



ADPH  
East of England

# NICOTINE VAPING POSITION STATEMENT

A stylized illustration of a grey vape pen is positioned vertically on the right side of the page. The pen has a mouthpiece at the top with two wavy lines representing smoke rising from it. Below the mouthpiece, there is a minus sign (-) and a plus sign (+) on the pen's body, indicating volume or power controls.



# ADPH East of England

**The Association of Directors of Public Health East of England (ADPH EoE) is the East of England regional arm of the representative body for Directors of Public Health in the UK.**

This position statement on nicotine vaping should be read in conjunction with the [ASH briefings and guidance for local authorities and schools](#) and the [ADPH position statement on tobacco](#). It has been developed following publication of [Stopping the start; our new plan to create a smokefree generation](#), the [Nicotine vaping in England 2022 evidence update](#), and the [Chief Medical Officer for England's statement on vaping](#).

With thanks to the Association of Directors of Public Health North East for allowing us to adopt their [position statement on nicotine vaping](#) and to Essex County Council and the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities for their support in the development of this document.

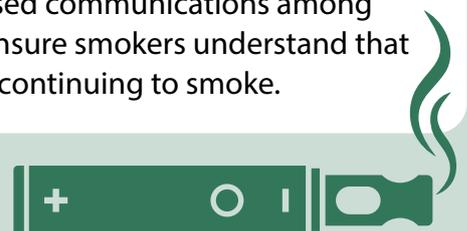
**“If you smoke, vaping is much safer; If you don't smoke, don't vape; Marketing vapes to children is utterly unacceptable.”** Chief Medical Officer (CMO) for England (2023)



– Please note that for the purposes of this document, any references to vapes, vaping or e-cigarettes relate to nicotine-containing vapes, nicotine vaping and nicotine-containing e-cigarettes that comply with UK regulations.

# OUR POSITION ON NICOTINE VAPING

- Tobacco remains the single biggest cause of preventable illness and death worldwide (WHO, 2023) with over 7,000 people in the East of England dying each year from smoking-related disease (OHID, 2023). Smoking tobacco is also a significant driver of health inequalities (ASH, 2019). Our priority for tobacco control is to reduce the number of people who smoke a known uniquely lethal product.
- The evidence is clear that, for smokers, vaping is a much less harmful option, and in the short and medium term, vaping poses a small fraction of the risks of smoking (GOV.UK, 2022). We must ensure that vaping is an affordable and accessible alternative for smokers who want to reduce their risk of dying from a smoking-related disease.
- We support the Government's plan to create a smokefree generation (GOV.UK, 2023). This plan critically identifies the important role vapes play in helping adult smokers to stop smoking.
- At the same time, we recognise that vaping is not risk-free (GOV.UK, 2022) and therefore vaping must be presented as an alternative to, or replacement for smoking, not a recreational activity which is appealing to the wider non-smoking population.
- Vaping is not for children and marketing vapes to children is utterly unacceptable (CMO, 2023). Whilst vaping can help people to quit smoking, those who don't smoke should not vape. We will shift the social norms for children and young people away from vaping, reduce the number of young people accessing vape products and the amount of non-compliant products available for sale. We will work closely with our Trading Standards colleagues to support compliance with regulations and to take enforcement action when necessary. We will also continue to advocate for tighter e-cigarette regulations where needed, ensuring the right balance is taken around protecting young people and supporting smokers to quit.
- The number of adults who now incorrectly believe e-cigarettes are as, or more harmful than cigarettes has increased (ASH, 2023). "Anxiety over youth vaping is obscuring the fact that switching from smoking will be much better for an individual's health. We must not be complacent about youth vaping and further regulation is needed, but so too is work to ensure more adults stop smoking and vaping is an effective means of doing that." (McNeill cited in ASH, 2023). We therefore support the delivery of evidence-based communications among stakeholders and the public to widen understanding and to ensure smokers understand that switching to vaping is a significantly less harmful option than continuing to smoke.



# THE PROBLEM WITH SMOKING



Tobacco smoking is our biggest killer and a key contributor to avoidable health inequalities. Cigarettes are the only legal consumer product that, when used exactly as the manufacturer intends them to be used, will kill up to two thirds of long-term consumers (Khan, 2023).

