

Men's Health

Public Health Spotlight

Evidence and policy briefing

May 2026

Purpose

Spotlight briefings summarise the key information that decision makers need to keep up to speed on important health issues. Each briefing puts the science, national policy and guidance into a local context to support local decisions.

Briefings are shared with a wide range of partners including South Gloucestershire Health & Wellbeing Board, Elected Members, Council staff, and members of the Locality Partnership. Please share with others who would find it helpful.

If you would like to be added to the mailing list for these briefings please email:

publichealthsouthgloucestershire@southglos.gov.uk

Spotlight: Men's Health

This Spotlight provides a strategic overview of men's health in South Gloucestershire, using the national '**Men's health: a strategic vision for England**' as a foundation for local action

It brings together data and insight about:

- the **national policy direction**
- the **wider determinants shaping men's outcomes**
- the **local burden of preventable ill health**
- examples of **current delivery across the South Gloucestershire system**
- practical actions for **partners, services and elected members**

The aim is to support partners to apply a **men's health lens** across prevention, service design and community delivery, helping men access support earlier and reducing avoidable inequalities.

Headlines – why this matters now...

Both nationally and in South Gloucestershire, men continue to experience:

- poorer engagement with prevention and early help
- lower life expectancy and a higher burden of preventable disease and behavioural risk factors
- increased exposure to smoking, alcohol and gambling harms
- significant mental health need, with suicide a major cause of premature death
- inequalities linked to deprivation, employment, social isolation and stigma

The publication of England's **first Men's Health Strategy** provides an important opportunity to translate national ambition into **local system priorities for South Gloucestershire**.

National Strategic Context: What the national strategy means for South Gloucestershire

The national *Men's health: a strategic vision for England* sets out a 10-year vision to improve the health of men and boys through prevention, community-based support and tackling inequalities.

For South Gloucestershire, the strategy translates into **four areas for action**

- A shift from sickness to prevention
- Improving access by meeting men where they are
- Strengthening work on wider determinants and improving social connection
- Applying a men's health lens to service design

Understanding the wider determinants of Men's health – what is the national report telling us?

“Men’s outcomes are not inevitable. They are shaped by structural and social conditions: where men live, the work they do and the opportunities and constraints embedded in our systems. Men’s health is inseparable from the wider determinants of health and from the economic, social and cultural forces that influence how care is sought, delivered and valued”

- Men’s health: a strategic vision for England

Understanding the wider determinants of Men's health – what is the national report telling us?

Category:	Examples:
Socio-economic	- Men in the most deprived areas die 10 years earlier and live 19 fewer years in good health, compared to those in the least deprived areas. - Deprivation drives higher prevalence of risk factors and mortality (eg Alcohol-related mortality is 3.6 times higher in deprived areas) - Low education and financial insecurity constrain choices, increase exposure to risks and reduce engagement with services.
Environmental	- Poor housing and air pollution increase risks for respiratory and cardiovascular conditions, which disproportionately impact men due to higher baseline vulnerabilities and occupational patterns. - In male-dominated industries, occupational exposures contribute to higher rates of fatal injuries and work-related ill health.
Working and living conditions	- Good quality work can protect health by providing structure, income and purpose. - Low quality, precarious, or insecure work harms health. - Inflexible work hours, shift patterns or geographical barriers (e.g. rural areas) limit access to health care, delay diagnosis and exacerbates disengagement from services.

Understanding the wider determinants of Men's health – what is the national report telling us?

Category:	Examples:
Social and community networks	- Men often perceive greater stigma around loneliness. - Weak family, community or social ties increase risks of mental health decline and suicide. - Poor networks leads to reduced social participation, lower wellbeing and amplified vulnerability to other health challenges, as isolation hinders support seeking and resilience.
Societal norms and cultural forces	- Traditional masculinity expectations such as norms that emphasise strength, self-reliance, stoicism and reluctance to show vulnerability discourage help-seeking, promote risk-taking and heighten stigma around mental health, loneliness and social expression – This leads to men delaying or avoiding care and engaging in more harmful health behaviours.
Intersecting inequalities	- Wider determinants interact with personal characteristics to heighten risks. Examples (Ethnic minorities, sexual orientation, disability, criminal justice, homelessness): - Higher Cardiovascular Disease in South Asian men - Reduced life expectancy for men in contact with criminal justice or those who are homeless. - Greater substance misuse, mental health issues and sexually-transmitted infections among those who are gay, bisexual or other men who have sex with men.

