

## TRAFFORD COUNCIL

**Report to:** Children's & Young People's Scrutiny Committee  
**Date:** 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2024  
**Report for:** Information  
**Report of:** Helen Gollins, Director of Public Health

### Report Title

Substance and Alcohol support for young people: partnership work to address the substance misuse and alcohol use, including vaping.

### Summary

This paper provides Trafford Council Children's Scrutiny Committee an outline of how the Council and the local service provider are supporting Trafford young people affected by substance misuse and alcohol and working to prevent harm. This paper will provide an overview of the national and local context, young people's substance misuse treatment outcomes, an introduction into new and emerging substances and future developments for Trafford.

### Recommendation(s)

The Children's & Young People's Scrutiny Committee are asked are asked to note the content of this report and provide any comment and insights which can inform future developments.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. National Context:

In 2019 the Home Office and the Department of Health and Social Care commissioned Dame Carol Black to conduct a two-part independent review of substance misuse. In response, the government published their 10-year drug strategy titled '*From Harm to Hope: A 10-year Plan To Cut Crime and Save Lives*'. This strategy outlined three reform objectives relative to substance misuse including alcohol:

1. Breaking supply chains
2. Delivering a world-class treatment and recovery system
3. Achieve a generational shift in demand for recreational drugs.

All these objectives aim to have positive impacts on children and young people (CYP) and local areas have been given some increased funding to help achieve these overarching aims. Although the strategy is focused on drugs, the harms of alcohol use are recognised within the strategy and the integrated nature of many support services and treatment providers means that the investment has been used to tackle both.

### 1.2 Early Break Young People & Family Service

Trafford *Achieve* Recovery Service is the locally commissioned service to support Trafford residents affected by substance misuse and alcohol harms. This partnership is led by Greater Manchester Mental Health Foundation Trust (GMMH) and Early Break is a sub-contracted core partner in this service model, delivering specialist support to CYP (under 21 years; young people aged 22-25 with additional needs can be seen by either Early Break or the adult service) and to families affected by parental substance misuse.

Early Break staff work with young people to develop a comprehensive assessment and care plan working towards reduction or abstinence of their substance misuse behaviours and the associated risk taking and harmful behaviours. This process will cover a range of areas such as substance use, safeguarding, physical health, emotional health, sexual health, family and peer relationships, education, finance and employment etc. Advocacy Workers offer one-to-one support, education and advice and offer access to treatment and specialist structured harm reduction interventions. They do this by providing holistic therapies, taking account of mental wellbeing and the drivers of people's behaviour, including trauma. Early Break will work with young people for however long they need. To fully support a young person's comprehensive assessment of need and care plan, they will also work with partner agencies such as in education, criminal justice, sexual health or youth services.

They also offer their award-winning Holding Families programme which is a whole family approach to support parental substance use and young people who are impacted by this. This six-month programme allows the parent and the child/ren to have their own individual workers, to meet their individual needs, as well as coming together to be supported as a family. Additionally, Holding Families Plus was developed as part of PHE National Innovation grant in 2019, to develop

services for children affected by alcohol dependent parents who are in prison. This project builds on the evidence based of Holding Families to offer a trauma responsive service working with children, families and carers effected by parental substance misuse and criminality. This work has strengthened partnerships with probation and local prisons and across children's services. The aim of these family services is to provide support to prevent the early onset of challenging and risk-taking behaviours amongst young people. It also supports the adult to reduce their risks and to reintegrate with their family, where appropriate.

