



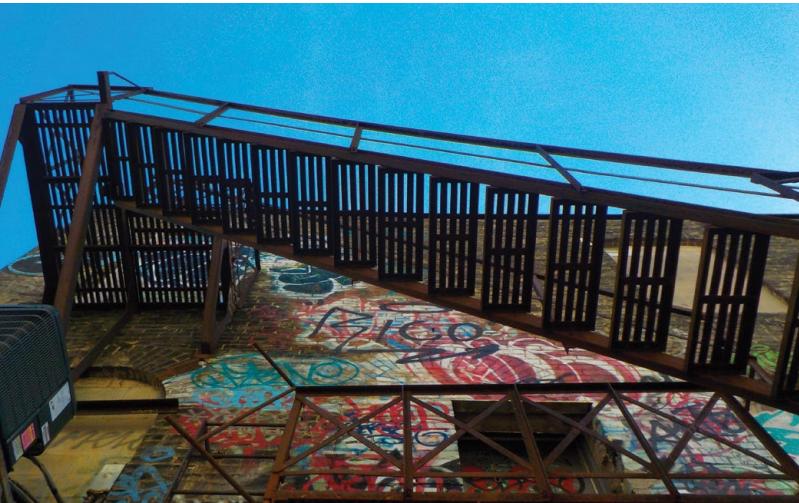
Middlesex-London  
**COMMUNITY  
DRUG & ALCOHOL  
STRATEGY**

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**A Foundation For Action**

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September 2018



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We would like to thank our community for many of the images used in this report including photos courtesy of the London Arts Council's Culture City photo archive, taken by Gr. 7/8 students from Antler River School and University Heights Public School, as well as other photos courtesy of Middlesex County.

# A CALL TO ACTION

The Middlesex-London Community Drug and Alcohol Strategy (CDAS) is the result of the commitment and collaboration of many stakeholders. The CDAS lays out recommendations and actions that, when implemented, will prevent and reduce harms of substance use in London and Middlesex County.

This Strategy is a roadmap for long-term action. Ongoing commitment of partners, and continued and strengthened collaboration among and between sectors will be critical to success.

Furthermore, our community as a whole has a vital role to play.

The financial impacts of substance use to our communities in costs related to healthcare, lost productivity, criminal justice and other direct costs are in the millions. The negative social impacts of substance use on the lives of people in our community - our families, friends and neighbours – is incalculable. We are losing loved ones to opioid poisoning, families are being torn apart, and community organizations and agencies are struggling to meet needs; we must change this trajectory.

We also know that there are groups of people who are disproportionately affected by the harms of substance use. Indigenous peoples and communities, related to histories of colonization and systemic racism, experience higher rates of substance related harms. Other people, including those identifying as LGBTQ2+ and people experiencing mental illness, are also likely to experience more harms from substances. Layered onto this, is the effect of stigma which leads to isolation, creates barriers to accessing support and causes harm to vulnerable individuals and the community as a whole.

Johann Hari, an award-winning British journalist and playwright has stated;

“The opposite of addiction isn’t sobriety. It’s connection. It’s all I can offer. It’s all that will help [you] in the end. If you are alone, you cannot escape addiction. If you are loved, you have a chance.”

People connecting creates powerful energy. The development of this strategy began with connection. Organizations and individuals concerned about the health of Middlesex-London connected with the goal to solve a problem. Through this connection trust was built, understanding was deepened and solutions emerged.

Moving forward, we all have a role to play. The communities within and surrounding Middlesex and London are strong and vibrant. Reaching out, challenging stigma and connecting with our fellow citizens is something each of us can do.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The development of a long-term and comprehensive community drug and alcohol strategy is a complex, time-intensive process that requires the dedication and support of many organizations and individuals. As we deliver the Middlesex-London Community Drug and Alcohol Strategy, we wish to express our sincere thanks and appreciation to all those who have been involved in its creation. Without the sharing of expertise, passion, and commitment of many, this work would not have been possible.

To the Steering Committee and Pillar workgroup co-chairs and members, thank you for your commitment and continued efforts in making this important work come to life. We extend our appreciation to the multiple organizations and agencies who have supported and will continue to support this work.

To the community members and service providers across London and Middlesex who have provided input, thank you. Your feedback has helped shape the final Strategy and will inform the actions that will make a difference in the years ahead.

Thanks are also due to the health promotion, nursing, program evaluation, epidemiology, and program support staff at the Middlesex-London Health Unit (MLHU). Your time and expertise throughout the development of this strategy, from logistical support of committee work, to community consultation planning

and data analysis, to providing surveillance data, has been essential to the development of this Strategy. Additionally, it is important to acknowledge the overall backbone support of MLHU. Without their investment in time and resources we would not be at this stage in the process.

Finally, and most importantly, thank you to the people with lived experience who have, with dedication and passion, shared stories, insights and input. Your wisdom is integral to this Strategy and the important work that will unfold in the coming years.

Early in the process, the Steering Committee for the Strategy committed to a vision that our work would be collaborative, inclusive, and based on the existing strengths in our community. We have steadfastly worked to stay true to this vision.

The development of the Community Drug and Alcohol Strategy truly has been a community effort.

**Rhonda Brittan, Manager, Healthy Communities and Injury Prevention, Middlesex-London Health Unit & Brian Lester, Executive Director, Regional HIV/AIDS Connection, Middlesex-London Community Drug and Alcohol Strategy Steering Committee Co-Chairs.**

## Executive summary

Substance use is part of our social culture. People from all walks of life use substances and do so for a variety of reasons. Not all substance use is problematic. However, all substances have the potential for negative effects, and for some people there can be substantial risks and harms.

The harmful outcomes of substance use are a significant issue in London and Middlesex. Whether alcohol, prescription medications or illegal drugs, problematic substance use negatively impacts individuals, families and our communities as a whole.

In late 2015, local stakeholders came together confirming the need for a long-term comprehensive strategy to prevent and reduce harms related to substance use in Middlesex-London. It was identified that despite much positive work happening in our community, strengthened coordination, new solutions, and a long-term focus was needed to influence meaningful change. From this, the Middlesex-London Community Drug and Alcohol Strategy (CDAS) was created.

The CDAS has been built on the internationally recognized "Four Pillar" approach of Prevention, Treatment, Harm Reduction, and Enforcement and focuses on all substances, with the exception of tobacco.

A Steering Committee and four Pillar workgroups, made up of service providers and individuals representing health, education, social services, law enforcement, the non-profit sector, the private sector, municipal government, and people with lived experience, began the work of developing the Strategy in the Spring of 2016. A list of CDAS members can be found in **Appendix A**.

A vision, mission and set of guiding principles, outlined on page 9, were collaboratively developed and have served as a foundation for this work. The guiding principles, which are fully defined in **Appendix B**, have grounded the development of the Strategy and are intended to guide the future actions and initiatives during implementation.

An important part of developing the CDAS involved obtaining broad input from our communities. This occurred in two phases:

**Phase 1:** An environmental scan of service providers and organizations across London and Middlesex was completed during late 2016 into 2017 to gain input and insight on current substance use issues and needs. Questions asked were related to each organization's:

- existing substance use-related services and programs,
- insights on barriers to service delivery and service gaps,
- ideas on the urgent issues regarding problematic substance use in London and Middlesex County, and
- perspectives on opportunities for collaboration and integration of services to manage substance use.

**Phase 2:** Consultation with the broader community took place in the Spring of 2018 to obtain feedback and input on a set of draft recommendations. This consisted of:

- five in-person, drop-in style community consultations, two in Middlesex County and three in London,
- an online survey through the CDAS website,
- focus sessions with specific groups including LGBTQ2+ youth, Indigenous persons, and women with lived experience of substance use.

Following the community consultations, all feedback gained was analyzed, collated and incorporated to produce the recommendations and actions of the CDAS.

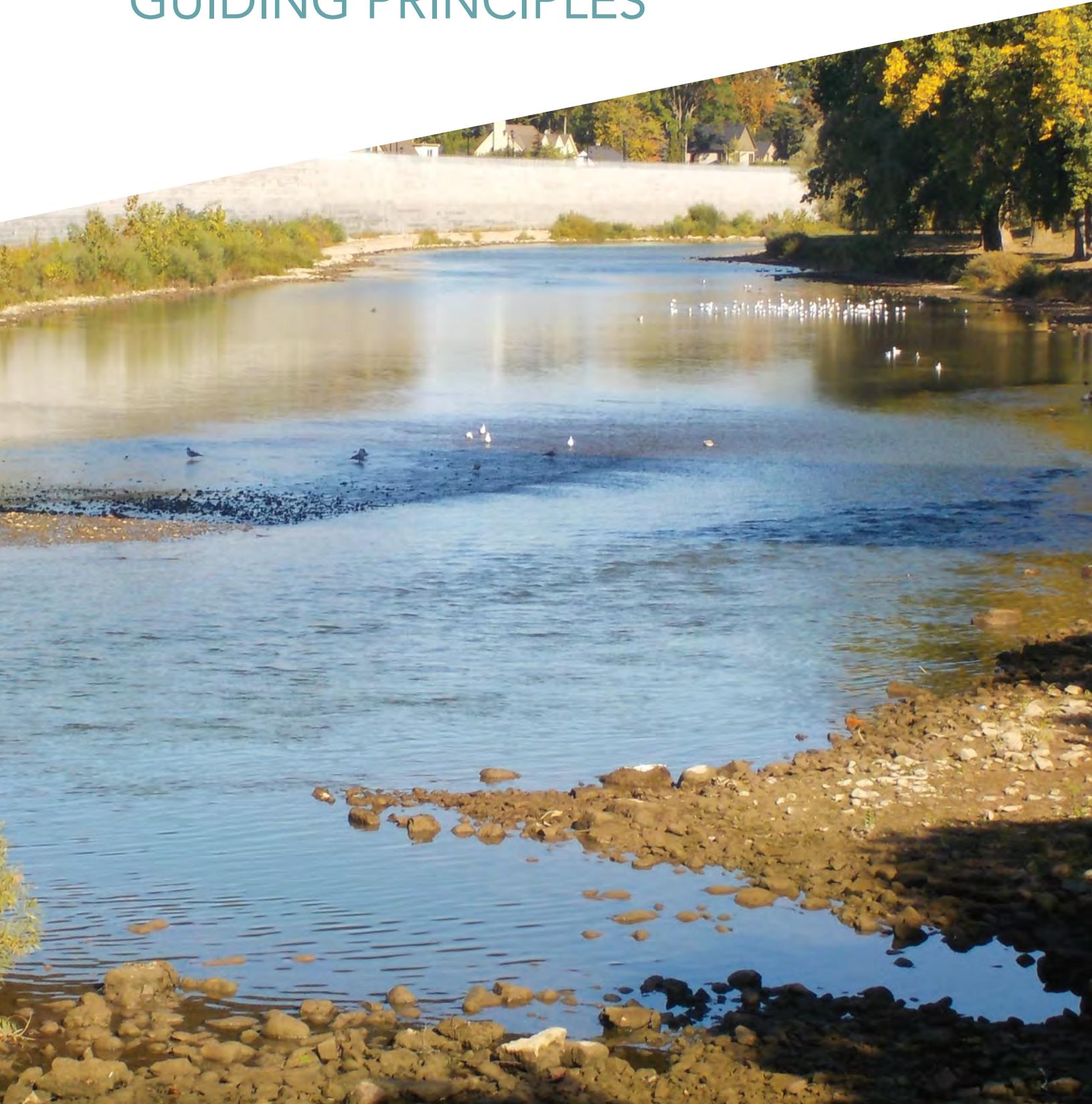
The Strategy outlines a total of 23 recommendations with 98 associated actions in the pillars of treatment, prevention, harm reduction, and enforcement, including some "overarching" recommendations and actions that cross all pillars.

