

August 2022

PSPO Evidence

**Safer Merton**

*Working Together To Keep Merton Safe & Sound*

# Background

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The existing five ward PSPO expires in October 2022 and we are considering extending that Order for a period of three years. A scan of the available alcohol related data and results of relevant public consultations has been undertaken. The results are as follows.

## Quantitative Evidence

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Available intelligence has been examined to see what the potential requirement for the borough will be going forward. The evidence is not comprehensive; however, the information below seeks to provide some context as to how big the **reported** problem of alcohol related ASB is in the borough. The time period we will look at, where possible, is the financial year (FY) 2021-2022. It should be noted that we have not undertaken a comparison of year on year figures since due to the unique circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic and the effect this would have on skewering figures.

### **Safer Merton alcohol related ASB complaints**

The Safer Merton ASB Team log all complaints that come into their service. They log the type of incident and the location. Looking at the data supplied by the Team for the period identified, there were 1,104 ASB complaints, of these 80 had an alcohol related element. The top locations were Graveney (24%), Figges Marsh (16%) and Pollards Hill (15%). It's important to flag the relatively small numbers because the proportion of cases where alcohol is a contributory factor are thought to be much higher than the figures indicate.

### **FPN's issued for street drinking**

The Environment Enforcement Team (Kingdom) have been assisting the partnership with the enforcement of the current PSPO. In the FY 2021-22 6 Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) were issued. The highest number was in Figges Marsh ward with 3 FPNs issued.

### **CCTV alcohol related logs**

The CCTV Team log any alcohol related concerns on their system, as well as a brief description of events and associated behaviours where applicable. The location, time and date of logs are also captured. The two busiest locations when it comes to alcohol and drug related incidents are Mitcham town centre and Wimbledon town centre. Mitcham town centre has been the focal point of the current PSPO, with drinkers congregating around Mitcham Fair Green on a daily basis. There has been an increase in evening street parties happening on Friday and Saturday nights.

Wimbledon town centre is the main location for the night time economy in Merton. Most of the alcohol related incidents there are related to pubs and clubs however there has been an increase in alcohol related incidents, including rough sleepers and beggars.

Since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021, CCTV has recorded more than 300 incidents involving alcohol and drug use however the true number of alcohol related incidents is most likely much higher.

There has been a number of ASB, domestic, rough sleeper, and traffic incidents recorded on the system, many of which are likely to have the added characteristic of being alcohol related but were not logged under 'alcohol related' incident type. The top locations were Mitcham (35%) and Wimbledon (28%).

The incidents logged by CCTV are restricted to the locations where there is camera coverage, mostly town centres. They do not include most of the domestic incidents and alcohol related incidents in residential areas without cameras.

### **Police calls related to street drinking**

The only Police data that is specifically related to street drinking comes in the form of call data to the Police. There is no central collection point of data in relation to action undertaken in relation to the PSPO. The Police 'CAD' System registers the quantity and type of calls that comes through to the Police. A search was undertaken to look at the number of calls that came through to the Police with an opening code of Street Drinking (what the public have perceived the problem to be, this may be re-classified after investigation). It should be noted that the use of the Street Drinking code depends on operators using the correct code and applying all relevant codes. For instance, when callers report street drinkers they may be reporting something that would generate a different type of code (e.g.: fighting, causing noise). In FY 2021-22, 14 calls to the Police were classified as Street Drinking.

### **London Ambulance callouts for alcohol**

SafeStats, the London Ambulance Service (LAS) data is normally the most reliable dataset to use in relation to alcohol related issues on the Borough however like any data capture system it is reliant upon the flag / field being completed. In the FY 2021-22, 709 alcohol related ambulance callouts were made in Merton. Within that total, only 4 were classified as directly attributed to some kind of assault and a further 16 related to a police incident. Figges Marsh and Colliers Wood had the highest levels of calls.

### **Summary of figures**

**The current information available to us around street drinking and associated behaviour is not comprehensive.**

The quantitative data around reports to either the ASB Team or the Police are low. Enforcement figures for the PSPO have not been high with only 6 FPNs issued in the last year.

