



July 2016

E-cigarettes: a developing public health consensus

Joint statement on e-cigarettes by Public Health England and other UK public health organisations

Since 2000, smoking among adults in England has fallen by one third and among children by two thirds. Yet almost one in five adults continue to smoke, with higher rates in the more deprived communities meaning that they bear the majority of the harm caused. There is a strong public health consensus on tobacco control, embodied in the landmark report [Smoking Still Kills](#).

We all agree that e-cigarettes are significantly less harmful than smoking. One in two lifelong smokers dies from their addiction. All the evidence suggests that the health risks posed by e-cigarettes are relatively small by comparison but we must continue to study the long-term effects.

And yet, millions of smokers have the impression that e-cigarettes are at least as harmful as tobacco. Over 1.3 million UK e-cigarette users have completely stopped smoking and almost 1.4 million others continue to smoke. We have a responsibility to provide clear information on the evidence we have, to encourage complete smoking cessation and help prevent relapse to smoking.

The public health opportunity is in helping smokers to quit, so we may encourage smokers to try vaping but we certainly encourage vapers to stop smoking tobacco completely.

We know that e-cigarettes are the most popular quitting tool in the country with [more than 10 times as many people](#) using them than using local stop smoking services. However, we also know that using local stop smoking services is by far the most effective way to quit.

The current national evidence is that in the UK regular e-cigarette among youth use is almost exclusively confined to those young people who have already smoked, and youth smoking prevalence is continuing to fall. This is an area that we will continue to research and keep under closest surveillance. Since October 2015, regulations to

protect children make it an offence to sell e-cigarettes to anyone under 18 or to buy e-cigarettes for them and the Tobacco and Related Products Regulations 2016 ban print and broadcast advertising of e-cigarettes as part of an extensive range of regulations.

We should not forget what is important here. We know that smoking is the number one killer in England and we have a public health responsibility to provide smokers with the information and the tools to help them quit smoking completely and forever.

We share a commitment to provide up-to-date information on the emerging evidence on e-cigarettes, as shown in PHE's review, which is the third in this area. This commitment drove PHE and Cancer Research UK to set up the UK E-cigarette Research Forum and the Royal College of Physicians to publish Nicotine without smoke, honouring our longstanding promise to monitor and share the evidence, providing clear messages to the public.

There is no circumstance in which it is better for a smoker to continue smoking – a habit that kills one in every two and harms many others, costing the NHS and society billions every year. We will continue to share what we know and address what we don't yet know, to ensure clear, consistent messages for the public and health professionals.

Public Health England

Action on Smoking and Health

Association of Directors of Public Health

British Lung Foundation

Cancer Research UK

Faculty of Public Health

Fresh North East

Healthier Futures

Public Health Action

Royal College of Physicians

Royal Society for Public Health

UK Centre for Tobacco and Alcohol Studies

UK Health Forum

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PHE publications gateway number: 2016129