

North Yorkshire Council

Executive

21st January 2025

North Yorkshire Substance Use Strategy 2024-2028

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To share the final all-age North Yorkshire Substance Use Strategy 2024-2028 and recommend that Executive approves the strategy.

2.0 SUMMARY *(Include if report is more than, say, three pages)*

- 2.1 The North Yorkshire Drug and Alcohol Partnership Board has developed and publicly consulted on an all-age Substance Use Strategy 2024-2028.
- 2.2 The Substance Use Strategy 2024-2028 sets an ambitious vision for North Yorkshire and represents a commitment by partners across the county, working alongside people, to reduce harms associated with substance use.
- 2.3 The strategy has been revised by the partnership Editorial Team in response to a public consultation. The strategy has been endorsed by the Drug and Alcohol Partnership Board. Approval will be sought from North Yorkshire Council Executive and partners through respective governance arrangements between September 2024 – January 2025. The strategy will be launched from January 2025.
- 2.4 The strategy will be underpinned by an Annual Delivery Plan and Annual Progress Report. The Annual Progress Report will be published in line with the drug strategy partnership guidance.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 National data shows that alcohol-related harm costs the UK economy c.£21.5bn, and illicit drugs and associated harm cost c.£20bn. In an average secondary school in England, 40 pupils will be living with a parent with substance use treatment needs. 17,000 households assessed by local authorities as statutorily homeless where dependence on drugs was a factor and 12,500 assessed where dependence on alcohol was a factor. One in six Child in Need assessments carried out by local authorities record parental alcohol use, with a similar proportion for drug use. Substance use recorded in 36% of serious case reviews where a child died or was seriously harmed (Why Invest and Must Know).
- 3.2 Data shows that around 1/5 adults in North Yorkshire drink more than 14 units of alcohol per week. Estimates show that 5,543 people are alcohol dependent, and 72% (vs 76% nationally) are not engaged in treatment – note that there are typically over 1,100 adults receiving treatment for alcohol in a 12-month period.
- 3.3 Data estimates that around 2,226 15–64-year-olds in North Yorkshire use opiates and/or crack cocaine, and 60% (vs 57% nationally) are not engaged in treatment – note that there are typically over 800 adults receiving treatment for opiates in a 12-month period.

- 3.4 The North Yorkshire Drug and Alcohol Partnership Board, chaired by Cllr Harrison, has developed and publicly consulted on an all-age Substance Use Strategy 2024-2028.
- 3.5 The strategy represents North Yorkshire's local response to the national drug strategy, 'From Harm to Hope', published in December 2021, and the national alcohol strategy, published in 2012 – based on an assessment of local needs.
- 3.6 The drug strategy set clear expectations of local partnerships, outlined in national guidance published in summer 2022, including:
- the appointment of a Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) who is accountable for local co-ordination and delivery to the national cross-government department 'Joint Combatting Drugs Unit'. The Director of Public Health has been nominated by the Drug and Alcohol Partnership Board as the SRO.
 - The development of a local strategy delivery plan based on assessment of needs.
- 3.7 A partnership Editorial Team comprising North Yorkshire Council, North Yorkshire Horizons, North Yorkshire Police and the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioning Team has worked with partners across the system, and people with lived and living experience, to develop and publicly consult on the strategy.
- 3.8 The strategy is the first all-age strategy for North Yorkshire that addresses harms caused by alcohol and other drugs, including illegal drugs and dependence-forming medications. Tobacco, including vaping, are addressed in the separate Tobacco Control Strategy – however vaping as a mechanism for consuming illicit drugs is addressed within this strategy. The strategy updates and replaces the former North Yorkshire Joint Alcohol Strategy 2014-2019.
- 3.9 The Drug and Alcohol Partnership Board endorsed the strategy on 26 September 2024. The board comprises the following membership:
- North Yorkshire Council
 - North Yorkshire Probation Delivery Unit
 - North Yorkshire Police
 - Humber and North Yorkshire ICB
 - Tees and Esk Wear Valley NHS Trust
 - Job Centre
 - North Yorkshire Horizons
 - North Yorkshire RISE
 - North Yorkshire Connected Spaces Lived Experience Recovery Organisation

4.0 THE STRATEGY

The strategic partnership vision is:

"We will reduce harms associated with substance use across North Yorkshire – putting people, health and communities at the centre"

- 4.1 The strategy balances respect for everyone in North Yorkshire; individuals who use alcohol and other drugs, and people who experience harms as a result of alcohol and other drugs, whether or not they use them personally.
- 4.2 The strategy commits to the following for North Yorkshire people:
- *We will champion and advocate for non-stigmatising communities across North Yorkshire*

- *We will work alongside people who use substances, people who experience harmful substance use, our communities, our assets and our services.*

4.3 The strategy reflects an evidence-based approach to substance use, based on the following principles:

- Prevention – we will ensure that people can avoid the use of substances, including alcohol
- Harm reduction – we will reduce harms and deaths
- Recovery – we will support people to achieve their goals and live lives free from harmful substance use

4.4 The strategy includes three key priorities:

- **Priority 1:** Drug supply and responsible retailing of alcohol
- **Priority 2:** Deliver effective support for all people who experience harmful substance use
- **Priority 3:** Achieve a generational shift and reduce demand for substances.

4.5 These are supported by partnership action across six cross-cutting and enabling chapters:

- Harm Reduction
- Communications and engagement
- Workforce development
- Research and development
- Homes and jobs (protective factors)
- Targeted local action

4.6 North Yorkshire Connected Spaces – Lived Experience and Recovery Organisation – has written the Foreword, demonstrating the strength of partnership with people with lived and living experience.

