

# Drugs and Alcohol

Southwark Public Health

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# Substance misuse is a key cause of morbidity and mortality in Southwark, as elsewhere in London and UK

## INTRODUCTION

**Both drug and alcohol misuse are important causes of death and poor health in Southwark. This makes substance misuse a pressing public health issue.**

- Drug and alcohol *misuse* (harmful use and dependence) negatively impacts the lives of people using the substances, as well as having a significant impact on the people around them, including their families, friends, communities and wider society.
- In 2021 there were 4,859 deaths related to drug poisoning in England and Wales – the highest number since records began [1].
- Alcohol misuse is the biggest risk factor for death, ill-health and disability among 15-49 year olds in the UK, and the fifth biggest risk factor across all ages (2). Alcohol is the fourth largest risk factor for death, ill health and disability in Southwark(3).
- The total societal costs to the UK economy associated with alcohol consumption have been estimated at levels between £21-£55bn [4].

### References

[1] [Deaths related to drug poisoning in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)

[2] [Local Alcohol Profiles for England - OHID \(phe.org.uk\)](https://phe.org.uk)

[3] [IHME 2019 Global burden of disease](https://www.who.int)

[4] [The costs of alcohol to society.docx \(ias.org.uk\)](https://ias.org.uk)

# The use of illicit drugs is associated with health harms including death, long-term conditions, and wider impacts

## DRUG RELATED HARMS

**In 2021-22 approximately 3 million adults in England and Wales used illegal drugs[1]. The associated health harms vary, according to the substance, the pattern of use, and the vulnerabilities of the user.**

- The UK has one of the highest rates of drug-related deaths in Europe, three times the European average. [2]
- Health impacts associated vary depending on the substance. They can include blood-borne viruses (associated with needle use), bacterial infections of soft tissue, depression and anxiety, severe mental illness, lung damage and cardiovascular disease [3]
- Families, friends and carers can also be impacted by resulting relationship difficulties, financial difficulties, and physical violence and abuse.
- In the UK (and Southwark), there is an ageing cohort of people who use drugs, particularly opioids, whose physical and mental health is declining through having lived with chronic conditions and risk factors for poor health for many years.

### References

[1] [Drug misuse in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk)

[2] [http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/system/files/publications/11364/20191724\\_TDAT19001ENN\\_PDF.pdf](http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/system/files/publications/11364/20191724_TDAT19001ENN_PDF.pdf)

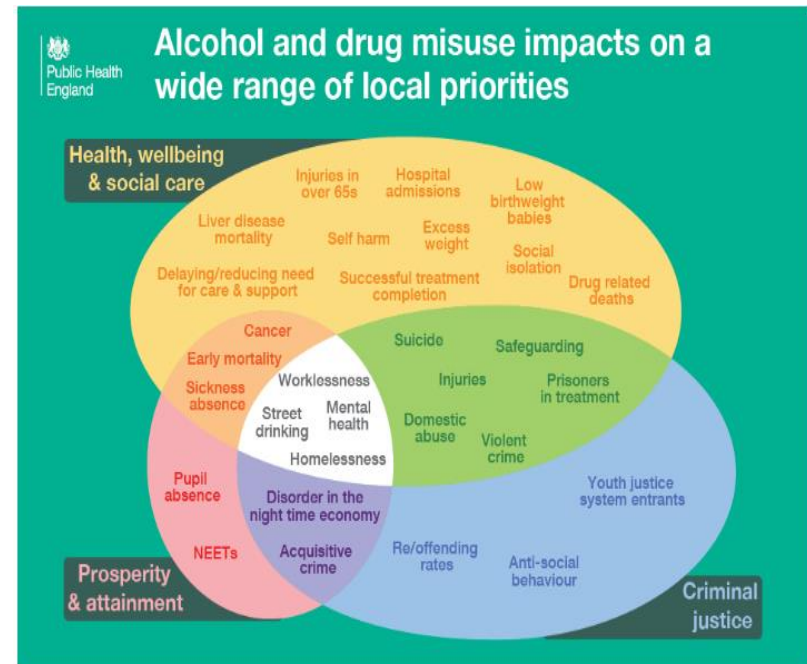
[3] [Misuse of illicit drugs and medicines: applying All Our Health - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

# Alcohol is a leading cause of ill-health and health inequalities, with alcohol-related harms worsening since the pandemic

## ALCOHOL-RELATED HARMS

**Alcohol misuse is now the leading risk factor for ill-health, early mortality and disability among 15-49 year olds in England, with alcohol and drug misuse impacting on a wide range of local policy priorities.**

- Alcohol misuse contributes (wholly or partially) to 200 health conditions, and a range of physical and mental illnesses, with many leading to hospital admission [1].
- Alcohol use can lead to acute alcohol intoxication, chronic diseases and death due to the toxic effect of alcohol misuse over time.
- In England, more than 10 million people consume alcohol at levels above the UK CMO's low-risk drinking guidelines, increasing their risk of developing alcohol-related ill-health (1)
- Since the start of the pandemic, rates of alcohol-specific deaths increased [2], and rates of heavy drinkers also increased [3].



