Lived experience focus group participant)

Our long-term vision - we will...

- Ensure work to reduce drug-related harm for children and young people has a strong profile and is well integrated with wider children and young people programmes and adult workstreams.
- Give all children and young people in Wirral access to high quality education on substance use, treatment and recovery, and ensure schools are supported to be confident to respond to issues around drug use.
- Work with schools and schools' programmes to support those at risk of exclusion or suspension for drug-related incidents.
- Ensure people who use drugs and their families receive the support they need to sustain healthy family relationships and protect children from the effects of drug use.
- Protect children and young people from exploitation related to the drug trade.

To achieve this, initially we will...

- Better connect our current programmes of family support with drug treatment services and explore how we can provide an enhanced service to families where children are at risk, including furthering understanding and work with our community, voluntary, and faith sector.
- Review current education on substance use, treatment and recovery for CYP and develop an improvement plan.
- Work with schools and the community around the schools' programme to support those at risk of exclusion or suspension for drug-related incidents.
- Increase the capacity and capability of the Response Service to support young people with their wider needs and provide bridging support to those eligible for adult services.
- Work with the Breaking the Cycle programme to upskill our system in providing trauma informed care.
- Better connect our current programmes of family support with drug and alcohol treatment services and explore how we can provide an enhanced service to families where children are at risk.
- Better connect work on drug-use to the Safer Adolescence Strategy and identify key areas for collaboration.



Priority 3

Strengthening our excellent treatment and recovery system

Providing high quality treatment for people with a drug use need is key to reducing drug-related harm and helping people move into recovery. Increasing the number of people accessing treatment is a key goal of the national strategy..

Wirral Ways has significantly increased their capacity and reach with new investment from the ADDER programme and has recently been rated as outstanding by the Care Quality Commission.

Our long-term vision is to build on this success, ensuring that services are accessible and appropriate for anybody who might have a drug use problem, and providing the wide-ranging support people need.

This will require collaboration from partners including those working in housing, social services, education and employment support services, or Citizens Advice. Physical and mental health provision is another key piece of the puzzle, and is captured in more detail in Priority 4. Our adult and children and young people's treatment providers have a role to play in upskilling how all our workforces support people who use drugs.

Patterns of drug use are changing, with cocaine and benzodiazepines being reported more frequently, alongside poly-drug use. New responses are needed, including effective early intervention and preventative offers, alongside improved support for people addicted to prescription or over the counter medications. We recognise the importance of joined up approaches to drugs and alcohol, especially where clients have overlapping needs.

We recognise the importance of understanding the journeys people have been on prior to entering treatment which calls for a trauma informed care approach, prioritising the voice of people with lived experience and working to combat stigma.

Many of the aims of our Strategy for our adult system apply to our system for children and young people; we will ensure that these systems continue to work closely, and are strengthened jointly.



With the right motivation, it didn't feel like treatment to me, it felt normal, like I belong here."

(Lived experience focus group participant)

Our long-term vision - we will...

- Ensure that all people who need treatment for a drug use need in Wirral are accessing treatment - expanding treatment capacity and bolstering existing high-quality treatment provision, with enhanced support for key at-risk groups.
- Improve our system's support for people using non-opiate drugs.
- Upskill our wider workforce across the system to be confident in supporting people who use drugs.
- Strengthen existing system-wide support for people who use drugs and those in recovery – including housing, education, training, and employment – to maximise treatment and recovery outcomes – and ensure these wider systems are well connected to the drug treatment system.
- Ensure simple transitions for people moving out of treatment into recovery, or back into treatment where their recovery may be threatened.

To achieve this, initially we will...

- Review all referral pathways into treatment – ensuring all parts of the system are working together to identify need and refer people into treatment.
- Explore and introduce new treatment options, including strengthening the provision for non-opiate/cocaine use and over the counter and long-term prescribed medications - working with primary care where necessary.
- Expand the provision of brief interventions and preventative programmes, enhancing them through co-production with people with lived experience of addiction.
- Develop a workforce plan, to expand the size and skill of the workforce, and build training capacity to improve the knowledge and understanding of other professionals on key concepts in drugs and alcohol and 'identification and brief advice' tools.
- Maximise the uptake of existing education, training and employment programmes by people who use drugs.
- Improve joint working between housing services and treatment services to better support those in treatment or recovery and identify those outside of treatment with co-existing housing and drug use needs.
- Strengthen partnership working with recovery providers to better understand pathways from treatment to recovery and recovery to treatment, supported by people with lived experience.



