
Wolverhampton's Tobacco, Smoking and Vaping Addiction Partnership

Position Statement
Winter 2023/24

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Purpose of this position statement

Despite significant reductions in the prevalence of smoking in Wolverhampton over the past 10 years, there are still an estimated 31,000 smokers residing in Wolverhampton. Smoking has been proven to be one of the biggest causes of death and illness in the UK.

Smoking causes 7 out of every 10 cases of lung cancer and increases the risk of coronary heart disease, heart attack, stroke and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Second hand smoke or passive smoking can also increase the risk of a number of conditions. Children and babies are particularly vulnerable to the effects of second hand smoke and for women who smoke in pregnancy harms caused to their babies include low birth weight, miscarriage, still births and sudden infant deaths.

In Wolverhampton, smoking prevalence is substantially higher in deprived communities and amongst residents diagnosed with anxiety, depression and other long-term mental health conditions. Smoking prevalence in Wolverhampton is almost double amongst residents in manual and routine

occupations, compared to the general population, further demonstrating inequalities amongst the City's population.

This position statement from Wolverhampton's Tobacco, Smoking and Vaping Addiction Partnership (TSAVA) and the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing, has been written to support the direction of travel that the City intends to take in a bid to reduce smoking prevalence, including:

- The use of vapes as an effective method to support adults to quit smoking.
- To reduce the access to vapes for children and young people.

These actions will be in line with the Government's approach to achieving a Smokefree status by 2030.

The position set out in this document will be based on current evidence, guidance from the Khan Review and proposed Government legislation. Due to the changing landscape of evidence and Government legislation around smoking and vaping, this will be a live document.

Introduction

The Annual Population Survey (APS), which estimates the smoking prevalence among persons 18 years and over, is the most recognised measure of smoking prevalence in England. The APS estimated in 2022 that the smoking prevalence is 12.7% in England, 13.4% in the West Midlands and 15.1% in Wolverhampton. In September 2023, the UK Government announced a number of measures to bolster their efforts to achieve the Smokefree 2030 ambition set out in 2019. The term 'Smokefree' is defined as having a smoking prevalence of 5% or less.

There is long-standing evidence and consensus that smoking is one of the biggest causes of death and illness in the UK. In recent years there has been a growth in the evidence base around the use of vapes as a tool to help smokers quit smoking. The Khan Review recognises that vaping is widely considered to be much less harmful than smoking and an effective tool to support smokers to quit smoking, although it is not without its own risks.

With the rising popularity of vapes amongst adults and availability of vapes in retail outlets across the country, there has also been a concerning rise in the use of vapes amongst school-aged children and young people. The rise in vaping amongst school-aged children and young people has raised concerns amongst the public and added an element of uncertainty, confusion and misinformation about vaping amongst the public and some healthcare professionals.

Therefore, it is imperative that the TSAVA sets out its position in regards to reducing tobacco harm from smoking, use of vaping to help reduce the smoking prevalence and the deterrence of vaping amongst school-aged children and young people.



The TSAVA Position

The TSAVA supports the Government's legislative measures to reduce smoking prevalence to 5% or less by 2030 and becoming 'Smokefree'.

The Government's recently announced measures are based on the recommendations from the independent review by Dr Javed Khan OBE, published in 2022, 'The Khan Review'. The plan to increase the legal age to purchase tobacco by a year every year is a positive action, which will go a long way to ensure that young people do not start smoking tobacco, over time the ambition is to develop a smokefree generation. The partnership will support existing services, and services in development, in the City to deliver the 'Swap to Stop' scheme announced by the Government, as one of the trailblazers in the West Midlands. This will allow current smokers to swap their tobacco for e-cigarettes, alongside recommended behavioural change practice. The Government have also announced further funding and powers for trading standards to further enhance their work to limit the supply and sale of illicit tobacco.

The TSAVA endorses the use of vapes that meet UK regulatory standards, as an effective tool for adult smokers to stop smoking, with a view to also stop vaping in the future.

There is a growing body of evidence that show that vapes are substantially less harmful compared to smoking tobacco and there are numerous health benefits for individuals who swap smoking tobacco for vaping. Vapes are currently the most popular tool to support adults to stop smoking and evidence from clinical trials suggest that they can be effective in helping adults to stop smoking tobacco. The approach to endorse vaping as a safer alternative to smoking tobacco, is a new approach in Wolverhampton.

The TSAVA does not recommend school-aged children and young people to use vapes and will work to deter them from vaping and work as a partnership to restrict the access of vapes to residents aged under 18.

Despite the health benefits of vaping over smoking tobacco, vaping itself is not risk free. There is significant concern amongst educational settings and local communities about the rise of vaping amongst school-aged children. It is currently illegal for vapes to be sold to people aged under 18, therefore the supply of vapes to teenagers aged under 18 is a crime. The Government's plans to ban the sale of disposable vapes are very welcome and it is envisioned that they will contribute greatly to deter under 18's from vaping. Wolverhampton's Trading Standards team are a key member of the TSAVA partnership and they will be supported to continue their efforts to restrict the sale of vapes to under 18's. Illicit vapes are vapes which do not meet the UK regulations, such as those that exceed the size limit of the vape liquid or those containing chemicals or substances not permitted in the UK.

The trading standards team will also continue to work to eradicate the supply and sale of illicit vapes. We will work with educational establishments across the City to develop educational tools and materials to educate children about the risks of vaping and the links to wider behaviour that can be detrimental to the health of young people. Educational establishments will work with trading standards to share intelligence around the availability of vapes to under 18's in local retail outlets.



What can our partners do?

Local Authorities and health professionals play a pivotal role in advocating nicotine vaping as a valuable tool for smoking cessation. Aligning with guidance from reputable sources such as NICE, Cochrane review, OHID, KCL, and Dr. Javed Khan's independent review, they should provide accurate information on the benefits of vaping. By endorsing this evidence-based approach, they contribute to public health efforts, offering smokers a viable and supported option for quitting while dispelling misconceptions around vaping.

Health professionals and other frontline professionals working with Wolverhampton residents should promote vaping as an effective tool to support smokers who want to quit, ensuring they also provide accurate information about the benefits of using vapes rather than continuing to smoke tobacco. Health professionals should be aware of the latest guidance and evidence on using vapes as a smoking cessation tool from the NHS, NICE, OHID and the Khan Review, and employers should support health professionals to do this through training opportunities. The partnership will have a responsibility to promote or develop training materials that are appropriate for our population.

Public and private sector entities should implement policies that create a supportive environment for employees and customers who choose to vape. Taking a proactive approach reflects a commitment to both individual well-being and broader public health objectives.

NHS trusts, Integrated Care Boards, and primary care settings should embrace policies that facilitate the choice of vaping over smoking on hospital sites, mental health services and maternity services, aligning with the smoke-free NHS initiative. By adopting practices demonstrated by some NHS trusts, they empower staff, patients and visitors to make healthier choices, promoting harm reduction and general well-being.

Education establishments and professionals working with young people across the City can further engage with PSHE leads and work to develop localised materials that can educate pupils and parents on the potential harms of vaping and illicit vapes. Education establishments can work closely with trading standards to share intelligence about the supply of vapes and illicit vapes to residents aged under 18 years of age.

The TSAVA Partnership is made of representatives from City of Wolverhampton Council (Public Health, Trading Standards and Education), NHS Royal Wolverhampton Trust and the NHS Black Country ICB.

**CITY OF
WOLVERHAMPTON
COUNCIL**



**For more information on the work of Wolverhampton's Tobacco, Smoking and Vaping Addiction Partnership, please contact:
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