

# Safer Southwark Partnership

Alcohol related issues for Southwark  
residents aged 65 and older

Southwark Council, the police and partners in the  
community are working hard to keep you safe.

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# 1.0 Key findings and conclusions

## 1.1 Overview of problem

Dr Tony Rao has identified an 109% increase in alcohol related hospital admissions in the over 65 age group between 2002/03 and 2011/12. Southwark also displays a much higher proportion of this age group with mental and behavioural problems than the London average. With this in mind, this report has been commissioned by the alcohol steering group, in order to ascertain the true scope of the problem in the borough

## 1.2 Objectives

This profile seeks to provide an overview of crime and health issues related to the 65+ age group in Southwark, particularly where alcohol is involved. The following will be considered:

- Have levels of crime/disorder or health related data increased over the past five years, and if so, is this at a similar rate as the alcohol related hospital admissions.
- Are there any identified social issues characteristic of older drinkers?

## 1.3 Methodology

Information contained within this report has been taken from 2007/08 where possible to 2012/13 from the following sources:

- Police CRIS (Crime Reporting Information System) database. This was a search of all offences where either the victim or suspect was aged over 65 and had been drinking.
- Demographics of the borough were obtained from [www.neighbourhood-statistics.gov.uk](http://www.neighbourhood-statistics.gov.uk) with projections obtained from the GLA.
- Two reports were run on London Ambulance Service data, one for all calls, and the second for alcohol related calls.
- NDTMS data (patients in treatment) were obtained from Southwark DAAT, and looked at those patients for whom alcohol was their primary drug.
- Finally, A&E data for 2011/12 and 2012/13 was obtained, cleaned and interrogated for those attendances that were alcohol related, and in the 65+ age group.

## 1.4 Key findings

- 7.7% of Southwark's population is aged over 65, a much lower proportion than other London boroughs.
- Very few victims aged 65+ of alcohol related crime, and they also represented an exceptionally small proportion of those victims who had been drinking.
- Where the victim had been drinking, most offences were domestic in nature. In almost all incidents the suspect was known to the victim, most often a member of their immediate family.
- The number of suspects decreased considerably between 2007/08 and 2012/13, but the proportion of those aged 65+ remained at a similar rate.
- There were two key themes regarding crime and those suspects who had been drinking alcohol and were aged over 65, the first being domestic abuse, and the second being racial/homophobic abuse.
- There was an overall increase of 45% in alcohol related ambulance calls across Southwark, with the proportion of those to the over 65's remaining at a constant level.
- Call outs to those aged 65+ increased by 20.4% over the last five years, with alcohol related calls to this age group increasing by 39.2%.
- 1.6% of those in treatment for alcohol were aged 65+ (the national average is 3%).
- Overall, the number of people in alcohol treatment has steadily increased over time, whereas the proportion of those that are over 65 (albeit low) remained at a fairly steady level, following an increase in 2010/11.
- There was a 25.5% increase in attendance in A&E at Kings College Hospital by those aged 65+ between 2010/11 and 2012/13. Proportions of those attendances that are alcohol related did not significantly change for any age group.

## **1.5 Conclusions**

It is clear from the various sources of information that the 65+ age group forms a small but significant proportion of all alcohol related issues, with defined social problems within it.

The police data shows very low numbers of either suspects or victims. The principal issues were either domestic violence or racial/homophobic abuse, both themes that were not evident in the health data scanning.

The prevalence of alcohol has increased across all health datasets, and the level of those aged 65+ has at least remained a constant, and in some cases increases, certainly in terms of patients in treatment and alcohol related ambulance calls. It can be surmised that the increased social acceptance of drinking amongst young people of present mean that there may well be an increased 'cohort' of older drinkers in years to come.

If the A&E datasets from both St Thomas's and Kings College Hospitals are to be used to drive change within the SSP, it is imperative that certain issues are addressed, these being:

Location, both in terms of type (i.e. home, public house, nightclub, street etc) as well as specifics, i.e. the name of the venue or street.

Specific fields ought to be added for alcohol, domestic violence and drugs. By using a drop down menu for these fields, this would enable consistent and meaningful analysis to take place.

## 2.0 Introduction

Alcohol use / abuse by the elderly is not a topic which has been extensively explored in Southwark previously, with efforts concentrated upon either young people, or with the problems associated with alcohol in the night time economy.