Local Data – The South Gloucestershire context

- Life expectancy at birth is 3.7 years lower for males than females in South Gloucestershire ([SouthGlos JSNA](#), 2026)
- For males, there is a gap of 6.8 year between those living on the most and least deprived areas in South Gloucestershire, showing a **clear social gradient in male life expectancy** ([SouthGlos JSNA](#), 2026).
- Men experience higher rates of mortality from diseases considered **preventable**, including cancers, cardiovascular disease, liver disease and respiratory disease ([SouthGlos JSNA](#), 2026)
- In the 3 years from 2022 to 2024 74% (59 of the 80) recorded **suicides** in South Gloucestershire were among males. ([DHSC](#), 2026)
- Local data indicates higher rates of **behavioral risk factors among men**, including smoking ([DHSC](#), 2026), alcohol related harm ([DHSC](#), 2026) and gambling related harms ([Gambling Needs Assessment](#), 2025).
- Evidence indicates intersectionality surrounding higher prevalence of behavioral risk factors, including deprivation, employment status and employment types, such as those working in routine and manual occupations.

Local Data – Disparity in access to services

National and local data provides evidence that that some services are not reaching men as effectively as they could.

For example :

- Fewer men than women access local South Gloucestershire Stop Smoking Services (42.2% men) despite smoking prevalence in men being higher. Once engaged men's success rate for quitting is higher.
- Of all referrals into South Gloucestershire adult healthy weight programme in 2025/26, only 27% were men
- Data since 2021/22 indicates that of all NHS Health Checks provided, 44.2% were taken up by men
- Across BNSSG in 2023-24, only 33% of referrals received by NHS Talking therapies were men (NHS Talking Therapies data, 2026, [Microsoft Power BI](#))

Takeaway: The Picture in SouthGlos is similar to that described in the national report, with access to services and late presentation being a key driver of poorer outcomes for men.

Wider determinants – Some of the local picture

Data from recent Needs Assessments completed in South Gloucestershire:

- In South Gloucestershire, boys have **poorer educational outcomes** when compared to all pupil averages, across most stages of compulsory education ([Children and Young People Needs Assessment](#), 2023)
- While limited data exist among adults in South Gloucestershire, local pupil survey data indicates male pupils were more likely than the rest of their cohort to report having engaged with **online gambling related activity** ([Gambling rapid needs assessment](#), 2025)
- Men, especially single working-age men, experience a **disproportionate burden of homelessness** and associated health needs in South Gloucestershire. Structural barriers within housing prioritisation and access to support mean men are more likely to remain in unstable accommodation ([Homelessness health needs assessment](#), 2025).

Pathway to progress – Considerations and opportunities for South Gloucestershire

The National report identifies various levers for change and opportunities for Local Authorities and partners to consider as ways of improving outcomes for men

Levers for change	Considerations/opportunities
Improving Access to Healthcare Services	<u>Community-Based Men's Health Programmes:</u> - Develop and lead innovative, evidence-based programmes in trusted, non-clinical settings to engage at-risk and hard-to-reach men. <u>Neighbourhood Health & Integrated Services:</u> - Contribute to neighbourhood health centres and develop tailored neighbourhood health plans that reflect local men's needs. - Use integrated neighbourhood teams to pro-actively support higher risk men and co-design male friendly local pathways with communities. <u>General Commissioning:</u> - Apply a men's health lens across all commissioning, ensuring that services are co-designed, context-specific and connected to trusted settings eg workplaces, sports clubs and community venues. - Monitor and evaluate men's access to services and health outcomes, including across different groups of men.

Pathway to progress – Considerations and opportunities for South Gloucestershire

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Levers for change	Considerations/opportunities
Supporting Individual Behaviours	<u>Stop Smoking Services:</u> - Expand and target smoking cessation services, prioritising men in deprived areas, routine and manual workers, those with mental health or substance issues or those experiencing homelessness. - Integrate with lung cancer screening, community outreach, and other services to improve quit rates. - Collaborate with NHS and local partners to reach men in high-prevalence settings. <u>Drug & Alcohol Treatment and Recovery:</u> - Commission harm reduction programmes and join up with physical and mental health support. <u>Gambling-Related Harms Prevention:</u> - Support coordinated prevention efforts, including awareness raising campaigns, advertising and sponsorship restrictions, and targeted outreach to at-risk groups. - Improve treatment access and integration.

Pathway to progress – Considerations and opportunities for South Gloucestershire

Levers for change	Considerations/opportunities
Developing Healthy Living & Working Conditions	<u>Workplace Health Initiatives:</u> - Partner on local workplace health pilots in male-dominated industries, with a focus on priority areas including CVD, mental health and musculoskeletal health <u>Planning and Environmental Measures:</u> - Use the revised National Planning Policy Framework to restrict new fast-food outlets near schools and youth areas
Fostering Strong Social, Community and Family Networks	<u>Loneliness & Social Connections:</u> - Build strong community networks via Men's Sheds, sports clubs and local initiatives to reduce isolation and support peer connections. <u>Father Inclusion and Perinatal Support:</u> - Commission father-specific services, including peer groups, one-to-one support and workshops. - Train staff on father-inclusive practice - Promote men's inclusion in the design and delivery of services to boost parenting confidence and mental health.