4.7 Action to tackle stigma is central to the strategy, which includes the important role of language:

- Substance use
- People who use substances
- People who experience harmful substance use

5.0 CONSULTATION

The partnership Editorial Team designed and delivered a 12-week public consultation, which was hosted by North Yorkshire Council and launched in February 2024, following a Key Decision.

5.1 The consultation was delivered using a mixed methods approach including:

- 4-minute online video
- Online survey for the general public
- Bespoke infographic and survey for young people
- Focus groups
- Paper copy surveys distributed across key public venues including libraries

Easy read materials were available. Promotion and delivery of the consultation was supported by all partners.

5.2 The Editorial Team specifically focused promotional efforts to ensure that the general public, people with experience of substance use and harms associated with substance use, and under-represented groups who typically experience increased risk of substance use and harms were aware of the consultation and able to contribute, including:

- General public (adults and young people)
- People who use drugs and alcohol (adults and young people)
- People affected by a loved one's substance use
- People who live in rural/ coastal communities
- People who have protected characteristics, such as a disability, identifying as LGBTQ, the travelling community, serving in the armed forces or a veteran

The consultation survey was completed by 223 adults and 25 young people. The consultation video was viewed 351 times. The consultation heard a range of feedback from a range of people with a range of perspectives. Specific focus groups were conducted with people with lived and living experience.

5.3 The Editorial Team reviewed all feedback, and the content of the strategy has been adapted in response. A Consultation Summary Report has been prepared and endorsed by the Drug and Alcohol Partnership Board on 26 September 2026.

5.4 Key feedback included,

- 67% said the strategy (document) is easy to read, clear and understandable (139 people). Note that the strategy has since been through a design process led by North Yorkshire Council.
- 80% said they are clear about what we are trying to achieve (168 people)
- 69% said they agree with the language that we have used – e.g. 'people who experience harmful substance use' (148 people)
- 72% young people agreed that teaching young people how to keep themselves safe and reduce harm is preferred vs 'just say no (with no other information)'.

5.5 A series of adaptations were made to the content of the strategy, including e.g.

- Purpose of strategy (and commitment to an annual delivery plan)
- Clarified deliberate use of, and importance of, language – as part of a suite of actions to address stigma
- Reinforced what we mean by substances, and why alcohol and medicines are included
- Developed a 'plan on a page' infographic to simplify interpretation.

5.6 The consultation reinforced that substance use is a divisive issue for North Yorkshire people. Qualitative feedback reinforced the important role of the strategy in balancing respect for everyone in North Yorkshire and their experiences of substances and associated harms, including the role of the strategy and partnership in taking action to address stigma.

6.0 Contribution to council priorities

Substance use and associated harms is complex and multi-faceted. North Yorkshire Council has a key role to play in supporting the delivery of the vision for North Yorkshire people – through leadership, strategy and policy, employment practices and service delivery.

Key examples of this include:

- Alcohol environment – e.g., make full use of licensing powers and manage availability of alcohol, in line with the latest national Alcohol Strategy.

- Local services and support – e.g., delivery of effective and non-stigmatising adult and children’s services, and support for employees and carers.
- Jobs, homes, and welfare support (protective factors) – e.g., Economic Framework, Housing Strategy.
- Localities – e.g., non-stigmatising meaningful activities and connections

7.0 Financial implications

In terms of the cost of producing the strategy, including consultation costs, this has been met from existing departmental budgets. The main channel for sharing the strategy, once approved, will be digital/online. If the outcomes contained within the strategy are achieved, this will have a significant impact on improving people’s health and wellbeing and, whilst a figure cannot be easily estimated, this prevention element will help the Council and its partners in managing resources.

8.0 Equalities implications

An equality impact assessment (EIA) has been completed and was shared as part of the consultation on the draft strategy. Following the consultation, the EIA has been updated and is included with this report. There are no changes to the outcome of the EIA, that there should be no adverse impact from this proposal.

9.0 Climate change implications

A climate change impact assessment has been completed. The strategy should not have any negative impact on climate.

10.0 Next steps

Members of the North Yorkshire Drug and Alcohol Partnership Board will be progressing the strategy through their internal governance arrangements between September 2024 and January 2025 – for adoption.

Within North Yorkshire Council, the timeline for approval and adoption is as follows:

- Executive – Jan 2025

The strategy will be launched from January 2025, following the Drug and Alcohol Partnership Board meeting.

11.0 CONCLUSIONS

11.1 The Substance Use Strategy 2024-2028 sets an ambitious vision for North Yorkshire people, and represents a commitment from partners across the county, working alongside people, to deliver reduced harms associated with substance use.

11.2 The strategy has been adapted by the partnership Editorial Team in response to a public consultation. The strategy has been endorsed by the Drug and Alcohol Partnership Board. Approval will be sought from the council and partners through respective governance arrangements between September 2024 and January 2025. The strategy will be launched from January 2025.

The strategy will be underpinned by an Annual Delivery Plan and Annual Progress Report. The Annual Progress Report will be published in line with the drug strategy partnership guidance.

12.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)

That North Yorkshire Council Executive adopts the all-age North Yorkshire Substance Use Strategy 2024-2028

Richard Webb
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21st January 2025 County Hall, Northallerton

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Documents:

- North Yorkshire Substance Use Strategy 2024-2028
- Consultation Summary Report

References:

Must Know: [Must Know: Treatment and recovery for people with drug or alcohol problems | Local Government Association](#)

Why Invest: <https://app.box.com/s/p52mrjh78yryshd9smogm350s7ougg1>