Research of literature available on the internet indicates that this is a national trend, with few publications available, certainly from the United Kingdom. One notable exception is the Royal College of Psychiatrists, who estimate that though older people tend to drink less alcohol than young people, 1 in 5 older men and 1 in 10 older women are drinking enough to harm themselves. These figures have increased by 40% in men, and 100% in women over the past 20 years.

Last year, MP's called for a review into the safe alcohol limits for older people. In January 2012, Age UK stated that 'figures suggest that the number of people over the age of 65 being treated for drinking problems has soared over the last decade, with older people more likely to drink every day than those in other age groups'.

They focussed on London, stating that in 'London alone, there has been a 163% increase in alcohol-related hospital admissions among the over-65s'. Only the North East has a higher rate of such admissions. Apparently, the data suggested that alcohol consumption fell slightly amongst people in other age groups.

Data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) show that over a tenth (13%) of people who are 45 and older have a drink virtually every day. That compares with 4% of those who are younger.

The statistics reveal that 22% of men who are at least 65 consume alcohol practically daily, while only 3% of 16 to 24-year-old males gave the same answer.

Only 1% of women aged 16-24 said they drink almost daily, but that figure rises to 12% for those aged 65 and over.

### 2.1 Southwark's demographics

At the time of the 2011 census, Southwark had 22,329 people aged 65 and over living within its bounds, 7.7% of its total population. This proportion is much lower than most other London boroughs (the 5<sup>th</sup> lowest). When considering purely the number, Southwark ranked 24<sup>th</sup> out of 33.

The most recent population projection estimates, published by the GLA in June 2013 show that by 2020, the amount of people aged 65 and over will have increased by 17%, to 26,200. This is in sync with the projected increase for London (17.7%). Based upon these projections, in 2020, Southwark will increase 6 places, to 18<sup>th</sup> in London.

## 3.0 Alcohol related crime

In order to effectively examine crime trends concerning those aged 65+ which were alcohol related, the data is divided into two sections, those where an elderly person was the victim of crime, and secondly where an elderly person was the suspect for an offence. These two sections will then be subdivided, (using conventional analytical techniques) into the VOLT model (Victim, Offender, Location, Time), with the addition of a statistical introduction.

### 3.1 Offences where the victim was aged over 65

#### Statistics

**Table 1: Victims of alcohol related crime in Southwark**

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
All victims (where age estimated)	33,024	33,227	35,544	35,957	35,193	33,291
% 65+	3.9%	4%	3.6%	3.9%	3.5%	3.6%
% alcohol related	1.1%	1.2%	2%	1.9%	2.1%	1.9%
% alcohol related (65+)	0.009%	0.01%	0.03%	0.04%	0.05%	0.04%
% 65+ of all alcohol	0.8%	1%	1.5%	1.9%	2.2%	1.9%

- The number of victims has steadily decreased over time, however, the proportion of those aged 65 and older has remained at a constant rate.
- From 2008/09 there was a borough wide increase in the proportion of victims that had consumed alcohol, however, from 2010/11, the proportion of those victims that were aged 65 and older also significantly increased.

#### The most recent picture

When considering offences concerning victims aged 65+ who have been drinking alcohol, numbers remained at a consistent (low) level since 2009/10, with 2012/13 seeing 12 victims.

#### Offence types

Ten of the twelve incidents were domestic in nature - though no violence was committed, all involved arguments fuelled by alcohol, whereby one party (or in some instances a neighbour) called the police. The other two were acquisitive, one the burglary of a residential care home, and the other the snatch of a mobile phone as an elderly gentleman waited at a bus stop.

#### Victim

7 males and 5 female victims, aged from 66 to 90. 7 were derived from African Caribbean backgrounds, four from white European, and one from dark European. There were no repeat victims. All but one lived in Southwark, with most occurring inside the victims own home.

#### Offender

In ten cases the offender was known to the victim, and a member of their immediate family, most often their partner, though a number also involved their children. In almost all offences all parties had been heavily drinking.

#### Location

In most offences the incident took place within the family home. There were no repeat blocks/roads. The snatch took place at a bus stop outside London Bridge train station, a location common for such offences.

#### Time

There are few conclusions to be drawn from the temporal data. There were no peak months or days, and offending typically took place in the morning, between 0200 and 1200.