### References

[1] [Alcohol: applying All Our Health - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

[2] [Monitoring alcohol consumption and harm during the COVID-19 pandemic \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

[3] [The-COVID-Hangover-report-July-2022.pdf \(ias.org.uk\)](https://ias.org.uk)

# National rates of heavy alcohol consumption increased during the pandemic

## NATIONAL DATA – IMPACT OF PANDEMIC

**National evidence suggests that high-risk alcohol consumption increased during the pandemic, particularly among people in lower occupational social grades.**

- Prevalence of 'high risk drinking' (defined as AUDIT-C above score 5) increased sharply during the first COVID-19 lockdown, rising by 40%.
- The increase was sharper in routine and manual occupational groups[1].
- There is evidence of a “polarisation” of drinking: with those who previously drank heavily, drank more during the pandemic, whereas lighter drinkers drank less on average in the period.
- The higher rates of harmful drinking coincided with higher rates of harm. Nationally there was a 20% increase in alcohol specific deaths in 2020 compared to 2019 [2].

### References

[1]The COVID Hangover report, Institute of Alcohol Studies. Jul 2022.

[2]Monitoring alcohol consumption and harm during the COVID-19 pandemic, GOV UK. Jul 2021.

# Alcohol-related harms in Southwark are high compared to London and England averages

## THE PICTURE IN SOUTHWARK: HEALTH BURDEN OF ALCOHOL MISUSE

### Rates of alcohol-related deaths and hospitalisations give an indication of harm from alcohol misuse.

- Alcohol-related deaths or admissions can be 'specific' to alcohol – such as acute alcohol poisoning, or 'related' to alcohol – such as the increased risk of cancers or CVD.
- There were 37 alcohol-specific deaths in Southwark in 2021, equivalent to 18 deaths per 100,000. This is higher than the London average of 11 deaths per 100,000.
- There were 82 alcohol-related deaths in 2021, equivalent to 42 deaths per 100,000. This was higher than the London average, at 33 per 100,000.
- There were 2,141 admissions per 100,000 for alcohol-related conditions. Rates of admission for both specific and related conditions were significantly higher than the London and England average.

Figure 1: Deaths per 100,000 population, 2021

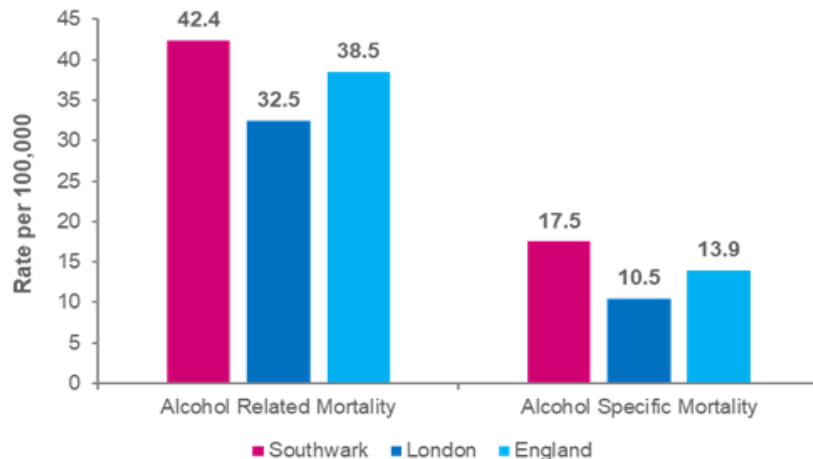
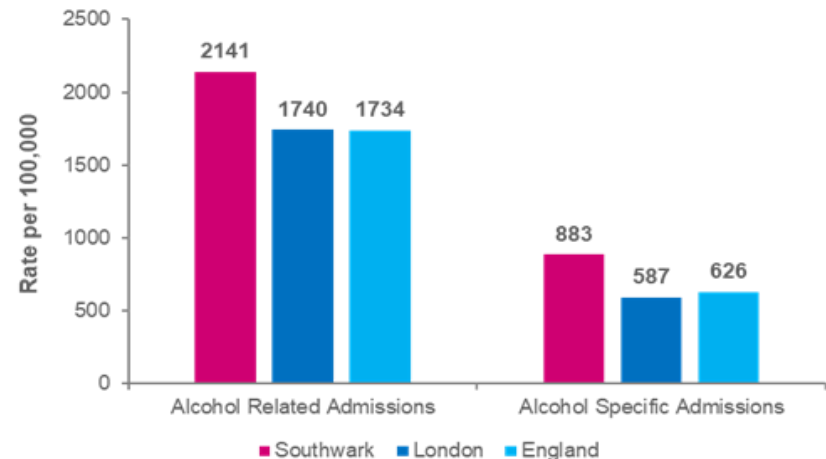