While all are important, 59 priority actions have been identified for focus over the next 3 years of the CDAS. These broad and comprehensive actions are directed toward:

- education and awareness,
- programs and services,
- supportive environments and collaboration, and
- policy and advocacy.

The CDAS is a locally developed strategy for preventing and addressing substance use-related harms in our community. It is the result of the expertise of local partners as well as the diverse voices of hundreds of citizens who are invested in the health and wellness of Middlesex-London. The vision of the CDAS is a caring, inclusive, and safe community that works collaboratively to reduce and eliminate the harms associated with drugs and alcohol. While the work of implementation is already underway, reaching this vision will be dependent on the long-term involvement, dedication and support of citizens, community agencies, service providers, and governments.

# VISION, MISSION, AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES



Early work of the Steering Committee was dedicated to building a shared understanding and a strong foundation for the development of a local strategy. A collaborative process, a collective vision, and strong relationships were identified as essential elements. A vision, mission and guiding principles were developed to ground and guide the work.

## Vision

A caring, inclusive, and safe community that works collaboratively to reduce and eliminate the harms associated with drugs and alcohol.

## Mission

Create, implement, and evaluate a comprehensive drug and alcohol strategy to reduce problematic substance use and harm that reflects the needs of the entire community, through the use of a person centred, equity-focused approach based on the four pillars of prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and enforcement.

## Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles were collaboratively developed and have grounded the work of the Steering Committee and the development of recommendations. It is intended that the guiding principles be frequently referenced and continue to support the Strategy's implementation. A full explanation of the Guiding Principles can be found in **Appendix B**.

- Community Strengths Based
- Evidence Informed
- Non-stigmatizing
- Accessible
- Locally Relevant
- Collaborative
- Hopeful
- Responsive to Barriers
- Action-oriented & Results Driven
- Culturally Safe
- Inclusive
- Equity Focused
- Reconciliation Aware

# THE NEED FOR A DRUG AND ALCOHOL STRATEGY IN MIDDLESEX AND LONDON



London and Middlesex, like many communities throughout Ontario and Canada, are experiencing significant impacts related to substances, including alcohol, prescription medications, and illegal drugs. Whether directly or indirectly, individuals, families, and our communities as a whole are experiencing negative effects on health, personal relationships, safety, and overall community wellness. Furthermore, we know that the impacts of stigma and marginalization on people who use substances only serve to intensify negative consequences.

Substance use is a complex issue with no single solution that any one organization or sector can provide. In London and Middlesex County, many organizations are actively working to prevent and reduce the harms of substance use. While there has been, and continues to be significant benefits to many, we know that more must be done.

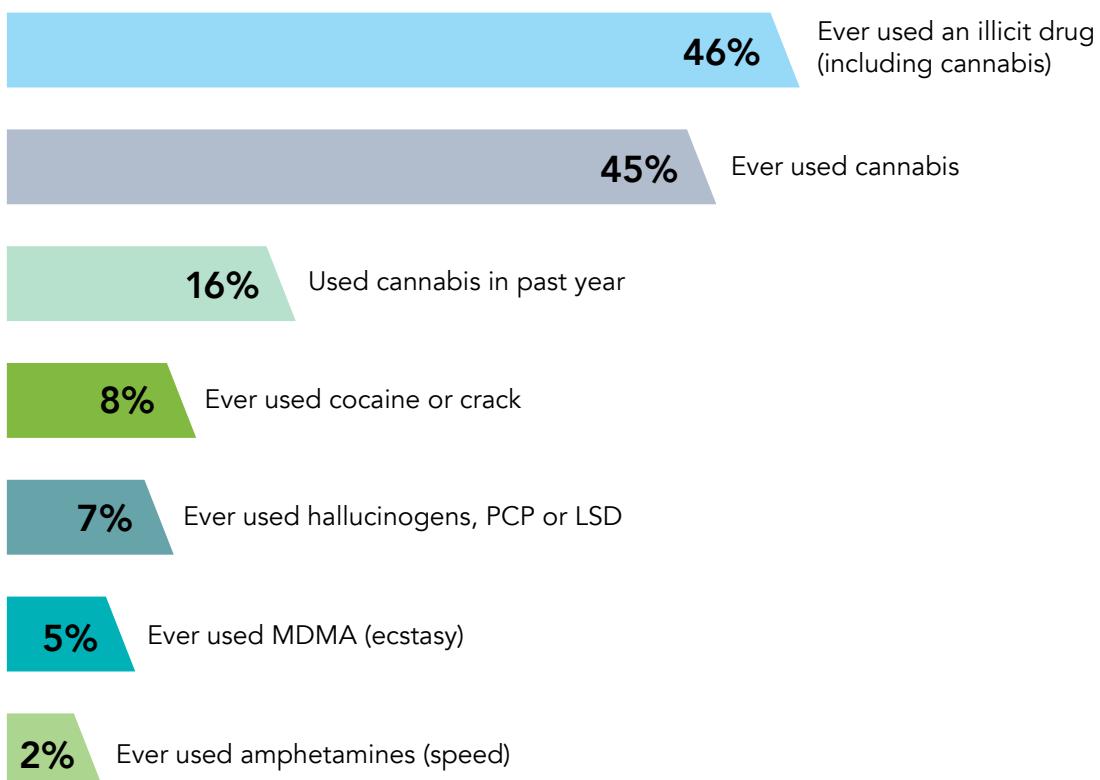
Strengthened coordination, new solutions, and a long-term focus is needed to impact meaningful change. As a community, we must also do more to build opportunities for community connectedness and inclusion for all citizens, notably our youth.

In late 2015 organizations and stakeholders came together and, with an almost unanimous voice, agreed that a community-focused, long-term comprehensive strategy to prevent and reduce the harms related to substance use and misuse was needed in Middlesex-London. From this, the Middlesex-London Community Drug and Alcohol Strategy was born. We know from other communities that such an approach has many benefits including increasing coordination of services, promoting collaboration and actions across sectors, and ensuring the voices of the community – including those with lived experience – are heard.

# Substance use in Middlesex-London

The data on the following pages provides a high level snapshot of some of the substance use related issues in our community. Data sources can be found in the reference list.

## Substances used in Middlesex-London<sup>1</sup>:



## Substances for which people seek local treatment support

- Alcohol and opioids were the top “problem substances” identified by clients in both Middlesex County and London at their initial in-take to receive addiction services.<sup>2</sup>
- 50% of people seeking addiction treatment services self-reported being diagnosed with a mental health concern.<sup>2</sup>

## Alcohol use in Middlesex-London<sup>3</sup>

**24%**

of those 19 years and older reported heavy drinking (five or more drinks for males, four or more drinks for females).

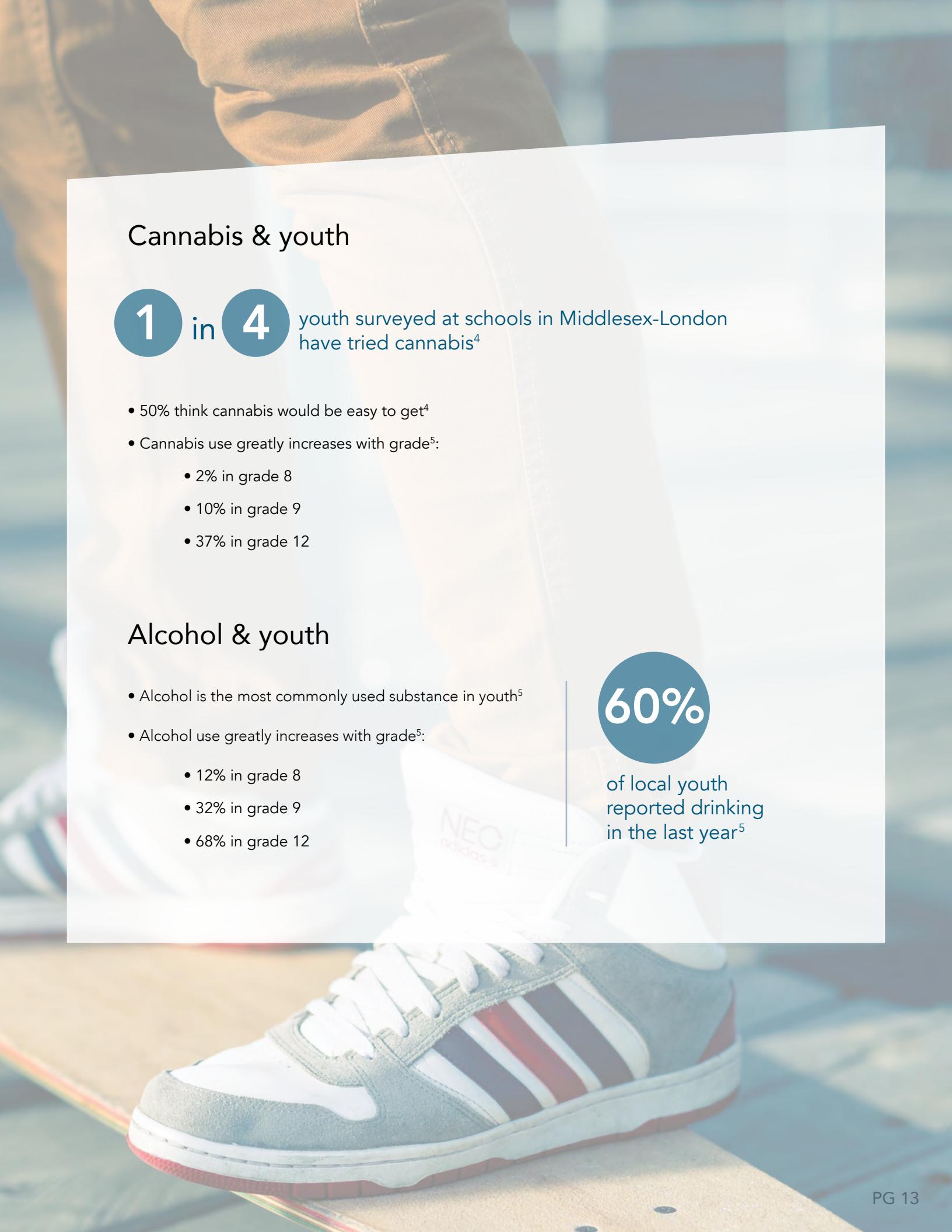
**49%**

of those 19 years and older reported exceeding the low-risk alcohol drinking guidelines (increasing the risk of chronic disease and/or injury).