## 3.2 Offences where the suspect was aged over 65

### Statistics

**Table 2: Suspects for alcohol related crime in Southwark**

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
All suspects (where age estimated)	25,458	26,445	26,093	25,621	22,622	20,131
% 65+	0.4%	0.4%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%
% alcohol related	6.8%	6.8%	7.1%	6.8%	6.6%	5.7%
% alcohol related (65+)	0.05%	0.03%	0.06%	0.05%	0.04%	0.09%
% 65+ of all alcohol	0.8%	0.4%	0.9%	0.7%	0.7%	1.6%

- The number of suspects has decreased at a faster rate than the victims, yet again, the proportion of those aged 65 and older has remained at a constant rate.
- Alcohol related offending has remained at a similar level for the most part (and indeed decreased when comparing the most recent two periods), however levels involving those suspects aged 65 and older increased.

### The most recent picture

Levels of suspects aged 65+ are still extremely low (just 21 in 2012/13). This is the highest that it has been since 2007/08, and over double the figure from 2011/12. Closer examination has shown that there are a similar number of incidents as previous years - but that suspects have been charged with more than one offence - which has artificially increased the figures.

### Offence types

Offences varied in nature, from sexual assault to harassment; however, there were two key themes, these being:

**Domestic violence** - Seven of the twenty one incidents were domestic in nature with the most common crime types being assault with injury and common assault, though there were also two offences of criminal damage.

**Racial / Homophobic abuse** - Ten incidents involved an element of either racist or homophobic abuse. This was usually directed against people in authority (police or hostel staff) or against local shopkeepers. Worryingly, in two incidents, the shopkeeper stated that this was a regular problem, and that this was the first time they had called police (having been racially abused on a weekly basis for six months).

### Victim

The victims of these offences are typically police officers, and shopkeepers/bar staff/bus drivers of non-white ethnicities.

### Offender

Almost all domestic offences involved a male suspect with a female partner. In most of these cases it was solely the suspect who had been drinking. Generally, offenders were white males, aged between 65 and 68, though there was also one prolific dark European offender, who regularly racially abused shop staff. There were seven repeat offenders, responsible for seventeen offences.

### Location

Other than the domestic assaults, which occurred inside the victims' homes, offences tended to take place inside residential hostels or local shops, most notably in Dulwich.

### Time

Similarly to the victims' data, there is not enough evidence to give conclusive peak times. However, there appears to be a peak between Thursday and Sunday, from 1700 to 2300.

## 4.0 Alcohol related health issues

The Royal College of Psychiatrists' state that there are differences between the way in which alcohol affects older people and younger people. As people get older, they can lose muscle, gain fat and their bodies break down alcohol more slowly. This means that they become more sensitive to the effects of alcohol, reacting more slowly, and losing their sense of balance more quickly. This means that safe drinking levels are probably lower for older people than young ones.

Particular risks to drinking for older people are:

- health problems can make people more susceptible to alcohol
- balance gets worse with age - even a small amount of alcohol can make anybody more unsteady and more likely to fall.
- Alcohol can add to the effect of some medications, and reduce the effect of others.

Alcohol can damage people's physical and mental health. Not everyone who drinks too much develops health problems but as the amount of alcohol consumed increases, so does the likelihood of having such problems.

Their research showed that 'about a third of older people with drinking problems (mainly women) develop them for the first time in later life. Bereavement, physical ill-health, difficulty getting around and social isolation can lead to boredom and depression. Physical illness may be painful and it can be tempting to use alcohol to make these difficulties more bearable. It may then become part of our daily routine and difficult to give up. There may be less pressure to give up drinking than for a younger person, fewer family responsibilities, and no pressure to go to work each day.'

There are various health datasets available for use in this study, though not all of them give the required level of detail. The following datasets are used on the following pages:

- London Ambulance Service (both alcohol related, and all calls)
- Alcohol related hospital admissions
- Mental health
- Patients in treatment
- A&E data (Kings College Hospital only)



## 4.1 London Ambulance Service data

Overall, the amount of ambulance pick ups increased by 8.6% over the past five years (using 2007/08 as a baseline). For the same period, alcohol related ambulance pick ups increased by 45%, which appears to be fairly disproportionate.

