

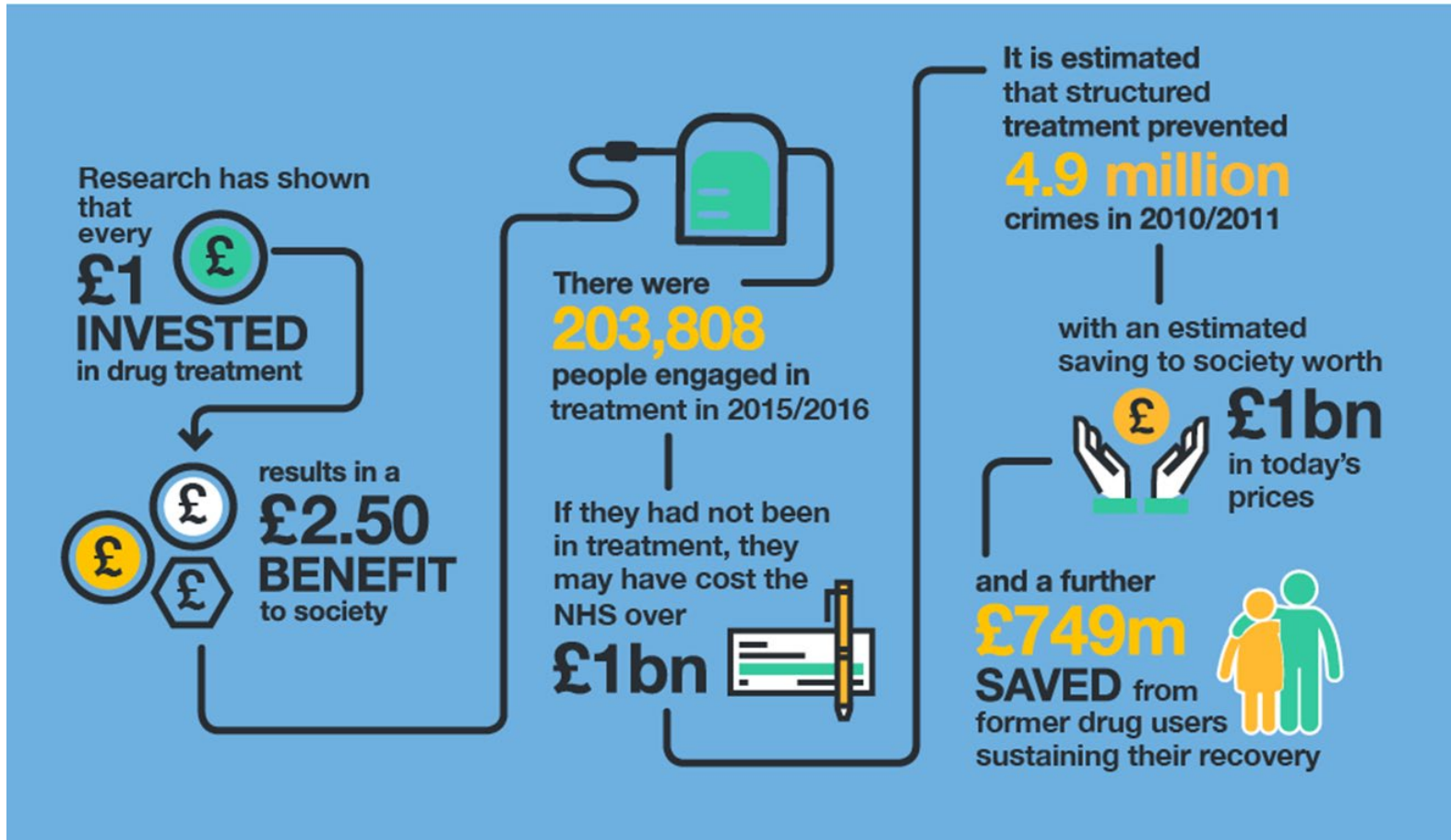


APPENDIX

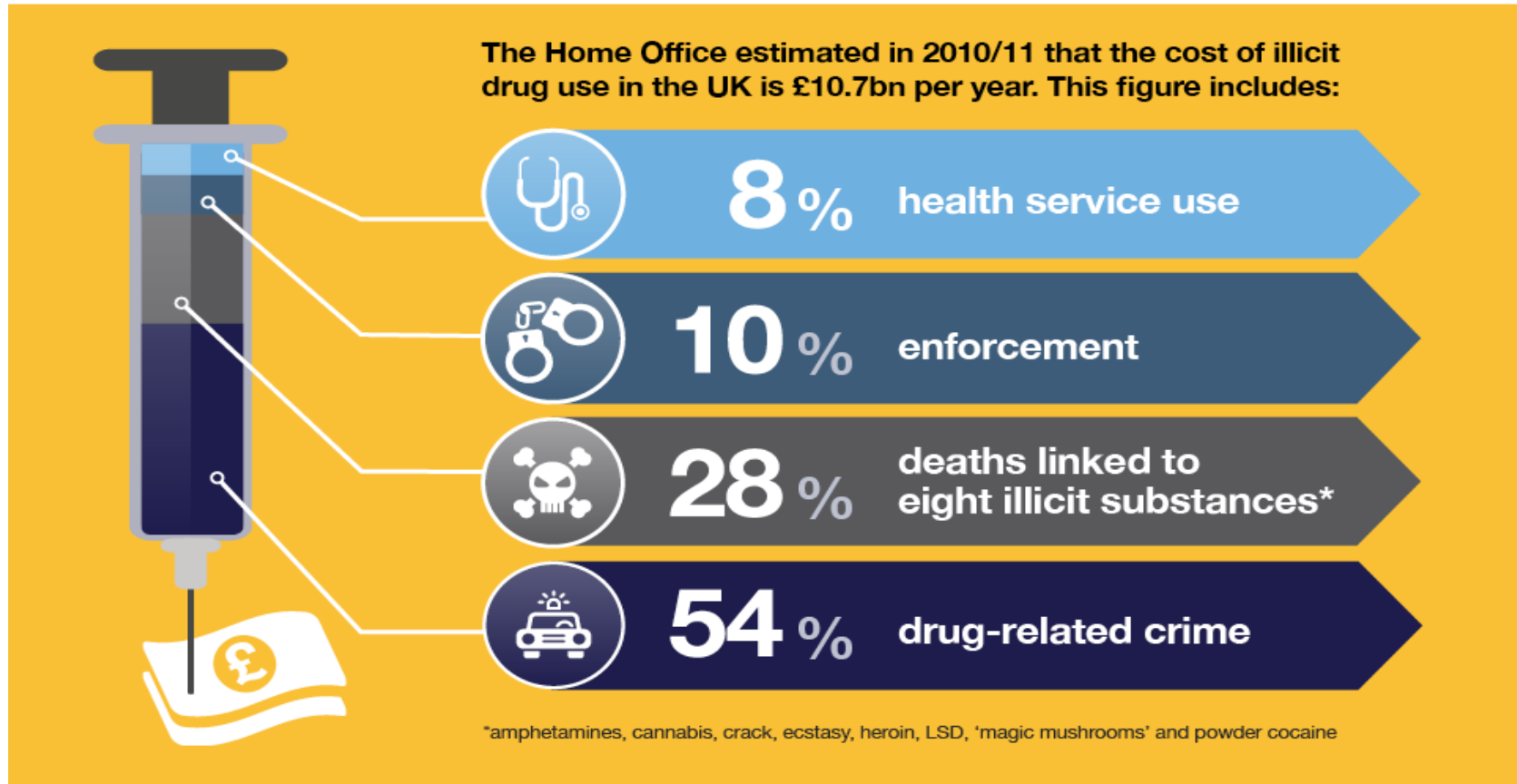
WORKING WITH ISLINGTON RESIDENTS WHO NEED SUPPORT WITH THEIR DRUG AND ALCOHOL USE DURING COVID

