

# Introduction to a whole settings approach for colleges

## Why do colleges need a whole settings approach to smoking and vaping?

The smokefree transformation of England began in 2009, when all enclosed workplaces and public spaces became free of tobacco smoke. College buildings went smokefree and most extended the legislation to their entire sites, however some have retained dedicated smoking and vaping areas or shelters.

There remains a great deal more work that can be done to reduce the prevalence of smoking among further education students. This work is important to build upon the existing education that students receive in school and to ensure that as young people become more independent, making healthy choices becomes the 'norm'. Additionally, there have been substantial changes in smoking trends and legislation. These include the increased popularity of vapes and other tobacco and nicotine products, which require consideration as part of a whole settings approach to becoming smokefree. Education settings play a major role in health education, including smoking and vaping prevention, as most adult smokers first try smoking before the age of 18.

Whilst we have made great strides in the right direction, there is more to do and to create a smokefree generation an ongoing effort is needed. This is especially true for those in our society who already suffer from poorer health and other disadvantages, where smoking rates remain stubbornly high.

A whole settings approach recognises that to create a smokefree culture, colleges must focus on a range of areas such as policy and education and extend work further into the system such as considering the college environment and wider community. This will help to ensure that smokefree efforts are embedded in the college culture and extended into families and communities. A persistent effort in all aspects of the college setting is most likely to result in change, over time. More information on the whole settings approach to smoking can be found in this **NICE Guidance**.

## What are the challenges of a whole settings approach for colleges?

Working with young people aged 16-19 offers a number of challenges. The whole settings approach aims to address the issues identified below:

- Students may have been smoking or vaping for a number of years and may have developed a nicotine dependency.
- Students are at an age where the influence and opinion of peers is very important to them.
- Parents/carers play an important role in influencing behaviour and if they smoke or vape themselves, it can undermine messages from the college.
- Many colleges have a smokefree policy, but have retained 'smoking areas'. These are used by students and staff. Colleges may be hesitant about removing these areas, as it may lead to 'displacement' smoking (going off site), potentially upsetting neighbouring residents.
- Curriculum and staffing time is very limited to focus on individual issues such as smoking and vaping.
- The college may have staff who smoke or vape themselves.
- Some of the students may be over 18 and thus legally able to be sold cigarettes.

## Benefits of a whole settings approach in colleges

- It recognises a variety of influences (e.g. family and friends) that are likely to impact a young person's decision to smoke or vape and seeks to address these with targeted interventions.
- It makes clear the role of the college in providing an understandable and consistent message to students.
- It emphasises the staff as role models.
- It makes clear that students are likely to enter into work places where smoking is not the norm and prepares them for this.
- It recognises that some young people may already be addicted to smoking or vaping and supports them in going smokefree.
- It can reduce the litter found on site and reduces environmental harm from cigarettes and vapes.