Reproduced with permission from the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction.

Canada's Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines (LRADGs) recommend specific limits in number of drinks for men and women to help Canadians moderate their alcohol consumption and reduce their immediate and long-term alcohol-related harms. For more information on Canada's LRADGs refer to the [Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction's website](#).



## Cannabis & youth

1 in 4

youth surveyed at schools in Middlesex-London  
have tried cannabis<sup>4</sup>

- 50% think cannabis would be easy to get<sup>4</sup>
- Cannabis use greatly increases with grade<sup>5</sup>:
  - 2% in grade 8
  - 10% in grade 9
  - 37% in grade 12

## Alcohol & youth

- Alcohol is the most commonly used substance in youth<sup>5</sup>
- Alcohol use greatly increases with grade<sup>5</sup>:
  - 12% in grade 8
  - 32% in grade 9
  - 68% in grade 12

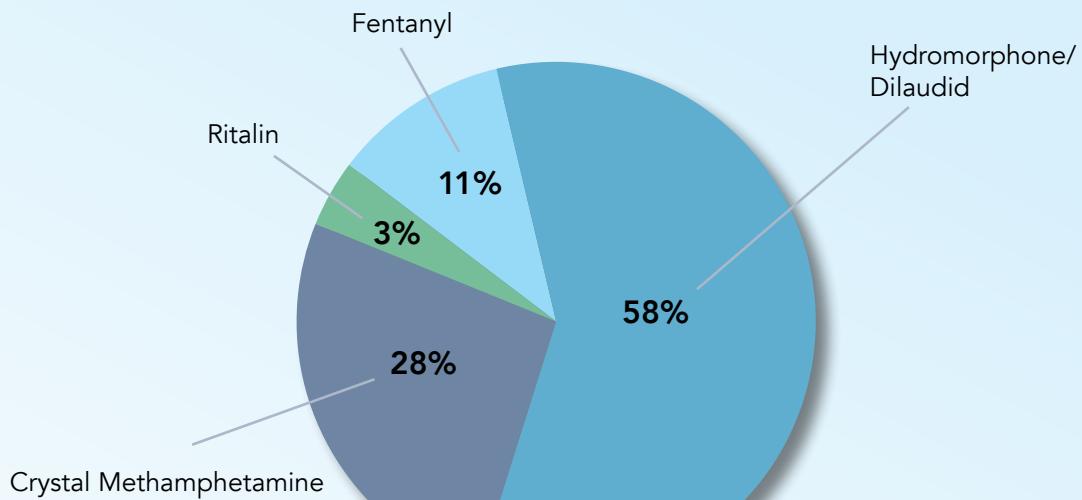
60%

of local youth  
reported drinking  
in the last year<sup>5</sup>

# PEOPLE WHO INJECT DRUGS IN MIDDLESEX-LONDON

It has been estimated by those working in harm reduction that up to 6,000 people in London and Middlesex use injection drugs. It is typical for people who inject drugs to use more than one substance and it is known that substances used change over time based on availability and other factors.

**Top reported substances at London's Temporary Overdose Prevention Site**  
**February 12, 2018 to August 31, 2018**



A 2016 research study<sup>6</sup> of 199 people in London who inject drugs found that 79% reported injecting hydromorphone and 64% reported injecting morphine in the past 6 months. Over half of those injecting opioids reported that they did so daily. Crystal methamphetamine was reported to be used by 83% of people over the past 6 months, with 35% reporting daily use.

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“...A focused Drug and Alcohol Strategy will only enhance our response to community safety concerns, leading to a community that thrives.”

(A SERVICE PROVIDER PERSPECTIVE)

## Opioid poisoning

Deaths related to opioids continue to occur in Middlesex-London.

- Visits to the emergency department (ED) for opioid poisonings increased in 2017.<sup>7</sup>
- There were 30 deaths reported in both 2016 and 2017.<sup>7</sup>

**Diagnosed cases of opioid poisoning in ED visits, hospitalizations and deaths, Middlesex-London residents, January 2015 to December 2017**



Source: Ontario Opioid-Related Death database, Office of the Chief Coroner for Ontario \*\*Death data preliminary after 07/2017 and subject to change; Discharge Abstract Database (DAD), Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, IntelliHealth Ontario; National Ambulatory Care Reporting System (NACRS), Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, IntelliHealth Ontario

# WHAT IS KNOWN ABOUT SUBSTANCE USE

## Continuum of substance use



Adapted from the Canadian Mental Health Association's (Ontario) website "Substance Use and Addiction". Retrieved on June 1, 2018 from <http://ontario.cmha.ca/addiction-and-substance-misuse/>

Substance use is part of social culture. People from all walks of life use substances and do so for a variety of reasons. Substance use is not always problematic. It exists along a continuum, ranging from an individual having never used substances to chronic dependence and addiction (also known as a substance use disorder). Some substances, such as prescription medications, have well-established benefits when taken correctly. However, all substances have the potential for negative effects, and for those individuals that develop a dependence (physical or psychological), there can be significant risks and harms to them as well as their families and friends.<sup>8</sup>

Casual substance use often starts as a way to relax, have fun, or experiment.<sup>8</sup> For many people, trying substances begins in their youth. The 2017 Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey cites that 43% of Ontario students grade 7 to 12 reported drinking in the past year (with 17% reporting binge drinking in the last month) while 19% of students reported smoking cannabis in the past year.<sup>5</sup> For some people, substance use may never become problematic. For others, using a substance just once may lead to addiction.

## Risk factors for problematic substance use and addiction

There are known risk factors that may influence the likelihood of someone using substances and developing a substance use disorder. Risk factors include those related to biological, physical, and psychological changes that occur during a person's lifetime, or factors in their environment.<sup>9</sup> Having a risk factor does not guarantee someone will develop a substance use disorder; it only indicates there is a higher possibility.<sup>10</sup> Many risk factors are linked with one another. Some of the more common known risk factors are discussed below:

### Early initiation of substance use

One of the most commonly cited risks for developing a future substance use disorder is starting to use substances during adolescence or as a young adult. Throughout development, a young person's brain is undergoing many changes. Substance use can be very damaging to this development, and result in a higher likelihood of addiction later in life.<sup>11,12</sup>

### Mental health issues

Mental health issues are often linked to problems with substance use.<sup>9</sup> The reasons for this are complex and not completely clear; however, three relationships between mental health and substance use are often used to explain this connection:

1. Both substance misuse and mental health problems have common risk and protective factors.
2. Mental health issues can lead to problematic substance use. People may use alcohol or drugs to help cope with mental health symptoms.
3. Problematic substance use may trigger mental health issues.<sup>13</sup>

### Genetic predisposition

Genetic predisposition, or inherited traits, have been found to account for at least 50% of a person's risk for developing an addiction.<sup>14</sup> This means that a person with a relative who has a substance addiction is at a higher risk for also developing an addiction. This link also may result in becoming addicted more quickly to a substance, or an addiction progressing more rapidly.<sup>15</sup>

### Exposure to trauma and/or violence

Exposure to trauma and/or violence is often associated with substance use and addiction. Substances can be used as a way to cope with trauma, numbing a person's feelings or helping them to forget what happened. Using substances in this way can increase risk of developing an addiction. It is vital that all health, social, and other services are trauma- and violence-informed in providing care.<sup>16,17</sup>

### Societal norms related to substance use

Alcohol in particular has become normalized in our society, with approximately 80% of Ontarians aged 18 and older reporting consumption of alcohol.<sup>18</sup> Positive media messaging, the loosening of protective alcohol policies, and the lack of public understanding regarding the true harms associated with alcohol have served to reinforce its normalcy. Alcohol consumption is a causal factor in more than 200 diseases and injuries and statistics indicate that at least 3.1 million Canadians drink enough to put themselves and others at risk for injury or harm.<sup>19,20</sup>

The normalization of cannabis use is also a growing concern. Currently, Canadians have some of the highest rates of cannabis use worldwide with youth being the top users, compared to their counterparts in other developed countries.<sup>21</sup> Research has found that youth tend to have more misconceptions around the harms associated with cannabis which can put them at greater risk of harm.<sup>22</sup> While the legalization and regulation of cannabis is consistent with a public health approach, it also brings yet unknown factors related to public perception and normalization.

## Addiction

Addiction is more common than many people think and can affect anyone, regardless of sex, race, income or social standing. Over 20% of Canadians meet the criteria for substance use disorder in their lifetime. According to 2012 Statistics Canada data, youth have the highest reported rates of substance use disorder at 12%, while the lowest rate is among those 45 years and older at about 2%.<sup>23</sup>

**A good way to understand addiction is to think of the four Cs:**

- 1. Craving.**
- 2. Loss of control** of amount or frequency of use.
- 3. Compulsion** to use.
- 4. Use despite consequences.<sup>24</sup>**

**“ Seize opportunities to explore people’s narrative and allow them to share their experiences with those who don’t understand poverty and substance use. ”**

(COMMUNITY MEMBER PERSPECTIVE)



## Populations at-risk for problematic substance use

Due to a host of issues, such as risk factors discussed previously and inequities influenced by the social determinants of health, certain groups are more at-risk for problematic substance use and disproportionate harm. Acknowledging these impacts is important to ensuring a more equitable approach through focusing resources and developing tailored solutions. Honouring these voices of lived experience will strengthen the response to their unique needs. Some examples of higher-risk populations are discussed below.

**People who are unstably housed or homeless** are some of the most underserved and vulnerable populations in Canada. Because of this, coupled with higher rates of mental health issues, feelings of shame, fear, hunger, pain, and the stresses of living on the streets, a much higher proportion of people who are homeless experience addictions and harms of substance use. Substance

use and addiction can also be a cause of homelessness for some people, as it can impact relationships, finances, work, and other necessities of life.<sup>25</sup>

**Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning (LGBTQ2+) youth** are found to use substances at a rate that is 2-4 times higher than that of the rest of the population. Often, they are dealing with stigma of homophobia, biphobia and transphobia or using substances as a coping mechanism for dealing with difficult feelings and experiences. Like with many youth, substance use may also be part of cultural acceptance, and be seen as a way to socialize with others.<sup>26</sup>

**Indigenous persons** within Canada have a lengthy and complex history with colonization and the resulting ongoing impacts. This history has led to extreme inequities in all aspects of life, including culturally unsafe healthcare, inadequate education systems, sub-standard housing, and mental and physical abuse experiences. Additionally, many

communities do not have access to appropriate services to assist in managing these stressors due to geographic and financial barriers, as well as discriminatory experiences with service providers, often times resulting in substance use as the most accessible alternative to cope. In a survey done by the federal government, issues relating to alcohol and drug use were found to be the number one challenge for wellness within First Nations communities.<sup>27</sup>

**Populations in correctional facilities** report high rates of substance use. Upon admission, nearly 70% of people who are incarcerated have a substance use issue requiring intervention, and 34% of people used injection drugs prior to coming to a correctional facility. People in correctional facilities are more likely to also have mental health concerns and histories of trauma, thus increasing their risk for problematic substance use. Furthermore, discharge from a correctional facility is an extremely high risk time for overdose.<sup>28,29</sup>

# Protective factors for problematic substance use and addiction

Providing accurate information about substances and harms is important, but education alone is not sufficient or effective in preventing problematic substance use.