Focusing on recovery...

Successful treatment outcomes are dependent on being able to give people the support they need to remain in recovery. It is important to be able to support a range of recovery options recognising people's differing needs – including abstinence-based programmes, fellowship models and models focused on harm reduction

The concept of a recovery village is growing in Wirral, with a well-established and well-integrated recovery-oriented system of care, and a range of pathways through treatment into a diverse range of recovery support. Spider Project and Nightingales Café and Recovery Hub sit alongside mutual aid meetings, the Discovery Academy, and a wealth of community-led recovery initiatives. Together these provide people with structured recovery programmes, access to purposeful activities, or drop-in resources for people to use as they need.

It is essential that recovery programmes are closely linked with treatment programmes, so that transitions between treatment and recovery are as easy as possible. Better integrating recovery programmes with the wider community will help those moving away from any 'formal' offer – this also gives us the opportunity to harness the positive impact of recovery in our communities.

We are also aware that moving away from 'formal' recovery services does not mean that a person's needs stop, and there is scope for improving a 'light touch' easy access recovery offer for anyone who might need that support.

While people in recovery may have moved away from drug treatment services, they may still have complex needs as a result of their drug use, including chronic health problems, or ongoing support for housing or educational and employment needs. Without addressing these issues, people will be at higher risk of relapsing.

In recovery, you have to face everything that you've blocked off for years."

(Lived experience focus group participant)



I'm throwing everything into my recovery, it's my focus. It's too easy to take your eye off the prize"

(Lived experience focus group participant)

Our long-term vision - we will...

- Strengthen the integration of treatment and recovery, and the integration between the different pillars of our recovery system, to ensure that all people who use drugs are able to easily access the recovery support they need.
- Strengthen the connections between recovery communities and the wider Wirral community - harnessing the positive contributions of people in recovery to spread the positive impact of recovery.
- Ensure that people in recovery are able to access continuing support to meet their ongoing needs and build independent lives.
- Ensure that people in recovery are able to access the support they need for their long term health needs as a consequence of drug use.

To achieve this, initially we will...

- Improve integration and reciprocal pathways between our recovery providers.
- Work on equality of access to recovery services across Wirral, exploring options for co-location, transport support or satellite recovery hubs.
- Enhance the promotion and marketing of recovery options – making a positive case for recovery to our communities, staff, and service users.
- Launch and evaluate the recovery housing project in partnership with Torus, Change Grow Live, Nightingales and Wirral Council to provide alternatives to residential rehabilitation placements.
- Explore how we can provide an enhanced health service to people in recovery via our key providers.



Priority 4

Reducing health inequalities and reducing drug-related deaths

Drug dependence often co-exists with other physical and mental health problems. People who use drugs experience poorer health. Ultimately this results in fewer years lived in good health on average for people who use drugs.

People who use drugs in Wirral have high rates of lung disease, but also of cardiovascular disease and other physical health conditions. Prevention, screening, and treatment of blood-borne viruses (BBVs) is also important – work here will need to be joined up with Wirral's Health Protection Strategy to ensure all parts of the system are delivering.

Poor mental health and drug use are closely linked, with people who use drugs having higher rates of mental health problems, and people with mental health problems being more likely to turn to drug use. Dame Carol Black clearly identified that the mental health system is not currently delivering as well as it should for people who use drugs and alcohol.

People who use drugs can have difficulty accessing the health and care system and may face stigma

from professionals. A proportion of people who use drugs will be high users of healthcare – Wirral has some of the highest rates of drug-related hospital admissions in the country.

Ultimately poorer physical and mental health, and the risks around current drug use, combined with difficulties accessing healthcare lead to the tragically high rates of drug-related deaths we see in Wirral.

Significant progress has been made, in part with funding from the ADDER programme – developing new models of care, such as respiratory clinics co-located in Wirral Ways, but there is still much work to be done to improve how our health and care system works together to support people who use drugs.

Improving the physical and mental health of people who use drugs, preventing ill health, and preventing drug related deaths, are key to changing some of the greatest health inequalities we see in Wirral.



The way I think for what needs to be done is more in mental health. In fact, you have everyone that's had some sort of addiction, whether it be alcohol, drugs or whatever. They've got mental health traumas."

