

## Higher than average rates for under-18 self harm and alcohol related hospital admissions in the Stroud District

Members of the Committee requested greater detail on these issues following a presentation of the Director of Public Health Annual report at the June CS&L Committee. The briefing is longer than usual due to the two topics covered; both self harm and alcohol.

### Public Health Profile

The latest Public Health Profiles for Stroud District shows that we are again higher than the English rate for self harm and alcohol related hospital admissions for under-18s. The graphs below show the trend in admissions per 100,000 population in recent years. The fine line is Stroud District against the bold line of England.

Figure 1 Hospital stays for self harm - Stroud

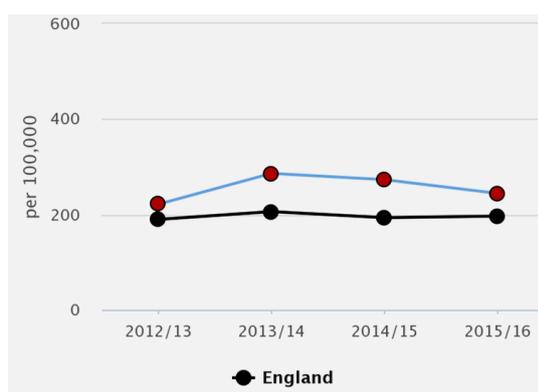
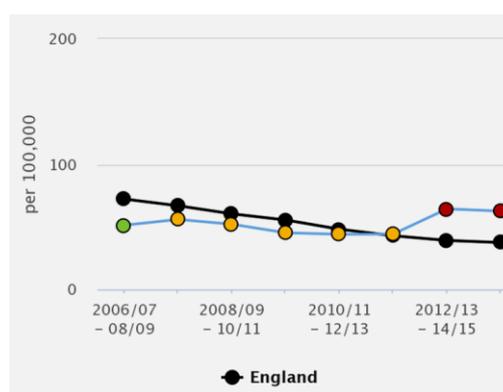


Figure 2 Hospital stays for alcohol - Stroud



In fact the whole of the South West has higher rates of hospital admissions for self harm than England. Public Health England think this may be because South West hospitals are following NICE guidelines to admit all under-18 self harm cases, when perhaps other parts of the country are not doing so. PHE are looking for evidence to confirm this.

Public Health Gloucestershire are also exploring whether the admission rates are due to several individuals being admitted once or the same few people with repeated admissions. The way the data is currently collected does not make this clear.

When a young person is admitted to hospital for self harm or alcohol related reasons, this triggers a range of investigations and support. Public Health Gloucestershire see alcohol and self harm as closely related because they are unlikely to be isolated issues. It is more likely that a young person is using these

behaviours as a coping mechanism for dealing with bigger issues affecting their mental health.

The county's high rates of under-18 self harm are a concern to Public Health Gloucestershire who now have self harm as one of their top priorities. Jennifer Taylor is the lead commissioner for this and is heading up a 'deep dive' into self harm for the Mental Health and Wellbeing Board. She will be talking to key professionals and young people, including Emergency Department doctors, Gloucestershire Healthy Living and Learning and the Youth Support Team.

Jennifer will also be holding a workshop on self harm in the Autumn and would appreciate District input on this, especially from our Youth Council. In the interim she will be giving an overview of self harm to the Gloucestershire Health & Wellbeing Board on 19<sup>th</sup> September. A copy of this will be provided to the CS&L Committee.

Hospital admissions for self harm tend to be for poisoning with substances easily obtained at home like paracetamol. Admissions don't tend to be for cutting behaviours so young people who are cutting are not being picked up in the PH data.

To support their research Public Health Gloucestershire has looked at self reporting of self harm in the Online Pupil Survey which tends to include more of the cutting behaviours. Levels of self harm reported through the OPS are in line with the national average.

15 schools and colleges in Stroud were part of a Schools Mental Health pilot in 2015-16 which aligned a specialist mental health worker to every school in the pilot. This made accessing support easier and quicker and aimed to catch problems early. The pilot also included a project on self harm with Stroud High School. We will have to wait on the next lot of PHE data to see if the pilot had any impact on admissions for self harm or alcohol. The pilot evaluation was positive and teachers felt much more able to deal with problems arising at school as a result of the closer partnership working with the mental health team. Interestingly the evaluation showed that self harm was not one the highest reasons for referring from schools to the mental health team but it was a secondary issue as part of a wider problem like anxiety or depression.

### **Services available for Self Harm**

'Teens in Crisis' now offer online counselling as well as face to face counselling.

Gloucestershire is one of the only areas to have a 'Self Harm' Helpline. The majority of helpline users are women in their 20s and 30s. As a result the helpline introduced an online and text service which is being promoted to younger people.

Gloucestershire Children and Young People's Service deliver professional mental health support. As resources become tighter, the threshold for accessing these services becomes higher but anecdotally, the schools mental health pilot seems to have improved support for Stroud young people through earlier intervention before a situation escalates.

Stroud District Youth Council supported development of the 'On Your Mind' website for young people and families who need advice about mental health issues. <https://www.onyourmindglos.nhs.uk/>. They also developed a self harm leaflet in 2014 having raised the issue with various health partners at the time. They would like to promote avenues of support to their peers.

### **Services available for Alcohol**

Infobuzz offer a once a week drop in at Stroud Library for any young person between 16 and 25 who needs advice about a drug or alcohol issue. They will work with that young person as informally as is needed to keep them engaged. Megan Bailey is our Stroud case worker. She is not seeing as many young people in Stroud as she does in other areas but thinks this is because the drop in service is only a few months old. Anyone can refer to Infobuzz by phone, email or in person. Megan feels there is far more cannabis misuse than alcohol in the Stroud area and that is what the majority of her cases are about.

Prospect offer the next tier of support after Infobuzz. They deliver substance misuse treatment for under-18s. They see more patients from Stroud than any other district in Gloucestershire. Louise Denman from the Prospects team feels this is due to our effective referral record rather than a greater problem with our young people. The Stroud liaison has been working closely with Stroud schools for 10 years so their relationships are stable and the partnership works well. Stroud schools are good at referring anyone they are concerned about and the Prospect team are happy to work informally with a young person if they're not ready to agree to treatment. Like Megan at Infobuzz, Louise also cites cannabis as the number one addiction for young people, with alcohol a long way behind.

Gloucestershire Healthy Living and Learning provide resources and training support for schools on substance misuse and mental health but it is up to the schools what resources they choose to use and how much depth they go into on a subject.

### **Feedback from Stroud District Youth Council**

Feedback from our SDYC members is that young people are more likely to call the Samaritans or Child Line as these are well known sources of support. There is less awareness of Gloucestershire Self Harm Helpline. They would like more frequent discussion and advice about self harm in PSHE lessons and more education for family members on what to do if a young people is self harming. Evidence suggests

that families don't know how to help and feel they have to keep their young people away from knives which is not the answer.

In terms of alcohol, our young people report that during PSHE lessons, they are taught about alcoholism in adults but there is little discussion about young people using alcohol to deal with psychological problems themselves.

They were not aware of the services being offered by Prospect or Infobuzz.

### **Next Steps**

The Committee will be kept informed about the Public Health Gloucestershire Self Harm Review and the 'deep dive' into health data after the September HWB Board briefing and the Autumn workshop.

The Youth Council and supporting officers will work with Infobuzz to publicise their Stroud services.

The Schools Mental Health Pilot Evaluation will be reviewed and circulated to the CS&L Committee and SDC Youth Team.