Early Break also provide input to schools and partners to raise awareness of substance use risks and offer harm reduction training. They have recently developed their 'Stressed Out Brain' training which we have commissioned in Trafford. This has been developed by young people for professionals as young people often reported that wider front-line agencies did not know how to talk to young people about their substance use effectively, resulting in these needs often being missed or not addressed. This training provides professionals with resources to use in their own practice. Over the last year almost 100 professionals have received the SOB training in Trafford, this includes colleagues from; Early Help, VCSF, Youth services, Childrens Social Care, Education, Complex Safeguarding, Youth Justice and Cared for Children. <https://stressedoutbrain.earlybreak.co.uk/stressed-out-brian-film-new-trauma-informed-resource-for-young-peoples-workers/>

#### 1.2.2 Trafford's Alcohol, Substance Misuse & Gambling Partnership

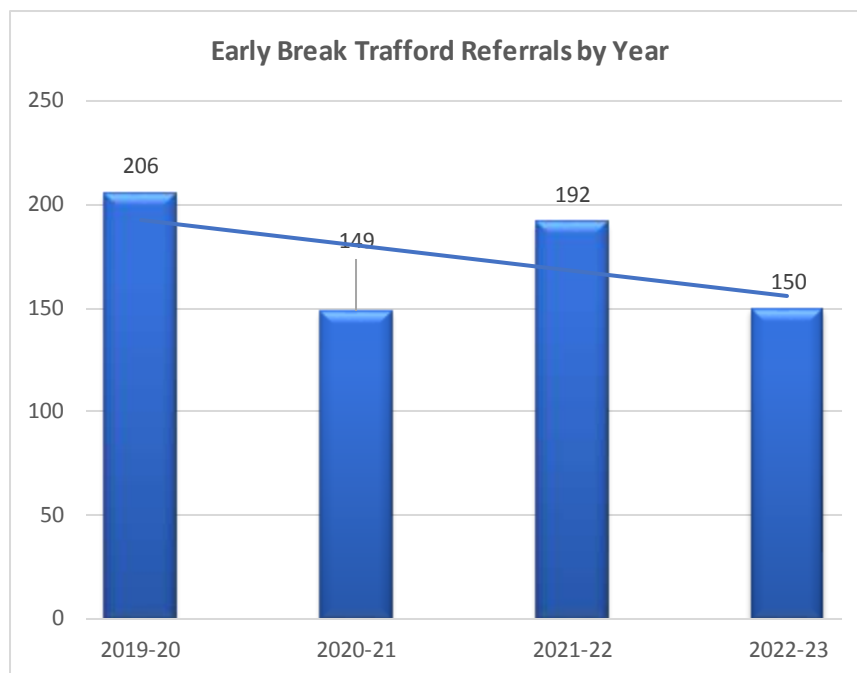
In Summer 2023, Trafford Council's Public Health Team set up The Trafford Alcohol, Substance Misuse & Gambling Partnership (TASMGP). This partnership brings together a range of partners and organisations linked both directly and indirectly with alcohol, drugs, and gambling. The focus is to collaborate and share good practice to strengthen alcohol, drug and gambling activity across the borough and deliver on a local alcohol, drug and gambling action plan. A Joint Strategic Needs Assessment is currently being developed to inform this action plan and future investment and activity. Early Break and wider young people's services are represented in this partnership which is accountable to Trafford's Health and Wellbeing Board and Safer Trafford Partnership.

## **2.0 Trafford Indicators and Outcomes**

### 2.1 Referral Breakdown – All Referrals

The table below outlines the total number of referrals Early Break received from 2019/20 to 2022/23.

**Figure 1: Early Break Trafford Referrals 2019/20–2022/23**



The reduction in referrals in 2020/21 is due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and young people not being seen by education or wider services. In Quarter 4 of 2023 the Trafford team experienced changes in staff which disrupted partnership working and referral generation whilst new relationships were being established. During 2023 Trafford has seen an upward trajectory in their number of referrals again; in quarters 1 – 3 Early Break have received 153 referrals.

The table below shows the breakdown of referrals Early Break Trafford received by sector, over the last 4 years.

