

London Borough of Waltham Forest

Appendix	Background and context of the Waltham Forest Combating Drugs Partnership
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Meeting / Date Cabinet, 10 September 2024

1. **Summary**

- 1.1 Following the independent review of drugs by Dame Carol Black, the Government published a strategy in December 2021 'From harm to hope: a 10-year drugs plan to cut crime and save lives' which directed each local authority area to set up Combating Drugs Partnerships.
- 1.2 The strategy and guidance set out the importance of developing and improving local collaboration which is underpinned by an evidence-base and aims to address the demand for, and supply of, drugs, whilst also improving treatment and recovery.
- 1.3 Between July and October 2022, multi-agency planning rapidly took place to mobilise and implement a local Combating Drugs Partnership in line with national guidance.

2. **Why is addressing substance (and alcohol) misuse important?**

- 2.1 Alcohol is the main (leading) cause of ill-health, disability and death among people aged 15-29 years in England.
- 2.2 Alcohol contributes to over 200 medical conditions, such as circulatory and digestive diseases, liver disease, several types of cancers and depression.
- 2.3 It is estimated there are more than 3,100 alcohol dependent drinkers in Waltham Forest, with the majority of dependent drinkers not accessing support.
- 2.4 The illicit drug market is estimated to be worth £19bn nationwide while the total cost to society in terms of health harms, costs of crime and wider impacts are considered more than twice as high.
- 2.5 Nationally it is estimated that around half of all theft, burglary and robbery offences are linked to addiction to opiates and crack-cocaine.
- 2.6 Drugs are a major driver of serious violence, and it is estimated that around 4,000 teenagers across London are being criminally exploited through County Lines.
- 2.7 There are an estimated total of 19,105 users of any illicit drug in Waltham Forest (ages 16-59 years), including around 1,440 opiate and/or crack users.
- 2.8 We know that our residents' perceptions of crime and violence are impacted by drug-driven anti-social behaviour and nuisance.

3. **Journey of the Combating Drugs Partnership to date**

October 2022

- 3.1 Waltham Forest Combating Drugs Partnership (CDP) established. The working group met monthly, alongside the well-established Alcohol & Drugs Steering Group, which mainly focused on treatment.

12 January 2023

- 3.2 Scoping workshop with key stakeholders to explore the 'prevention' element of combating drugs.

February 2023

- 3.3 Needs assessment and outcomes framework completed.

15 March 2023

- 3.4 Combating Drugs Partnership convened the Health & Wellbeing Board to receive a formal update on progress.

8 June 2023

- 3.5 Protecting Communities from Drug and Alcohol Related Harm formally agreed by the Strategic Partnership Executive as a cross-cutting priority for the Strategic Partnership Boards, jointly led by SafetyNet and the Health & Wellbeing Board via the Combating Drugs Partnership.

June 2023 onwards

- 3.6 Multi-agency collaboration to finalise the partnership framework and delivery plan. Note that this is a high-level document, aimed at both professionals and the community to articulate the shared vision and approach which is divided up into three 'pillars' of prevention, supply, and treatment. It is intended to be a living document and is updated accordingly as work in this area develops.

27 September 2023

- 3.7 Second convening of the Combating Drugs Partnership via the Joint Board (for Safeguarding and Community Safety), with Health & Wellbeing Board members to receive a formal update on progress and provide comment on framework and delivery plan.

- 3.8 *February 2024*

- 3.9 Formal launch by Dame Carol Black of the Partnership framework and delivery plan for alcohol and drugs.

- 3.10 *April 2024*

- 3.11 Dedicated steering groups established to drive forward the work of the CDP.

4. **Our ambition**

- 4.1 We want each Waltham Forest resident to thrive, living free from the health and social harms of alcohol and drugs. We have adopted a three-pillared approach which mirrors the Government's national strategy's long-term approach to turning around the chronic and entrenched nature of drug use through breaking supply, reducing the demand, and improving treatment and recovery.

5. **Our approach**

- 5.1 The 'prevention' pillar aims to reduce the number and risk of people using substances and experiencing harms, through universal and targeted interventions, early identification, and brief advice. The 'supply' pillar focuses on disrupting drugs markets and tackling the harm they cause in communities, through intelligence-led policing, problem-solving, and Project ADDER. The 'treatment' pillar supports all those with substance misuse problems into effective, high-quality services, and achieves good recovery outcomes, through increasing access, capacity, and continuity of care, especially for those with multiple disadvantages.
- 5.2 These three 'pillars' have presented opportunities for a more systematic integrated response. We understand the intersecting nature of the factors that influence alcohol and substance misuse, and we know that our ambition can only be achieved with collaboration and coordinated efforts across services.
- 5.3 Success of our partnership working is being measured via a local outcomes framework which has been developed using our needs assessment and the national guidance. This tracks performance on a range of key performance indicators such as drug-related deaths, treatment performance and supply disruptions. Our partnership dashboard ensures data is used to understand performance and drive improvement.

6. **What difference will this partnership framework make?**

- 6.1 The value of this partnership framework is already evident in the holistic and integrated way Public Health and Community Safety / Police now work together, which was previously not as robust.
- 6.2 An analytical framework along with this new integrated approach is enabling us to spot emerging issues earlier. It is enhancing coordination, leadership, and accountability which has been realised through improved partnership working with the police, prisons, probation, and service users which in turn has enabled expanded recovery activities and employment support across the borough.
- 6.3 As the CDP continues, the strengthened arrangements will take the heat out of drug markets across the borough. This will mean less drugs on the streets and fewer organised criminal gangs operating in Waltham Forest. The closure of county lines will mean fewer children are criminally exploited and trafficked and thereby easing the pressures on statutory children's services. From a health perspective, this comprehensive approach will mean fewer hospital admissions and more lives saved.
- 6.4 Success will be measured via a local outcomes framework which tracks performance on a range of key performance indicators such as drug-related deaths, treatment performance and supply disruptions. Going forward, the work of the Combating Drugs Partnership will be subject to ongoing governance and review, overseen jointly by SafetyNet and Health & Wellbeing Board.