

7.5 Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) is a common group of disorders which includes chronic bronchitis and emphysema. About three million people in the UK have COPD and it is estimated that another half-a-million have the condition but have not been diagnosed. People with COPD have difficulties breathing and the most common symptoms are increasing breathlessness when active and a persistent cough with phlegm. The most common cause is smoking, though other, rarer causes include; fumes, dust and genetic disorders¹. Other relevant causes include exposure within the mining and pottery industries. In 2014 there were more than 26,000 deaths in England and Wales attributable to COPD².

COPD mainly affects people over the age of 40 and becomes more common with increasing age. The average age of diagnosis is around 67 years and it is more common in men than women. COPD accounts for more time off work than any other illness; exacerbation of COPD is one of the most common reasons for admission to hospital (1-in-8 admissions are due to COPD). Mortality from COPD is significantly higher in Walsall compared to both regional and national figures.

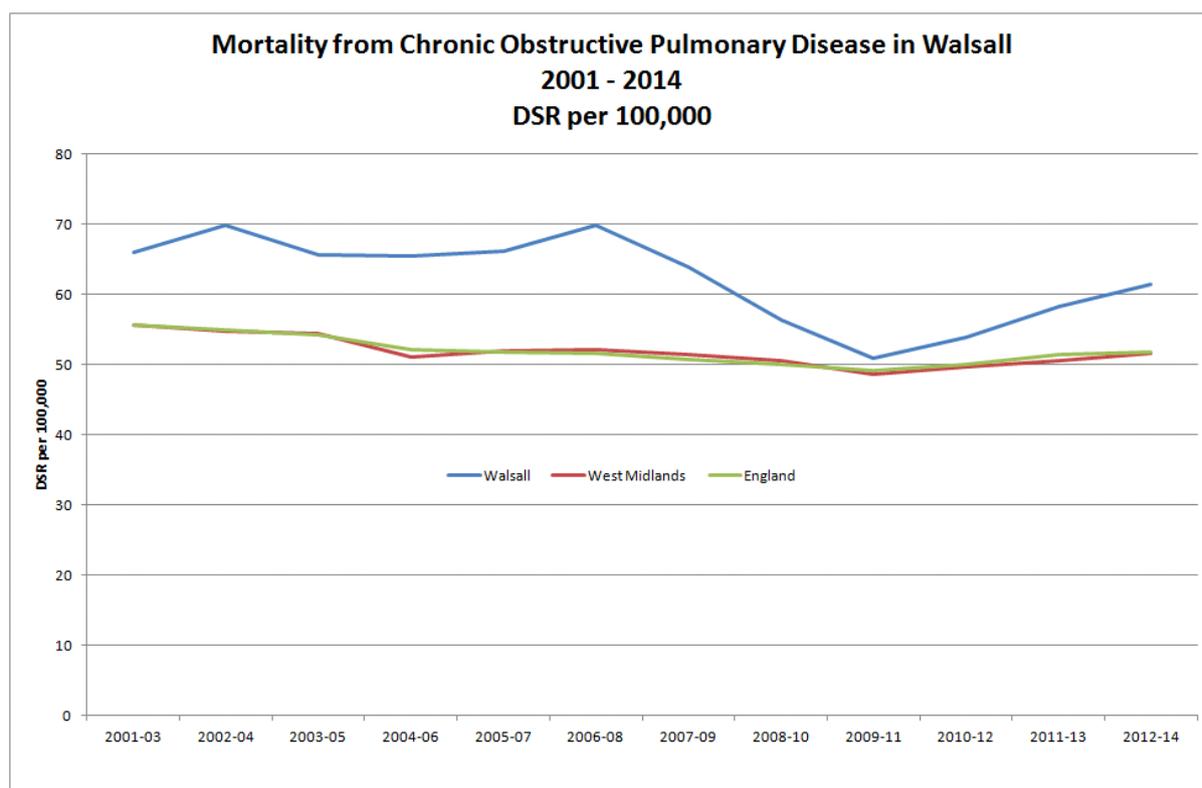


Figure 1 Mortality from COPD 2001-2014 (Source: Public Health England, Public Health Profiles)

According to the 2014-15 data from Quality and Outcomes Framework, the prevalence of COPD in NHS Walsall CCG is 2.46%. This is considerably higher than the England average of 1.8%.

¹ <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/chronic-obstructive-pulmonary-disease/pages/introduction.aspx>

² <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/vsob1/death-reg-sum-tables/2014/rft-deaths-summary-tables-2014.xls> Table 2

Figure two and three identify the trends in mortality by gender in comparison to regional and national rates.