During the last decade, Iceland has done significant evidence-based work to reduce adolescent substance use. Working with local partners has been critical in reducing risk factors and strengthening school and community-level protective factors for adolescent substance use.<sup>30</sup>

Research shows that there are many known factors, often referred to as protective factors, that can play a role in preventing the development of problems with substances, particularly among children and youth.

## Examples of protective factors:

- Strong attachment to neighbourhood
- Strong and positive family bonds
- Parent monitoring of children's activities and peers
- Time spent with parents
- Clear rules of conduct that are consistently enforced within the family
- Parent support (caring and warm) and involvement
- Ability to self-regulate
- Problem-solving skills
- Success in school
- Strong bonds with institutions (e.g., school and religious organizations)
- Participation in organized teams or clubs<sup>30,31</sup>

# FOUR PILLAR APPROACH



Substance use is a complex issue. There is no one solution to address substance use and no one sector can do it on its own. A Four Pillar approach includes strategies and actions that incorporate prevention, treatment, harm reduction, and enforcement. The four pillar approach first originated in Europe and has been utilized and proven to be successful in countries and cities across the world, including in Canada. While often symbolized as four separate pillars, there is much overlap. For success, cooperation and coordination of efforts is imperative.

## Prevention

Prevention refers to efforts that aim to prevent or delay substance use or limit the development of problems associated with using substances. As such, alcohol and other drug prevention exists along a continuum.

- Early prevention: seeks to improve social, economic and cultural protective factors of substance use.
- Primary prevention: seeks to prevent or delay use of alcohol and other drugs.
- Secondary prevention: seeks to limit alcohol and other drug use before harms occur.
- Tertiary prevention: seeks to minimize problems resulting from alcohol and other drugs.

## Treatment

Substance Use Addiction  
Treatment refers to interventions and activities that seek to improve the physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual health and well-being of people who use or have used substances (and family or key supports). Treatment services provide options along a continuum of care that support the differing needs of individuals. Services may include withdrawal management services, outpatient and peer-based counselling, opioid substitution programs, daytime or residential treatment, harm reduction supports, supportive housing services and ongoing medical care.

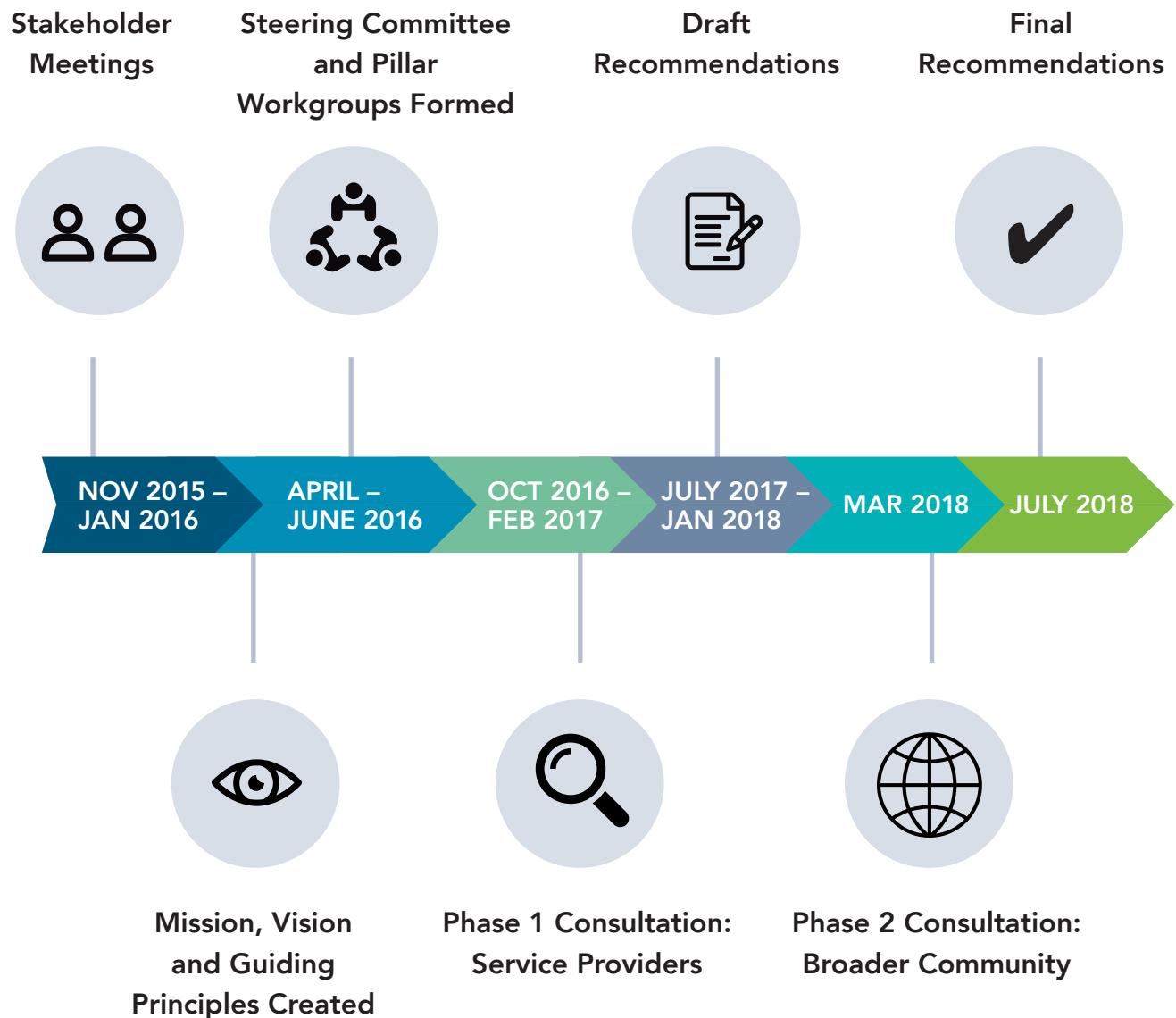
## Harm Reduction

Harm Reduction refers to any policies, programs and practices that aim to reduce the health, social and economic harms associated with drug use without requiring the person to stop using substances. Harm Reduction is an evidence-based and cost-effective approach – bringing benefits to the individual, community and society.

## Enforcement

Enforcement refers to interventions that seek to strengthen community safety by responding to the crimes, provincial legislation and community disorder issues associated with legal and illegal substances. Enforcement includes the broader justice system of the courts, probation, parole and other health and social services.

# CREATION OF OUR LOCAL STRATEGY





## Stakeholder meetings

In November 2015 and January 2016, over 80 diverse community stakeholders came together over two meetings hosted by the Middlesex-London Health Unit (MLHU). Attendees reviewed local data and shared perspectives on current substance use issues in our community. During these meetings, it was confirmed that there was both interest in and a need for a collaborative and collective effort to address problematic substance use within the community.

A decision was made to base the strategy's development on a Four Pillar framework of Prevention, Treatment, Harm Reduction, and Enforcement. The Four Pillar approach is recognized internationally as an effective way to prevent and respond to harms associated with problematic substance use.

From the outset, the intent was to develop a comprehensive, long-term drug strategy inclusive of all substances, with the exception of tobacco, and to consider the issue from multiple perspectives grounded in collaboration, shared decision making, and community strengths. Early in the process, a decision was made to explicitly name alcohol as part of the strategy.

As a comprehensive strategy, the Community Drug and Alcohol Strategy (CDAS) recognizes not only that addiction is a significant issue, but additionally other adverse outcomes associated with substance use must also be addressed and prevented. The Strategy acknowledges the importance of a continuum of responses based on multi-sector involvement and support. The Strategy also acknowledges that substance use exists across our communities and that issues experienced by those living in Middlesex County may be different than those living in London.



## Steering Committee and Pillar Workgroups

A Steering Committee and four workgroups representing the pillars of Prevention, Treatment, Harm Reduction, and Enforcement were formed and began working together in the Spring of 2016 (for a list of members, see [Appendix A](#)).

Over 50 partners have been involved in the Middlesex-London Community Drug and Alcohol Strategy partnership and played a role in the development of the Strategy. The Steering Committee and Pillar workgroups have consisted of individuals representing service providers, community organizations, the business sector and people with lived experience.

The Steering Committee has provided support, guidance and oversight to the development of the Strategy.

The Pillar workgroups have provided expertise into the creation of the recommendations and action items for the Strategy.



## COMMUNITY INPUT

An important step in developing the Strategy was obtaining input from diverse stakeholders within our community. This occurred in two phases. Phase 1 involved conducting an environmental scan of service providers and organizations in order to gain input and insight on current substance use issues and needs. Phase 2 involved broadly consulting community members in London and Middlesex to obtain feedback and input on draft recommendations.



### Phase 1 consultation: service provider environmental scan

The environmental scan of Middlesex and London service providers was conducted during late 2016 into 2017. The primary purpose of this scan was to obtain a comprehensive understanding of service providers' perspectives related to substance use/misuse. Input was received from 37 organizations.

## The service provider environmental scan asked about each organization's:

- Existing substance use-related services and programs
- Insights on barriers to service delivery and service gaps
- Ideas on the urgent issues regarding problematic substance use in London and Middlesex County
- Perspectives on opportunities for collaboration and integration of services to manage substance use

### Response themes:

- Priority substance use issues were identified for both organizations themselves and the broader community. Issues identified included: access to services and support, the need for more access and understanding of harm reduction, the need for substance education and awareness, and the importance of considering the role of the social determinants of health in substance use.
- Substances that were identified as particularly challenging at that time included Crystal Methamphetamine, Opioids/Opiates, Alcohol, Cannabis, and other prescribed medications or unclassified drugs.
- Organizations shared perspectives on who was not being well reached by existing programs and services. Populations identified included youth, Aboriginal/First Nations people, LGBTQ2+ youth, individuals struggling with addiction, people who lack basic necessities, individuals who are inmates/paroled, people with complex mental and physical issues, rural communities, women, and other populations.
- Five main areas for action were identified: increasing education, increasing access to services, more collaboration, the development of laws and policies, and increasing funding.

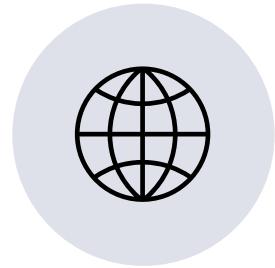


### Draft recommendations

Following phase 1 consultation, pillar workgroups began the work to develop draft recommendations. Stakeholder input, the local expertise of CDAS members, and findings from a review of other community drug strategies led to potential recommendations and action items that would be reflective and responsive to local needs. Draft recommendations were reviewed and added-to by the Steering Committee and further refined through a facilitated half-day session of both Steering Committee and Pillar workgroup members. During this session, the alignment of the service provider environmental scan results, collective expertise of the group, CDAS Guiding Principles, and local data were all considered. The results were collated and used to finalize the draft version of the CDAS recommendations and actions.