**Table 1: Early Break Trafford Referral Sources 2019/20-2022/23.**

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023 Q1-3
Children & Family Services	19%	24%	23%	23%	17%
Education Services	24%	13%	26%	22%	18%
Health & Mental Health Services	23%	23%	26%	18%	20%
Substance Misuse Services	1%	<5%	9%	8%	7%
Youth Justice Services	11%	19%	9%	18%	22%
Family/Friends/Self	16%	11%	9%	9%	15%
Other (including missing data)	<5%	<5%	<5%	<5%	<5%

Referrals from Health & Mental Health Services increased in 2021/22. This is possibly due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people and the result of professionals returning to office-based working, strengthening partnership working and referral pathways. There has since been a drop which is particularly noticeable in hospital referrals. These decreased from between 11-13% in previous years, to 8% in 2022/23. This has been a particular concern as Trafford has a higher hospital admission rate for under 18's for alcohol-specific conditions (2018/19) compared to the North-West and England. Early Break have

completed some focused work with the hospitals and most recent data in 2023 is showing an upward trajectory in the numbers referred into the service.

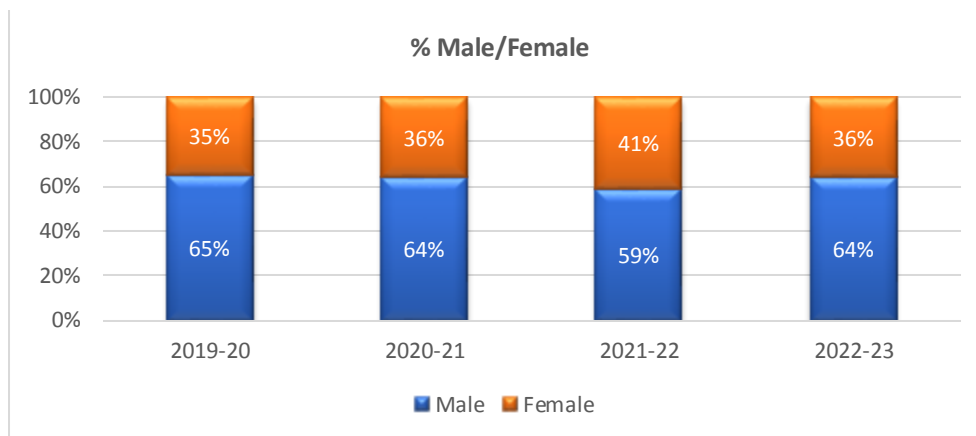
Referrals from Youth Justice Services decreased in 2021/22; this is thought to be due to the COVID-19 lockdowns and the reduction in arrests being carried out with young people. Early Break has worked closely with the Youth Justice Service, embedding a worker with the team and providing workforce training and development. Early Break is now represented in the YJS referral meetings and prevention projects such as PIED; this has increased the number of young people coming into treatment services, with the proportion of referrals coming from youth justice increasing from 18% in 2023/23 to 22% in Quarters 1-3 in 2023/24.

## 2.2 Demographics - All Referrals

2.2.1. Gender - there are consistently more males open to the Early Break service compared to females; male clients make up around 65% of service users.

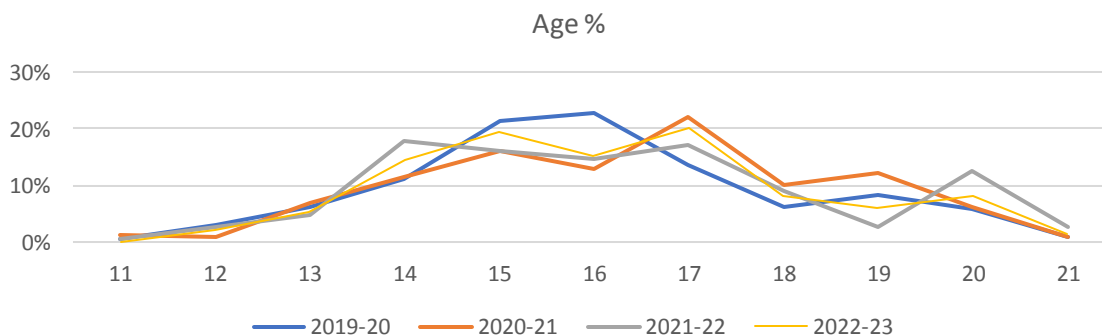
The increase in proportion of female clients in 2021-22 appears to relate to an increase in alcohol-related referrals in 2021-22 seen by the service.

