

## Smokefree Generation: Stopping the start

### Report of the Director of Public Health, Communities & Prosperity

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Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Cabinet (and confirmation under the provisions of the Council's Constitution) before taking effect.

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#### 1) Recommendation

1.1 That the Cabinet:

- (a) Note the additional funding allocated to Devon County Council to enhance local stop smoking services and tackle the rise in youth vaping.
- (b) Receive a presentation to be given at the meeting.

#### 2) Background / Introduction

- 2.1 In October 2023 the Department of Health and Social Care launched its policy paper, *Stopping the Start: our new plan to create a smokefree generation* ([smokefree generation](#)). The policy sets out the Government's ambition to create the first smokefree generation by bringing forward legislation so that children turning 15 this year or younger will never be legally sold tobacco products. The Tobacco and Vapes Bill was introduced to Parliament on the 20<sup>th</sup> March 2023.
- 2.2 Tobacco is the single most important entirely preventable cause of ill health, disability and death in this country, responsible for 64,000 deaths in England every year. Smoking causes around 1 in 4 of all UK cancer deaths, responsible for the great majority of lung cancer cases, and is a major cause of premature heart disease, stroke and heart failure.
- 2.3 Smoking is the single biggest cause of health inequality in England. The more disadvantaged someone is, the more likely they are to smoke and to suffer from smoking-related disease and early death. At present the smoking rate for Devon County Council is 13.9% (12.9% England average) but this masks huge variations across communities with rates varying from 8% to 21%. Prevalence in routine and manual workers is 26%.
- 2.4 Over 80% of smokers started smoking before they turned 20, with many starting as children. The evidence also shows that most smokers want to quit but struggle due to addiction to nicotine.
- 2.5 The Government has announced a number of measures and financial investment to support the policy including:

- An additional £70million per year for 5 years to support local authority-led stop smoking services
- Funding for new national anti-smoking campaigns
- Roll out of new national 'Swap to Stop' scheme (encouraging smokers to swap their cigarettes for vapes).
- Action on vapes including restricting disposal (single use) vapes, restricting flavours, point of sale and preventing industry giving out free samples of vapes to children.
- Additional funding to support enforcement agencies including Trading Standards, Border Force and HMRC to tackle illicit trade. Under the bill, enforcement officers' powers will also be strengthened with 'on the spot fines' of £100 to uphold the new laws and clamp down on underage sales of tobacco and vaping products. This builds on a maximum £2,500 fine that local authorities can already impose.

### **3) Proposal**

- 3.1 Devon County Councils share of the £70million equates to approximately £949,746 for 2024/25 and is ring-fenced for use on local stop smoking services and support.
- 3.2 The funding allocation is for local authorities to support the delivery of a set of ambitious enhanced local stop smoking targets. The metric measure will be the number of smokers setting a quit date, with a target that the current level will increase by 25% in 2024-25, followed by further increases year on year during the 5 year period.
- 3.3 The additional funding will be used to build capacity in local stop smoking services areas to respond to increased demand, but will also be utilised to:
- stimulate more quit attempts by providing more smokers with advice and swift support
  - link smokers to the most effective interventions to quit
  - boost existing behavioural support schemes designed to encourage smokers to quit (for example the 'swap to stop' scheme)
  - provide system leadership for evidence-based tobacco control
  - strengthen partnerships in local healthcare systems
  - ensure a focus on reducing inequalities, by prioritising key population groups and adapting services to meet the needs of those living with multiple complexities.
- 3.4 In addition to the funding to support local stop smoking services, funding will be allocated to Devon Trading Standards Service to enhance enforcement to tackle illicit sales of tobacco and vapes.

### **4) Strategic Plan**

- 4.1 The funding will support Devon County Council strategic plan as smoking is not only the biggest cause of inequalities in health, but it also has a significant detrimental impact on many other elements in society. Some of these impacts are detailed below, according to DCC's strategic priorities.