Pathway to progress – Considerations and opportunities for South Gloucestershire

Levers for change	Considerations/opportunities
Addressing Societal Norms	<u>Local Health Literacy and Communications:</u> - Embed tailored communications and symptom awareness work at community level to challenge stigma, promote positive help-seeking and improve men's health literacy. <u>Workforce and Community Training:</u> - Support delivery of new national e-learning modules on men's health for professionals.
Tackling Health Challenges and Conditions	<u>Targeted Prevention in Deprived Areas:</u> - Support integrated local efforts on major male killers through prevention, early detection and joined up care. - Utilise and encourage the use of funding opportunities such as the Pride in Place Impact fund

Local insights – Case Study – where has taking Men's perspective added to our understanding locally

- Since December 2025, Developing Health and Independence (DHI), commissioned provider of SouthGlos drug and alcohol services, in partnership with creative nature, delivered two men-only, nature-based programmes:
 - A structured 5-week course focusing on mental health, suicide prevention and identity
 - Informal sessions focussed on connection, mindfulness and time outdoors
- Insights gathered from those taking part and running sessions were that while men were harder to engage;
 - Men were more open about mental health in male-only, non-clinical sessions
 - Outdoor environments were perceived as reducing stigma and enabling peer connection
 - Informal, activity-based settings felt more effective than traditional support offers
 - Trusted promotion route (especially social media and word of mouth) increase engagement

Takeaway: Designing services around how men engage - through male-focused, non-clinical, activity-based and peer-supported approaches, promoted via trusted informal channels - can significantly improve access and engagement.

Local Delivery: Smokefree support (targeted outreach and engagement)

Smokefree support (targeted outreach and engagement)



- **Proactive outreach model** targeting men in **routine/manual and industrial sectors**
- Delivery through:
 - workplace visits (500+ businesses)
 - industrial estates and community settings
 - **direct, in-person engagement**
- Approach designed to:
 - improve access for groups with **higher smoking prevalence (men)**
 - build **trust through face-to-face contact**
- **Partnership working** with Armed Forces and veterans:
 - signposting to specialist support (e.g. SSAFA, Royal British Legion)
- **Community-based promotion:**
 - football partnerships (e.g. Yate Town FC)
 - local events and sports settings to reach men in **trusted environments**
- Model demonstrates:
 - value of **taking services to where men are**
- importance of **non-clinical, familiar settings for engagement**

Local Delivery: Supporting men and fathers (Family Support Services)

- Targeted support for **fathers and male caregivers** through Families Plus
- Dedicated **Dad's Matter worker** (via Home-Start UK)
- [Children's Partnership audit report](#) featuring priority theme of working with fathers and [Including Fathers Self Assessment tool](#)
- Delivery through:
 - **drop-in support** at Patchway Family Hub
 - accessible, welcoming environments for men
- Recognises:
 - the role of fathers in **family wellbeing**
 - that men are often **underrepresented in family support services**
- Demonstrates:
 - importance of **actively designing services to include men**
 - value of **male-focused roles and outreach**

Local Delivery: **Healthy Weight programme (targeting high-risk groups)**



INSPIRING
ACTIVE
LIFESTYLES

- Programme includes **targeted delivery to high-risk populations**
- Men identified as a **priority group within delivery model**
- At least **20% of provision focused on higher-risk groups**
- Aligns with:
 - reducing inequalities
 - improving long-term health outcomes
- Demonstrates:
 - how **mainstream services can embed a men's health lens**
 - importance of **proportionate universalism**

A call to action – what more could we be doing?

Improving men's health is a whole-system responsibility. Small changes in how services are designed, promoted and delivered can significantly improve engagement and outcomes.

In Services

- Review uptake, access and outcomes **by sex and deprivation**
- Identify where men are **less likely to access, complete or benefit**
- Test **male-friendly access routes** including digital, self-referral and evening options
- Use **practical, strengths-based language** that reduces stigma
- Ask: “**Would men in our target population naturally access this service?**”

In Communities & Workplaces

- Promote support through **sports clubs, community venues and faith settings**
- Use **workplaces, industrial estates and local employers** as prevention settings
- Support campaigns in places men **already trust and use**
- Strengthen offers for **fathers, veterans, men living alone, and manual workers**
- Use local events and community champions to **normalise help-seeking**

In Leadership & Decision Making

- Champion men's health as a **health inequalities and prevention priority**
- Request **male-specific data** in performance and needs assessments
- Ensure men's perspectives are reflected in **family support, mental health, substance use, employment and housing**
- Use **HWB, locality partnerships and scrutiny spaces** to maintain focus
- Embed men's health into **routine commissioning and service redesign**