“ The issues that impact our organization are those that affect our community...We are cognizant of the fact that community issues are our issues – we reflect on the needs and concerns of our community and attempt to identify them in time to provide not only a reactive response but a proactive response as well. ”

(A SERVICE PROVIDER PERSPECTIVE)



## Phase 2 consultation: broader community

Following the development of draft recommendations and actions, the community was consulted more broadly. Community members had the opportunity to participate through either in-person sessions or an online survey.

The purpose of these consultations was to confirm that the draft recommendations were reflective of community needs and to obtain further input. Additionally, consultations provided opportunities to share information about local substance use issues, the CDAS and discuss next steps.

Those who participated in the consultations were asked to identify if anything was missing from the recommendations identified under each of the pillars, and provide any additional thoughts that should be considered. Participants were also asked to rank the recommendations in order of importance.

The in-person and online community consultations were promoted through the use of local media channels, social media, poster advertisements and community partners.

Focus sessions were also held with specific groups including Indigenous persons, LGBTQ2+ youth, and women with lived experience of substance use.

Following the community consultations, all feedback gained was analyzed, collated and incorporated into the recommendations.

“ This Community Drug and Alcohol Strategy is a great beginning. We need to learn from one another, network better, share resources and knowledge more freely. We are stronger together than in our individual silos.”

(A SERVICE PROVIDER PERSPECTIVE)

## In-person consultations

Five in-person, drop-in style community consultations were conducted; two were held in Middlesex County, specifically in Strathroy and Dorchester, and three were held in London.

Members of the Steering Committee and Pillar workgroups, as well as other representatives of partner organizations, staffed the in-person consultations. A presentation was conducted to provide an overview of the work of the CDAS. Participants were invited to provide input and ask questions on any or all of the recommendations. Feedback was collected both by facilitators through facilitated table processes as well as by direct individual input.

In total, 48 people attended these consultations, providing valuable input. Results were collated and analyzed by MLHU program evaluators.

## Online survey

An online survey was available through the CDAS website. The online survey mirrored the questions used for the in-person consultations. Participants were asked to place the recommendations in order of importance within each pillar, provide any points that they felt were missing from the draft recommendations, and offer any additional thoughts on the draft recommendations.

The survey gathered 427 responses, with most respondents being community members, or family members and friends of people with lived experience. The survey was monitored and information was collected and analyzed by the Centre for Organizational Effectiveness and with the support of MLHU program evaluation staff.

# FOCUS SESSIONS

Focus sessions were also conducted with populations that were deemed as important stakeholders. These populations included Indigenous persons, LGBTQ2+ youth, and women with lived experience. Each focus session used different methodology for gathering information that was tailored to the specific population or setting. It is important to note that there was a small sample size for each of the focus sessions and the information received may not be reflective of the entire target population. It is acknowledged that as the Strategy moves to implementation, further input and involvement of these voices will be important. Results from each focus session were collated and analyzed by program evaluators at the Middlesex-London Health Unit.

## Indigenous persons

Prior to conducting community consultations, a meeting was held with Indigenous leaders to discuss and review the high level recommendations with a goal of ensuring that a more inclusive, Indigenous lens was included. Recommendations then moved forward to broader community consultations.

Focus sessions with Indigenous people were done one-to-one with a facilitator. Participants were asked to identify what was missing that could help them achieve success and what were some of the barriers they have experienced that have prevented them from achieving success. These focus sessions gathered 12 responses.

There were five emerging, overarching themes that were apparent in the consultations with Indigenous persons. These themes were:

- There are barriers to accessing services/support/treatment
- More services/supports are needed
- Stigma and racism are barriers
- Lack of basic necessities in life (that can impede the ability to get sober/recover)
- Need for meeting people where they are at





## LGBTQ2+ youth

A facilitated focus group was held with LGBTQ2+ youth. They were asked if there were recommendations missing that would help them or their friends achieve success in finding, accessing, or using information and services that relate to substance use. They were also asked about issues that have prevented people from finding/accessing and/or using information and services that relate to drug and alcohol use.

There were three emerging, overarching themes that were apparent in the consultations with LGBTQ2+ youth. These themes were:

- There are barriers to accessing services/support/treatment
- More services/supports are needed
- Stigma and racism are barriers

## Women with lived experience of substance use

Focus sessions were conducted with women of lived experience, including those who experience gender-based violence, trauma, chronic mental and physical health challenges, homelessness or housing instability, substance use and extreme poverty. These focus sessions were conducted by either allowing participants to independently fill out the forms that were provided at the in-person consultations, or filling them out with a volunteer. This information was combined with the results from the in-person consultations.

“More needs to be done to get help for people living with addiction, [who] are also living with mental health issues as well as living in poverty.”

(COMMUNITY MEMBER PERSPECTIVE)

## Alignment with other community strategies and initiatives

While the Community Drug and Alcohol Strategy sets a long-term comprehensive four pillar approach to address substance use in our communities, it is acknowledged that there is much existing important work being done. An important role of the CDAS is to support and strengthen existing work.

There are other strategies and initiatives in London and Middlesex that have alignments with the vision and goals of the CDAS.

One example of this is the Community Mental Health and Addiction Strategy (CMHAS), developed through a facilitated process led by the City of London. The CMHAS focuses on improving the experiences and outcomes of people in London who are experiencing mental health and/or addiction challenges. Several of the recommendations within this strategy complement those of the CDAS. As we move into implementation phase, both strategies will address a range of gaps and service needs. Leveraging opportunities for collaboration will strengthen our impact.

## Temporary overdose prevention site & supervised consumption facilities

The work to develop supervised consumption services has been a significant project demonstrating the strength of partnerships in our community. London opened a Temporary Overdose Prevention Site (TOPS) on February 12, 2018. In alignment with the CDAS, many agencies moved quickly to bring this site to reality. TOPS shares space with Regional HIV/AIDS Connection (RHAC), sharing the site of the Counterpoint Needle and Syringe Program, which is already familiar for people who inject drugs. Staffing is provided by the two main partners: RHAC and Middlesex-London Health Unit (MLHU). RHAC provides the day to day operational management of the TOPS program. Wrap-around services are provided in-kind by five additional partners: Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre; Addiction Services of Thames Valley; the Canadian Mental Health Association; London Intercommunity Health Centre; and London Cares Homeless Response Services – all members of CDAS. The work of the Opioid Crisis working group, made up of several partners including people with lived experience was integral in making TOPS a reality. In the first 29 weeks of operation, TOPS had a total of 7,347 visits by over 2,000 unique individuals. During this time, 34 opioid poisonings occurred with successful treatment and no deaths.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, the Middlesex-London Community Drug and Alcohol Strategy consists of 23 recommendations with 98 actions. These recommendations incorporate both new actions and those that will build on and strengthen initiatives currently happening in our community.

The CDAS was built on a four pillar model of Prevention, Treatment, Harm Reduction and Enforcement. As such, the recommendations are organized by these pillars in addition to a broader category of "Overarching" for those recommendations that have a broader scope. Because there is overlap between pillars, implementation of the strategy must focus across pillars and across recommendations.

Together, these recommendations aim to prevent, reduce and eliminate the harms of problematic substance use in Middlesex-London.



# OVERARCHING

## Recommendations / Actions

### **Recommendation 1:**

**Advocate for policies and programs that address poverty, homelessness, housing and other social determinants of health including Indigenous determinants of health.**

#### **Actions**

- 1.1 Advocate to increase access and availability of efficient, attainable, scattered and diverse housing stock.
- 1.2 Advocate for financial support programs (e.g., Ontario Works, Ontario Disability Support Program) to increase rates that better reflect cost of living.
- 1.3 Advocate for financial support for medical expenses not covered by OHIP or non-insured health benefits (e.g., transportation to health related appointments).
- 1.4 Advocate for expanded supportive housing approaches and promote Housing First programs to assist people experiencing chronic and persistent homelessness to secure permanent housing with support.
- 1.5 Promote a range of supports and services to support people and families experiencing or at risk of homelessness and/or food insecurity.
- 1.6 Advocate for Emergency Shelter specialization (i.e., youth shelter).
- 1.7 Work alongside Indigenous communities to identify and address Indigenous-specific determinants of health, such as colonization and cultural continuity, that contribute to problematic substance use.

**Recommendation 2:**

**Ensure programs and services in Middlesex-London are person focused.**

**Actions**

- 2.1 Advocate for and support cultural safety and trauma-informed care training to agencies and organizations and embed policies and practices to ensure services are culturally safe.
- 2.2 Work in purposeful partnership with diverse populations to enhance access to culturally safe prevention, treatment, harm reduction and enforcement related programs and services.
- 2.3 Ensure information is communicated using accessible and targeted language to reflect the needs of diverse populations.
- 2.4 Advocate to ensure training for service providers and programs for the community reflect the needs of diverse populations that exist throughout Middlesex-London.

**Recommendation 3:**

**Encourage participation of people with lived experience during development and implementation of programs, services, and campaigns.**

**Actions**

- 3.1 Advocate for new Peer Training programs that are specific to people who have lived experience with addiction.
- 3.2 Integrate personal stories of substance use experience, including recovery, into messaging and education about substance use.

**Recommendation 4:****Work to reduce stigma related to substance use and addictions.****Actions**

- 4.1 Promote an inclusive, compassionate community that understands substance use and addictions as health concerns and supports families.
- 4.2 Provide opportunities for community members and organizations to learn about substance use, harm reduction, addictions and stigma around drug use.
- 4.3 Share positive messaging and continue to help people tell their personal stories in a non-stigmatizing way.
- 4.4 Continue to challenge the continuum of service providers and media to not perpetuate stigma.
- 4.5 Support training opportunities for health and other professionals about addiction, harm reduction, and injection drug use.
- 4.6 Work towards shifting language to reduce stigma (e.g., overdose to poisoning).
- 4.7 Advocate for substance use content to be included in the education curriculum of professionals who work with people who use drugs (i.e., health and social services workers, police, educators, etc.).

**Recommendation 5:****Increase response to public space challenges related to drugs and alcohol.****Actions**

- 5.1 Increase collaboration between services, organizations, business groups, and community members with a mechanism for ongoing feedback to work together towards the goal of achieving public spaces that are non-stigmatizing and safe for all.
- 5.2 Services, businesses, institutions, and community members work together to foster mutual public respect and understanding in public spaces.
- 5.3 Improve communication between stakeholders to utilize models of service delivery which recognize and address the impact in surrounding community spaces and plan accordingly to address issues.



# PREVENTION

## Recommendations / Actions

### **Recommendation 6:**

Provide accurate substance related information and prevention messaging to the community about the facts, protective factors and impact of substance use.

#### **Actions**

- 6.1 Support schools by providing up-to-date and evidence-based information and resources to inform curriculum and school policy and aid in the implementation of comprehensive school health.
- 6.2 Use and promote national and provincial education campaigns and materials related to alcohol, cannabis, and other drugs. Develop local messages to fill any gaps.
- 6.3 Use workplaces as a place to share information and encourage workplaces to support substance use prevention and treatment programs (e.g., Employee Assistance Programs).
- 6.4 Support primary care as a valuable partner in prevention by providing up-to-date and evidence-based information, resources, and tools for working with patients including families, children, youth, adults, and older adults (e.g., screening and brief intervention tools, Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines).

