

What is a local public health prevention approach to harmful alcohol and drug use?

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Context

Alcohol and drug use is a **key public health concern** nationally and in Bradford (where the research team work) given the health and social harms it can have.

National and local approaches to address harmful alcohol and drug use in **England tend to focus on treatment and/or criminal justice**, policing and enforcement. While this is important, it takes place **after** health harms have occurred.

More effective **prevention** is needed, but England does not have a functioning drug and alcohol prevention programme, or sufficient investment in prevention infrastructure.¹

It is unclear what a public health prevention approach to alcohol and drug use means and could involve in practice

If local areas want to take a strategic approach to prevention, a clear **framework, and shared language, definition and understanding will be needed to ensure its success**

Rapid evidence review

We completed a **rapid review** of **published evidence** to develop a **definition** and **framework** for understanding what a public health prevention approach to addressing harmful alcohol and drug use is, which could be applied locally in Bradford and England more widely.

We screened 5000+ papers and **included 18** that were the most 'rich in detail'.

We analysed the findings by testing and refining a prevention framework that members of the team had used in previous prevention-related research.²

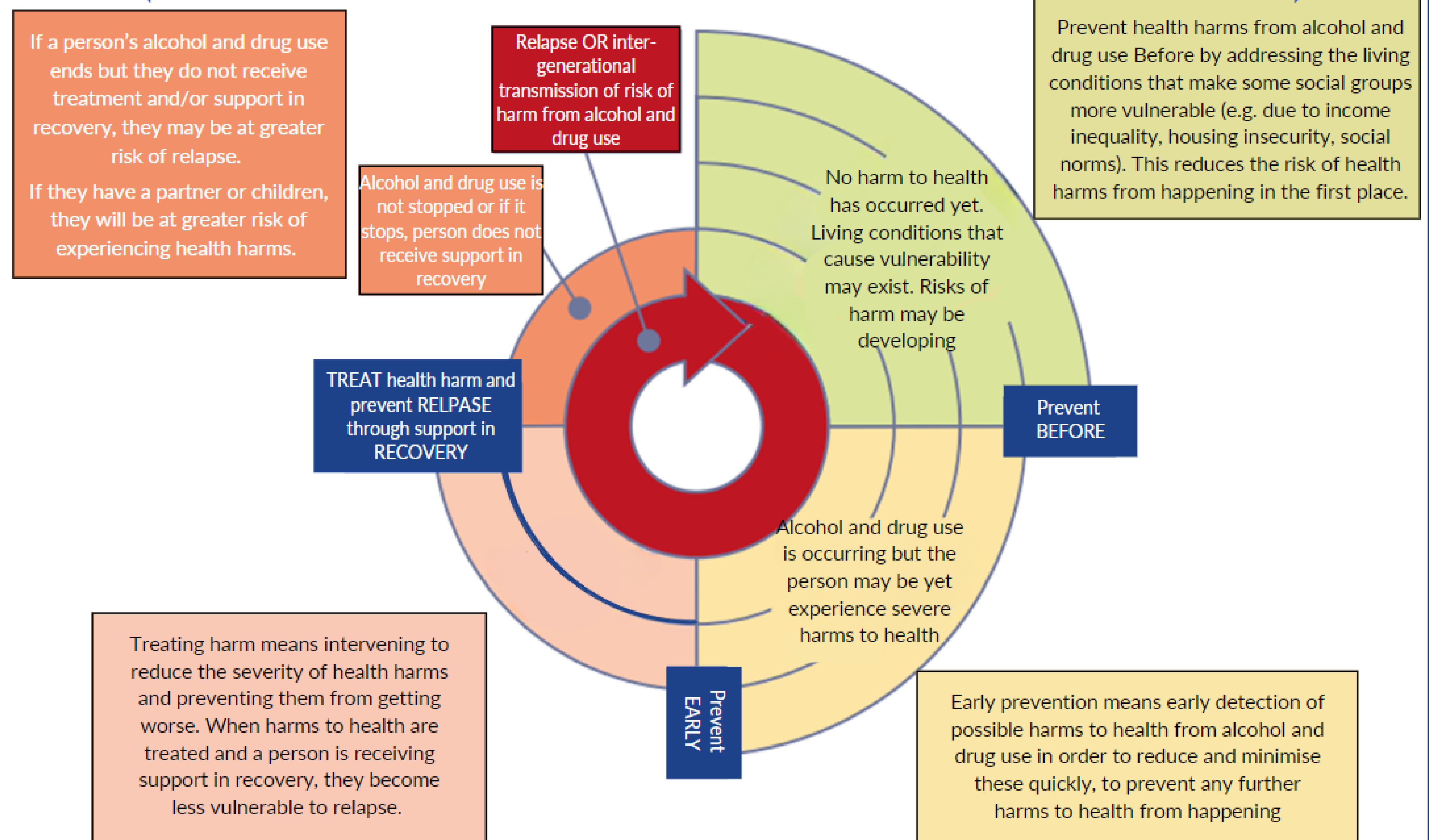
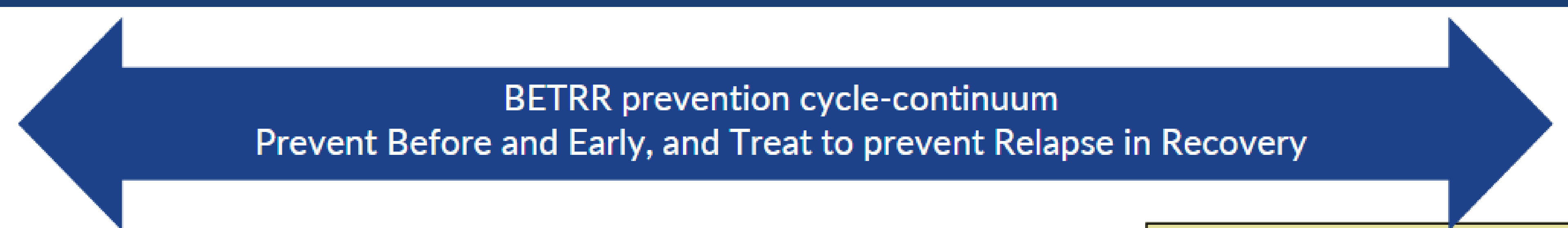
What we found out