(Lived experience focus group participant)

Our long-term vision - we will...

- Work to improve the underlying health of people who use drugs and prevent ill health.
- Continue to improve provision of care, strengthening the links between drug treatment services and wider health and care provision, and developing tailored models of care.
- Improve the care received by children and adults with a mental health problem who also use drugs.
- Ensure all partners work together to understand and prevent drug-related deaths.
- Ensure the voices of people with lived experience are heard in the design and operation of our healthcare system, working to reduce stigmatisation of drug use.

To achieve this, initially we will...

- Ensure a strong focus on reducing smoking rates among people who misuse drugs within the local Wirral Tobacco Control Plan.
- Achieve and sustain micro-elimination for Hepatitis C, and work with the Wirral Health Protection Board's system wide response to BBVs.
- Improve access to primary care for people who use drugs, or are in recovery, and improve detection and management of long

term conditions.

- Better integrate Wirral Ways with the wider Wirral health data system, enabling better care through data sharing.
- Strengthen the links between the hospital and drug treatment system, to improve pathways for patients and improve our response to drug related hospital admissions.
- Build on existing models of pop-up service delivery, e.g. respiratory and sexual health clinics to improve access to care for people who use drugs or are in recovery.
- Strengthen joint working between mental health and drug treatment, starting by recruiting a specialist workforce and improving access to NHS Talking Therapies.
- Develop and deliver training programmes for health and care workers looking after people who use drugs.
- Enhance the surveillance system for reporting fatal and non-fatal overdoses and implementing learning from these cases.
- Continue to enhance our system wide distribution of naloxone to prevent fatal overdoses.
- Participate in a national pilot to understand, and reduce stigma encountered in health and care.



Priority 5

Working together to reduce drug-related crime and harm in Wirral

Drug-related crime harms individuals and communities, making neighbourhoods feel less safe. People who commit drug-related crimes are often suffering from drug dependency and may feel trapped in cycles of crime and drug use. For many people, custodial sentences, or a criminal record can do more harm than good and prevent them moving forward in their recovery. A whole system approach is needed to make non-custodial and diversionary options as effective as possible. The prison system needs to be supported to help people move forward, not backward in their recovery journey

The organised crime groups that control the drug trade target vulnerable people, through cuckooing, county lines and other methods, and work

must be done to protect our communities from organised crime, and the wider impacts of drug-related crime. This is not just a job for the police, but our whole Community Safety Partnership working together.

To reduce drug-related crime, it is essential that the system works together to break drug supply chains, reduce the supply of drugs, and divert people into treatment and recovery. This needs to be underpinned by a focus on prevention to break the cycle to drug-related crime.

Police, Probation and the wider criminal justice system are working in positive, new ways to reduce drug-related harm in Wirral, and this Strategy will mark the strengthening of this work.



There needs to be some kind of collective system whereby drug services, social services, criminal services, mental health services they all talk to each other”

(Lived experience focus group participant)

Our long-term vision - we will...

- Ensure a whole system approach to diversion, prevention, and enforcement to maximise harm reduction, break the cycle of addiction, offending and imprisonment and prevent criminalisation.
- Ensure that diversionary pathways are delivering for people who use drugs and reducing crime and criminalisation.
- Strengthen partnership working and sharing of information to combat crime and reduce drug related harm, including preventing vulnerable people being exploited through county lines and cuckooing.
- Improve joint learning and training across the system, developing a consistent approach to policing and crime prevention and sharing best practice.
- Ensure people leaving prison receive the wrap around support they need to move forward in their recovery journey.
- Develop agreed pathways and memoranda of understanding between partners on diversionary pathways.
- Recruit specialist workers to bridge the gaps between the Courts, Probation and Wirral Ways, and increase the awareness and utilisation of non-custodial sentencing options.
- Build on police outreach work and joint working between Police and Wirral Ways to increase numbers of people referred into treatment.
- Review, and build on positive work to change the use of language around drug use by Police as a step to combatting stigma in the criminal justice system.
- Continue to develop reporting, recording and training for Police and partners on county lines, cuckooing and modern-day slavery.
- Improve the connections between arrest for trigger offences and the availability of assessments of suitability for treatment at the point of sentencing.

To achieve this, initially we will...