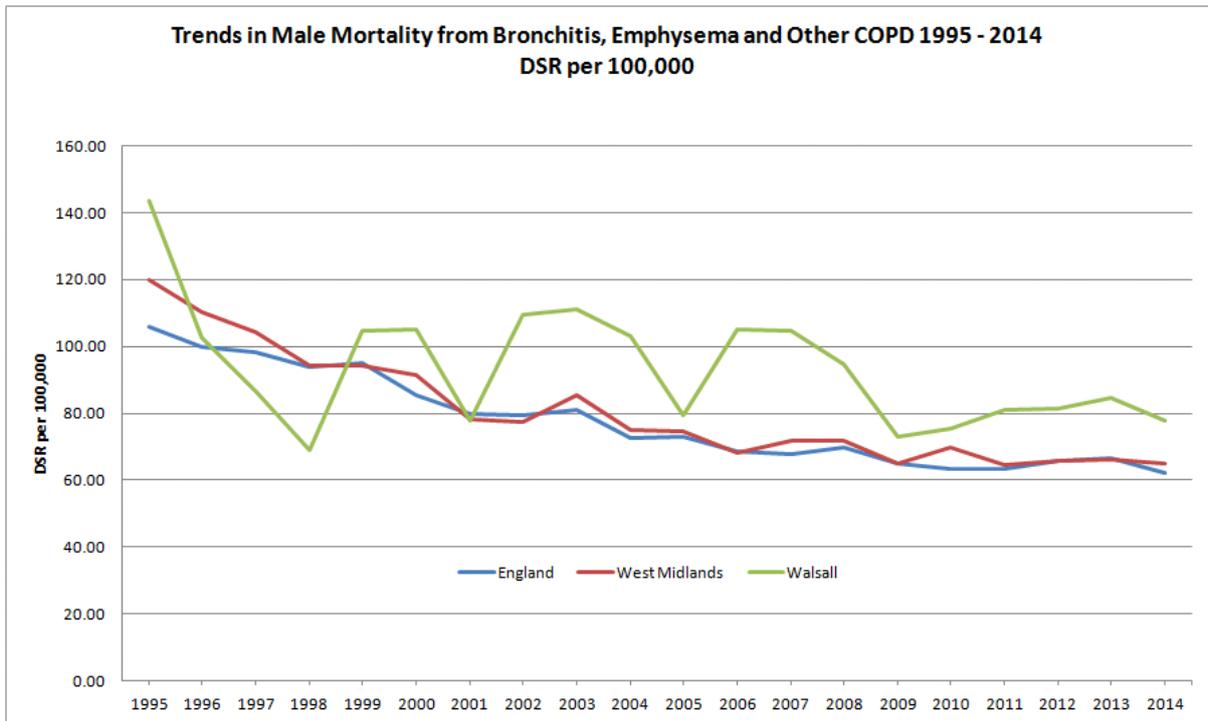


Figure 2 Trends in male mortality from bronchitis, emphysema and other COPD, 1995-2014 (Source: Health and Social Care Information Centre)

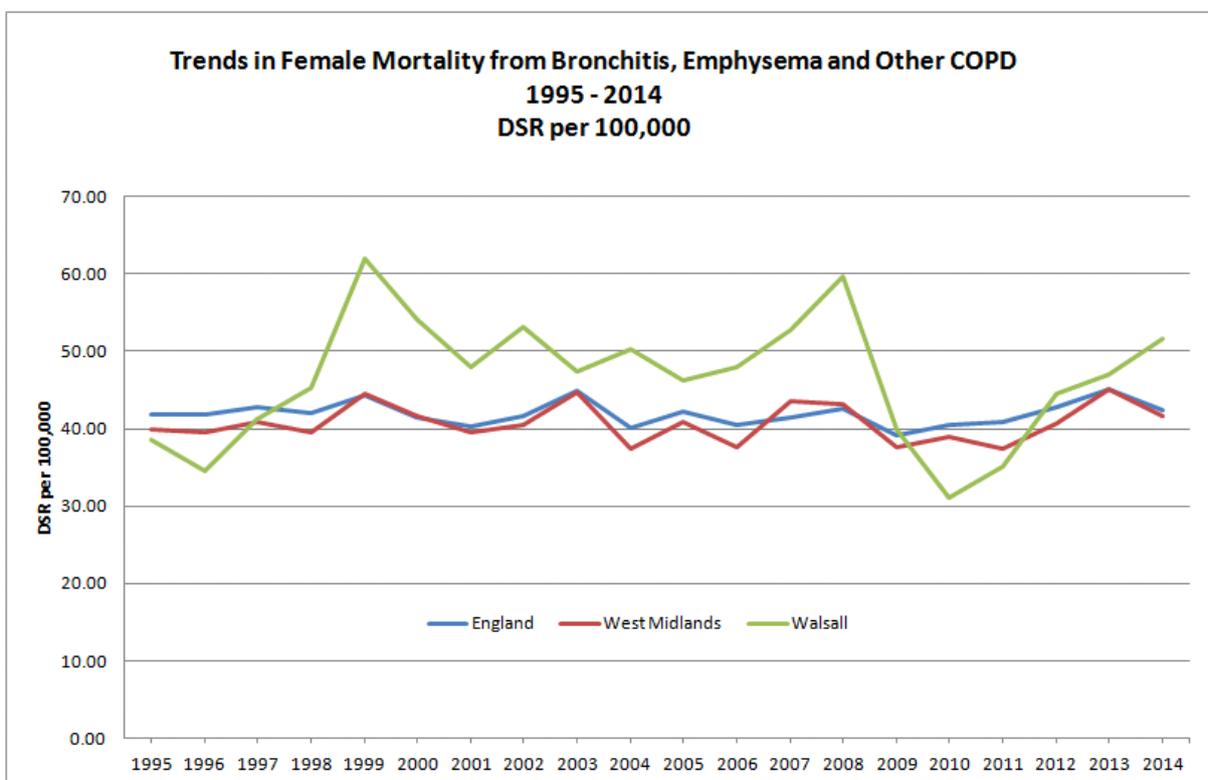


Figure 3 Trends in female mortality from bronchitis, emphysema and other COPD, 1995-2014 (Source: Health and Social Care Information Centre)

Indicators:

Traditionally, male mortality from COPD is higher than females – 77.95 (male) compared to 51.61 (female) in 2014 (rate per 100,000). Rates in Walsall are generally higher than regionally and nationally. Female rates peaked in 2008 (59.58) improved, dropping to 44.57 in 2012 but has since increased again to 51.61 in 2014.

Priorities for action:

The main action to prevent this high morbidity and mortality is to prevent people from smoking and to support those who do smoke to stop. This stops the damage to the lungs which leads to COPD. In addition, robust approaches to managing the condition, monitoring and aggressive treatment of flare-ups will prevent or shorten hospital stays and reduce days lost from work.