A public health prevention approach has **5** features:

1. Understand which social groups are more at risk or least protected from harms to health, including being mindful of key transitions in people's lives
2. Reduce health harms through a continuous cycle of BETRR prevention to change people's living conditions and enable people to thrive
3. Collaborate in a multi-sectoral partnership system, including community connections and people with lived and living experiences
4. Be led by evidence-informed decision-making about what could work or is happening in practice
5. Focus on equity, participation, addressing stigma and human rights

A possible definition:

"Public health prevention is an **ongoing process of protecting people from, and minimising the health harms of, alcohol and drug use throughout their lives**. This can be achieved by **intervening before harms occur, intervening early, and treating harms and preventing relapse through providing support in recovery**. Prevention involves **changing people's daily lives and living conditions, and enabling people to exercise choice and control, and to thrive.**"



Local strategic partnerships could consider the value of adopting the definition of public health prevention and 'cycle of BETRR prevention' framework to guide strategic action on reducing the health harms of alcohol and drugs

Could the framework and 5 intervention pathways be mapped against current partnership work and local good practice to identify gaps and inform future solutions?

5 pathways to BETRR public health prevention across this cycle (with examples of initiatives)

Pathway to prevention	What this involves	Examples of preventative initiatives
1. Access to life's essentials	Ensuring everyone has access to life's fundamentals (e.g. housing security, adequate income, safety, dignity, rights, healthcare) throughout their lifecourse	Living wage employment; employment, welfare and rights services; housing support; pregnancy interventions; screening, brief intervention, and referral to treatment; wrap-around care
2. Education, development, literacy, skills	Enabling children and young people's development, and adult literacy and skills, including knowledge about how to protect health from harmful alcohol and drug use	Universal education; best start interventions (e.g. 1001 days); after-school programmes; mental health literacy programmes; workforce and skills training; alcohol and drugs education; overdose prevention training
3. Power and control	Building individual and community capabilities to exercise choice and control to protect health against harmful alcohol and drug use	Peer support; peer street outreach; user-led organisations; community-led action; youth work; Youth Council; anti-racism work; anti-stigma actions (optimal contact); navigator models
4. Disruption and regulation	Disrupting and/or regulating supply chains and commercial interests, through e.g. law enforcement or actions on availability, quality, marketing and/or pricing,	Price controls and marketing restrictions on alcohol; controls on opioid prescribing/prescription monitoring; medication take backs; police-run events; drug quality testing/checking
5. Partnership	Partnership activities that enhance the preventative response through coordination and pooling of resources	Multi-sector partnership, joint workforce development (i.e. joint recruitment and leadership development work), joint action on poverty, violence, racism, mental health; shared systems for surveillance, monitoring, evaluation

References

1. Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (2022) ACMD Drug misuse prevention review, updated 18 May 2022. Available online: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/drug-misuse-prevention-review/acmd-drug-misuse-prevention-review-accessible>
2. Such, L. Aminu H, Barnes A, Hayes K, Ariyo MD. (2022) Prevention of modern slavery - what does or could work? Research report. March 2022. Available online: <https://modern-slavery.files.svdcn.com/production/assets/downloads/Modern-Slavery-PEC-prevention-report-final.pdf?dm=1646749399>