Call outs to those aged over 65 increased by 20.4% over the 5 years, with alcohol related calls to this age group increasing by 39.2%

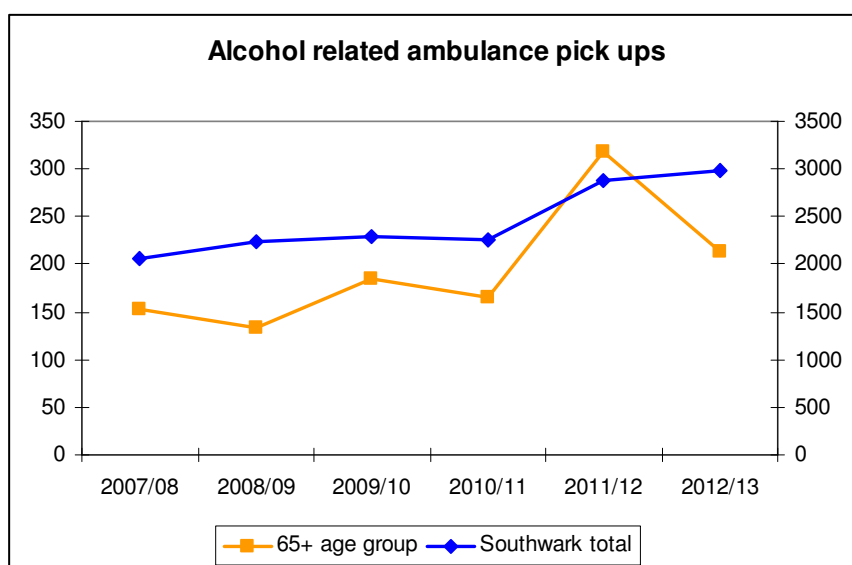
Thus it can be seen that when looking at a five year trend for alcohol related ambulance pick ups, alcohol related calls, calls to those aged 65+ and alcohol related calls to those aged 65+ increased at a disproportionately higher level than the overall total implied, though it must be remembered that the percentage changes will be higher, as the numbers are smaller, however, these findings are statistically significant.

The chart below shows the total ambulance pick ups in Southwark per financial year, and highlights both the amount that are alcohol related, and also those that are concerned with the 65+ age group.

**Table 3: Ambulance pick ups in Southwark**

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
No Ambulance pick ups	39,886	40,824	42,081	43,537	42,888	43,322
Proportion of all ambulance pick ups that were alcohol related	5.5%	5.9%	5.8%	5.6%	6.7%	7.4%
Proportion of all ambulance pick ups to 65+ age group	26.5%	26.3%	26.8%	26.6%	32.1%	28.7%
Proportion of all alcohol related pick ups to 65+ age group	7.4%	6%	8%	7.4%	11.1%	7.4%

Though the amount of ambulance pick ups increased over time, the proportions of those calls which were to the 65+ age group, and also alcohol related calls to this age group appear to have remained at a fairly constant level. However, from 2010/11, the proportion of pick ups that are alcohol related has increased by almost 2%.

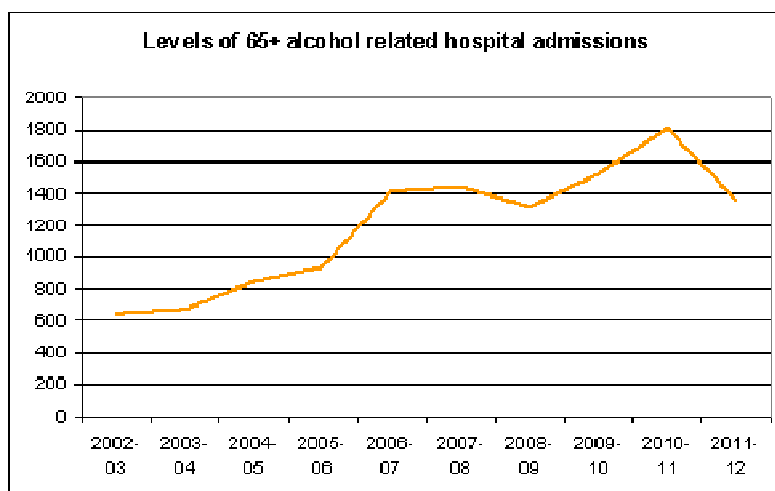


The five year trend for alcohol related ambulance pick ups across Southwark was an increase of 45%.

When considering those aged 65+, the long term trend showed a slightly smaller increase, of 39.2%.

Increases were particularly noted from the beginning of 2010/11, for both datasets.