Further Information

Further Support Across South Gloucestershire

Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing

A wide range of support is available across South Gloucestershire to promote mental health and emotional wellbeing. Services such as South Gloucestershire Talking Therapies provide free NHS support for common conditions including anxiety, depression and stress, while the Early Intervention in Psychosis Team offers specialist care for individuals experiencing a first episode of psychosis. In addition to statutory provision, a variety of local, community and private providers including Hush Therapy, Ripples Wellbeing and Third Wave Psychologist offer counselling, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), coaching and wider wellbeing support. Despite this breadth of provision, men are less likely to access mental health services, even though need remains high, particularly in relation to mental health outcomes and suicide risk.

Primary Care Services

Primary care services continue to provide a central role in supporting men's health across the life course. GP-led services across South Gloucestershire offer access to general health support, screening and onward referrals. This includes NHS Health Checks. NHS Health Checks for adults aged 40–74 play a key role in prevention, supporting early identification of cardiovascular disease, stroke and diabetes conditions that disproportionately affect men.

Pharmacies and other primary care providers also offer accessible advice and support on a range of men's health issues, including sexual health and lifestyle factors, recognising the importance of addressing both physical and mental health needs holistically.

Further Support Across South Gloucestershire

Substance Misuse

Support is available to help individuals address the impact that substances may be having on their wellbeing. The locally commissioned service is Developing Health & Independence, alongside wider regional inclusion of GPs, and pharmacies who offer a range of support, through psychosocial and medication pathways when necessary. These services provide support for alcohol reduction, drug treatment and recovery pathways, and often engage a high proportion of male participants.

Broader system support

Alongside these services, a broader system of support exists through partnership working and community provision. This includes support for Armed Forces personnel and veterans, with signposting to specialist organisations such as SSAFA and the Royal British Legion. Community, voluntary and faith groups also play an important role in supporting men through initiatives that address social isolation, encourage physical activity and provide peer support opportunities.

Overview

Overall, there is a strong foundation of support already in place across South Gloucestershire. However, this provision is often not specifically branded or designed for men, is spread across multiple services and sectors, and relies heavily on individuals engaging with services rather than being supported through clearly defined, targeted pathways.

Further information/evidence sources

National data and benchmarking

- OHID Fingertips – best source for local authority benchmarking on life expectancy, healthy life expectancy, suicide, smoking, alcohol, NHS Health Checks, CVD, cancer, and wider determinants. Particularly useful for sex-disaggregated local authority comparisons and trend data. <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/>
- Office for National Statistics (ONS) – strongest source for life expectancy, mortality, census, labour market, wellbeing and population trend data by sex, age and deprivation. Particularly useful for male life expectancy and healthy life expectancy trend charts. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/>
- NHS England data and inequalities dashboards – useful for pathway metrics including screening, primary care access, mental health, neighbourhood health and unwarranted variation. <https://www.england.nhs.uk/>

National policy and evidence synthesis

- The King's Fund – excellent strategic commentary on health inequalities, service redesign, prevention, neighbourhood health and implementation of the men's health strategy. <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/insight-and-analysis/blogs/englands-first-mens-health-strategy>
- NICE guidance – best source for evidence-based interventions relevant to men's health themes including smoking, CVD prevention, suicide prevention, mental health and alcohol harm. <https://www.nice.org.uk/>
- [White working-class boys still at the bottom of the class, says race report chief - The Centre for ...](#)

Further information/evidence sources

Specialist men's health evidence and insight

- Men's Health Forum – leading specialist UK charity source for men's health evidence, policy briefings, lived experience insight, workplace health and practical engagement approaches. Particularly strong for how to design services men are more likely to use. <https://www.menshealthforum.org.uk/>
- Healthwatch research on men's experiences – strong qualitative insight on barriers to help-seeking, NHS Health Check uptake, stigma and prevention awareness. <https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/report/2025-11-05/mens-health-how-improve-health-outcomes-knowledge-and-behaviours>
- Men's Health Academic Network / University-based research groups – strong for peer-reviewed evidence on help-seeking, masculinities, service design and intervention effectiveness.

Local government and system delivery

- Local Government Association (LGA) – strong source for prevention, wider determinants, place-based working and case studies from councils. Useful for connecting men's health to housing, employment, community safety and family support. [Men's health: The lives of men in our communities | Local Government Association](#)
- JSNA / local Population Health Intelligence Portal – your most important local intelligence source for translating national evidence into South Gloucestershire-specific priorities and inequalities analysis. [Population Health Intelligence Portal | BETA - South Gloucestershire Council](#)

Thank you

For any feedback or spotlight topic requests please contact:
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