

Advice for schools on e-cigarettes

It is currently estimated that about 6% of the population use e-cigarettes¹, the majority to cut down or quit smoking. The popularity of e-cigarettes has raised issues for schools in relation to their smokefree policy and use of e-cigarettes by young people and parents.

What are e-cigarettes?



E-cigarettes are devices which deliver nicotine within an inhalable aerosol by heating a solution that typically contains nicotine and flavours. E-cigarettes usually consist of three main components: a battery, an atomiser and a cartridge containing nicotine. When a user sucks on the device, a sensor detects air flow and heats the liquid in the cartridge so that it

evaporates. The vapour delivers the nicotine to the user. There is no side-stream smoke but some nicotine vapour is released into the air as the smoker exhales. The most recent "tank" e-cigarettes mimic cigarettes in the delivery of nicotine.

Public Health England (PHE) has published a comprehensive review of the latest evidence on e-cigarettes and concludes that e-cigarettes are considerably safer than smoking cigarettes and have the potential to help smokers quit smoking¹.



E-cigarettes have been marketed as cheaper and healthier alternatives to cigarettes and for use in places where smoking is not permitted since they do not produce smoke.

What is the law relating to e-cigarettes?

The European Union Tobacco Products Directive (May 2016) introduced new legislation to ensure safer products, including quality and safety standards, labelling and packaging requirements, plus restrictions on advertising.

Currently, e-cigarettes are not regulated under smokefree law in the UK. In general, users are free to use them in most public places such as bars, restaurants and on public transport, although the managers of some premises have prohibited their use. However, the ban on smoking in public places has reinforced in many people's minds that smoking has gone from a normal, widely accepted activity to one that is not the "norm" and unacceptable. There are concerns that e-cigarettes will undermine this process, threatening the now established practice of smokefree public places, such as at work or on public transport.

Can e-cigarettes be used as a stop smoking aid?

Although the data for the effectiveness of quitting using e-cigarettes is not as robust as for those medicines licensed for smoking cessation, e-cigarettes can reduce the urge to smoke and can help smokers quit. They are now the most popular form of stopping smoking aid.

What about e-cigarettes and young people?

From October 2015, it has been against the law to sell e-cigarettes to under-18s. There have been concerns that e-cigarettes may become a gateway to lifelong use of nicotine by young people, whether through continued use of e-cigarettes, or by moving on to cigarettes. E-cigarettes may also help to re-"normalise" smoking by making it appear that people are smoking cigarettes more widely, although the more recent "tank" style e-cigarette is noticeably different. However, in a survey in Hampshire schools, it was found that young people are often using them to try out the flavours and to play with smoke rings³. Amongst 11-15 year olds, regular use of e-cigarettes is around 3%³; the majority of young people try them but do not continue to use them. However, e-cigarette use among young people is being monitored both nationally and locally.

Should e-cigarettes be covered in our school smokefree policy?

Hampshire County Council has prohibited the use of e-cigarettes on council premises as part of the Smokefree Policy. Hampshire County Council encourages schools to consider prohibiting e-cigarettes in their own smokefree policies to promote a healthy environment and "smokefree" role model.

Specific reasons include:

- Avoiding "re-normalising" smoking by removing the visibility of "cigarettes" from the school site.
- Concerns over safety issues of e-cigarettes, particularly in relation to battery charging which may be a fire hazard.
- Most e-cigarettes contain nicotine, which is highly addictive.

- Controls on the use of nicotine within school – you may wish to consider ways of supporting students who currently smoke in coping with nicotine withdrawal through Nicotine Replacement Therapy, rather than e-cigarettes. The Hampshire Stop Smoking Service, (see below), can provide guidance in helping pupils to stop smoking, or in managing their withdrawal cravings.

Hampshire Stop Smoking Service

Smokefree Hampshire offer free support and advice to smokers who want to try e-cigarettes to quit. Their voucher scheme for a free vaping starter pack is available to over 18s. Visit their website for more information www.smokefreehampshire.co.uk

¹ Public Health England, 2018, Evidence review of electronic cigarettes and heated tobacco products:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/e-cigarettes-and-heated-tobacco-products-evidencereview/evidence-review-of-e-cigarettes-and-heated-tobacco-products-2018-executive-summary>

² Hampshire Public Health, 2015, Smoking, drinking and drug use amongst young people in Hampshire in 2015:

www.smokefreehampshire.co.uk

³ HSCIC, 2017, Smoking, drinking and drug use among young people in England in 2016:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/smoking-drinking-and-drug-use-among-youngpeople-in-england/2016>