January 2021

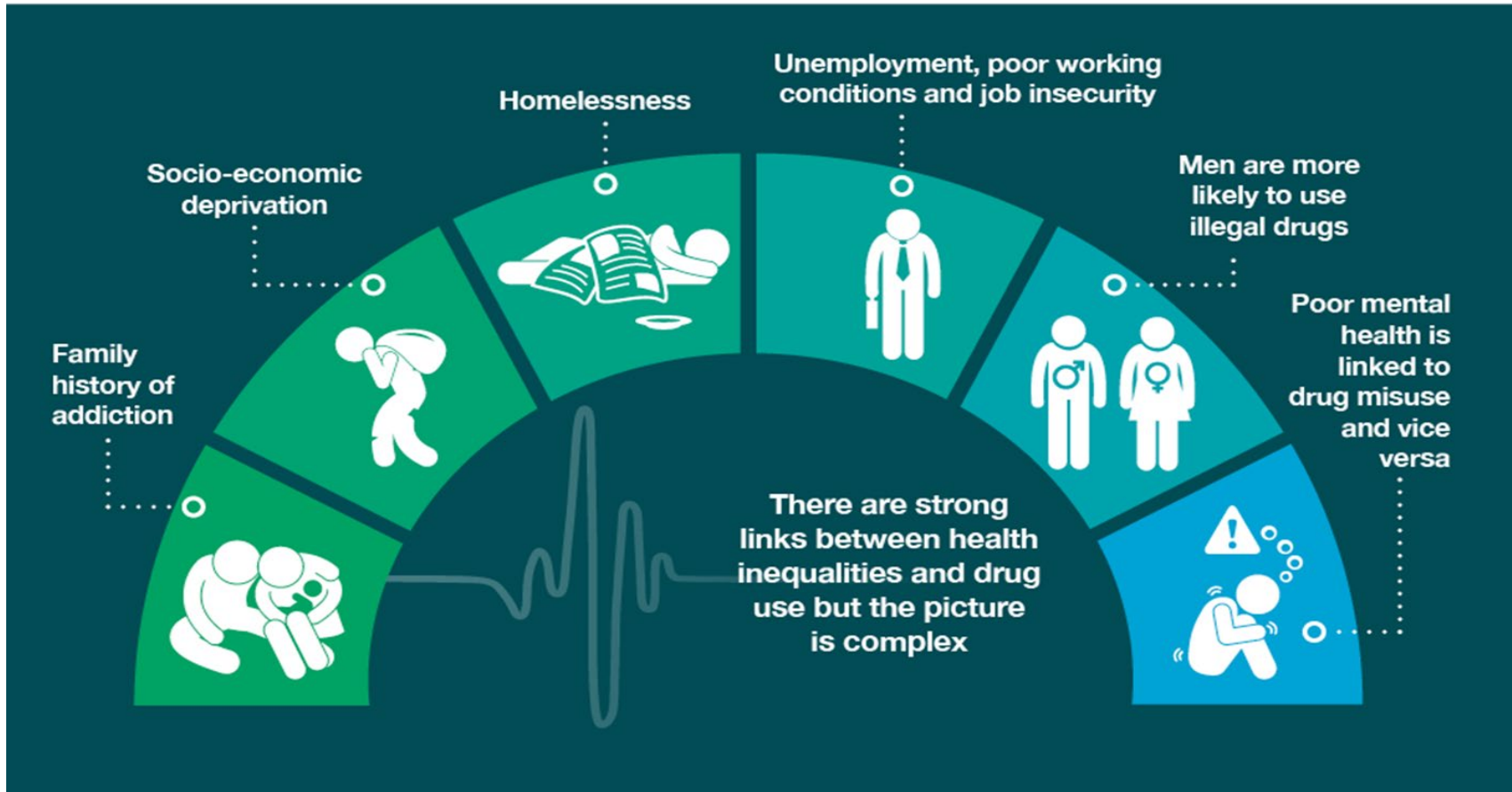
Why invest in treatment?



Impacts of substance misuse



Impacts of substance misuse



Local services

Better Lives, the new adult Islington drug and alcohol recovery service started on the 1st April 2018.

Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust (C&I) are the lead provider working in partnership with WDP and Humankind (formerly Blenheim).

Better Lives provide comprehensive support to local residents aged 18+ who need support in addressing their alcohol and/or drug use. This includes:

- Harm minimisation advice
- 1:1 structured support
- Substitute prescribing
- Group sessions
- Peer support
- On-site mutual aid (pre-covid)
- Education, training and employment
- Family support service
- Psychiatric and psychological assessment and support

Accessing support during Covid

During Covid lockdown

- **Facilitating access.** The initial focus of support was on ensuring that residents could access, or continue to access, the critical elements of their care.
- **Adapting assessments.** Assessments were carried out by phone and in person, with the necessary PPE safety measures in place.
- **Outreach.** Better Lives staff attended other sites such as hostels and hotels to assess people in order to minimise the need for residents to travel around the borough.
- **Staff Well-Being.** Staff who were able to come in to work were risk assessed to ensure that they were able to adequately manage any risk to themselves and others.
- **Supporting wider needs.** Better Lives worked with volunteers / We are Islington / ICDAS members in delivering food and other essentials to service users



Accessing support during Covid cont'd

Post lockdown

- **Online and remote support.** As staff, service users and residents adjusted to Covid ways of living and working it was possible to restart other types of support such as online groups and online key-working.
- **Re-instating face-to-face support.** It has also been possible for the service to start reintroducing some service based activities, including support for families and friends of people using drugs and / or alcohol. Consideration will be given to the latest lockdown measures before further face-to-face support can be offered.
- **Covid secure sites.** In order to ensure Covid safe spaces, these activities have to be carefully managed so that social distancing can be maintained in buildings.