Data Source	FY 2021-22
ASB Complaints	80
CCTV Logs	300
PSPO FPNs Issued	6
Alcohol Related Ambulance Callouts	709
Street Drinking Police Calls	14

## Qualitative Evidence

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In February 2022, Safer Merton put together a short survey to assess perceptions of the PSPO amongst partners and the Police Safer Neighbourhood teams. 14 responses were received. In general, partners felt that the PSPO was a useful tool to have, particularly for those working in the 5 wards where the PSPO applies. It was felt that fines for persistent drinkers may be an issue and it was that it would be good if there was an easier way to report breaches of the PSPO, for example through an app. Generally, partners felt that the prohibition was the right one, however other geographical areas that were suggested for consideration were: -

- Wimbledon Town Centre

- Colliers Wood
- Longthornton
- Pollards Hill
- Willow Lane Estate
- Merton Park and Morden Town Centre by Tube

### **CCTV Case Studies – Mitcham town centre**

*The main reason the PSPO was introduced in Mitcham was the constant presence of street drinkers around the Fair Green area. Merton CCTV has focused on monitoring the drinkers and reporting any incidents to the Police and Safer Merton ASB team. Two of the most prolific drinkers have been filmed on numerous occasions causing disturbance and fighting in Mitcham town centre. The two individuals were seen fighting in July 2022, which resulted in one being arrested.*

*Also in July 2022, a street drinker collapsed in Mitcham town centre, and LAS was called to resuscitate him as he was close to death.*

### **Kingdom Security**

*We have come across multiple drinkers in the past regards to drinking alcohol in a public place, for example the most common wards I can say are Graveney/ Figges Marsh and Merton Park. Most recent intervention we have come across is a male drinking alcohol outside of a school in Wimbledon while children were walking out. Have approached male to discard/ dispose his alcohol in the bin. Compliant at that time, no FPN has been issued (Kingdom Team Leader).*

### **Merton Street Pastors**

*At present we have the three patrol locations - Mitcham, Morden and Wimbledon. The Mitcham patrol focus around the centre. There are the two main pubs where we will have conversations with many of drinkers outside of the pub. Around by the clock tower we will have discussions with members of the community who may be homeless or have no fixed address. Drinking/ addiction seems much more of an issue. Mitcham tends to be an older crowd in general. A lot of our conversations will be with members of the public who are very familiar with our Street Pastors.*

*The Morden patrols tend to vary, I think this may well be that alongside the bars and restaurants around the station many drinkers will also be coming and going from either the station or the buses. Quite a mix in terms of ages and ethnicities from the Morden patrols. With both the Mitcham and Morden patrols we are out between 8pm-12 so we interact with many of the local businesses that are still open at that time. I've noticed from my own experiences that we tend to speak with more people on these patrols who have been drinking during the day.*

*The Wimbledon patrol is our busiest and liveliest of the patrols. Due to the number of bars and later opening hours our patrols there are from 10pm-2am. We tend to be interacting with a younger crowd but the feedback from the team is that Wimbledon High street has a very positive vibe during the night time economy (Merton Street Pastors Coordinator).*

### **WDP (Adult Drug and Alcohol treatment service provider)**

WDP Merton provide support for problematic use of alcohol or drugs to residents of Merton and those who are experiencing homelessness in Merton.

*When the current PSPO launched, WDP contributed information for a leaflet that can signpost people who are drinking on the streets to fast-track assessment slots with WDP, to get support with their drinking and other drug use if relevant. WDP Merton also had two roles funded by a grant from Merton's Homeless Person's Unit (HPU) which has helped us to perform more outreach activities to engage into treatment those who are sleeping rough or at risk of homelessness and may also be street drinking, using an assertive case management approach alongside our colleagues from the HPU.*

*WDP understands that there are a wide range of reasons why people drink on the streets – which can include homelessness and unstable or unsuitable housing, but also as a way of coping with mental illness, as a means of connecting with others to reduce isolation or to socialise with people from the same culture or language group, or to escape temporarily from problems within the household (such as domestic violence and abuse or living with someone else with a mental illness).*

*Rather than being viewed as a punitive instrument, a PSPO can identify street drinkers who may be experiencing some or many of the above difficulties and using alcohol as one means of coping with them and then encourage them to access help from WDP. With WDP they will receive a comprehensive assessment of their holistic needs and be guided to work towards goals that will reduce the risk of their current drinking and support them in accessing other forms of professional help that can address other areas of challenge and complexity that they are experiencing.*

## Public Perception

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In addition to the quantitative data, we felt it was important to consider the views of the public so we have therefore looked at perception information from the surveys conducted recently on the Borough.

### **London Borough of Merton Annual Residents Survey**

#### **Adults Survey**

The 2021 Annual Residents Survey provides a representative sample of 1000 residents living in the Borough.

Feelings of safety in the local area have declined substantially compared to 2019, with just 63% saying that they feel safe going out after dark, compared to 84% in 2019.