**Figure 2: The percentage of Males & Females referred to the Early Break Trafford Service 2019/20-2022/23.**



2.2.2. Age - The average age of Early Break service users is consistently around 16 years with breakdown shown below.

**Figure 3: Proportion of Early Break service users in each age group, 2019/20-2022/23**



2.2.3. Ethnicity - The highest percentage of referrals was for young people who are White British. The percentage of service-users from a black or minority ethnicity has ranged from 15-20% in recent years.

**Figure 4: Percentage of non-white ethnicity amongst Early Break service users, 2019/20-2022/23**



### 2.3 Substance Misuse Profile - All Referrals

The table below shows a breakdown for substances that young people reported using at point of referral.

**Table 2: A breakdown of substances Trafford young people referred to Early Break reported using in 2019/20-2022/23.**

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Cannabis	79%	77%	70%	81%
Alcohol	34%	34%	41%	34%
Cocaine	7%	13%	12%	15%
Amphetamines	0%	1%	0%	0%
MDMA	2%	6%	2%	5%
Codeine	1%	3%	1%	1%
Benzodiazepines	6%	6%	5%	7%
Ketamine	2%	1%	5%	7%
LSD	0%	0%	1%	1%
Nitrous Oxide	1%	3%	2%	2%
Aerosols	0%	0%	1%	0%
Heroin/Opiates	0%	0%	0%	1%

Alcohol, Cannabis and Cocaine (ACC) remain the top three substances used amongst young people in service, followed by Benzodiazepine and Ketamine.

There continues to be a steady increase in the proportion of service users who note that they use Cannabis, Cocaine, Benzodiazepines and Ketamine over the last 4 years. 2023/24 data so far shows similar proportions to last year. However, the GM Trends research<sup>1</sup>, which includes testing of substances and a survey with young people and professionals, conducted by Manchester Metropolitan University and Early Break with partner organisations, showed a 48% increase in THC (cannabinoids) vaping and anecdotally Early Break feel this is an issue in Trafford too, though responses to the survey were low from Trafford.

<sup>1</sup> [Greater Manchester GM Trends | Testing & Research on Emergent & New Drug Trends \(mmu.ac.uk\)](https://www.mmu.ac.uk/gm-trends)

When making a referral into the service referrers are asked to name their (1) primary, (2) secondary and (3) tertiary substance, listing them in order of impact and support needs.

Alcohol being given as the primary substance increased by 10% in 2021/22 and Cannabis use decreased by same percentage. Possible reasons for this could be that Cannabis was not as widely available during lockdown and alcohol may have been used more as an alternative. These percentages returned to pre-COVID-19 trends in 2022/23.

#### 2.4 Specialist Substance Misuse Treatment - Tier 3 Breakdown

The data outlined above in this report refers to all referrals made into the Early Break service. Not all these referrals will lead to specialist drug and alcohol treatment, also known as tier 3 support. The data below specifically cover Trafford children and young people accessing tier 3 specialist drug and alcohol treatment.

**Table 3: Total number of Trafford Tier 3 Service Users in 2019/20-2022/23**

Active tier 3	2019-20		2020-21		2021-22		2022-23	
Total number in tier 3 treatment	74		87		89		73	
New presentations	50		65		47		41	
Trafford treatment re-presentations (last 6 months)	8	11%	16	18%	9	10%	9	12%
National average re-presentations (last 6 months)		19%		23%		19%		17%

The number of new presentations refers to the number of unique young people that have not been in specialist tier 3 substance misuse treatment before. Re-presentations refers to the number of young people who been in specialist tier 3 substance misuse treatment in the last 6 months and returned. Positively, Trafford's re-representation percentages have remained lower than national averages for the last four years. This reflects the effectiveness of Early Breaks treatment interventions. At the time of writing, National Drug Treatment Monitoring Systems data has not yet been published for this year.

