



**HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:**

**17<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2024**

**VAPING AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

**Purpose of Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to inform the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the work that is currently being carried out relating to vaping and young people in Leicestershire and to provide information on how the additional Government Smokefree Generation (SFG) ringfenced funding will help contribute towards this over the next few years.

**Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

2. Additional funding has been allocated to Local Authority Stop Smoking services through the Smokefree Generation Programme, a government funded programme, resulting in an additional estimated £716K being allocated to Leicestershire Public Health from 2024/25 to 2028/29 in line with the current grant conditions. Confirmation of the exact funding allocation will be communicated to Local Authorities through the formal grant agreement process. This is part of the government's plan to further reduce smoking prevalence and work towards a smokefree generation by 2030.

**Background**

3. E-cigarettes also known as vapes are battery-powered devices that deliver nicotine by heating a solution containing nicotine, flavourings and other additives. The primary function of vapes is to deliver nicotine. Smokers are not addicted to tobacco but are addicted to nicotine. E-Cigarettes are regulated as consumer products under the UK Tobacco Related Products Regulations (2016) and there are an estimated 3.6 million E-cigarette users in Great Britain.
4. There has been an increase in vaping prevalence amongst young people nationally as well as locally. In 2023, 20.5% children nationally had tried vaping, up from 15.8% in 2022 and 13.9% in 2020 before the first Covid lockdown. Quit Ready Stop Smoking Service in November 2022 conducted a survey to assess the local situation with vaping in young people. There were over 1100 respondents targeted at young people under the age of 18 years old with 25% of children using vapes and the majority using vapes for 6 months or more. It has become evident that there has been an increase in young people vaping and this has raised concern amongst schools, parents and public health. Currently there is no national direction on what

support will be available to help young people stop vaping, but the consensus for adults, remains that smokers are better off vaping than smoking but that non-smokers should not vape.

5. Selling vapes to children is illegal but giving them out for free is not. 2.1% of children who tried vaping have reported obtaining their first vape from an E-Cigarette company. The increase in disposable vapes has happened concurrently with higher levels of youth use (ASH, 2023 findings).
6. Vaping however is not for children and whilst it can help people quit smoking, national and local guidance states that those who do not smoke should not vape. The health effects of vaping are not currently well understood and more research is needed on its long term effects. Vaping has been associated with an increasing number of reported lung complaints and conditions worldwide.
7. There is a need to reduce the number of young people accessing vape products and the amount of non-compliant products i.e. products that are not tobacco product directive compliant, available for sale. Leicestershire Trading Standards have reported receiving a total of 84 complaints regarding vapes, 63 relating to children under the age of 18 years old being sold vapes. The remaining complaints referred to counterfeit vapes. The Public Health Department will need to continually work closely with our Trading Standards colleagues to support compliance with regulations and to take enforcement action when necessary.

### **Proposals/Options**

8. The Council's Quit Ready (QR) Stop Smoking Service are currently working with schools and have recently produced a toolkit for secondary schools. This includes a lesson plan for teachers and or student support staff. The toolkit also includes a support pack for teachers which includes the local survey results, how to support young people and where to go for help and the laws and guidance around vaping in young people and vaping and the environment.
9. The toolkits have been distributed to schools via the Council's Teen Health Service with an intention to distribute this to all secondary schools. This will include the young person's tobacco specialist following up with schools to offer them the opportunity to promote the resources, provide support for any pupils identified as smokers and help shape and contribute to the schools' policies on vaping and smoking. Quit Ready will be approaching the School Heads via the Education Effectiveness Team.
10. Quit Ready will be working with schools and young people via a competition to design a poster and or Tik Tok video highlighting the risks of vaping and choosing not to vape if you don't smoke. The winning school will be provided with a voucher presented by Public Health's lead member, Mrs Richardson, with the school being able to use this towards purchasing resources for the school. The winning video and or poster will be advertised via the Communications team and forms part of the current marketing plan.
11. The Quit Ready team currently works in partnership with Trading Standards to promote the Tobacco Product Directive (TPD) around vaping and E-cigarettes with

local businesses. Trading Standards also follow up on illicit vapes (i.e. those not TPD compliant) reported via the anonymous helpline. This is reported quarterly into Public Health.

