

Report of the Executive Director of Public Health & Communities to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee (OSC) on 23 July 2024

Response to the Recommendations of the Vaping Task & Finish Group

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This report outlines the service's response to the findings and recommendations of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee's Vaping Task and Finish Group (TFG).

2.0 Background

2.1 As part of its work programme for 2023/24 the OSC agreed to undertake a TFG investigation into vaping. Members had become increasingly concerned regarding the numbers of adults and young people vaping in the Borough. This included concerns regarding the health impact on individuals, the vast availability of vapes in shops as well as illicit vapes, the marketing of vapes at young people in terms of bright packing and flavours and the impact on the environment, particularly with the prevalent use of single use vapes.

2.2 Vaping is the use of electronic devices that produce a vapour with or without nicotine and other flavourings, which is then inhaled. Vaping has become particularly popular over recent years and was often used to quit smoking. However, it is increasingly attracting people who have never smoked, especially young people. As the TFG's investigation commenced in Autumn 2023, the national government were at a pivotal point in terms of announcements regarding 'creating a smokefree generation and tackling youth vaping', including launching a consultation on various proposals. Therefore, the group were mindful of this as they undertook their work.

2.3 The TFG sought to better understand the various aspects to this work, in particular the numerous health perspectives, work being undertaken to tackle illicit vapes, as well as hearing from young people. The group made note of aspects of the environmental impact but did not focus on this area given government announcements planning to ban the use of single use vapes. As a result of the investigation, the group have highlighted a number of recommendations in support of further improvement.

2.4 The members of the TFG who undertook this investigation were as follows: Cllrs Will Fielding (TFG Lead Member), Jeff Ennis, Joe Hayward, Abi Moore, Sarah Tattersall, Neil Wright and Co-opted Member Dani Veters, Engagement Officer for Healthwatch Barnsley. The group specifically co-opted Dani due to her expertise and local work with young people including via TransBarnsley and Chilypep as well as been part of regional oral health work.

3.0 Response to the Task & Finish Group Recommendations

3.1 **Recommendation 1: An evaluation is undertaken of the effectiveness of work on having smoke-free sites.**

Service Response: This recommendation is supported.

3.2 Various sites across Barnsley have become voluntary smokefree/vape-free sites under our

'Make Smoking Invisible' campaign. This includes primary schools, play parks etc. An evaluation of these smokefree sites will be completed to determine their effectiveness. The results will then be used to inform the future Make Smoking Invisible work plan.

- 3.3 **Recommendation 2: A session should be undertaken with Barnsley Alliance and Public Health officers to look at the prevalence of vaping, its impact on local schools and young people, and different ways schools are tackling the issue.**

Service Response: This recommendation is supported.

- 3.4 Throughout the investigation, one of the TFG's key concerns is the number of young people who are vaping and the impact this is having on their health and education. Public health is already engaging with local schools via the 'Let's hear your voice survey', our biannual health and lifestyle survey. The data and insight helps us to understand the key health and wellbeing issues of children and young people in Barnsley and how we can work to address any key issues. It can be used to:

- develop a whole setting approach to improve health and wellbeing
- inform policy and procedure
- develop bespoke PSHE and RSE curriculums based on pupil needs
- identify and build key partnerships with wider local services to support your pupils

- 3.5 It will allow us to track a wide range of children and young people through their education. It will also offer detailed trend data on the range of topics.

- 3.6 In addition to this public health officers are currently attending the Barnsley School's Alliance to understand their specific issues around vaping, offering advice and support where needed.

- 3.7 **Recommendation 3: Enforcement activity is carried out as frequently as possible regarding trade in illicit tobacco and vaping products.**

Service Response: This recommendation is supported.

- 3.8 The TFG group had particular concerns regarding the use of illicit products, with these being especially harmful to the local population due to potentially harmful chemicals, increased levels of nicotine, increased capacity of nicotine liquid or dangerous in terms of construction of the devices. Barnsley Council Trading Standards team conduct 'test purchases' in relation to many age restricted products and services including vapes. Enforcement activity is currently focused primarily on businesses suspected of selling illegal tobacco products including vapes to children, but often also involves the seizure of significant quantities of illegal vapes from those premises. Activity from Trading Standards is reported through the Tobacco Control Alliance, quarterly.

- 3.9 **Recommendation 4: The TFG write to MPs to lobby for additional resources for Trading Standards and enforcement activity, particularly given the upcoming new smoking/vaping legislation.**

Service Response: This recommendation has already been actioned.

- 3.10 Throughout the investigation, the TFG group heard of the particular concerns regarding illicit smoking and vaping products and the harm caused by these products. Public health has written to all local MP's lobbying for them to support the new government planned legislation. In addition to this, Council Officers welcome the Elected Members from the TFG also writing

to MPs for support around trading standards and enforcement activity and have already provided assistance in actioning this.

3.11 Recommendation 5: Public Health analyse the findings of the Youth Council research into young people and vaping.

Service Response: This recommendation is supported and is complete.

3.12 The Youth Council and public health conducted research on vaping before the government announced new regulations to ban disposable vapes, limit flavours, and require plain packaging and less advertising. The research was put on hold until the new legislation is passed, so that the Youth Council can update their information and compare it with the data from their 'Let's hear your voice survey'. Public health will meet with the Youth Council again and analyse the results of their original research.