Tobacco and vapes both contain nicotine, which is an addictive substance, but nicotine itself has been used safely for many years in medicines to help people stop smoking. However, tobacco and the smoke it produces, contains a toxic mix of over 6,000 chemicals, many of which are known to cause cancer as well as other fatal and life limiting conditions such as respiratory and cardiovascular disease, not just among smokers but also among those who are exposed to second-hand smoke.



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13.2% of adults in the East of England smoke (ONS, 2022). Whilst this is in line with the national average of 12.9% (ONS, 2022) an inequalities gap remains within the region. For example, the smoking rate among routine and manual workers is 23.9% (ONS, 2022). This results in a significantly negative impact on income as well as employment due to ill health and disability. The economic costs of smoking to the region due to lost earnings are £1.4bn per annum (ASH, 2023).

Amongst those with mental health conditions, the smoking rate is 23.7%, increasing to 39% (OHID, 2023) for those with serious mental illness. Those with serious mental illness are five times more likely to die before the age of 75 than the general population (GOV.UK, 2023) and smoking is the largest preventable cause of this inequality (Peckham et al, 2016). Smoking is also the leading cause of poor birth outcomes, yet 8.5% (OHID, 2023) of women in the East of England smoke at the time of delivery. Overall smoking costs the East of England approximately £1.8bn each year, with almost £205 million of this spent on health care and £128.4 million on social care (ASH, 2023).

Smoking damages and cuts short lives in extraordinary numbers. It causes disability and death throughout the life course (GOV.UK, 2023).



# THE EVIDENCE BASE ON VAPING

The most robust evidence on nicotine vaping is contained within the Nicotine Vaping in England: 2022 evidence update (GOV.UK, 2022). The report is the most comprehensive to date, its focus being a systematic review of the evidence on the health risks of nicotine vaping. Based on the evidence within the review, a summary of conclusions is that:

- In the short and medium term, vaping poses a small fraction of the risks of smoking, but vaping is not risk-free, particularly for people who have never smoked.
- There is significantly lower exposure to harmful substances from vaping compared with smoking, as shown by biomarkers associated with the risk of cancer, respiratory and cardiovascular conditions. However, there is similar or higher exposure to harmful substances from vaping compared with not using any nicotine products.
- There is no significant increase of toxicant biomarkers after short-term second-hand exposure to vaping among people who do not smoke or vape.
- Exposure to second-hand tobacco smoke is dangerous. Compared with cigarettes, vaping products themselves produce little or no side-stream emissions and in households where tobacco smoking occurs, vapes offers a much safer alternative for non-smokers.

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## THE ROLE OF VAPING IN HELPING SMOKERS TO QUIT TOBACCO



Vapes are the most popular quitting aid in England and are up to twice as effective as available licensed nicotine replacement therapy. The Cochrane living systematic review on electronic cigarettes for smoking cessation (Hartmann-Boyce et al, 2022) shows that vaping is effective at stopping people smoking.

NICE recommends that smokers are encouraged to vape in their quit attempt (NICE, 2023). However, the majority who use them are doing so without behavioural support: quit rates will increase if behavioural support is provided alongside switching to vaping.

# E-CIGARETTE REGULATION



**E-cigarettes are regulated in the UK through legislation relating to quality, safety, age of sale and advertising.**

Enforcement of laws on underage sales, sales of illegal products, and point of sale advertising is the responsibility of Trading Standards. Enforcement of other advertising and promotion of vaping to under-18s, for example on social media, is the responsibility of the Advertising Standards Authority.

However, there are concerns about the attractiveness of some vapes to children, that a proportion of retailers are selling to under 18s, and that products that don't comply with UK rules are easily accessed. In 'Stopping the Start: Our new plan to create a smokefree generation' the Government outlines proposals to tackle these issues. The plan commits to having the biggest impact possible on reducing youth vaping whilst ensuring that vapes continue to be available to adult smokers to help them stop smoking.



Vaping is not harm free.

We must not be complacent about youth vaping.

Marketing vapes to children is utterly unacceptable.

(CMO for England, 2023)

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