Impact of Covid on service users

Feedback from Better Lives

Positives

- Service user survey results in June 2020 indicated 85% of service users rated their experience of the service during the first lockdown as good or very good
- 31% felt they received more support, 51% the same as usual and 18% less support. 15% reported missing group support
- Service users reported that prescriptions being delivered to pharmacies supported them to remain in treatment
- There has been an increase in the number of people remaining in treatment for 12 weeks or more and a decrease in service users leaving in an unplanned way (ie: dropping out of treatment)

Challenges

- Support services, outside of drug and alcohol services, closing or moving online has had a negative impact on some service users, resulting in greater social isolation and poorer mental wellbeing. As a consequence Better Lives has been seeing more complex presentations. These cases are having to be managed within the service's own more limited treatment options as a consequence of needing to maintain covid safe spaces.
- A significant number of service users do not have the equipment or desire to access online support



Impact of Covid on service users

Feedback from Islington Clients of Drug and Alcohol Services (ICDAS)

ICDAS are the local drug and alcohol service user group who work with Better Lives and commissioners to develop the support available within the Borough.

During the pandemic, ICDAS had little face to face contact with service users so can't offer a more complete picture.

From those people that ICDAS have encountered there have been mixed responses about their experience during Covid although the prescription service has been mostly well received. Some people miss groups.

The largest zoom meeting at Better Lives was Stuart's Christmas quiz which attracted about a dozen attendees.

Anecdotal feedback from those people who are not using online support includes:

- No computer and/or internet
- Not enough technology expertise
- Tech OK but they don't want to
- Tech OK but they have relapsed



Impact of Covid on staff

Feedback from Better Lives

- IT kit was in high demand and availability limited at the early stages of covid. Some staff who were shielding at the start of the pandemic were trying to work from home with their own or no devices. However this issue was later resolved and all staff are now able to work remotely with Trust devices.
- Working remotely with service users left some staff feeling “deskilled” and there was a need to support and train staff in these new ways of working. This training has been offered to staff and will be reviewed during supervision sessions.
- With the exception of the initial national shortages of hand sanitiser, PPE availability has been good throughout the pandemic.
- The uncertainty, illness of family and friends, concern about the risks to service users and rate of change has been stressful for staff. We have supported staff by re-instating staff meetings (virtually) and offering reflective practice and “thinking space” sessions.
- Staff working from home have felt socially isolated at times. This has been addressed by implementing a rota to allow safe numbers of staff to work from service buildings.
- There have been added pressure on staff when having to cover for colleagues who are off sick or self isolating as a result of Covid.



Borough performance

Contract Management

During the initial stages of covid, formal contract monitoring was suspended to allow the service to focus on delivering the critical elements of care.

Contract management processes have now been reinstated and efforts are being made to develop a post covid way of working. This is however hampered by the changing pandemic scenario. The service is working hard to minimise the immediate disruption of changing tiers to the drug and alcohol support provided to service users whilst keeping the service covid safe for anyone using or working the sites.

Positively, the service is able to report very low numbers of covid deaths amongst their current treatment population, many of whom have conditions which make them clinically vulnerable.



Case study from Better Lives

- SU A was referred from a local DV service to the Better Lives family service.
- They had experienced serious domestic violence which had been exacerbated by the lockdown and the increased alcohol intake/ deteriorating mental health of their partner. SU A had also retired just prior to lockdown.
- The family worker assessed and co-produced a care plan which focussed on expanding SU A's social network and self-care.
- They also developed a safety plan and worked together to understand what they could do to break the cycle of violence and co-dependency and get the support they needed for themselves as well as their partner.
- During lockdown they had a combination of telephone and socially distanced face to face contact using PPE.
- SU A started to make new connections and networks outside of the home environment.
- They also used the sessions to reflect on the impact of retiring.
- As the sessions progressed they reported feeling safer, calmer and less anxious.
- They are planning to join the "friends and family open support group" at the end of their one to one sessions.