

Press release

E-cigarettes: an emerging public health consensus

From: [Public Health England](#)

First published: 15 September 2015

Part of: [Smoking](#)

Joint statement on e-cigarettes by Public Health England and other UK public health organisations.

We all agree that e-cigarettes are significantly less harmful than smoking. One in 2 lifelong smokers dies from their addiction. All of the evidence suggests that the health risks posed by e-cigarettes are relatively small by comparison but we must continue to study the long term effects.

And yet, millions of smokers have the impression that e-cigarettes are at least as harmful as tobacco and we have a responsibility to provide clear information on the facts as we know them to be. It is our duty to provide reassurance for the 1.1 million e-cigarette users who have completely stopped smoking to prevent their relapse.

To be clear, the public health opportunity is in helping smokers to quit, so we may encourage smokers to try vaping but we certainly encourage vapers to stop smoking tobacco completely.

We know that e-cigarettes are the most popular quitting tool in the country with [more than 10 times as many people](#) using them than using local stop smoking services. But, we also know that using local stop smoking services is by far the most effective way to quit.

What we need to do is combine the most popular method with the most effective and that is why we are encouraging those who want to use e-cigarettes to quit smoking to seek the help of their local stop smoking service.

The current national evidence is that in the UK regular e-cigarette use is almost exclusively confined to those young people who smoke, and youth smoking prevalence is continuing to fall. This is an area that we will continue to research and keep under closest surveillance. In October this year, regulations to protect children will make it an offence to sell e-cigarettes to anyone under 18 or to buy e-cigarettes for them and within a year the [EU Tobacco Products Directive](#) proposes a ban on all print and broadcast advertising of e-cigarettes as part of a full range of regulations.

The concerns on [Public Health England's evidence review](#), raised by McKee and Capewell in the BMJ today, are not new and have [been covered](#) and [fully responded](#) to before.

We should not forget what is important here. We know that smoking is the number one killer in England and we have a public health responsibility to provide smokers with the information and the tools to help them quit smoking completely and forever.

PHE has always been very clear on its commitment to providing up to date information on the emerging evidence on e-cigarettes, as shown in the [recent review](#) which is the [third in this area](#) in the last 2 years. This commitment drove PHE and Cancer Research UK to set up the [UK E-cigarette Research Forum](#). PHE is honouring its longstanding promise to monitor and share the evidence, providing clear messages to the public.

There is no circumstance in which it is better for a smoker to continue smoking – a habit that kills 1 in every 2 and harms many others, costing the NHS and society billions every year. We will continue to share what we know and address what we don't yet know, to ensure clear, consistent messages for the public and health professionals.

Public Health England

Action on Smoking and Health

Association of Directors of Public Health

British Lung Foundation

Cancer Research UK

Faculty of Public Health

Fresh North East

Public Health Action (PHA)

Royal College of Physicians

Royal Society for Public Health

Tobacco Free Futures

UK Centre for Tobacco and Alcohol Studies

UK Health Forum