Rotherham

Position Paper on Vapes

This position paper is informed by the best current evidence from UK Health Security Agency, Royal College Physicians, Action on Smoking and Health, National Centre Smoking Cessation Training and NICE/NHS guidance. The aim of this statement is to develop an agreed consensus in Rotherham on vapes that all local partners are signed up to. This is to ensure that the public receive clear, evidenced based and consistent advice on vapes.

We acknowledge evidence that:

Vapes are significantly safer than cigarettes and are a valuable harm reduction tool and quitting aid for adults.

- Smoking is the leading cause of premature death, disease, and disability in our communities (1).
- Vaping is significantly less harmful than smoking tobacco and switching completely from smoking to vaping offers significant health benefits.
- When combined with standard behavioural support, nicotine containing vapes are effective smoking cessation and reduction aids (2).
- Nicotine-containing vapes are the most popular quitting aid used by smokers in England (1).
- The long-term implications of vape use is not fully understood. As such, people who have never smoked should be encouraged not to smoke or vape (1).
- Unfortunately, the public are increasingly likely to incorrectly believe that vaping is as harmful as smoking. These misperceptions are particularly common among smokers who do not vape and may prevent them from using vaping products as a stop smoking aid (3).

Young people should be discouraged from vaping.

- In children and adolescents, the consumption of nicotine, including via vapes, potentially has a detrimental impact on brain development (4).

- Although the available evidence does not suggest that trying vaping products leads to regular smoking, there is widespread concern that young people who develop a nicotine addiction through vaping will go on to smoke (4).
- Children exposed to smoking are significantly more likely to take up smoking themselves (5). There is concern that, similarly, exposure to vaping will normalise and increase the uptake of vaping amongst young people.

Vaping amongst pregnant people is safer than tobacco smoking - but is not risk-free.

- Use of vapes as a quit aid in pregnancy has a harm reduction impact for mother and the unborn baby due to the elimination of exposure to the known carcinogenic chemicals present in cigarettes. However, the impact of vaping in pregnancy is poorly understood and licensed nicotine replacement therapy products are the recommended first option to stop smoking during pregnancy (6).

A better balance is needed between minimising promotion of vapes to young people, whilst allowing promotion to adults who smoke.

- Vape manufacturers, including those owned by tobacco companies, have a commercial interest in maximising the widespread use and uptake of vapes.
- Advertising restrictions in England regulate the promotion of vape products on media platforms, including on television, radio, newspapers, and magazines (7).
- There has been an overall increase in young people reporting noticing vape promotions - most prominently marketing on billboards and posters, taxis, buses, and public transport, which are permitted channels in England. Worryingly, young people who have never smoked or vaped notice vape marketing at a consistently higher rate than adults who smoked (8).

We don't have all the answers now, but on balance there is sufficient evidence to take action to improve the health of local people.

- Patterns of use, behaviours, and social norms around vaping are rapidly evolving, including amongst young people and children.
- National and international guidance on the safety and long-term health impacts of vaping continue to change and evolve.

We welcome:

- The Government's ambition to make England smokefree by 2030 and tackle health inequalities in smoking prevalence.
- The proportionate regulation of vapes through the UK Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), under the Tobacco and Related Products (TPR) Regulation.
- Ongoing efforts to develop and approve medically licensed vape products available through NHS prescription.

- The Government's implementation of the "Swap to Stop" scheme which aims to provide 1 million smokers across England with vape starter kits.
- The development and adaptation of national guidance around the safe, effective, and cost-effective use of vapes as a quitting aid.
- The development of national guidance and evidence around how to minimise uptake amongst young people and never-smokers.
- Proposals for legislation requiring plain packaging of vapes to help frame them as a quit aid rather than a product which is appealing to children and non-smokers.
- The development of guidance on how to best support under 18s who smoke, including pregnant smokers, to access vapes legally and safely.
- The increasing concern relating to other nicotine containing products, including but not exclusive to smokeless tobacco (nicotine pouches/snus) and heated tobacco products. We recognise that more research is required to further understand the health impact of other nicotine products alone as well as in relation to smoking tobacco or vaping.

