



ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE

13TH JUNE 2023

REPORT TITLE:	WIRRAL DRUGS STRATEGY 2023-2027
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH

REPORT SUMMARY

This report seeks approval of the Wirral Drugs Strategy which sets out a vision for uplifting communities and enabling all people in Wirral to live healthier lives free from the harmful impacts of drugs.

There will be a focus on improving the health of people who use drugs, and preventing the early deaths that are seen too often. Prevention will be key, as will a vision for a positive narrative for recovery, combatting the stigma associated with drug use, and strengthening the voice of people with lived experience.

The Wirral Drugs Strategy will contribute to the Wirral Plan aims, in particular promoting 'Active and Healthy Lives'. Supporting Wirral residents and communities to live healthier lives free from the harmful impacts of drugs is aligned to the ambitions set out in Wirral's Health and Wellbeing Strategy and will contribute to the reduction of health inequalities within the Borough.

This report is a key decision affecting all wards.

RECOMMENDATION

The Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee is recommended to approve the Wirral Drugs Strategy 2023-2027 as set out as Appendix 1 to this report and further request the Director of Public Health to submit a report on an annual basis to enable the Committee to monitor progress.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 This report enables the Committee to adopt the 4-year Wirral Drugs Strategy which places collective responsibility for local system partners to align policy, strategy, and resources wherever possible to protect and improve the health of residents.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Strategic planning helps local system partners work together to establish a clear vision, prioritise resources, determine a clear direction of travel, and to set goals and outcome targets. One option could be to not develop a local Strategy; however, the absence of a local strategic plan could exacerbate the burden of ill health, impacting negatively on health outcomes, inequalities, system pressures and the local economy.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 This report updates the Committee on the partnership work undertaken to develop a Wirral Drugs Strategy. The Strategy is the local 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 society. 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. However, despite this, Wirral currently experiences high levels of drug-related harm, with high rates of drug-related deaths. Many of these deaths are the result of chronic and complex ill-health due to physical and mental health problems. This harm does not affect individuals and communities in Wirral equally and exacerbates local health inequalities, for example 77% of opiate clients live in the most deprived areas in Wirral.

- 3.2 The Strategy provides a framework for Wirral that aims to reduce drug-related harm. It has been co-developed by assessing local health needs and the strategic aims and priorities have also importantly been aligned with those of system partners, Wirral's Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Wirral Plan, as well as national strategic direction.

3.3 Strategic vision and priorities

The Council's vision is to enable all people in Wirral to live healthier lives free from the harmful impacts of drugs. Following consultation with a wide range of local and regional partners and reviewing local intelligence, the Strategy sets out agreed priority areas which require collective action. These priority areas have been identified as the areas in which by working together will make the biggest difference in reducing drug-related harm for everyone and to help reduce health-inequalities within Wirral. These are:

- Building a positive culture to reduce drug-related harm;
- Protecting children and young people;
- Strengthening our excellent treatment and recovery system;

- Reducing health-inequalities and reducing drug-related deaths; and
- Working together to reduce drug-related crime and harm in Wirral.

3.4 The priorities identified within this Strategy are not new and are recognised system challenges for all local partners. Delivery of this Strategy will be overseen by the Wirral Combatting Drugs Partnership; a multiagency group established to co-ordinate and drive the work of all partners to reduce drug-related harm. The Wirral Combatting Drugs Partnership is chaired by the Wirral Director of Public Health and is made up of partners from a wide range of local organisations including:

- Merseyside Police;
- Local NHS commissioners and providers;
- Merseyside Probation;
- Wirral Council – Regeneration team, Children and young people service, Housing and homelessness team;
- Local treatment providers – Wirral Ways to Recovery, Wirral Response;
- Job Centre Plus;
- Education representatives;
- Community Safety Partnership; Police and Crime Commissioner representatives;
- Liverpool John Moores University;
- Healthwatch Wirral;
- Spider Project;
- Wirral Mind;
- Representatives of Wirral’s Multicultural Communities; and
- Tomorrow’s Women Wirral.

3.5 The Wirral Combatting Drugs Partnership 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 the Council to account to ensure that it is achieving its goals.

3.6 The Wirral Drug Strategy is subsidiary to the Wirral Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Wirral Community Safety Strategy.

3.7 Once the Strategy is approved a detailed Strategy Implementation Plan will be developed. This plan will set out the agreed system actions, outline how to measure success and the accountable lead group for delivery. There is already a strong existing local partnership approach to build on with established leads from across sector partners and a number of multi-agency steering groups already in existence to drive progress against agreed priorities.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The Strategy places collective responsibility for local system partners to align policy, strategy, and resources wherever possible in protecting and improving health.

Oversight and support for the delivery of the local Strategy will be provided by existing resources funded by the Public Health Grant. Where opportunities arise, there will be collaboration with Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, Local Authorities of Cheshire and Merseyside and regional partners to provide greater economies to deliver the Strategy.

