

Bristol Drug and Alcohol Strategy - Vision, Principles, Priorities and Ambitions

Our vision statement:

Bristol aspires to be a recovery city working together with individuals, families and communities to reduce drug and alcohol harms, promote education and understanding, and provide compassionate, inclusive services.

Our guiding principles

The Bristol Drug and Alcohol Strategy is underpinned by a set of core principles that shape every aspect of our approach. These principles reflect our commitment to building a compassionate, inclusive, and effective system of support for individuals, families, and communities affected by substance use. The principles are:

- **Trauma-informed practice.** We recognise the profound impact trauma can have on individuals and communities. Our services and interventions are designed to be sensitive to trauma, promoting safety and empowerment
- **Challenging stigma.** We actively work to dismantle stigma associated with substance use. Through education, advocacy, and inclusive language, we aim to broaden understanding and reduce discrimination
- **Lived experience at the centre.** The voices of people with lived experience are at the centre of our strategy. We value the opinions of those in the lived experience community to ensure relevance, authenticity, and impact
- **Accessibility and flexibility.** We are committed to ensuring that services are easy to access and responsive to individual needs. Flexibility in delivery models allows us to meet people where they are
- **Evidence-informed decision making.** Our actions are guided by robust data, research, and local intelligence. We continuously evaluate and adapt our approach to ensure it remains effective and responsive to emerging trends
- **Equality, diversity and inclusion.** We value and celebrate Bristol's diversity. Our strategy promotes equity in access, outcomes, and opportunities, ensuring that no one is left behind
- **Collaborative recovery city approach.** Bristol proudly aims to be a Recovery City. We work collaboratively across sectors, organisations, and communities to build a culture of recovery, resilience, and hope

Priorities and Ambitions

We have identified 6 priorities of focus for the coming 5 years with 33 associated ambitions.

Priority 1: Prevent and reduce harms

Bristol will adapt to emerging challenges, trends and opportunities in communities

Our ambition is to:

- Use data and intelligence to identify need and adapt our services, approaches and resources to improve outcomes
- Be responsive to any emerging drug threats and prevent drug related deaths in our city
- Work with transport, licensing and planning teams to design and create public places and safer communities which support healthy behaviours and reduce harms
- Work with local partners, including trusted community organisations and Avon and Somerset Police, to reduce the impact of drug and alcohol harms on communities and prevent further exposure to harms
- Use our regulatory powers as a local authority on licensing and planning to address the negative impacts of drugs and alcohol on neighbourhoods
- Increase awareness of drug and alcohol harms through education, information and campaigns

Priority 2: Address inequalities

Remove the barriers and create health equity

Our ambition is to:

- Improve accessibility and engagement in substance use treatment across underserved communities, including culturally diverse groups and those with limited digital access
- Improve access to primary and secondary healthcare and mental health services, for people with substance use needs, recognising the multiple disadvantage, complex health needs and inequitable access impact
- Help people get and keep a home

Priority 3: Children and Young People

Children and young people in Bristol are protected from drug and alcohol harms and able to thrive

Our ambition is to:

- Ensure children and young people understand the potential harms of drugs and alcohol and how to be online safely

- Support children and young people’s self-confidence, emotional resilience, and mental wellbeing to increase their potential to make informed decisions around substance use
- Ensure children and young people are supported to access services for their drug and/or alcohol use as early as possible
- Provide support to children and young people with substance-using parents/carers to reduce further harms and where needed safeguard them
- Ensure there are safe places and trusted people in every neighbourhood for young people to discuss their concerns around substance use and receive support
- Recognise key groups or periods in a young person’s life where risk is greater – Adverse Childhood experiences, transition to adulthood and target work to meet these needs
- Protect children and young people from drug and alcohol-related criminal exploitation

Priority 4: Treatment and support

Bristol’s treatment services are high quality and effective.

Our ambition is to:

- Provide a wide and varied number of treatment options that are responsive to need
- Ensure treatment is accessible and inclusive to all communities, with effective pathways and outreach provision
- Support families and carers of people in treatment and recovery services in their own right
- Build a professional and highly skilled workforce, that represents our local population, including those with lived experience
- Build better understanding across services and organisations on how substance use and mental health can present and how services can better respond and meet their needs
- Be a learning city; working together with academia, providers and wider partners to ensure evidence is robust, informs our decision making and can add value to this sector whilst embracing innovation and creativity

Priority 5: Criminal justice

Recognise and address the health and social inequalities, that can lead to crime and disorder

Our ambition is to:

- Prioritise the protection of vulnerable adults from drug and alcohol-related exploitation
- Tackle serious and organised crime associated with drugs, including county lines.

- Reduce the numbers of people experiencing the ‘revolving door of the criminal justice system’ through proactive work to increase engagement in alternative options
- Address drug and alcohol-related violence against women and girls
- Reduce the risk of substance use harm for those being released from prison

Priority 6: Recovery

Promote, build and invest in sustainable recovery across Bristol

Our ambition is to:

- Secure sustainability of our Lived Experience Recovery Organisation as a social movement for recovery in Bristol so that it reaches all neighbourhoods and communities, including our diverse communities and underpins our work as a city
- Identify and address barriers to learning and work, working with system partners to ensure improved access and support
- Continue to raise awareness of the importance of mutual aid groups including SMART recovery and fellowships e.g. Alcohol Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA)
- Involve people with lived experience in training the health and wider workforce to support a compassionate approach
- Develop after care offer for those leaving treatment
- Develop city-wide public awareness campaigns to challenge stigma and shift narratives from criminality to health and recovery. Showcasing the life experience and success of people in our city as a route to humanise dependence and recovery