In recognition of the available evidence, we commit to:

1. **Ensure that vaping is effectively integrated into stop smoking services and campaigns across Rotherham, to maximise quit rates and reduce harm caused by tobacco smoking,** including by:
    a) Ensuring that all smoking cessation services (including those available through community, hospitals, antenatal, and mental health services) are aligned with latest guidance from NICE/NHS on vapes.
    b) Ensuring that all smoking cessation services can provide vape starter kits through the "Swap to Stop" scheme.
    c) Providing accurate information and guidance about the safe and effective use vapes as a quit aid alongside information about other methods, so that smokers can make an informed decision about which approach to use.
    d) Offering behavioural support to people who chose to vape as a quit aid.
    e) Ensuring that the value of switching to vapes from tobacco smoking is understood and effectively communicated by non-health professionals as part of the Making Every Contact Count programme.
    f) Minimising inequality in access to effective quit aids including vapes.
    g) Ensuring that all local smoking cessation services offer advice to people who want to reduce or quit vaping.

2. **Minimise the incidence of vaping amongst young people as part of ongoing efforts to create a smokefree generation**, including by:
    a) Scaling-up enforcement of existing laws which prevent retailers from selling vapes or e-liquids under 18s and prevent adults from buying or attempting to buy vapes on behalf of a child ('proxy purchasing').

b) Supporting schools and colleges to implement smokefree and vape free policies.
c) Incorporating messaging about the harms of vaping into local youth-focused anti-smoking campaigns and materials.
d) Ensuring that there is support available to reduce vape use and / or quit for young people who vape.

3. **Restrict public messaging, advertising and promotions relating to vaping to ensure a focus on the value of vapes as a quitting tool, whilst avoiding promoting individual brands, or glamorising vaping amongst non-smokers, especially children and young people.** This will involve:
   a) Remaining vigilant and ensuring that any work relating to vapes is aligned with our ongoing commitment to protect tobacco control activity from the vested interests of the tobacco industry (as set out in WHO FCTC Article 5.3).
   b) Preventing advertising of all commercial vape products on publicly owned or contracted advertising spaces.
   c) Restricting reference to vapes, vape products and vaping on publicly owned sites to public health messages focusing on the value of vaping as a harm reduction tool and quitting aid.

4. **Support employers and organisations who manage outside public spaces to develop and expand Smokefree policies** which de-normalise vaping, whilst ensuring that they are a preferable option for smokers to switch or quit, by:
   a) creating an environment where smoking and vaping are not visible to support de-normalisation of everyday social use.
   b) supporting smokers to stop smoking, such as providing visible signposting to quit services.
   c) responding to the harm reduction and health needs of people living in secure and other restricted settings.
   d) aligning smokefree policies with national smokefree law and policy.

5. **Take measures to minimise the use of potentially unsafe vape products, including by;**
   a) Ensuring that local stop smoking services recommend that service users who wish to use vapes to quit or switch should be offered a vape starter kit through the service in the first instance. Following this service users should be advised to purchase products that are registered with the MHRA and are compliant with the requirements of the TPD. This includes requirements for products to:
      i. Have child resistant and tamper evident packaging.
      ii. Be protected against breakage and leakage and capable of being refilled without leakage.
      iii. Deliver a consistent dose of nicotine under normal conditions.

iv. Include tank and cartridges that are no more than 2ml in volume and contain liquids that have no more than 20mg of nicotine (this must appear on the label).
v. Have packaging which is covered by a health warning that covers at least 30% of packs.
vi. Contain an information leaflet on use of the product and ingredients within the e-liquid.

b) Enforcing trading restrictions preventing the sale of unsafe products
c) Working with local vape retailers to ensure that they offer MHRA-approved products, guidance on safe and effective use of vapes, and referrals into local stop smoking services.
d) Promoting the Yellow Card reporting scheme (which enables consumers and healthcare professionals to report side effects and safety concerns about vapes or refill containers) through local stop smoking services.
e) Helping the public to identify responsible vape shops and retailers.

6. Respond to evolving trends and evidence, including by:

a) Monitoring the trends in vape use amongst young people through local and national surveys.
b) Collecting and reviewing data on trends in vape quit rates and long-term use amongst community service users.
c) Regularly reviewing and updating this policy position as evidence and guidance around the safety and use of vapes continues to emerge.

Accessing support

Local stop smoking services are free and can increase the chance of quitting for good. Expert advisers are available to provide accurate information, give advice on stop smoking aids including vaping products, and support quit attempts.

Call the free Smokefree National Helpline on 0300 123 1044 to speak to a trained expert adviser.

Find your local stop smoking service on the NHS Better Health website.

Contact Rotherham Healthwave for more information about services locally: Rotherham Healthwave - Helping Boost Health and Wellness (connecthealthcarerotherham.co.uk)

Endorsements

The Rotherham Tobacco Control Group, which includes partners from:

- Public Health, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
- Trading Standards, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
- Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust
- Rotherham Doncaster and South Yorkshire NHS Foundation Trust
- Connect Healthcare
- Community Pharmacy South Yorkshire

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