

## Vaping Update – South Area Council

### Background:

The evidence shows that while nicotine is the addictive substance in cigarettes, it is safe and effective for smoking cessation. In fact, almost all the harm from smoking comes from the thousands of other chemicals in tobacco smoke, many of which are toxic. Despite this:

- 4 in 10 smokers and ex-smokers incorrectly think nicotine causes most of the smoking-related cancer

Public Health England's, now the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID), [Vaping in England Evidence Review \(2021\)](#) finds that there is strong evidence that nicotine vaping products (e-cigarettes) are effective for smoking cessation and reduction. Combining vaping products (the most popular source of support used by people making a quit attempt in the general population) with stop smoking service support (the most effective type of support) should be an option available to all people who want to quit smoking.

### Are they safe?

E-cigarettes are not risk free but carry a fraction of the risk of smoking and are helping thousands of smokers to quit and stay smokefree.

Leading health and public health organisations including the Royal College of General Practitioners, British Medical Association, Cancer Research UK and the US National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, and OHID, agree, based on available evidence, that although not risk-free, e-cigarettes are far less harmful than smoking.

The British Medical Association state:

*“There is growing consensus that using an e-cigarette is substantially safer than smoking tobacco. Unlike smoking, e-cigarette use does not involve combustion. While the constituents of e-cigarette vapour can vary, and some of the toxicants present in tobacco smoke have been detected in e-cigarette aerosol, they are typically present at levels which are much lower than in tobacco smoke”.*

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) [guideline 92](#) recommends that health and social care professionals provide advice to smokers who are using, or interested in using, an e-cigarette for quitting.

The independent HMG Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COT) [reports](#) that although e-cigarettes pose some health risk, these are expected to be much less than from continuing to smoke. The report also states that risk to bystanders from ambient exposure to vaping is likely to be low.

### Gateway effect:

OHID's [Vaping in England Evidence Review \(2021\)](#) finds no evidence to support the concern that e-cigarettes are a route into smoking among young people. UK surveys show that young people are experimenting with e-cigarettes, but regular use is rare and confined almost entirely to those who already smoke. Meanwhile, smoking rates among young people in the UK continue to decline.

There is also no evidence to support the assertion that vaping is ‘normalising smoking’. In the years when adult and youth vaping in the UK were increasing, the numbers of young people believing that it was ‘not ok’ to smoke was accelerating. OHID and Barnsley Council’s public health team will however monitor the trends in e-cigarette use alongside those in smoking.

### **E-cigarettes in the UK and regulation:**

The UK has some of the strictest regulation for e-cigarettes in the world. Under the [Tobacco and Related Products Regulations 2016](#), e-cigarette products are subject to minimum standards of quality and safety, as well as packaging and labelling requirements to provide consumers with the information they need to make informed choices.

All products must be notified by manufacturers to the UK Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), with detailed information including the listing of all ingredients.

### **Youth vaping and disposable vapes:**

Under the [Nicotine Inhaling Products \(Age of Sale and Proxy Purchasing\) Regulations 2015](#), it is illegal to sell e-cigarette products to anyone under 18 or for adults to buy them on behalf of under-18s. Regulations limit their appeal by nicotine strength, refill bottle and tank sizes limits, labelling requirements and advertising restrictions. OHID and Barnsley Council are committed to ensuring that our regulatory framework continues to protect young people and non-smokers from using e-cigarettes.

OHID monitors closely the national data on vaping among young people in England, alongside those on smoking, and publishes an independent annual update report. The currently available data indicate that among under-18s, while experimentation with e-cigarettes is fairly common, regular use is rare and largely confined to those who are current smokers or have smoked in the past.

Some localities have expressed concerns that the national data do not match their perception of vaping prevalence among young people in their own area. More recently, concerns have been raised by local authority trading standards officers and others including the independent vape trade regarding:

- Increased sales of e-cigarette products to under-18s
- Increased visibility of e-cigarette use by young people
- Increased visibility of litter from disposable vapes where young people gather

Access to and use of new-style disposable e-cigarettes appear to be of greatest concern. These products frequently fail to comply with UK regulation and can be of higher nicotine concentration than is permitted. They are often sold from outlets with little regard for age of sale legislation.

There is universal agreement in the public health, clinical profession, and Government that young people should not start using e-cigarettes and we should be discouraging anyone under 18 from taking up a nicotine habit. E-cigarettes are not recommended for young people, including for quitting smoking.

### **Actions for local areas:**

Local areas should continue with comprehensive action to address the most harmful substance – tobacco – while monitoring and securing compliance with e-cigarette regulations.