- 4.2 As part of the National Drugs Strategy, Wirral was selected as an 'accelerator' area, for early enhanced investment. The Council received additional funding of £1,400,000 in both 2021/22 and 2022/23, focusing on strengthening the drug treatment system. The Council will receive significant further investment in next period 2023-25, with a confirmed Supplemental Substance Misuse Treatment and Recovery grant allocation for 2023/24 totalling £2,267,500. An indicative allocation of £4,376,408 has been announced for 2024/25 which remains subject to annual approval with sign off conditional, based on performance. The Drug Strategy will help shape the spend of these investments locally. Should Supplemental Substance Misuse Treatment and Recovery grant be reduced the Council will work with partners and adjust and scale back local plans accordingly.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Director of Public Health has primary responsibility for the health of the local community. Legal and procurement advice has been sought related to the National Drug Funding received by the Council and continued support will be provided in relation to these matters as we move into Strategy Implementation.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 The Strategy places collective responsibility for local system partners to align policy, strategy, and resources wherever possible in protecting and improving health. There are no additional resource requirements identified at this time in relation to this decision. Leads from across sector partners and a number of multi-agency steering groups already exists to drive progress against priorities.
- 6.2 The Supplemental Substance Misuse Treatment and Recovery grant for 2023/24 will be used to meet Wirral Borough Council staffing costs related to service delivery, commissioning, and marketing.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 By not identifying and taking action to enable all people in Wirral to live healthier lives free from the harmful impacts of drugs there are a range of direct and indirect risks that impact on individuals, communities, health services and the economy. Local system partners will support honest and open discussions regarding system risk and risk mitigation. These include risk of:

- poor individual and population health outcomes such as ill health, premature mortality, or negative impact on quality of life
- excessive pressure on emergency, health and social care services and related opportunity cost of ill health
- personal, societal, and business economic impact of ill health
- increased crime, family disruption, and domestic abuse

7.2 A risk register will be held, managed, and reviewed on a quarterly basis by Wirral's Combatting Drug Partnership. Combatting Drug Partnership members will record relevant risks within their own established processes. Wirral Council's Public Health risks will be recorded within the Directorate Risk Register and where appropriate, within the Wirral Council Corporate Risk Register.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 This Strategy has been developed following wide consultation and outlines how local partners will work effectively together to achieve our collectively agreed vision, aims and objectives. Consultation sessions were held with YMCA, the Spider Project and at the Nightingales Café. 25 individuals with varying experience of drug and alcohol use, and at various stages of their involvement with services, contributed to these sessions. Their views and important themes gathered via this feedback has been fed into the Strategy.

8.2 In addition over 50 representatives from key partners attended a successful Strategy Development Workshop. This included colleagues from a wide range of local organisations. It also included several participants with Lived Experience, representing the views of that community.

8.3 Engagement will continue as part of the Strategy implementation. A key priority identified within the Strategy is the development of a Lived Experience Network, supported by all members of the Wirral Combatting Drugs Partnership. This work is progressing, with the support of Wirral Mind, who have now successfully recruited a Lived Experience Involvement Project Lead. This post will co-ordinate engagement with the Lived Experience community, including establishing a monthly consultation and feed-back meeting that will be a regularly available point of contact with commissioners, and with representatives from the services.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision, or activity.

9.2 The Wirral Drugs Strategy, and Strategy Implementation Plan once developed, seek to positively address equality implications, providing focus on those most vulnerable and at risk. An Equality Impact Assessment for the Wirral Drugs Strategy is available at: <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/equality-impact-assessments>

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Illicit substance misuse is a global trade that can damage the environment in a number of ways:

- The cultivation of cocaine is a significant contributor to deforestation in Latin America
- Opium production contributes to water shortages in Afghanistan

- Environmental harm from dumping of chemical waste from MDMA and ecstasy production

It is hoped by reducing demand for illicit substances, the Wirral Drugs Strategy will minimise environmental harm.

10.2 Climate implications are being considered as part of the delivery of the Strategy. For example, one aim set out within our Wirral Strategy is to increase the capability of the system to take the services closer to where the people live. This is primarily to facilitate increased accessibility, but it will also reduce the distance people need to travel to appointments, and therefore reduce the environmental impact of this travelling. Another element of this programme that will contribute towards reducing carbon emissions comes with the naloxone distribution. Much of this will be undertaken by the dedicated team utilising bicycles (reclaimed bicycles donated by Merseyside Police colleagues).

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 Delivery of the Wirral Drugs Strategy will support community wealth building and provide significant local social value by working to improve the lives of some of our most vulnerable residents. Interventions delivered as part of Strategy delivery will:

- Support community development through building resilient local communities and community support organisations. This activity will be focused in areas and communities with the greatest need.
- Support the creation of a significant number of local employment and training opportunities.
- Support increasing the number of people with jobs from areas of Wirral with the higher levels of social deprivation and health inequalities.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Wirral Drugs Strategy 2023-2027

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Independent Review of Drugs by Professor Dame Carol Black
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/independent-review-of-drugs-by-professor-dame-carol-black>

From Harm to Hope: A 10-year Drugs Plan to Cut Crime and Save Lives

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/from-harm-to-hope-a-10-year-drugs-plan-to-cut-crime-and-save-lives>

Wirral Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-27

<https://www.wirralintelligenceservice.org/strategies-and-plans/wirral-health-wellbeing-strategy-2022-27/>

Wirral Intelligence Service – Drug Misuse

<https://www.wirralintelligenceservice.org/jsna/drug-misuse/>

TERMS OF REFERENCE

This report is being considered by the Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee
Terms of Reference

c) all Public Health functions (in co-ordination with those functions reserved to the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee’s statutory health functions).

e) undertaking the development and implementation of policy in relation to the Committee’s functions, incorporating the assessment of outcomes, review of effectiveness and formulation of recommendations to the Council, partners and other bodies, which shall include any decision relating to:

(i) furthering public health objectives through the development of partnerships with other public bodies, community, voluntary and charitable groups and through the improvement and integration of health and social care services.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee	6 th March 2023
Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee	14 th June 2022
Health and Wellbeing Board	15 th Dec 2021
Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee	8 th September 2021
Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee	7 th June 2021