



Electronic cigarette guidance for professionals supporting people to cut down or stop smoking

B&NES Tobacco Action Network October 2016

This document is intended to give guidance to frontline health and social care professionals in Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES) who are asked for advice on Electronic Cigarettes (e-cigarettes) and their use in helping people to cut down or stop smoking.

This guidance has been produced by the B&NES Tobacco Action Network, a multi-agency alliance working together to deliver the Smoke Free B&NES Strategy (2013 - 2018)¹. Membership includes representation from Sirona Care and Health (Healthy Lifestyle Services, School Nursing, Health Visiting), B&NES Council (Public Health, Trading Standards, School Improvement), RUH Maternity Services and Avon Fire and Rescue Service.

It is a summary of the latest evidence and guidance from Public Health England², the National Centre for Smoking Cessation and Training³ (NCSCT) and the Smoking in Pregnancy Challenge Group⁴ and the application of this to local best practice in helping people to quit smoking.

This statement should be read in conjunction with the B&NES Harm Reduction Policy (August 2014) which also includes guidance on the use of licensed nicotine containing products such as patches, gum and inhalators.

Key facts:

- There are no circumstances where it is better for a smoker to continue smoking.
- Nicotine is not harmful to adults taken in the correct dose. The harm from smoking is caused almost exclusively by toxins present in tobacco released through combustion.
- Nicotine is an addictive substance and research suggests that exposure to nicotine in pregnancy can lead to health problems in the developing baby.⁵ Exposure to nicotine in adolescence has also been associated with a negative impact on brain development.⁶
- Whilst not completely risk free, e-cigarettes are significantly less harmful than smoking. Using e-cigarettes is significantly safer than smoking and the vapour released from e-cigarettes poses no measurable risk to bystanders.

¹ Smoke Free B&NES Tobacco Control Strategy 2013-2018 <http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/public-health/guide-programmes-strategies-and-policies/smoke-free-bnes-tobacco-control>

² E-Cigarettes: An evidence update. Public Health England 2015
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/e-cigarettes-an-evidence-update>

³ http://www.ncsct.co.uk/publication_electronic_cigarette_briefing.php

⁴ <http://www.smokefreeaction.org.uk/SIP/files/eCigSIP.pdf>

⁵ Services USDoHaH. Preventing tobacco use among youth and young adults: A report of the surgeon general. In: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services CfDCaP, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, editor. Atlanta, GA;2012.

⁶ Lydon, D.M., Wilson, S.J., Child, A., and Geier, C.F. Adolescent brain maturation and smoking: What we know and where we're headed. *Neurosci Biobehavioral Rev.* 2014; 45: 323–342

- E-cigarettes are the most popular quitting tool in the country with 1.3 million UK users having stopped smoking completely.
- Little research has been conducted into the safety of electronic cigarettes in pregnancy, however e-cigarettes are likely to be significantly less harmful to a pregnant woman and her baby than smoking tobacco.
- Regular use of e-cigarettes by adults and young people who have never smoked is very rare.
- There is no evidence to date that e-cigarette use is re-normalising smoking. Smoking prevalence in adults and young people continues to decline.

E-cigarette use to help cut down or quit smoking

The most commonly reported reasons for e-cigarette use are to assist with stopping smoking or to reduce cigarette consumption.

Varenicline and nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) with behavioural support remain the treatments with the best evidence for safety and efficacy. However recent studies support the Cochrane Review findings⁷ that e-cigarettes can help people to quit smoking and reduce their cigarette consumption.

There is also evidence that e-cigarettes can encourage quitting or cutting down even among those not intending to quit or rejecting other support. It is not known whether current e-cigarette products are more or less effective than licensed stop smoking medications, but they are much more popular, so they do provide an opportunity to expand the number of smokers stopping successfully.

In local stop smoking services across England smokers who have combined e-cigarettes with expert support have had high rates of success.

Supporting smokers who want to quit using e-cigarettes

Smokers who have tried other methods of quitting without success can be encouraged to try e-cigarettes to stop smoking.

Whilst licensed NRT products are the recommended option for pregnant women, if she chooses to use an electronic cigarette to stay smoke free she should not be discouraged from doing so.

We encourage professionals to offer clear and accurate information on the relative harm of nicotine, e-cigarettes and smoked tobacco and to offer behavioural support to smokers who want to quit using e-cigarettes.

The NCSCT have produced a useful guide for stop smoking advisors to enable an 'e-cigarette friendly' conversation with clients.

http://www.ncsct.co.uk/publication_electronic_cigarette_briefing.php

The B&NES Healthy Lifestyle Service actively encourages e-cigarette users into the service and can support them in their attempt to cut down, quit completely or to prevent relapse to smoking.

E-cigarettes can be used safely in conjunction with NRT, such as patches for example, similar to the use of other oral nicotine products such as gum, lozenges or inhalators.

People wanting more information about using e-cigarettes to cut down or quit can be given the patient leaflet 'To vape or not to vape' available from the Healthy Lifestyle Service on 01225 831852 or email: healthylifestyleservice@sirona-cic.org.uk for copies.

⁷ 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

The above leaflet also reinforces safety considerations when using e-cigarettes including the need to ensure the safe storage of e-liquids away from children and pets and the importance of using the correct chargers for the device to avoid fire risk. Clients should also be advised to look out for the CE mark that indicates chargers comply with European Safety standards.

The Healthy Lifestyle Service can provide information, advice and training where required on e-cigarettes and how best to support e-cigarette users to improve skills and confidence on this subject.

E-cigarettes on prescription

We will only prescribe products for smoking cessation that are licensed by the Medicines and Healthcare Regulatory Authority (MHRA).

At present there is only one e-cigarette that has been licensed as a medicine by the MHRA. This product is produced by British American Tobacco and is currently not available on the market for purchase. When this product does come to market B&NES Council will not be recommending that it is provided on prescription to patients for the following reasons:

- It is a first generation e-cigarette with inefficient delivery of nicotine. Second and third generation (tank) e-cigarettes on the market are much more efficient at delivering nicotine.
- It provides a 15mg/ml dose of nicotine. How much nicotine a person requires depends on their levels of current smoking. People will need to try different levels to find out what suits them.
- The e-cigarette market is continuing to develop, many different forms exist in terms of delivery mechanisms, technology and nicotine concentrations. People differ in how they use these devices and we would encourage people to find a product that suit their needs.

B&NES Council will keep abreast of new developments in relation to licensed e-cigarette products and review our policy regularly.

Children and Young People

Behaviorally, adolescents have been found to be more sensitive to nicotine and more likely to develop dependence than adults, even with relatively low amounts of nicotine exposure, and more likely to have continued use into adulthood.

Since October 2015 regulations to protect children make it an offence to sell e-cigarettes to anyone under 18 or to buy e-cigarettes for them. The Tobacco Products Directive which came into force in May 2016 also bans print and broadcast advertising of e-cigarettes and enforces child and tamper proof packaging.

In line with NICE guidance PH10 and the B&NES Harm Reduction Policy professionals working with children and young people who smoke (12 –17yrs) are recommended to:

- Offer young people information, advice and support on how to stop smoking. Encourage use of local NHS Stop Smoking Services by providing details on when, where and how to access them.
- Use professional judgement to decide whether or not to offer Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) to young people over 12 years who show clear evidence of nicotine dependence. If NRT is prescribed, offer it as part of a supervised regime.

This guidance will be regularly updated as new information and evidence emerges.

If you have any questions regarding this guidance please contact:

Cathy McMahan
Development and Commissioning Manager
B&NES Council Public Health team

Cathy_mcmahan@bathnes.gov.uk

01225 394064