- Local authority trading standards to continue enforcement on illicit vapes and underage sales of regulated products
- The public and professionals should be encouraged to report any adverse effects of using e-cigarettes via the MHRA Yellow Card [Yellow Card MHRA](#)

#### **Why services should offer e-cigarettes - E-cigarettes are effective stop smoking aids:**

A major UK clinical trial found e-cigarettes, when combined with face-to-face behavioural support, to be **twice as effective**, and **one fifth of the cost**, for quitting smoking as other nicotine replacement products such as patches or gum. Involving nearly 900 participants, it found that in Local Stop Smoking Services (LSSS), a standard e-cigarette was twice as effective at helping smokers to quit compared with the quitter's choice of combination NRT. Both groups were provided with behavioural support and those in the e-cigarette group had significantly faster reductions in cough and phlegm.

#### **E-cigarettes are a popular method of quitting:**

E-cigarettes are **the most popular stop smoking aid** in England, with an estimated 2.7 to 2.8 million adult users in 2020. Over half (51%) have stopped smoking completely and of the 45% who still smoke, half say that they are vaping in order to stop smoking. The number who have quit smoking and vaping has reached 770,000.

The following are the main findings from nationally representative survey data (STS).

- Using a vaping product is the most popular aid used by people trying to quit smoking. In 2020, 27.2% of people used a vaping product in a quit attempt in the previous 12 months. This compares with 15.5% who used NRT over the counter or on prescription (2.7%), and 4.4% who used varenicline.
- Vaping is positively associated with quitting smoking successfully. In 2017, over 50,000 smokers stopped smoking with a vaping product who would otherwise have carried on smoking.
- Prescription medication and licensing NRT for harm reduction were also positively associated with successfully quitting smoking. This shows how important it is for people who smoke to have access to a wide choice of cessation aids.
- The extensive use of vaping products in quit attempts compared with licensed medication suggests vaping products may reach more people who smoke and so have more impact than NRT and varenicline.
- Stronger and more frequent use of e-cigarettes is more strongly associated with successful quitting of tobacco.

#### **Stop smoking services are seeing positive quit rates when using e-cigarettes:**

The following are the main findings from English stop smoking services data.

- Between April 2019 and March 2020, 221,678 quit dates were set with a stop smoking service and 114,153 (51%) of these led to self-reported quits 4 weeks after the quit date.
- A vaping product was used in 5.2% of quit attempts. This was either using the vaping product alone, at the same time, or following use of a licensed medication (ranging from 15% in the East Midlands to 2.3% in Yorkshire & Humber). In 2019/20, Leicestershire SSS saw

the highest proportion of clients using an e-cig as part of their quit attempt (42.4%). Leicestershire SSS as a whole achieved 68% 4-week success rates last year, placing them in the top decile nationally for successful quit rates.

- Consistent with findings in previous years, the highest quit rates (74%) were seen when the quit attempt involved people using a licensed medicine and a vaping product one after another.
- Quit rates were similar for people using a vaping product and licensed medication at the same time (60.0%), a vaping product alone (59.7%) and varenicline alone (59.4%). The quit rates for single NRT and combination NRT were 50.6% and 47.4% respectively.

Quit rates involving a vaping product were higher than any other method in every region in England. These ranged from 49% in the South West to 78% in Yorkshire and the Humber.

An important limitation of the LSSS data is that it is observational and it is possible that the people using a vaping product alone or in combination with licensed stop smoking medicines may differ in their demographic, clinical and smoking characteristics, from people making a quit attempt with licensed medication only or those who only opt for behavioural support. Studies suggest that LSSS advisors willing to support the use of e-cigarettes for smoking cessation tend to be better trained and more experienced than average. It may also be that quitters willing to use an e-cigarette and their LSSS may be more than usually highly motivated. If this is the case, then the combination of the most experienced advisors and the most motivated of quitters would be expected to achieve greater success and this may explain why those who use e-cigarettes and NRT consecutively rather than concurrently have the highest success rates, signalling a willingness to adapt strategies. Notwithstanding, these factors, LSSS data is remarkably consistent with peer reviewed studies, including a Cochrane review.

### **Resources:**

Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) in collaboration with Sheffield and Barnsley Smokefree, in addition to other LAs across Yorkshire and Humber have developed resources for schools, other young people settings, parents and/ or carers - <https://ash.org.uk/resources/view/ash-brief-for-local-authorities-on-youth-vaping>

The RCGP has published a [position statement on e-cigarettes](#) in partnership with Cancer Research UK, accompanied by a [video](#).

Cancer Research UK's [E-cigarette hub](#) provides information and access to resources for health professionals.

[Stop smoking options: guidance for conversations with patients](#) supports healthcare professionals in their conversations with patients on the different options available for stopping smoking and their effectiveness.

The National Centre for Smoking Cessation and Training (NCSCT) has developed a free [online training module on e-cigarettes](#) for healthcare professionals.

PHE's blog: '[Clearing up some myths around e-cigarettes](#)' provides the evidence in response to some of the more commonly reported inaccuracies and misconceptions about e-cigarettes and vaping.

[PHE Evidence Reviews](#) on e-cigarettes

The Independent British Vape Trade Association (IBVTA) has information on its website for smokers / vapers and professionals [IBVTA](#)