## **Recommendation 7:**

**Advocate for and implement targeted strategies and programs to reduce known substance use risk factors and increase protective factors that help to prevent problematic substance use.**

### **Actions**

- 7.1 Collaborate with existing systems to create opportunities for positive community involvement and participation in meaningful leisure and recreational activities, for children of all ages and abilities, to foster feelings of inclusion and social capital among children and youth.
- 7.2 Enhance school and community partnerships to build a sense of personal and group belonging within schools and the community.
- 7.3 In collaboration with existing strategies, projects and plans, acknowledge that education and success at school are key protective factors. Support supplementary school success programs such as free tutoring, mentoring, wrap-around supports.
- 7.4 In collaboration with existing strategies, projects and plans, continue to implement and advocate for targeted programs that provide early supports, such as basic life skills and healthy coping, to children, youth, parents and families who may be at higher risk.
- 7.5 Collaborate with existing systems to enhance positive parenting programs, resources, and supports in the community.
- 7.6 Advocate for increased capacity for children's mental health and early supports for people with mental health concerns.
- 7.7 Promote programs that enhance wellbeing and resiliency through stressful life transitions (e.g., elementary school to high school, high school to college, retirement).
- 7.8 Collaborate with existing systems to create opportunities for positive social involvement and community connectedness for all residents (e.g., increase opportunities and reduce barriers to participate in local social and recreational activities).

## **Recommendation 8:**

**Ensure supportive built environments and social environments in our communities.**

### **Actions**

- 8.1 Work with municipal decision-makers to include evidence-based substance prevention considerations in municipal planning and policies (e.g., Municipal Alcohol Policies, bylaws related to cannabis legalization).
- 8.2 Advocate for provincial policy that reduces substance-related harms (e.g., cannabis and alcohol pricing and taxation, drug impaired driving laws).
- 8.3 Offer the necessary supports needed for accessing services and programs (e.g., transportation to and from programs, child minding services, free services).
- 8.4 Encourage workplaces to develop and implement policies that support work-life balance and flexible working hours for parents.



# TREATMENT

## Recommendations / Actions

### **Recommendation 9:**

**Enhance community awareness of services within Middlesex and London.**

#### **Actions**

- 9.1 Increase awareness of existing treatment information and pathways to treatment services in Middlesex-London, including awareness of existing sources of information such as Healthline and ConnexOntario.
- 9.2 Increase awareness of services and supports available to families of children and youth using substances.

**Recommendation 10:**

**Reduce system barriers and create greater access to treatment and recovery services.**

**Actions**

- 10.1 Explore and advocate for new models of treatment to meet community need (e.g., daytox, Indigenous model, full-day non-residential programs, low-threshold treatment and service options, a recovery community/centre, sobering centre).
- 10.2 Explore the extent to which transportation and location of services is a barrier, notably in rural areas, and develop strategies to address.
- 10.3 Identify barriers and create new strategies to help support people using drugs and/or alcohol to access services (e.g., childcare, mobility issues, etc.).
- 10.4 Advocate to all levels of government to provide funding for a full continuum of treatment and care for individuals using substances and for their families and friends, including involvement in the recovery process.
- 10.5 Implement “pre-treatment beds/stabilization housing” between withdrawal and residential treatment and/or other recovery programming.
- 10.6 Advocate to close the gap between short term programs and longer term residential program wait times.
- 10.7 Promote self-managed treatment and recovery options as appropriate (e.g., guided self change program).
- 10.8 Increase the hours of operation, availability (including reducing wait times) and options for treatment services.

**Recommendation 11:**

**Enhance coordination of treatment service and improve linkages and collaboration among the continuum of services.**

**Actions**

- 11.1 Explore and improve the different models of withdrawal management care (i.e., daytox clinic) and how they fit into the continuum of services.
- 11.2 Strengthen capacity for service providers to work together to share best practices and common processes.
- 11.3 Enhance relapse prevention supports and services.
- 11.4 Collaborate with institutions and community agencies to implement discharge planning and transition protocols to improve care for individuals leaving hospitals and jails.
- 11.5 Enhance collaboration between services that address substance use and mental health services.
- 11.6 Advocate for training for service providers across different services including primary care, hospital care, and community based treatment for the purpose of coordinating services.
- 11.7 Strengthen engagement with treatment organizations across different funding sectors (e.g., private/public).
- 11.8 Advocate for enhanced linkages and collaboration across Ministries at the provincial level.

**Recommendation 12:**

**Develop a coordinated service response specific to Crystal Methamphetamine (drug induced psychosis).**

**Actions**

- 12.1 Support existing efforts to provide evidence-based information and training to those in contact with people who use crystal methamphetamine including local businesses.
- 12.2 Provide education and supports to people who use crystal methamphetamine as well as their peers (e.g., user guide).
- 12.3 Investigate the efficacy of separate treatment entrance paths for people using crystal methamphetamine.
- 12.4 Investigate and develop both evidence-based residential and community treatment models specific to crystal methamphetamine.



# HARM REDUCTION

## Recommendations / Actions

### **Recommendation 13:**

**Work collaboratively to address the opioid crises within Middlesex-London.**

#### **Actions**

- 13.1 Advocate for more access to Suboxone as a means of treatment, including through primary care physicians, and enhancement of counselling service availability at opioid substitution clinics.
- 13.2 Support existing efforts to implement Supervised Consumption Facilities in London including a comprehensive model of care.
- 13.3 Advocate for continued provincial attention to the opioid crises including continued policy commitment under Ontario Narcotics Strategy.
- 13.4 Advocate for provision of naloxone kits, information and training to anyone being treated for an overdose at point of care and other access points.
- 13.5 Support organizations to have naloxone available as standard first aid measure (i.e., support with policies and procedures).
- 13.6 Explore and remove barriers that prevent naloxone being used.
- 13.7 Develop a community overdose awareness campaign (i.e., Stop Overdose Ottawa campaign).
- 13.8 Enhance collaboration between opioid substitution therapy providers and community services.
- 13.9 Explore and advocate for new treatment options for those addicted to opioids.

**Recommendation 14:**

**Ensure people who are using drugs have access to accurate and timely information.**

**Actions**

- 14.1 Continue to ensure people are informed of locations where to access naloxone.
- 14.2 Develop a coordinated way to inform people of contaminated/"bad" drugs within the community.
- 14.3 Develop a coordinated way to inform people about infection outbreaks.

**Recommendation 15:**

**Expand harm reduction services.**

**Actions**

- 15.1 Establish a managed alcohol program/facility for people with severe chronic alcohol addiction to address overall health and wellbeing.
- 15.2 Advocate for extended hours of services and locations of harm reduction services and distribution of harm reduction supplies in London and Middlesex.
- 15.3 Determine need and explore strategies to expand availability of harm reduction services and supplies in rural communities (e.g., expansion of mobile services).
- 15.4 Enhance participation in research and evaluation of harm reduction services.
- 15.5 Advocate for organizations across the continuum of care (e.g., treatment services, family health teams, hospitals etc.) to integrate harm reduction philosophies and strategies within their organizations (e.g., lower risk use and overdose prevention education, access to harm reduction supplies and supports).

**Recommendation 16:**

**Develop a comprehensive community needle syringe recovery strategy.**

**Actions**

- 16.1 Expand the availability of portable needle disposal kits and needle disposal bins throughout Middlesex-London.
- 16.2 Empower and educate the public regarding safe handling of sharps.
- 16.3 Explore and advocate for models of comprehensive needle recovery that support the effective and safe management of discarded sharps for citizens and property owners within London and Middlesex which does not rely on a fee for service.
- 16.4 Advocate for increased funding for a syringe recovery strategy.

**Recommendation 17:**

**Monitor substance use trends in Middlesex-London.**

**Actions**

- 17.1 Enhance surveillance and monitoring of local level substance use trends as well as risk and protective factors.
- 17.2 Use data and information to identify new drugs and new drug use trends to minimize negative impacts.

**Recommendation 18:**

**Advocate for policy and legal change within the correctional system that supports both harm reduction and treatment.**

**Actions**

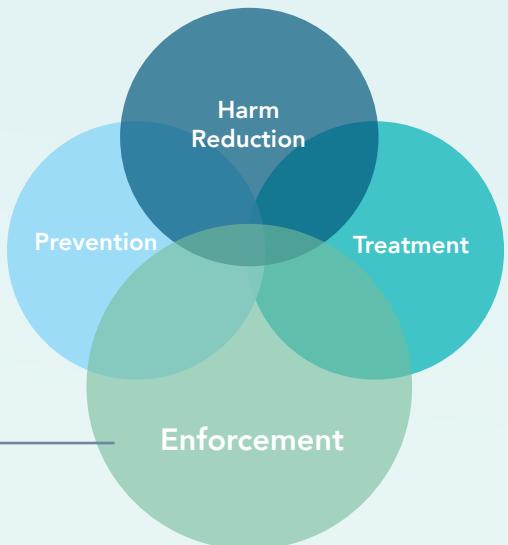
- 18.1 Advocate for evidence-based programs and services for both harm reduction and treatment support in federal and provincial correctional facilities.
- 18.2 Advocate that harm reduction equipment, treatment support, and general health information (i.e., understanding substance use, wound care, education) be made available in both federal and provincial prisons.
- 18.3 Improve discharge planning, aftercare, and continued community treatment – including harm reduction – upon release through enhanced collaboration between services.

**Recommendation 19:**

**Advocate for evidence-based reform of current drug laws and policy.**

**Actions**

- 19.1 Research evidence of the benefits of changing legislation related to criminalizing possession of substances.



# ENFORCEMENT

## Recommendations / Actions

### **Recommendation 20:**

**Improve collaboration between police, health and social services.**

#### **Actions**

- 20.1 Expand the coordination of police service activities with activities of health and social service agencies to develop long-term solutions that improve the health and safety of people living in Middlesex-London.

### **Recommendation 21:**

**Support education and training for those working within the justice system about substance use, harm reduction, and treatment.**

#### **Actions**

- 21.1 Assess and evaluate gaps in training related to substance use, harm reduction and treatment that may exist for those working in the justice system.
- 21.2 Facilitate access and support training based on identified need.