Figure 2: Hospital admissions per 100,000 population, 2021/22



### References

- [1] ONS Deaths Register, OHID Fingertips Tool. Data for 2021.  
 [2] Hospital admissions related to alcohol, OHID Fingertips Tool. Data for 2021/22

# There are a number of vulnerabilities that increase the risk of substance misuse among young people

## TREATMENT

Young people often enter specialist substance misuse services with a range of problems or vulnerabilities related to (or in addition to) their substance use (Figure 3).

- These include:
  - Using multiple substances (poly-drug use)
  - Having a mental health treatment need
  - Being a looked after child
  - Not being in education, employment or training (NEET).

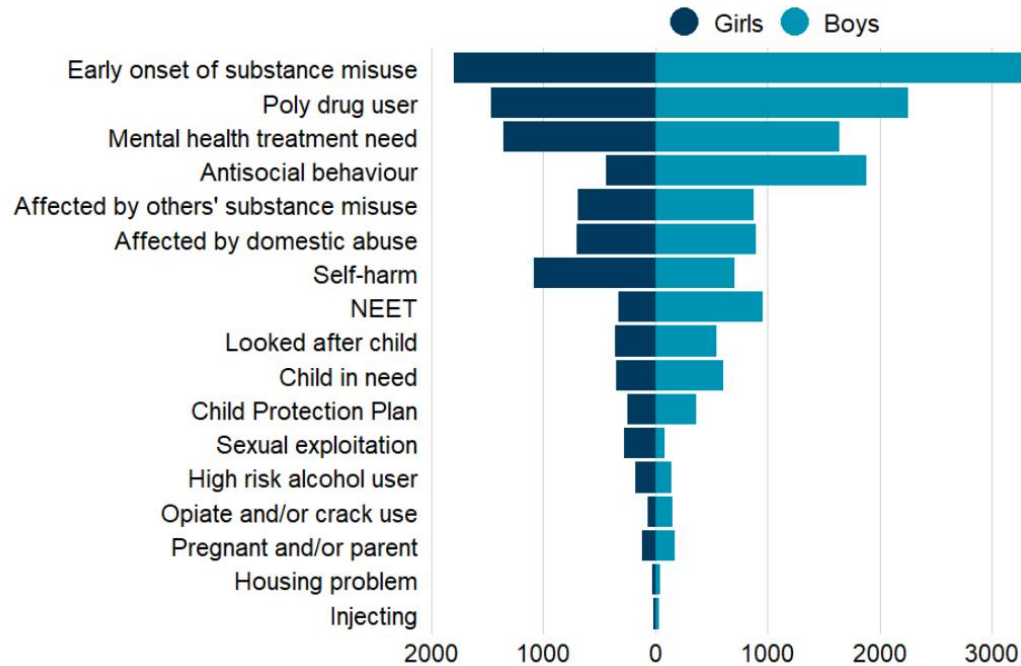


Figure 3. Vulnerabilities among young people starting treatment in England 2020-21

### References

[1] Young people's substance misuse treatment statistics 2020 to 2021: report - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

# Local authorities commission substance misuse treatment services

## DRUG AND ALCOHOL SERVICE COMMISSIONING

**As a result of the Health and Social Care Act 2012, the strategic responsibility for commissioning drug and alcohol treatment services was transferred to Local Authorities.**

- In Southwark, the Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) commissions and monitors drug and alcohol treatment services.
- From 2022-2025, additional funding has been made available to Local Authorities to improve drug and alcohol treatment and recovery systems and services. In addition, Southwark received 'enhanced funding' based on level of need. [1]
- Additionally, through their community safety functions, local authorities and their partners have an important role in disrupting supply chains and tackling drug-related crime.

