





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 heath, 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."

BETRR prevention cycle-continuum Prevent Before and Early, and Treat to prevent Relapse in Recovery Prevent health harms from alcohol and If a person's alcohol and drug use Relapse OR interdrug use Before by addressing the living generational ends but they do not receive conditions that make some social groups transmission of risk of treatment and/or support in more vulnerable (e.g. due to income harm from alcohol and recovery, they may be at greater inequality, housing insecurity, social drug use risk of relapse. norms). This reduces the risk of health No harm to health Alcohol and drug use i If they have a partner or children, harms from happening in the first place. has occurred yet. not stopped or if it they will be at greater risk of tops, person does no Living conditions that experiencing health harms. receive support in cause vulnerability recovery may exist. Risks of harm may be developing TREAT health harm and prevent RELPASE Prevent through support in **BEFORE RECOVERY** lcohol and drug use is occurring but the person may be yet experience severe harms to health Treating harm means intervening to reduce the severity of health harms and preventing them from getting Early prevention means early detection of worse. When harms to health are possible harms to health from alcohol and treated and a person is receiving drug use in order to reduce and minimise support in recovery, they become these quickly, to prevent any further less vulnerable to relapse. harms to health from happening

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?

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-

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.svdcdn.com/production/assets/downloads/Modern-Slavery-PEC-prevention-report-final.pdf?dm=1646749399

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

What this involves Pathway to prevention Examples of preventative initiatives Ensuring everyone has access to life's Living wage employment; employment, welfare and rights

throughout their lifecourse wrap-around care Universal education; best start interventions (e.g. 1001 Enabling children and young people's days); after-school programmes; mental health literacy 2. Education, development, development, and adult literacy and skills, programmes; workforce and skills training; alcohol and literacy, skills

including knowledge about how to protect health from harmful alcohol and drug use

Building individual and community capabilities to exercise choice and control to protect health

fundamentals (e.g. housing security, adequate

income, safety, dignity, rights, healthcare)

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

services; housing support; pregnancy interventions;

drugs education; overdose prevention training

screening, brief intervention, and referral to treatment;

Disrupting and/or regulating supply chains and 4. Disruption and regulation

commercial interests, through e.g. law enforcement or actions on availability, quality, marketing and/or pricing,

controls on opioid prescribing/prescription monitoring; medication take backs; police-run events; drug quality testing/checking

Price controls and marketing restrictions on alcohol;

5. Partnership

3. Power and control

1. Access to life's essentials

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