

HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

20th April 2023

Report by Corporate Director for Public Health

UPDATE : Smoking and Tobacco Control.

The purpose of this report is to provide a brief update, following presentation and scrutiny of a full report on smoking and tobacco control in September 2023. (embedded below),

At the meeting in September HOSC were particularly interested in the following areas:-

- Work with young people about the addictive potential of e-cigarettes
- Work to consider how the smoke free agenda could be progressed further in light of the cost of living crisis with particular reference to foodbanks
- Work to support social housing tenants who smoke to quit

Oxfordshire Data

At the meeting an overall smoking prevalence of 11.5% for 19/20 was reported. More recent data has been published showing a reduction of 1.3% in smoking prevalence in Oxfordshire to 10.2% for 2021.

New smoking prevalence data was released by OHID in December 2022¹ from the Annual Population Survey (APS) for England².

- As of 2021, according to the Annual Population (APS), Oxfordshire rates remain lower than the England average which is 13.8%³
- Based on the 2021 Mid-year population estimates recording 580,148 adults (18+) in Oxfordshire⁴, this equates to 59,175 Oxfordshire residents smoking.
- Although the overall prevalence is decreasing, this masks significant inequalities within Oxfordshire

A full data briefing can be accessed [here](#) or appended to this report as Annex A.

Work with young people around the addictive potential of e-cigs

Since the meeting, very brief advice (VBA) training related to tobacco and e-cigarettes has taken place with school nurses. The Oxfordshire Public Health Promotion Resource Unit, has ordered 5000 [youth vaping resources](#) to be distributed to schools⁵, including resources for PHSE, posters and leaflets. These are in the

¹ [Adult smoking habits in the UK - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

² [Annual population survey \(APS\) QMI - Office for National Statistics](#)

³ [Local Tobacco Control Profiles - Data - OHID \(phe.org.uk\)](#)

⁴ [ONS Population Estimates](#)

⁵ <https://ash.org.uk/resources/view/ash-brief-for-local-authorities-on-youth-vaping>

process of being adapted for Oxfordshire and made available to schools. Monitoring is in place to understand take up and usage.

Public Health have been working with The Training Effect (TTE), a commissioned service delivering risky behaviours training in schools, to deliver focus groups in schools with teenagers across Oxfordshire asking them about their use and attitudes towards e-cigarettes. From this we will be developing and delivering training to professionals working within schools. The initial focus of these resources will be around the nicotine element of e-cigarettes and the addictive potential.

E-Cigarette Enforcement

Trading standards have been undertaking targeted work regarding the sale of e-cigarettes. The work is designed to ensure that smokers are supported in their attempt to quit by making sure that they have access to legally compliant e-cigarettes, whilst also working to ensure that non-smokers, particularly children, do not have access to such products.

Practically, the two main areas of concern are that there is a significant quantity of non-compliant e-cigarettes in the market (generally disposable vapes with excess nicotine strength, excess capacity and/or with labelling failures such as a lack of warnings and UK contact details) and that anecdotal accounts point to a significant number of children (previous non-smokers) taking up vaping – even if only as a temporary act.

In response, trading standards have undertaken a range of activities designed to educate retailers, raise awareness of the above issues and pursue non-compliances with underaged test purchasing and the seizure of non-compliant products.

In 2022:

- 31 advice visits have been made to businesses, following up complaints of possible underaged sales being made. During these visits practical advice and resources are provided, aimed at reducing the likelihood of a sale being made to a child, such as information on age verification checks, 'Think 25' policy, the maintaining of a refusals book, age warning till prompts and posters that can be displayed on the premises.
- Since June 2022 alone, 2,399 illegal e-cigarettes have been seized (all excess strength or capacity devices)
- 34 test purchases have been made. Test purchases include the use of a underaged test purchaser, attempting to purchase a product, under the direction of trading standards officers
- 5 UAS investigations have been completed, resulting in 3 prosecutions and 2 resolved via other appropriate means
- 4 more UAS investigations are in progress, following sales made in November and January
- 1 business is under investigation for continuing to sell illegal high capacity vapes after being previously warned and having over 500 devices seized
- A dedicated page is available on our public website providing advice to businesses and includes photos of previously identified, non-compliant product

- All secondary schools in Oxfordshire have been contacted, with advice on how to report concerns/intelligence to trading standards
- Several media and public awareness opportunities have been used to support Public Health messaging and to advise/warn businesses selling such products, including BBC Radio Oxford and national press
- Oxfordshire officers are sharing intelligence and best practice with colleagues regionally and nationally, as well as other partners such as the Police and district councils (licensing and community safety)

Cost of Living Crisis

Visits were undertaken to two food banks to understand how we can best take work forward. Discussions with individuals attending who were smokers found initially they did not want to quit, they felt written information would be disregarded and the attendance of a Stop Smoking Advisor was not popular (and capacity wise would be difficult). However, further conversation found attendees thinking otherwise about potentially quitting. This has prompted the development of VBA training for food bank volunteers (which will also be available to debt support workers). At the most recent Tobacco Control Alliance we explored further ways of reaching people in cost-of-living crisis and are exploring a pilot offering direct supply of vouchers.

We currently offer clients of the Family Nurse Partnership and a significant partner who smoke, vouchers for successfully quitting smoking (based on strong evidence review). This scheme will be extended to up to five household contacts to support Smoke Free Homes.

Work to support social housing tenants to quit

A toolkit has been developed for social housing providers along with bespoke VBA Training for staff with a pathway to our local Stop Smoking Service Provider (while we are exploring other ways of supporting tenants to quit which could include things like e-cigarette vouchers or direct supply).

Full report as presented on 22nd September embedded is appended to Annex B to this report