3.13 Recommendation 6: Work should be undertaken to better highlight the impact of vaping on oral health.

Service Response: This recommendation is supported.

3.14 Public health is aware of the limitations of current data/studies in terms of the long-term effects of vaping on health. However, we are mindful that oral health is an area that is not spoken about frequently in terms of vaping, such as the possible role of vapes in the development of tooth decay and gum disease. Public health will work with Oral Health leads and Dentists to better understand the impact of vaping on oral health. We will also provide Dentists with fact and myth resources and information about the harms of vaping to young people. Once we are aware of specific risks around vaping and oral health, public health will look to work with the Oral Health lead and Dentists to develop specific resources and advice.

3.15 Recommendation 7: Detailed evaluation is undertaken of the 'Swap To Stop' scheme pilot.

Service Response: This recommendation is supported.

3.16 The TFG group acknowledged the good performance of the local Stop Smoking Service (SSS) and hope that the pilot Swap to Stop scheme that Yorkshire Smoke Free started on 1st February 2024 helps additional individuals to give up smoking. However, given the prevalence of vapes, public health is keen to ensure that the use of vapes as a nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) does not result in long-term vape users. Yorkshire Smoke Free will be completing an annual evaluation of their Swap to Stop pilot scheme and providing stop smoking commissioners with monthly and quarterly data. This evaluation will support future decisions whether to introduce vaping products alongside NRT as a smoking cessation tool.

3.17 Recommendation 8: Respiratory nurses from BHNFT to be stakeholders on the Tobacco Control Alliance.

Service Response: This recommendation is supported.

3.18 Public health welcomed the knowledge gained from BHNFT's respiratory nurses during the TFG, highlighting the importance of their front-line position in terms of being early identifiers of any trends or impacts of vaping on patients. The nurses had undertaken their own research at the hospital, which could be a useful tool as part of the work of the Tobacco Control Alliance in future. Public health has invited BHNFT's respiratory nurses to all their Tobacco Control Alliances in future and have asked them to prepare a presentation on the impact of vaping

and insight from their hospital role.

3.19 Recommendation 9: The OSC consider Vaping on their work programme in 2 years' time once new legislation is in place.

Service Response: This recommendation is supported.

3.20 Work and policies regarding vaping will change over the coming years due to legislation and ongoing research. Therefore, public health would welcome returning to OSC and giving an update and receiving critical friend challenge of work as it progresses and reflect what progress has been made and at the point in time, what is happening in their local communities after new legislation comes into place and the current action plan for vaping is worked through.

4.0 Future Plans & Challenges

4.1 Officers will continue to ensure that all Council operations and activities are considerate of the needs of all its communities. This includes making sure that information is understandable to all communities, including making information available in easy read formats for those with learning difficulties or where English is an additional language. The SSS will continue to offer flexible appointment times for those with additional needs who may need more time to discuss their concerns and receive support.

4.2 In responding to and actioning the TFG's recommendations, officers will expand communication activity alongside partner agencies. Information will be kept upto date and in-line with further Government announcements in terms of smoking/vaping and advances in research.

5.0 Invited Witnesses

5.1 The following witnesses have been invited to today's meeting to present the report:

- Anna Hartley, Executive Director - Public Health & Communities, Barnsley Council
- Carrie Abbott, Service Director - Public Health & Regulation, Barnsley Council
- Garreth Robinson, Senior Public Health Officer, Barnsley Council
- Councillor Wendy Cain, Cabinet Spokesperson for Public Health & Communities, Barnsley Council

6.0 Possible Areas for Investigation

6.1 This report is presented for information only.

7.0 Background Papers & Useful Links

Overview & Scrutiny Committee's Task & Finish Group report on Vaping:
<https://barnsleymbc.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s114564/Report.pdf>

Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) – Use of vapes amongst adults in Great Britain (2023):
[https://ash.org.uk/uploads/Use-of-e-cigarettes-among-adults-in-Great-Britain-2023.pdf?v=1691058248#:~:text=The%20number%20of%20e%2Dcigarette,see%20Appendix%201%20for%20methodology\).&text=There%20are%20differences%20in%20vaping,of%20those%20classified%20as%20ABC1.](https://ash.org.uk/uploads/Use-of-e-cigarettes-among-adults-in-Great-Britain-2023.pdf?v=1691058248#:~:text=The%20number%20of%20e%2Dcigarette,see%20Appendix%201%20for%20methodology).&text=There%20are%20differences%20in%20vaping,of%20those%20classified%20as%20ABC1.)

Youth Vaping – call for evidence analysis (2023):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/calls-for-evidence/youth-vaping-call-for-evidence/outcome/youth-vaping-call-for-evidence-analysis#overview-of-responses>

Consultation outcome - Creating a smokefree generation and tackling youth vaping: your views (2024):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/creating-a-smokefree-generation-and-tackling-youth-vaping/creating-a-smokefree-generation-and-tackling-youth-vaping-your-views>

8.0 Glossary

ASH	Action on Smoking and Health
BHNFT	Barnsley Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
BMBC	Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
NRT	Nicotine Replacement Therapy
OSC	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
SSS	Stop Smoking Service
TFG	Task and Finish Group

9.0 Officer Contact

Jane Murphy/Anna Marshall, Scrutiny Officers: Scrutiny@barnsley.gov.uk
15 July 2024