## 4.2 Alcohol related hospital admissions

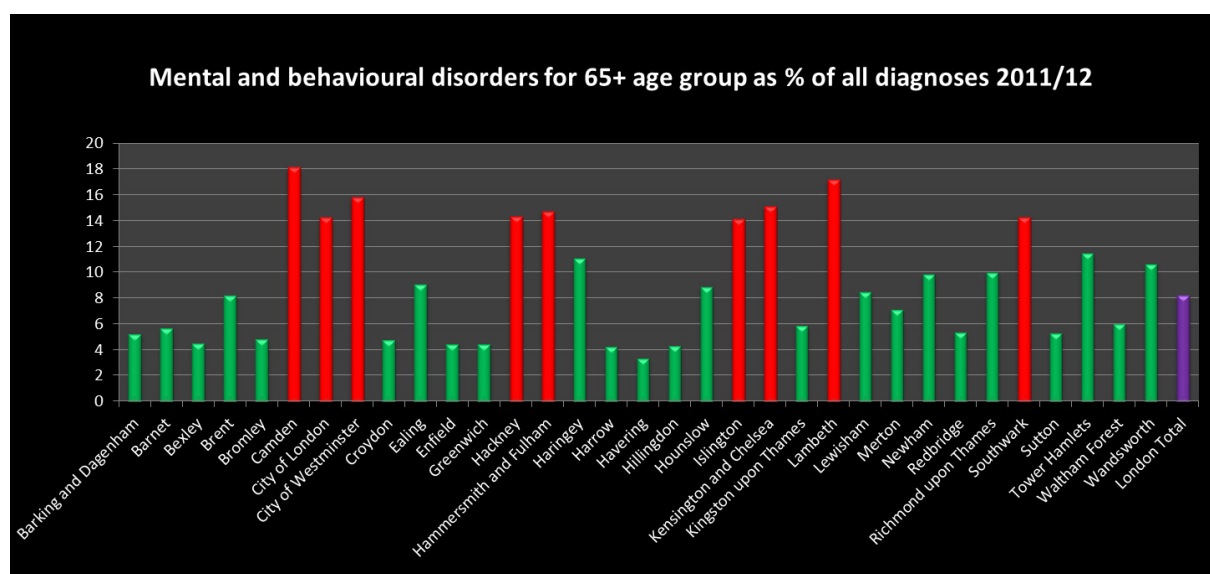


109% increase in alcohol related admissions to hospital in the 65+ age group between FY 2002/03 and FY 2011/12.

Though this is indubitably an extremely large percentage increase, the overall London percentage change in this period was 189%.

The percentage change in Southwark was the third lowest in London, with only Lambeth and Barking and Dagenham being lower.

## 4.3 Mental Health



The above graph was provided by Dr Tony Rao, and concerns the number of mental and behavioural disorders in the 65+ age group as a proportion of all diagnoses. Southwark, as well as eight other boroughs displays a much higher proportion than the London average, with 14% of all diagnoses being for mental and behavioural disorders.

In summary, it would appear that Southwark is doing something positive to prevent alcohol related admissions in older people but for those who are admitted, there is a higher proportion of older people with mental and behavioural problems (the vast majority of these will probably be alcohol dependence, alcohol withdrawal and alcohol related brain injury).

## 4.4 Patients in treatment

Demographics data for those in alcohol treatment in England in 2011/12 from the most recent document published by the National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse showed that 70% of all people in treatment were concentrated in the 30 to 54 age group. Just 16% were aged 18-29 and 14% aged 55 and over (3% were 65 and over). Men accounted for nearly two thirds (64%) of the treatment population during the year (women 36%). By far the biggest ethnic group was white British (88%). All other groups accounted for 2% or less.

NDTMS data, sourced from the DAAT showed that in 2011/12 there were 434 people in treatment in Southwark (where alcohol was their primary drug).

**Table 4: NDTMS data for Southwark**

	2011/12		2012/13
Age range	England average	Southwark average	Southwark average
Under 18		2.5%	0.9%
18 to 29	16%	10.4%	12.6%
30 to 54	70%	73.7%	74.2%
55+	14%	13.4%	12.2%
65+	3%	1.6%	1.6%