**Recommendation 22:**

**Advocate for recovery-focused solutions for people involved with the criminal justice system (e.g., drug court).**

**Actions**

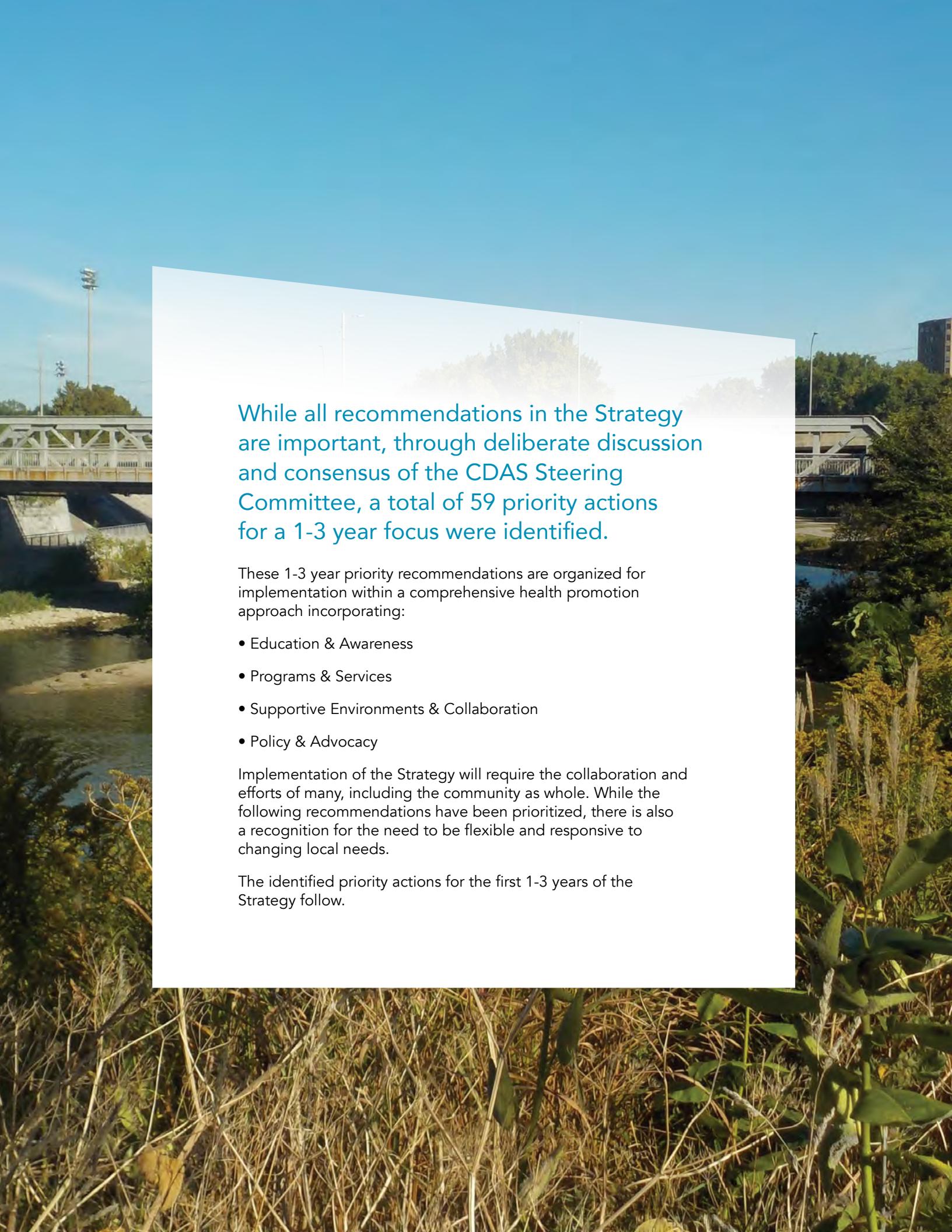
- 22.1 Support the reinstatement of diversion programs that combine treatment with a problem-solving lens that addresses diverse and unique needs.
- 22.2 Advocate for key influential stakeholders to support and sustain diversion programs at a systems-level.
- 22.3 Review similar recovery focused programs occurring elsewhere to inform successful implementation.

**Recommendation 23:**

**Enhance the community's understanding of the "right" responder to contact in situations where addiction crisis is apparent and increase community knowledge about reporting incidences.**

**Actions**

- 23.1 Support the development of an information campaign (e.g., when to go to a walk-in crisis centre; when to go to the emergency department; when to call 911).
- 23.2 Influence coordination and collaboration among first responders to work in a manner to ensure the right resource and care is mobilized.
- 23.3 Foster service provider, business and workplace awareness of crisis response resources and choices to make other than 911.
- 23.4 Facilitate knowledge transfer to community members about crisis response resources in London.



**While all recommendations in the Strategy are important, through deliberate discussion and consensus of the CDAS Steering Committee, a total of 59 priority actions for a 1-3 year focus were identified.**

These 1-3 year priority recommendations are organized for implementation within a comprehensive health promotion approach incorporating:

- Education & Awareness
- Programs & Services
- Supportive Environments & Collaboration
- Policy & Advocacy

Implementation of the Strategy will require the collaboration and efforts of many, including the community as whole. While the following recommendations have been prioritized, there is also a recognition for the need to be flexible and responsive to changing local needs.

The identified priority actions for the first 1-3 years of the Strategy follow.

# COMMUNITY DRUG AND ALCOHOL STRATEGY PRIORITY ACTIONS

## Overarching priority actions (years 1-3)

<b>Education/ Awareness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>4.2. Provide opportunities for community members and organizations to learn about substance use, harm reduction, addictions and stigma around drug use.</li><li>4.4. Continue to challenge the continuum of service providers and media to not perpetuate stigma.</li><li>4.5. Support training opportunities for health and other professionals about addiction, harm reduction, and injection drug use.</li></ul>
<b>Programs/ Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1.5. Promote a range of supports and services to support people and families experiencing or at risk of homelessness and/or food insecurity.</li></ul>
<b>Supportive Environments/ Collaboration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1.7 Work alongside Indigenous communities to identify and address Indigenous-specific determinants of health, such as colonization and cultural continuity, that contribute to problematic substance use.</li><li>3.2. Integrate personal stories of substance use experience, including recovery, into messaging and education about substance use.</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>4.1. Promote an inclusive, compassionate community that understands substance use and addictions as health concerns and supports families.</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>4.3. Share positive messaging and continue to help people tell their personal stories in a non-stigmatizing way.</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>4.6. Work towards shifting language to reduce stigma (e.g., overdose to poisoning).</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>5.1. Increase collaboration between services, organizations, business groups, and community members with a mechanism for ongoing feedback to work together towards the goal of achieving public spaces that are non-stigmatizing and safe for all.</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1.1. Advocate to increase access and availability of efficient, attainable, scattered and diverse housing stock.</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1.2. Advocate for financial support programs (e.g., Ontario Works, Ontario Disability Support Program) to increase rates that better reflect cost of living.</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1.3. Advocate for financial support for medical expenses not covered by OHIP or non-insured health benefits (e.g., transportation to health related appointments).</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1.4. Advocate for expanded supportive housing approaches and promote Housing First programs to assist people experiencing chronic and persistent homelessness to secure permanent housing with support.</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1.6. Advocate for Emergency Shelter specialization (i.e., youth shelter).</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>2.1. Advocate for and support cultural safety and trauma-informed care training to agencies and organizations and embed policies and practices to ensure services are culturally safe.</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>3.1. Advocate for new Peer Training programs that are specific to people who have lived experience with addiction.</li></ul>

## Prevention priority actions (years 1-3)

<b>Education/ Awareness</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>6.1. Support schools by providing up-to-date and evidence-based information and resources to inform curriculum and school policy and aid in the implementation of comprehensive school health.</li><li>6.2. Use and promote national and provincial education campaigns and materials related to alcohol, cannabis, and other drugs. Develop local messages to fill any gaps.</li><li>6.3. Use workplaces as a place to share information and encourage workplaces to support substance use prevention and treatment programs (e.g., Employee Assistance Programs).</li><li>6.4. Support primary care as a valuable partner in prevention by providing up-to-date and evidence-based information, resources, and tools for working with patients including families, children, youth, adults, and older adults (e.g., screening and brief intervention tools, Low Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines).</li></ol>
<b>Programs/ Services</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>7.3. In collaboration with existing strategies, projects and plans, acknowledge that education and success at school are key protective factors. Support supplementary school success programs such as free tutoring, mentoring, wrap-around supports.</li></ol>
<b>Supportive Environments/ Collaboration</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>7.1. Collaborate with existing systems to create opportunities for positive community involvement and participation in meaningful leisure and recreational activities, for children of all ages and abilities, to foster feelings of inclusion and social capital among children and youth.</li><li>7.2. Enhance school and community partnerships to build a sense of personal and group belonging within schools and the community.</li></ol>
<b>Policy/ Advocacy</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>8.1. Work with municipal decision-makers to include evidence-based substance prevention considerations in municipal planning and policies (e.g., Municipal Alcohol Policies, bylaws related to cannabis legalization).</li><li>8.2. Advocate for provincial policy that reduces substance-related harms (e.g., cannabis and alcohol pricing and taxation, drug impaired driving laws).</li></ol>

## Treatment priority actions (years 1-3)

<b>Education/ Awareness</b>	<p>9.1. Increase awareness of existing treatment information and pathways to treatment services in Middlesex-London, including awareness of existing sources of information such as Healthline and ConnexOntario.</p>
<b>Education/ Awareness</b>	<p>12.1. Support existing efforts to provide evidence-based information and training to those in contact with people who use crystal methamphetamine including local businesses.</p> <p>12.2. Provide education and supports to people who use crystal methamphetamine as well as their peers (e.g., user guide).</p>
<b>Programs/ Services</b>	<p>10.1. Explore and advocate for new models of treatment to meet community need (e.g., daytox, Indigenous model, full-day non-residential programs, low-threshold treatment and service options, a recovery community/centre, sobering centre).</p>
<b>Programs/ Services</b>	<p>10.2. Explore the extent to which transportation and location of services is a barrier, notably in rural areas, and develop strategies to address.</p> <p>10.3. Identify barriers and create new strategies to help support people using drugs and/or alcohol to access services (e.g., childcare, mobility issues, etc.).</p>
<b>Supportive Environments/ Collaboration</b>	<p>11.1. Explore and improve the different models of withdrawal management care (i.e., daytox clinic) and how they fit into the continuum of services.</p> <p>11.3. Enhance relapse prevention supports and services.</p>
<b>Supportive Environments/ Collaboration</b>	<p>11.2. Strengthen capacity for service providers to work together to share best practices and common processes.</p> <p>11.4. Collaborate with institutions and community agencies to implement discharge planning and transition protocols to improve care for individuals leaving hospitals and jails.</p> <p>11.5. Enhance collaboration between services that address substance use and mental health services.</p>
<b>Policy/ Advocacy</b>	<p>10.4. Advocate to all levels of government to provide funding for a full continuum of treatment and care for individuals using substances and for their families and friends, including involvement in the recovery process.</p>

