**Advice for advisors on electronic cigarette usage in North Somerset**

 

Smokefree North Somerset endorses the use of e-cigarettes in conjunction with stopping smoking, following the recent joint statement on e-cigarettes and vaporisers by Public Health England[[1]](#footnote-1) and other UK public health organisations.

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.

E-cigarettes are significantly less harmful than smoking. Evidence suggests that the health risks posed by e-cigarettes are relatively small in comparison, but their long term effects must continue to be studied. E-cigarettes commonly contain nicotine, as well as other substances including propylene glycol and flavourings. But unlike cigarettes, they don’t expose people to the harmful chemicals found in tobacco, 70 of which are known carcinogens.

In this country, e-cigarettes are the most popular quitting tool, with [more than ten times as many people](http://www.smokinginengland.info/downloadfile/?type=latest-stats&src=11) choosing to use them, rather than local stop smoking services. However, it is known that using a stop smoking service alongside medication is by far the most effective way to quit.[[2]](#footnote-2)

**By encouraging people who choose to use e-cigarettes as a tool to help them quit smoking with the help and support of the local stop smoking service, we are combining the most popular choice of stopping smoking with the most effective method.**

**What this means for health care professionals and support to stop advisors:**

**We are not saying e-cigarettes are risk free but they are less harmful than smoking tobacco**: There is a misunderstanding that e-cigarettes are at least as harmful as smoking, and this may have unintended consequences as many smokers may put off considering quitting with e-cigarettes. [[3]](#footnote-3) [[4]](#footnote-4)

**We suggest:** smokers who decide to use e-cigarettes to quit smoking should be able to get behavioural help, support and pharmacotherapies from their advisor.

**We ask you:** to accept it as one of the tools a quitter might choose to include in their attempt to stop smoking. There are currently no electronic cigarettes or nicotine vaporisers licenced and available for use as stop smoking medications, consequently stop smoking services are unable to prescribe them.

**We do not advise:** e-cigarettes be taken up by anybody who does not smoke and it is illegal to sell them to under-18s or to buy them on their behalf.

**EU legislation requires that from 2016:** all nicotine vaporisers containing over 20 mg/ml of nicotine are to be licensed as medicines. Products of this strength will continue to be sold to the consumer, with controls similar to those applied to tobacco products.

**Currently:** we are unable to fund the purchasing of e-cigarettes.

**Finally**: The advice that should still be given to smokers is that the use of licensed stop smoking medication (NRT, Champix, Zyban), combined with behavioural support provided by stop smoking services, remains the most effective and successful method of stopping smoking.

**North Somerset Stop Smoking Service will continue to keep you updated with any new information regarding e-cigarettes.**

For further information on electronic cigarettes:

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

<http://www.ncsct.co.uk/publication_ecigarette_briefing.php>

<http://www.ash.org.uk/files/documents/ASH_715.pdf>

These findings are endorsed by these bodies:

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

1. McRobbie H, Bullen C, Hartmann-Boyce J, Hajek P. Electronic cigarettes for smoking cessation and reduction. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2014, Issue 12. Art. No.: CD010216. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD010216.pub2 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <http://www.smokinginengland.info/latest-statistics/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Nutt D, J, Phillips L, D, Balfour D, Curran H, V, Dockrell M, Foulds J, Fagerstrom K, Letlape K, Milton A, Polosa R, Ramsey J, Sweanor D, Estimating the Harms of Nicotine-Containing Products Using the MCDA Approach. Eur Addict Res 2014;20:218-225 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. West R, Hajek P, Mcneill A, Brown J, Arnott D (2015) Electronic cigarettes: what we know so far. A report to UK All Party Parliamentary Groups. www.smokinginengland.info/reports/ [↑](#footnote-ref-4)