12. The stop smoking team is linked into the regional tobacco control work around vaping and will contribute to the recently announced “swap to stop” national scheme and “illicit vapes enforcement squad” initiatives that are due to come into effect.
13. To support existing smokers to quit, the government have doubled existing local authority spend, through the implementation of the Smokefree generation fund. Leicestershire has an annual spend of £580K via the public health grant. The funding provided through the Smokefree Generation fund will see an additional estimated £716K adding to the existing Public Health grant. The funding will be delivered through a new section 31 grant and ringfenced for the purposes of local authority-led stop smoking services. To receive the funding local authorities must maintain their existing spend on stop smoking support through the existing Public Health grant.
14. The Smokefree Generation (SFG) monies will be funding service expansion. This will include additional stop smoking advisors and Young Person Tobacco Specialist posts, with the aim for the specialists to help support the planned work with schools and help young people give up smoking. The team is to be in place in the upcoming financial year (2024/2025). The criteria for the SFG funding is to be used for smoking cessation purposes only and not for vaping or towards tobacco enforcement. We plan on providing young people with smoking cessation support. This work will include helping schools develop policies around smoking and vaping and adopt a proportionate response to exclusion and punishment. The Young Person Tobacco Specialists will work directly with schools and settings for young people, supporting both the smoke free policies and delivering smoking cessation support.
15. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidance recommends a co-ordinated whole school approach to smoking and vaping. The school’s response should not be at the point where young people take up smoking or vaping but rather have strategies in place to prevent the uptake of smoking and or vaping, by educating young people of the impact caused through smoking and/or vaping. Most young vapers also smoke or have smoked in the past, and it is important to recognise and communicate to young people that the level of risk from smoking is far worse than vaping. Furthermore, schools and parents should make contact with Trading Standards should they have concerns on underage sales of vapes and tobacco by reporting via the anonymous helpline.
16. To tackle the issue, collective support and buy-in from partner organisations and groups including schools, youth council, looked after children and Trading Standards will be needed. The dedicated resource through SFG will help with this.

### **Consultation**

17. A consultation has not taken place however in November 2022 a survey was conducted to gain feedback on the use and prevalence of E-cigarettes amongst young people in Leicestershire. This was disseminated through partners who currently engage with young people and families and through schools via the School

Sport Physical Activity Network (SPAN). The purpose was to gather baseline information on the use of E-cigarettes i.e. looking at localities, age, sex, ethnicity and reasons for using E-cigarettes as well as to establish how many users were current smokers, ex-smokers or never smoked.

### **Resource Implications**

18. The work outlined will be funded by the Public Health grant and the expansion of the team and additional work will be funded through the SFG money.

### **Timetable for Implementation**

19. The aim is for Quit Ready support to be expanded from April 2024 to commence delivery of services once funding has been received from HM Government.

### **Conclusions**

20. Whilst we recognise that vaping is not risk-free but is a safer alternative to smoking, children should not be vaping. Our stance as a public health department is if you do not smoke do not vape. Children who are smokers should be offered licensed nicotine replacement therapy alongside behavioural support and intervention. Work is underway to support young people to give up smoking and to raise education and awareness of the risks of vaping and smoking. The Smokefree Generation funding stream will help strengthen the smoking cessation offer for children, reduce smoking and vaping prevalence, and raise awareness of the issue more widely thus working towards creating a smokefree generation by 2030.

### **Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure**

21. None

### **Equality Implications**

22. Over two thirds of people trying smoking go on to become daily smokers. Therefore, it is vital that we prevent smoking initiation. Furthermore, reducing smoking in adults especially in deprived communities reduces youth exposure to smoking role models and access to tobacco products and vapes, this is key in reducing smoking initiation. Young people who grow up in smoking households are 4 times more likely to become smokers themselves and smoking in young people from disadvantaged communities are twice as common in disadvantaged communities transferring health inequalities from generation to generation.

### **Human Rights Implications**

23. There are no human rights implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

### **Other Relevant Impact Assessments**

24. Not applicable.

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