#### 4.2 **Be ambitious for children and young people**

The government has made clear they wish to create a smokefree generation unaffected by the extraordinary harms of addiction-driven smoking, and tackle youth vaping. This grant would help realise the ambition of the Smokefree Generation programme, including advocating for the changes to the age of sale legislation for tobacco, and reducing adult smoking prevalence, the biggest influence on smoking uptake in young people. It will support the existing Smokefree Devon Alliance strategy, which has three priorities, including: “Protect children and young people from the harms of tobacco and de-normalise tobacco use to help prevent uptake”.

#### 4.3 **Tackle poverty and inequality**

Smoking is the single biggest cause of health inequality in England. The more disadvantaged someone is, the more likely they are to smoke and to suffer from smoking-related disease and early death. Nationally, research showed one in five (21%) of smoking households in the UK were living below the poverty line, with long-term smokers being 7.5% less likely to be employed than non-smokers and smokers earning, on average, 6.8% less than non-smokers. Smoking has a huge financial cost to the individual; smoking 10 cigarettes per day will cost approximately £364 per month and £4368 per year. In total, an estimated £287.8 million is spent on legal and illicit tobacco per year in Devon (ASH, 2023).

#### 4.4 **Improve health and wellbeing**

Smoking is the leading cause of premature, preventable death, killing up to half of its users. On average, lifelong cigarette smokers die 10 years younger than non-smokers. Smoking harms nearly every organ of the body and affects a person's overall health. It has a significant cost to the healthcare system, with smoking-related hospital admissions and the treatment of smoking related illness via primary care costing £29.7million in Devon (ASH, 2023).

#### 4.5 **Support sustainable economic recovery**

Smoking negatively affects earnings and employment prospects; the cumulative impact of these effects amounts to productivity losses of £475.3million per year in Devon (ASH, 2023). Many people who develop a smoking-related illness will be severely impacted in their ability to perform routine activities, eventually requiring support from social care services; it is estimated that smoking costs social care services £17.4million per year in Devon alone (ASH, 2023).

#### 4.6 **Help communities be safe, connected and resilient**

The illicit tobacco trade is often part of organised criminal activity and is linked to a range of other illegal trades including alcohol production, people-trafficking and drug smuggling. There is also evidence to suggest that the illicit tobacco trade funds terrorism (Fresh, 2024). Reducing illicit tobacco helps protect our communities, as well as prevent uptake and maintenance of smoking behaviours, particularly in children and young people.

### 5) **Financial Considerations**

5.1 Devon County Council has been awarded £949,746 for 2024/25 and is ring-fenced for use on local stop smoking services and support. The funding is confirmed for

the next five years, but each LA allocation will be recalculated based on smoking prevalence each year. It is not expected that funding levels will change significantly. A key requirement of accepting the additional funding is that current funding levels on smoking cessation must remain the same.

## **6) Legal Considerations**

6.1 The lawful implications of the proposal have been considered in the preparation of this report.

## **7) Environmental Impact Considerations (Climate Change)**

7.1 The tobacco industry is a major contributor to both human and environmental damage. Tobacco products pollute the air with toxic smoke and the ground with waste, but the entire life cycle of products is damaging to the environment (Tobacco Tactics, 2022).

## **8) Equality Considerations**

8.1 The service aligns to the Equality Act and DCC's Equality and Diversity Policies.

## **9) Risk Management Considerations**

9.1 This proposal has been assessed and all necessary safeguards or action have been taken/ included to safeguard the Council's position.

## **10) Summary**

10.1 In summary we ask Cabinet to note the report and presentation and support the additional actions to tackle the current levels of smoking in Devon and to tackle the rising levels of children vaping in Devon.

**Steve Brown:** Director Public Health, Communities & Prosperity

**Electoral Divisions:** All

Cabinet Member for Public Health, Councillor Roger Croad

## **Local Government Act 1972: List of background papers**

NIL

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