When considering young people's discharge from structured tier 3 substance misuse treatment, these exits can be reported as planned (successful) or unplanned (unsuccessful such as a drop-out).

**Table 4: Early Break Trafford Tier 3 Service User Planned Exits 2019/20-2022/23**

	2019-20		2020-21		2021-22		2022-23	
Trafford Planned Exits	44	85%	40	80%	48	84%	34	65%
National Average		78%		76%		77%		78%

Between 2019/20 to 2021/22, the Trafford planned exits exceeded national averages between 80-85%. However, this percentage dropped in the last year. This year by the

end of Quarter 2, 96% of exits were planned, with successful outcomes, compared to a national average of 80%.

### **3.0 Trafford New & Emerging Substances**

Early Break chair the Greater Manchester Substance Misuse Operational Group (SMOG) meeting to discuss common issues such as A&E pathways, emerging trends or new themes. The meeting is attended by colleagues from young people's drug and alcohol treatment services across Greater Manchester and health professionals from emergency departments and school nurses. The SMOG reports back to the Northwest Children, Young People and Families Substance Misuse Partnership Group. This is a strategic group that reports to the Greater Manchester Strategic Lead for Drugs and Alcohol at the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, and is also chaired by Early Break on behalf of all North-West CYP drug and alcohol treatment services, health representation, MMU and wider academics, strategic leads from GM Complex Safeguarding and the Violence Reduction Unit. Over the last 5 years this group has been influential in developing National drug treatment protocols on Alprazolam (Xanax) and national harm reduction messages on Nitrous Oxide. The annual Young people's drugs trends survey which monitors young peoples substance use and learning is disseminated locally to the children's workforce and through these networks. In Trafford, Early Break deliver this up to date information through their Tier one training, which is available to any professional and is accessed via the safeguarding board website.

#### 3.1 Vaping

Early Break Trafford have been commissioned and trained for the first time to offer a tobacco smoking cessation service to children and families, which hasn't been in place previously.

In response to the increasing concerns surrounding youth vaping, Trafford Council's Public Health Team, Early Break and Trafford's School Health Team are working in partnership to deliver a vaping project to our children, young people, parents and professionals.

As part of the offer, health promotion initiatives are being developed to raise awareness about the harms of youth vaping and to provide young people, parents, and professionals with support and advice. These initiatives include:

1. Secondary school vaping drop-in sessions.
2. Parents vaping education webinars.
3. Professionals vaping education webinars.
4. Trafford youth vaping pathway (1:1 specialist support).

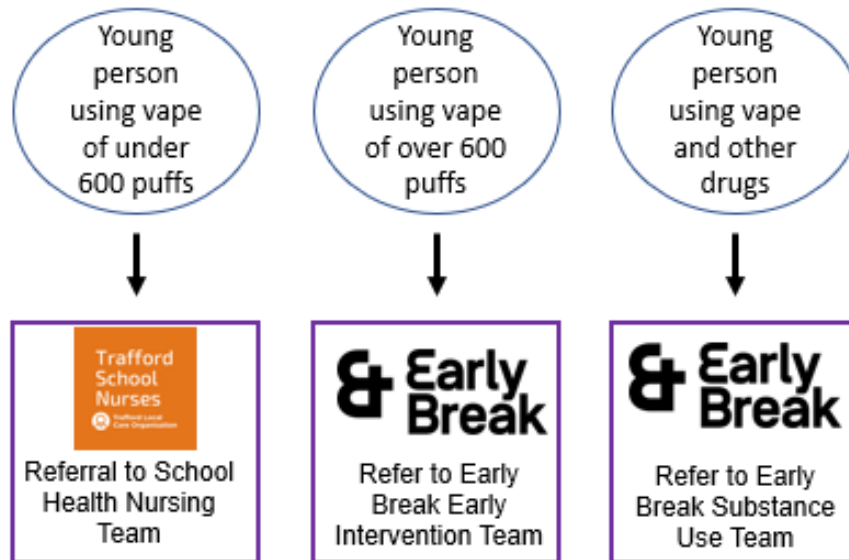
To help navigate the local support available for young people who regularly vape, the School Health Team and Early Break have developed a pathway of support and interventions available to young people who would like support to cut down or quit vaping.

