

What do DH, PHE, Royal Colleges and the wider UK public health community say about e-cigs?

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

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 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.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/534708/E-cigarettes_joint_consensus_statement_2016.pdf

DH

“The best thing a smoker can do for their health is to quit smoking. However, the evidence is increasingly clear that e-cigarettes are significantly less harmful to health than smoking tobacco. The government will seek to support consumers in stopping smoking and adopting the use of less harmful nicotine products.

Public Health England has produced guidance for employers and organisations looking to introduce policies around e-cigarettes and vaping in public and recommend such policies to be evidence-based . PHE recommends that e-cigarette use is not covered by smokefree legislation and should not routinely be included in the requirements of an organisation’s smokefree policy”

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/630217/Towards_a_Smoke_free_Generation_-_A_Tobacco_Control_Plan_for_England_2017-2022_2_.pdf p15

Delivery Plan includes:

2.3.2 will include within quit smoking campaigns messages about the relative safety of e-cigarettes

2.3.4 Provide evidence based guidance for health professionals to support them in advising smokers who want to use e-cigarettes or other nicotine delivery systems to quit. Delivery of on-line training module for stop smoking practitioners and other healthcare professionals to enhance their knowledge of e-cigarettes and support their work with smokers. Sept 2018 PHE

3.4.2 Support local areas looking to implement local smokefree policies differentiating the levels of harm caused by existing tobacco products including e-cigarettes and other novel products.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/714365/tobacco-control-delivery-plan-2017-to-2022.pdf

RCGP

“Using their clinical judgement on an individual patient basis, PCCs may wish to promote EC use as a means to stopping. Patients choosing to use an e-cigarette in a quit attempt should be advised that seeking behavioural support alongside e-cigarette use increases the chances of quit success further. Most SSS are EC friendly and patients can be advised to bring one to their appointment if they would like to quit using their device.”

<http://www.rcgp.org.uk/policy/rcgp-policy-areas/e-cigarettes-non-combustible-inhaled-tobacco-products.aspx>

RCP

"Although it is not possible to precisely quantify the long-term health risks associated with e-cigarettes, the available data suggest that they are unlikely to exceed 5% of those associated with smoked tobacco products, and may well be substantially lower than this figure"

<https://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/news/promote-e-cigarettes-widely-substitute-smoking-says-new-rcp-report>

PHE

Local stop smoking services and healthcare professionals

These should provide behavioural support to those smokers wanting to quit with the help of an e-cigarette. A new training course on e-cigarettes for healthcare professionals by the National Centre for Smoking Cessation and Training is now live.

NHS Trusts

To become truly smokefree, Trusts should ensure

- *e-cigarettes, alongside nicotine replacement therapies are available for sale in hospital shops*
- *vaping policies support smokers to quit and stay smokefree*
- *smoking shelters be removed*
- *frontline staff take every opportunity to encourage and support patients to quit*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/phe-publishes-independent-expert-e-cigarettes-evidence-review>

Advice to employers

Make a clear distinction between vaping and smoking

E-cigarette use does not meet the legal or clinical definitions of smoking. Furthermore, international peer-reviewed evidence suggests that e-cigarettes carry a fraction of the risk of cigarettes and have the potential to help drive down smoking rates, denormalise smoking and improve public health. So policies need to be clear on the differences between vaping and smoking.

Support smokers to stop smoking and stay smokefree

E-cigarettes are used almost exclusively by smokers and ex-smokers and are now the most popular stop-smoking aid in England. To help smokers to stop smoking and stay smokefree, a more enabling approach to vaping may be appropriate to make it an easier choice than smoking. In particular, vapers should not be required to use the same space as smokers, as this could undermine their ability to quit and stay smokefree.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/e-cigarettes-and-vaping-policy-regulation-and-guidance#advice-for-organisations-on-vaping-policies>

National Centre for Smoking Cessation and Training

Electronic cigarettes: A briefing for stop smoking services

<http://www.ncsct.co.uk/usr/pub/Electronic%20cigarettes.%20A%20briefing%20for%20stop%20smoking%20services.pdf>

Online training: http://elearning.ncsct.co.uk/e_cigarettes-launch

Smoking in Pregnancy Challenge Group

Pregnant women who smoke should be advised to access behavioural support and, if needed, licensed nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) products, which are free when prescribed, to help them quit smoking and stay smokefree. However, if they choose to use an electronic cigarette and this helps them to quit and stay smokefree, it is safer for both them and their unborn baby than continuing to smoke.

<http://smokefreeaction.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/eCigSIP.pdf>