

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Health & Wellbeing Board
Date: 20th April 2018
Report for: Information / Discussion
Report of: Julie Hotchkiss, Public Health

Report Title

Trafford Council and Trafford CCG Position Statement on E-cigarettes

Purpose

Position statement on E-cigarettes for consideration and discussion

Recommendations

To note the information within the report and progress discussions

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

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When putting together the following position statement, we have been mindful of the need to balance individual and population impacts offered by e-cigarettes.

E-cigarettes are now the most popular aid to quitting smoking used nationwide. Current evidence suggests whilst not completely risk-free they are 95% less harmful than tobacco cigarettes as they do not produce harmful products of combustion such as tar and carbon monoxide. They do still contain the highly-addictive nicotine, which produces cardiovascular effects such as increased heart rate, so they are not completely safe, but safer than tobacco cigarettes. For the addicted tobacco smoker switching to e-cigarettes can be considered harm reduction in the same way that a heroin user might switch to methadone. However it is important that the e-cigarette smoker (or vaper) does not occasionally smoke a tobacco cigarette, they must be tobacco-free to get the health benefits.

Since 2000, smoking rates in the UK and Trafford have been dropping, but smoking levels in workers employed in routine and manual work, and those with long-term mental health problems remain stubbornly high, which contributes to our health inequalities. We know that one in two smokers will die from their habit, with long term harm caused to many others, and costing the NHS billions every year. We must strive to help smokers in these target groups be given the best chance they have to reduce and quit tobacco smoking which may include use of e-cigarettes as support.

Perceptions are changing - the proportion of the adult population who believe that e-cigarettes were as harmful, or more harmful than cigarettes, has quadrupled in the

from 2013 to 2017, to nearly 27%. Therefore it is important to disseminate factual information to correct this erroneous belief, and to encourage people to move from smoking to vaping.

In terms of population health, the smoking ban in public places and other restrictions have effectively “de-normalised” smoking – it is now seen by many people as undesirable and anti-social to smoke near other people. The ban is almost entirely enforced through public/social pressure on smokers to refrain from smoking in enclosed areas; there is little other enforcement required. Therefore we need to take great care not to “re-normalise” smoking by treating e-cigarettes differently to tobacco cigarettes in terms of where smoking or vaping is allowed, as this could reduce the effectiveness of the ban: people might find it difficult to challenge smokers if vaping is allowed.

We also have a duty to protect children and young people from smoking related harm. We must therefore ensure that e-cigarettes are not taken up by young people who may find them an attractive option, because they are less anti-social, and less harmful than cigarettes. Once addicted to nicotine, a person remains addicted and will seek it from available sources – which might be tobacco – thus creating new smokers. This would be a tragedy after our successes in reducing the uptake of smoking by young people with the latest data showing that only 7% of 15 year olds were regular smokers. We must take care not to undermine our population-wide health in our attempts at harm reduction with individuals.

Free NHS stop smoking support:

- Web-based support at <https://quitnow.smokefree.nhs.uk>. This has information, quizzes and tips to help support quitting smoking.
- Telephone support by to a trained, expert adviser on you can call the free Smokefree National Helpline 0300 123 1044. Lines are open Monday to Friday 9am to 8pm and Saturday and Sunday 11am to 4pm.
- Face-to-face help and support including nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) is available from most of the pharmacies in Trafford.
- Most GPs and practice nurses can also support quit attempts including prescribing drugs to reduce the craving.

¹ Annual Smokefree GB survey 2017, commissioned by Action on Smoking and Health (ASH), conducted by Yougov <http://ash.org.uk/download/use-of-e-cigarettes-among-adults-in-great-britain-2017/>