Young people can access 1:1 support through a referral to their school nurse. If a young person is found to be using an unregulated vape, their support will be transferred to Early Break where they will have a comprehensive assessment of



their need, harm reduction advice, information on nicotine and the risks, an offer of nicotine replacement therapy if appropriate and support to change their habits, if the young person would like this.

**Figure 5: Trafford Young People’s Vaping Treatment Pathways**



As part of this work, Trafford School Health and Early Break are in the process of collaborating with Gorse Hill Studios to co-design a short, form-time vaping session for pupils. The session aims to capture the voice of our young people on vaping and will complement the secondary school drop in’s taking place from the new year and the materials developed following engagement with several groups of young people in 2022.

Trafford Council’s Public Health Team have also been successful in bidding to receive a population health fellow, funded by NHS England. This will allow the fellow (a Trafford school nurse) to spend 12 months completing research into young people’s vaping behaviours in Trafford in a placement arrangement within the team, to further her understanding of public health and complete an accredited course. We hope this will help us to gain a better understanding of local prevalence and young people’s motivations to vape, particularly for those who do not smoke, to help deliver interventions to best meet their needs.

In addition, Trafford Council has responded to the government’s national consultation on stopping the start: the government’s ambition to create a smokefree generation. Trafford’s response to this consultation included feedback from colleagues in youth health, education and enforcement around youth vaping. The response highlighted the risks of harm to young people using vapes in Trafford, particularly regarding vapes that have been adulterated and resulted in adverse effects. It also highlighted the difficulties Trafford schools have faced in enforcing measures to restrict vaping use amongst CYP. The response advocated regulating vape packaging and product presentation so vapes are less desirable

to young people and are instead understood and marketed as a nicotine delivery device for adults who wish to stop smoking.

### 3.2 Ketamine

Ketamine is an emerging concern in Trafford. Though the numbers are low, these are increasing and we are seeing more young people with physical health issues as a result. Early Break has monitored this trend through the Northwest Children, Young People and Families Substance Misuse Partnership Group.

Physical health impacts of ketamine use can be missed by primary care. For example, Trafford young people have been diagnosed with a urinary tract infection (UTI) and the general practitioner hasn't asked about the young person's substance misuse history. When Early Break supported young people with these physical health appointments, specialist referrals to urology were made to give young people the physical health support they require.

Trafford Council Public Health Team & Early Break are currently in the process of liaising with Primary Care colleagues to deliver some Ketamine awareness and education.

## **4.0 Future Developments**

### 4.1 Trafford's Drug & Alcohol Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

Trafford Council are currently developing a joint strategic needs assessment for drugs and alcohol. This should help to identify our local unmet need around substance misuse which includes children, young people and families and prevention of these support needs in the future. This is expected to be finalised in March 2024. However, accessing data and intelligence around these issues has been challenging for several partners and a focus of the TASMGP in 2024/25 will be to improve the recording and sharing of insight around young people (and adult substance use)

### 4.2 Trafford Strategic Safeguarding Partnership (TSSP) Board Data Set

Trafford Council Public Health Team and are working in partnership with the TSSP Quality Assurance Officer to complete a safeguarding adults data set that will include substance misuse. This will include intelligence from the Achieve service to help safeguard adults, children and families. Some examples of data that will be included is the number of Achieve service users with an under 18 living at the home, referrals made from Achieve to children's services, and those affected by vulnerabilities such as domestic abuse and mental health difficulties.

## **5.0 Recommendations**

The Children's & Young People's Scrutiny Committee are asked to note the content of this report and provide any comment and insights which can inform future developments.