### References

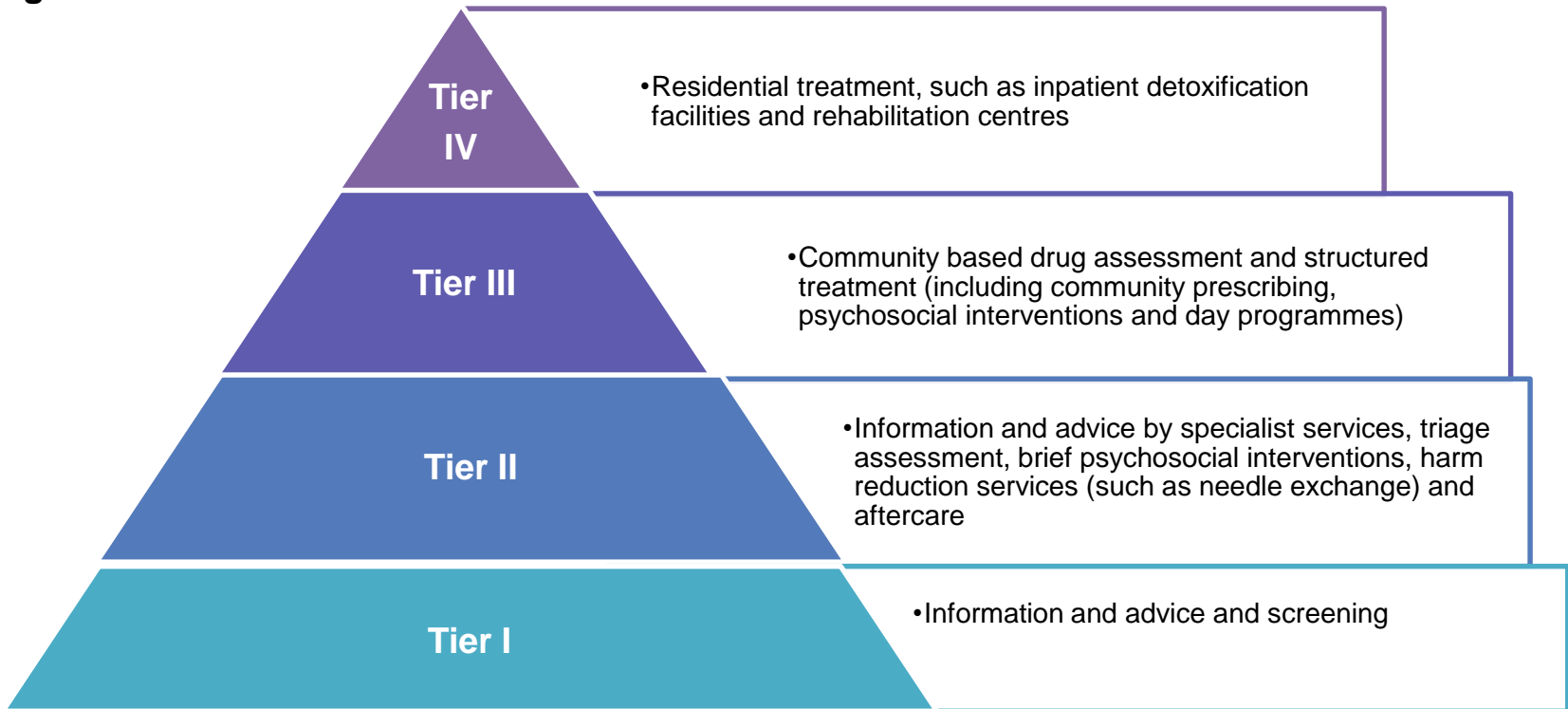
[1] [Extra funding for drug and alcohol treatment: 2022 to 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)



# A number of services in Southwark are commissioned to deliver all aspects of treatment and/or prevention

## THE SOUTHWARK RESPONSE

Southwark's alcohol and drug treatment is delivered over a tier based system with each tier offering different levels of provision. Smaller numbers of people require more intensive levels of drug treatment.



# A Combatting Drugs Partnership has been developed in Southwark

## CURRENT WORK

**The 2021 Government drugs strategy sets out the need for local areas to work on treatment, harm-reduction initiatives and tackling drug-related crime.**

- The strategy has three main aims which build on the domains of the 2017 drug strategy: breaking drug supply chains; delivering a world-class treatment and recovery system; achieving a generational shift in demand for drugs.
- The strategy also includes harm-reduction initiatives and clearly identifies drug misuse as a public health, as well as a criminal justice issue.

**Southwark has established a local Combatting Drugs Partnership**

- Guidance for local areas set out the requirement to establish local Combatting Drugs Partnerships (CDPs), which will collectively lead on all three domains of the drug strategy at local level.
- The Southwark Combatting Drugs Partnership meets regularly and has been developing programmes of work to align with the aims of the national drugs strategy

**Partnership Southwark will be undertaking a Deep Dive into alcohol across Southwark to understand gaps and opportunities to address issues as a partnership.**

- Alcohol is one of five components of the 'Vital 5' which are a key focus of the Live Well group within Partnership Southwark
- This deep dive into alcohol will inform actions to address issues identified

## Licensing

- On 25 November 2020, the Council Assembly approved the Southwark Statement of Licensing Policy 2021-2026

## References:

[1] From harm to hope: A 10-year drugs plan to cut crime and save lives - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

[2] Guidance for local delivery partners (accessible version) - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))