There has been an increase in those feeling that ASB and people being drunk/ rowdy in public is a problem. 30% of respondents cited ASB as a 'fairly big' or 'very big' problem, an increase of 11% on 2019. 23% of respondents cited being drunk or rowdy in public as a 'fairly big' or 'very big' problem, an increase of 10% on 2019.

Concerns regarding drunk/ rowdy behaviour are more concentrated in specific areas, notably East Merton & Mitcham (42%) and South Merton & Morden (25%).

#### **Young People's Survey**

As part of the Annual Residents Survey, the Council included young residents aged 11-17. The sample size was 110 young people.

16% stated they were concerned about ASB/ bad behaviour, 16% about groups hanging around and 8% around people using/ dealing drugs. In terms of personal concerns, 38% had a personal concern about crime.

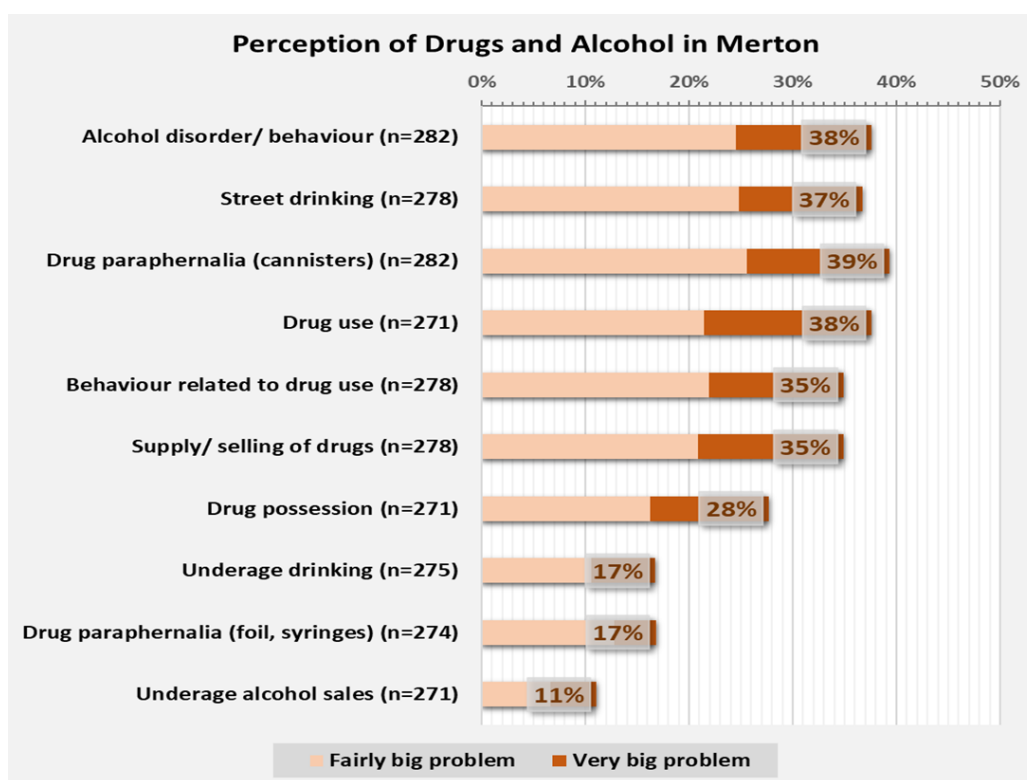
### Your Merton Consultation

This work was carried out April – July 2021 in order to understand the views, experiences, and ambitions of local people. For East Merton and Mitcham residents, ASB and safety were higher concerns in public space. They often cited public alcohol consumption as an issue.

### Safer Merton Strategic Assessment Survey

In 2021, a Community Safety Survey was undertaken to help inform the Strategic Assessment process. The survey opened at the beginning of July and closed in mid-October. There were 328 responses. The survey aimed to ask residents about all aspects of community safety and as such there was a section around ASB and drugs and alcohol.

## Alcohol and Drugs



Residents thought alcohol disorder and street drinking were the biggest problem, followed by drug paraphernalia (canisters) and drug use. 80% of people explained their score by saying they had experienced or seen it. Quite a number of comments came back from residents who had seen people using, dealing drugs as well as seeing the associated litter with street drinking and drug taking.

Residents were given the option to provide a qualitative response to specific ASB issues that they were concerned about. There were 169 free text responses provided. Of these, 5

contained the word 'alcohol' and 9 specifically mentioned 'drinking'. Most locations were open spaces such as parks.

Residents were then asked if there were any general comments they would like to feedback to the partnership. In total, there were 141 comments provided. Of these, 18 were specifically for 'drinking' and 3 were for 'alcohol'.

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