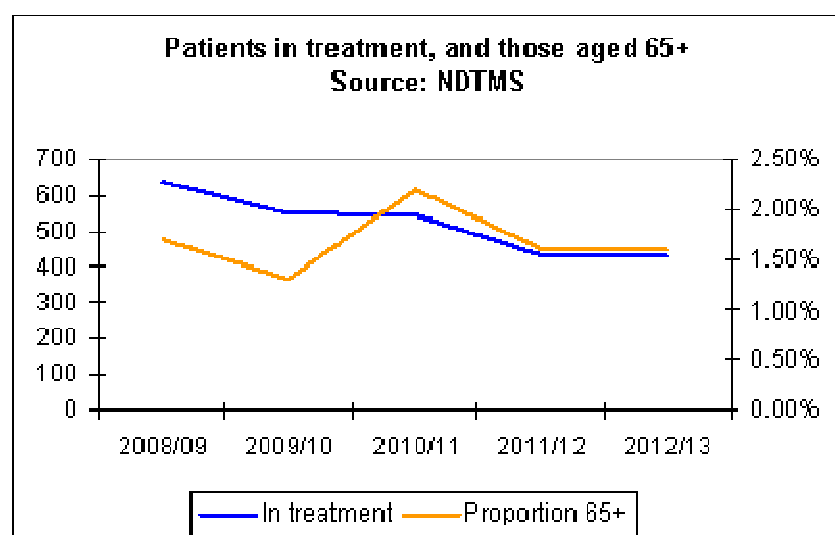
It can be seen that Southwark generally follows the national pattern, though there are fewer people in the 65+ age group than national averages in both 2011/12 and 2012/13.

In terms of gender, Southwark fitted the national model almost exactly; however, when considering ethnicity, the figures were vastly different (likely reflecting the boroughs ethnic diversity).

**Table 5: Ethnicity of those in treatment in Southwark**

Ethnicity	2011/12	2012/13
Asian	1.8%	2.3%
Black	10.8%	10.1%
Chinese	0.0%	0.5%
Mixed	3.5%	5.1%
Not stated	1.6%	1.6%
Other	4.1%	4.8%
White Other	11.5%	9.9%
White British	59.2%	57.9%
White Irish	7.4%	7.8%

National figures showed that 88% of those in treatment were white British. The table to the left indicates that this is not the case in Southwark, in either 2011/12 or 2012/13, with 59.2% and 57.9% respectively. Other ethnic groups that were over represented (against the national figures) were Black, White Other and White Irish.



The graph shows that the number of people in treatment for alcohol has steadily reduced over time, whereas the proportion of these people that are over 65 (albeit low) remains at a fairly steady level, following an increase in 2010/11.

## 4.5 A&E data

As St Thomas's Hospital do not record alcohol use, this section concentrates upon admissions to Kings College Hospital A&E. Though there are data integrity issues (which will be discussed in the conclusion), the data has been extracted for the period April 2010 to March 2013.

- Overall, attendances at Kings College Hospital decreased by 16.2% (578) between 2010/11 and 2012/13.
- There was no change when comparing the level of attendances that were alcohol related. In 2010/11 9.4% of admissions were alcohol related, by 2012/13 that had increased to 11.5%. As previously stated, this is likely to be a large underestimate.

The table below breaks attendances at KCH down by year and age group.

<b>Table 6: Proportion of attendances at KCH for assault, by age range</b>				
<b>Age Range</b>	<b>2010/11</b>	<b>2011/12</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>% change (10/11 to 12/13)</b>
9 and younger	50	50	55	10.0
10 - 17	536	382	315	-41.2
18 - 24	842	875	687	-18.4
25 - 30	621	562	583	-6.1
31 - 39	650	631	585	-10.0
40 - 65	814	776	696	-14.5
Over 65	55	64	69	25.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>3568</b>	<b>3340</b>	<b>2990</b>	<b>16.2</b>

As above, it is evident that overall, there was a 16.2% reduction in the amount of attendances at A&E in this period.

Whilst those aged 65+ are by no means the 'peak' age group for attendances, they (and the under 9's) are the only group to have increased between 2010/11 and 2012/13, by 25.5%.

When considering purely alcohol related attendances, though there were slight increases in the 18-25 age group (10 additional attendances), no single group increased significantly.

There were extremely low numbers of those aged 65+ who attended A&E for alcohol related assaults. The qualitative section below therefore details all 65+ admissions, referencing those that were alcohol related where appropriate.

- A third of patients aged over 65 were female, yet this significantly decreased (to just over 1%) when considering those that were alcohol related.
- There were no specific patterns concerning day/time of admission for those aged 65+, though an overall trend showed a large spike in attendances between 3 and 6am.
- In 2012/13, 38 people were diagnosed with either alcohol abuse or alcohol dependence. None were aged over 65, with the peak range being from 40 to 65 (mostly 40 to 44).
- Older victims tended to be the victims of assault, and not other related offences, such as mugging or robbery. None of those aged 65+ were the victims of domestic violence from a partner, or other member of their extended family.
- None of those patients aged over 65 were under the influence of illicit drugs.
- Kings College determined that 45 patients in 2012/13 had mental health issues, three of which were in the over 65 age group. 76 had a previous medical history of depression, again three of which were aged 65 and above.