# Harm Reduction priority actions (years 1-3)

<b>Education/ Awareness</b>	<p>14.1. Continue to ensure people are informed of locations where to access naloxone.</p> <p>14.2. Develop a coordinated way to inform people of contaminated/"bad" drugs within the community.</p> <p>14.3. Develop a coordinated way to inform people about infection outbreaks.</p> <p>16.2. Empower and educate the public regarding safe handling of sharps.</p>
<b>Programs/ Services</b>	<p>13.2. Support existing efforts to implement Supervised Consumption Facilities in London including a comprehensive model of care.</p> <p>15.1. Establish a managed alcohol program/facility for people with severe chronic alcohol addiction to address overall health and wellbeing.</p> <p>15.3. Determine need and explore strategies to expand availability of harm reduction services and supplies in rural communities (e.g., expansion of mobile services).</p> <p>16.1. Expand the availability of portable needle disposal kits and needle disposal bins throughout Middlesex-London.</p> <p>16.3. Explore and advocate for models of comprehensive needle recovery that support the effective and safe management of discarded sharps for citizens and property owners within London and Middlesex which does not rely on a fee for service.</p>
<b>Supportive Environments/ Collaboration</b>	<p>15.4. Enhance participation in research and evaluation of harm reduction services.</p> <p>17.1. Enhance surveillance and monitoring of local level substance use trends as well as risk and protective factors.</p> <p>17.2. Use data and information to identify new drugs and new drug use trends to minimize negative impacts.</p>
<b>Policy/ Advocacy</b>	<p>13.1. Advocate for more access to Suboxone as a means of treatment, including through primary care physicians, and enhancement of counselling service availability at opioid substitution clinics.</p> <p>13.3. Advocate for continued provincial attention to the opioid crises including continued policy commitment under Ontario Narcotics Strategy.</p> <p>13.4. Advocate for provision of naloxone kits, information and training to anyone being treated for an overdose at point of care and other access points.</p> <p>15.2. Advocate for extended hours of services and locations of harm reduction services and distribution of harm reduction supplies in London and Middlesex.</p>

## Enforcement priority actions (years 1-3)

<b>Education/ Awareness</b>	21.1. Assess and evaluate gaps in training related to substance use, harm reduction and treatment that may exist for those working in the justice system.
<b>Programs/ Services</b>	23.1. Support the development of an information campaign (e.g., when to go to a walk-in crisis centre; when to go to the emergency department; when to call 911).
<b>Supportive Environments/ Collaboration</b>	22.1. Support the reinstatement of diversion programs that combine treatment with a problem-solving lens that addresses diverse and unique needs.
<b>Policy/ Advocacy</b>	20.1. Expand the coordination of police service activities with activities of health and social service agencies to develop long-term solutions that improve the health and safety of people living in Middlesex-London.  22.2. Advocate for key influential stakeholders to support and sustain diversion programs at a systems-level.

## NEXT STEPS

The release of this report marks the beginning of the implementation phase of the Middlesex-London Community Drug and Alcohol Strategy. As we reach this milestone, many actions are already underway and many partners are committed to this collaborative work.

The Steering Committee and four Pillar workgroups, through collective dedication and expertise, have developed this Strategy. As we move to implementation, the structure and composition of the CDAS governance and workgroups will shift to better support the Strategy's implementation.

Consistent with other community drug strategies across Ontario, the need for a dedicated strategy coordinator has been identified as essential to coordinate implementation of the many recommendations and actions. Work is underway for a strategy coordinator to be put into place.

An implementation plan will be developed for priority actions. Many actions will depend on leveraging of existing resources, and some will require new sources of funding. This Strategy can serve to guide decision making of leaders and funders as the priorities and most immediate needs and actions are identified.

Progress of the Strategy will be monitored and reported on at regular intervals, with the CDAS website, [www.mldncdas.com](http://www.mldncdas.com), being a source of information and reporting progress.

The CDAS is a long term strategy. While priority actions have been identified, there is a need to be nimble and responsive to changing local needs. Ongoing commitment of partners and collaboration among sectors is essential to success. Each member of our community has a role to play.

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# APPENDIX A

## CDAS Steering Committee

Co-Chair, Rhonda Brittan, Middlesex-London Health Unit  
 Co-Chair, Brian Lester, Regional HIV/AIDS Connection  
 Joe Antone, Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre  
 Anne Armstrong, London Cares Homeless Response Services  
 Laura Cornish and Jan Richardson, Neighbourhood, Children and Fire Services, City of London  
 Scott Courtice, London InterCommunity Health Centre  
 Jon DeActis, Mission Services of London  
 Casey Donkers, Community Member  
 Tracey Law, London Area Network of Substance Users  
 Daryl Longworth, London Police Service  
 Janette MacDonald, Downtown London  
 Catherine McInnes, London Arts Council  
 Beth Mitchell, Canadian Mental Health Association Middlesex  
 Jen Pastorius, Old East Village Business Improvement Area  
 Michelle Quintyn, Goodwill Industries  
 Linda Sibley, Addiction Services of Thames Valley  
 Jack Smit and Sandra Datars Bere, Housing, Social Services and Dearness Home, City of London  
 Michael van Holst, Councillor Ward 1, City of London

*1 co-chair from each pillar workgroup*

Prevention Pillar Co-Chairs:	Pauline Andrew, Social Services, County of Middlesex Anita Cramp, Middlesex-London Health Unit
Treatment Pillar Co-Chairs:	Michael Annett, Salvation Army Centre of Hope Pam Hill, Addiction Services of Thames Valley
Harm Reduction Pillar Co-Chairs:	Sonja Burke, Regional HIV/AIDS Connection Natalie Meade, Middlesex-London Health Unit
Enforcement Pillar Co-Chairs:	Chris Auger, Ontario Provincial Police Bruce Rankin, Regional HIV/AIDS Connection

## Past Steering Committee Members:

Muriel Abbott, Middlesex-London Health Unit – Steering Committee Co-chair  
 Al Edmondson, Mayor, Middlesex Centre  
 Lori Hassall, Canadian Mental Health Association Middlesex  
 Sharon Koivu, London Health Sciences Centre  
 Heather Lumley, St. Leonard's Community Services London and Region  
 Janet McAllister, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health  
 Suze Morrison, London Diversity and Race Relations Advisory Committee  
 Kelly Simpson, South West Local Health Integration Network

## Pillar Workgroups

**People from the following organizations and affiliations have been members of Pillar workgroups during the development of the CDAS.**

### Prevention

- Co-Chair, Social Services, County of Middlesex
- Co-Chair, Middlesex-London Health Unit
- Children's Aid Society
- African Canadian Federation of London & Area
- Beth Emanuel Church
- Canadian Council of Muslim Women
- Community Member
- IMPACT Program - London Health Sciences Centre
- London District Catholic School Board
- London Police Service
- Middlesex-London Emergency Medical Services
- Middlesex-London Health Unit
- Mothers Against Drunk Driving
- St. Leonard's Community Services London and Region
- Thames Valley District School Board
- Youth Opportunities Unlimited

### Treatment

- Co-Chair, Salvation Army Centre of Hope
- Co-Chair, Addiction Services of Thames Valley
- Canadian Mental Health Association London-Middlesex
- City of London
- Craigwood Youth Services
- Family Service Thames Valley
- Local Physician
- London InterCommunity Health Centre
- Mission Services of London
- St. Joseph's Health Care
- St. Leonard's Community Services London and Region
- Teen Challenge

### Harm Reduction

- Co-Chair, Regional HIV/AIDS Connection
- Co-Chair, Middlesex-London Health Unit
- Addiction Services of Thames Valley
- Anova
- Children's Aid Society
- London Area Network of Substance Users
- London InterCommunity Health Centre
- Local Physician
- Mission Services of London
- Old East Village Business Improvement Area
- St. Joseph's Health Care

### Enforcement

- Co-Chair, Ontario Provincial Police
- Co-Chair, Regional HIV/AIDS Connection
- Children's Aid Society
- Ethno Cultural Council of London
- John Howard Society
- London Police Service
- Old East Village Community Association
- Ontario Provincial Police
- St. Leonard's Community Services London and Region

# APPENDIX B

## Guiding Principles

### 1. Community Strengths Based

- Recognize that Middlesex-London neighborhoods, institutions, and families and individuals have unique gifts to share, i.e. lived experience
- Draw on community and individual strengths as well as successes to further develop community assets
- Draw on community better practices from other community models that work

### 2. Evidence Informed

- Sound decision-making based on diverse forms of evidence from multiple sources, including best and promising practices, and persons with lived experience

### 3. Non-stigmatizing

- People first and all people matter
- Challenge harmful labels, stereotypes, discrimination and oppression
- Use language that is free of judgment and dignifying (not hurtful or derogatory)
- Share facts and positive attitudes about people who use substances, including addressing myths about use and behavior change
- Use of community and public education, including at a system level

### 4. Accessible

- Promote and ensure programs, services, communities and resources are accessible and appropriate to help reduce inequities faced by individuals who use substances and their supports in all environments (e.g. hospitals, clinics, business, women who are street involved)

### 5. Locally Relevant

- Tailor solutions to the diversity and uniqueness of, and local context found within all communities in Middlesex-London (i.e. consider local economy, drug use trends)

### 6. Collaborative

- Enhance inter-sectoral collaboration
- Nurture partnerships between citizens/residents, community groups, service providers, government, business, and persons with lived experience
- Engage community members in a full and meaningful way

### 7. Hopeful

- Build on our shared expectations, ambitions, and optimism for improvements in the impacts of substance use on our community
- Cultivate a realistic hope that acknowledges the challenges we face and persists in offering options outside of those already considered in resolving problems
- Embrace the language that fosters hope such as "when", and "we believe"
- Mentorship/peer support with lived experience

## 8. Responsive to Barriers

- Provide community wide responses designed to identify and eliminate attitudinal, structural or systemic barriers to full participation in civic life and society as well as barriers to accessing the community's resources
- Educate the community to remove stigma
- Encourage/invite community participation

## 9. Action-oriented & Results Driven

- Set goals and develop indicators to track progress and evaluate the performance of selected approaches against the results we seek
- Use champions with expertise related to specific tasks
- Assess unintended outcomes/impacts (both positive & negative) at process and outcome level (e.g. Health Equity Impact Assessment)
- Publish the community's successes along the way

## 10. Culturally Safe

- Recognize that it is impossible to be thoroughly knowledgeable about cultures other than one's own
- Regard citizens as experts of their own culture and access their cultural expertise when engaging the community (e.g. those with lived experience)
- Recognize that mainstream approaches can lead to stress in marginalized communities (e.g. ethno-stress in ethnic communities)
- Use tailored approaches that are relevant to the needs of individuals who use substances, as well as to families and communities affected by substance use
- Trauma informed

## 11. Inclusive

- Seek meaningful involvement, participation, and contribution of all people regardless of drug usage history, age, gender, ethnicity, race, income, and mental, cognitive or physical ability
- Apply inclusive approaches to all aspects of the drug strategy planning, implementation, and evaluation process

## 12. Equity Focused

- The social determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life (definition from World Health Organization)
- Take into account the inter-relationships and impact of social determinants of health (SDOH), including how determinants of health and inequities reinforce each other
- Collaborate with committees/groups working to address SDOH in other areas
- Utilize culturally appropriate models of social determinants of health (e.g. Indigenous-informed model by the National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health)

## 13. Reconciliation Aware

- To contribute to reconciliation by honouring the uniqueness of the relationship between settlers and Indigenous peoples
- Establish and maintain a mutually respectful relationship with Indigenous peoples and communities
- Recognize the role of our own colonial history, power and privilege in shaping community interactions so as to mitigate/eliminate adverse effects of that power and privilege