- Improve the system-wide understanding and reporting of pathways diverting from the criminal justice system, building a clear system to track performance.
- Build an understanding of how to utilise wider enforcement pathways such as licensing to develop a community wide response to drug-related harm.
- Consider how to enhance provision for priority groups under integrated offender management in the community.
- Achieve the agreed targets of 70% for continuity of care from prison to community, ensuring that those with a treatment need in prison receive the support they need on their release.

How we will measure success

The Wirral Combatting Drugs Partnership will produce an annual report on progress in delivering our Drugs Strategy.

Reducing drug related harm in Wirral will improve health and wellbeing, reduce health inequalities, improve the lives of children and young people, protect local communities, support our local economy and support the success of our local regeneration programmes.

Over the course of the first year of the Strategy, we will develop a suite of outcomes to best measure our performance against each of our priorities and align ourselves with the new metrics for Combatting Drugs Partnerships being developed nationally. Measures will need to be relevant, timely and agreed by all partners.

Key national metrics

As a system, we are currently judged on the following metrics as priorities for the National Drugs Strategy. These relate to the national aims of reducing drug-related crime, increasing the number of people in treatment, and reducing drug-related deaths.

Children and Young People

- Number of young people accessing substance misuse treatment services.

Adult treatment and recovery

- Number of adults in structured substance misuse treatment services (by category).
- Number of people receiving residential rehabilitation care.

Physical and Mental Health, and Drug-related deaths

- Number of drug-related deaths in Wirral.

Reducing drug-related crime

- Continuity of care from prison release to community drug treatment services. (The percentage of prison leavers with a drug use need accessing treatment on release).

Working alongside other strategies

Achieving our vision is a key part of the bigger picture for a healthier, safer, more prosperous Wirral. Reducing the impact of drugs in Wirral is a key component of the following local strategies:



Wirral's Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2027 shapes how all organisations in Wirral will work together to improve our health and wellbeing. The Health and Wellbeing Strategy identifies reducing drug-related harm as key to achieving its **Priority 2: Strengthen Health and Care Action to Address Differences in Outcomes**. However, the cross-cutting nature of our Strategy means that it will support delivery across all the priorities of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, making our neighbourhoods safer, helping children and young people get the best start in life, and boosting our regeneration and economic programmes.

Wirral Community Safety Strategy is Wirral's collective plan to make all our neighbourhoods safer. While Drugs and Alcohol stand alone as one of the 10 priorities for the Safer Wirral Partnership Board, reducing the impact of drugs on our communities will be key to achieving other priorities, including anti-social behaviour and violent crime.

Other key strategic links include:

Core20Plus5 - Reducing health inequalities across Wirral.

Merseyside Police Prevention Strategy - Fewer victims, fewer offences, and less demand on policing, achieved by addressing underlying causes and using partnership-oriented problem solving.

Breaking the Cycle Programme - Improving outcomes for those experiencing multiple disadvantages.

Wirral Health Protection Strategy - Ensuring all people in Wirral are protected from infectious diseases and environmental hazards.

Wirral Community Wealth Building Strategy - Our people centred approach to local economic development.

Wirral Economic Strategy 2021-2026 - Our economic strategy with a vision to create vibrant places, where communities and businesses thrive and people choose to live, work, and visit.

Delivering this Strategy

There are many opportunities but there are also challenges.

Delivery of this Strategy will be overseen by the Wirral Combatting Drugs Partnership (WCDP), a multi-agency group established to co-ordinate and drive the work of all partners to reduce drug-related harm.

The WCDP reports to the Wirral Health and Wellbeing Board and the Safer Wirral Partnership Board. Recognising the importance of the wider context that this work sits in, these boards, and regional and national partners will be holding us to account to ensure that we are achieving our goals.

We are also re-building a forum for people with lived experience of drug use - people with lived experience will have an essential role in shaping the delivery of this Strategy.

Ultimately, success will depend on many partners working together with the same vision. This Strategy isn't just about improving the health of individuals, but also about realising the positive ripple effects for the health and wellbeing of our communities and local economy. We look forward to sharing our progress.





Acknowledgements

This Strategy has been put together jointly by the members of the Wirral Combatting Drugs Partnership. Wider contributions were gathered at an initial workshop, and a series of focus groups with people with lived experience of drug use at various stages in their treatment and recovery journeys. The Wirral Combatting Drugs Partnership would like to thank everyone who has been part of producing this Strategy.