

City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee(s): City of London Health & Wellbeing Board	Dated: 09/05/2025
Subject: Health Impacts of Vaping	Public report: Public
This proposal: City of London Corporation's Corporate Plan 2024-2029	Providing excellent services
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of:	Dr. Sandra Husbands City and Hackney Director of Public Health
Report author:	Nickie Bazell Senior Public Health Specialist Ann McNeill Professor of Tobacco Addiction, Kings College of London

Summary

Tobacco smoking remains the biggest cause of preventable illness and premature death and the leading cause of health inequalities. Local work to tackle the harms of smoking are informed by the latest best practice guidance, which recommends use of legal vapes as a cessation tool among smokers age 18+.

However, use of nicotine vapes is not risk free, which is why we are implementing a range of measures to prevent and discourage their use among children and young people and all non-smokers.

Keeping abreast of the latest evidence around the relative health harms of vapes is essential to informing our local tobacco control plans.

This report summarises the eighth independent evidence review on vaping, led by King's College London and international collaborators, and commissioned by the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID).

The report offers a comprehensive, systematic review of the health risks of nicotine vaping. It will be presented by Professor Ann McNeill, lead author and researcher, who will provide updated evidence.

The main areas covered include:

- health risks
- harm perceptions
- role of vaping in smoking cessation.

The report also describes the key components of a new City and Hackney vaping position statement (informed by the latest evidence), which was recently developed and endorsed by the local Tobacco Control Alliance.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the content of this report (and the more detailed presentation that will be made to the Board), highlighting the latest evidence on vaping.
- Consider and respond to the following questions:
 1. Does the Board endorse the evidence-based City and Hackney vaping position statement, which was co-developed with the local Tobacco Control Alliance (TCA)?
 2. How can the Health and Wellbeing Board, as a collective body and as leaders within your organisations, support implementation of the City and Hackney vaping position statement and reinforce the messages contained within the statement?

Main Report

1. Background

- 1.1. Tobacco smoking remains the biggest cause of preventable illness and premature death (accounting for almost 75,000 deaths a year in England) and the leading cause of health inequalities (accounting for half the difference in life expectancy between the richest and poorest in society).
- 1.2. Locally, work to combat tobacco-related harms is led by the City & Hackney TCA. To maximize the potential for reducing smoking-related harms, it is essential that the TCA's efforts are guided by the latest evidence and regulatory/legislative framework.
- 1.3. National policies and guidance now support the use of vaping as a smoking cessation aid for adults, due to significant evidence regarding its effectiveness and lesser harm compared to smoking. For example, the latest NICE guidance recommends nicotine vapes as a 'first line' treatment as part of an evidence-based stop smoking service offer. And the government's "Swap to Stop" scheme aims to improve national health and lower smoking rates by motivating up to one million smokers to transition from cigarettes to vapes.
- 1.4. In line with these efforts, the Tobacco and Vapes Bill represents one of the most significant public health interventions in a generation. It aims to create the first smokefree generation by making it illegal to sell tobacco products to anyone born on or after January 1, 2009, ensuring that those turning 15 this year or younger can never legally purchase tobacco. The Bill also targets youth vaping through new powers to

restrict vape flavours, packaging and point-of-sale displays, while extending similar restrictions to non-nicotine vapes and nicotine pouches. It will also empower trading standards officers in England and Wales to take immediate action against underage tobacco and vape sales, strengthening enforcement.

- 1.5. On 26 March 2025, MPs voted overwhelmingly in favour of advancing the Bill and it is currently at the second reading stage in the House of Lords.
- 1.6. The importance of evidence-based policymaking in shaping these efforts is underscored by the comprehensive findings in a recent OHID report (McNeill, et al, 2022), which has been integrated into the TCA's plans. Updated evidence, which will further inform these discussions, will be presented to the Board by Professor Ann McNeill. The key conclusions of the OHID report are summarized below.

2. Health risks

- 2.1. In the short and medium term, vaping poses a small fraction of the risks of smoking.
- 2.2. Whilst long-term data are not yet available, biomarkers can be used as intermediate indicators of harm. Data on these suggest that the long-term health impacts of vaping are lower compared to smoking.
- 2.3. Toxicants were of a similar or higher level in people who vaped compared to those not using nicotine products (absolute risk) indicating that vaping is not risk-free, particularly for those who have never smoked.
- 2.4. Six studies have looked at the health risks of secondhand exposure to vapes. The evidence suggests there is no significant increase in toxicant biomarkers after short-term secondhand exposure to vaping.
- 2.5. Fires, explosions and poisonings are risks from vape use. These risks are serious but rare. Fires are much more likely to be caused by cigarettes than vapes - in London between 2017 and 2021, cigarettes were the source of ignition for over 5,000 fires, vapes for 15.

3. The role of vaping in smoking cessation

- 3.1. Vaping products remain the most common aid used by people to help them stop smoking.
- 3.2. Misinformation persists on vaping harms and can influence people's subsequent vaping and smoking behaviour.
- 3.3. Communicating accurate information about the relative harms of vaping can help to correct misperceptions of vaping, particularly among adults.
- 3.4. Interventions on absolute harms of vaping that aim to deter young people need to be carefully designed so they do not misinform people (particularly people who smoke) about the relative harms of smoking and vaping.

McNeill, A., Brose, L. S., Calder, R., & Hitchman, S. C. (2022). Nicotine vaping in England: 2022 evidence update. Office for Health Improvement and Disparities.

4. **Current Position**

- 4.1. The City and Hackney TCA has applied the latest evidence on vaping in co-developing a vaping position statement, to inform local policy and action to minimise the risks and to maximise the benefits of vaping.
- 4.2. The TCA vaping position statement includes the following principles, with further details laid out in the statement document appended to this report:
 - a. harms of tobacco use
 - b. relative harms of vaping
 - c. effectiveness of vapes as harm reduction tools
 - d. prevention
 - e. unacceptable marketing practices
 - f. commitment to ongoing review
- 4.3. Principle f. commits the TCA to review this position statement on a regular basis, in response to emerging evidence on relative harms and to ensure it continues to align with national policy and regulatory frameworks.

5. **Options**

N/A

6. **Proposals**

- 6.1. The primary recommendation is for members of this Board to familiarise themselves with the latest evidence on the health harms of vaping, as summarised in this report and to be presented by Professor Ann McNeill at the Board meeting on 9 May.
- 6.2. The Board is also asked to consider how they can support implementation of the City and Hackney TCA vaping position statement (which is based on the latest evidence), including reinforcing the messages contained within the statement.

7. **Key Data**

- 7.1. In stop smoking services in England in 2020 to 2021, quit attempts involving a vaping product were associated with the highest success rates (64.9% compared with 58.6% for attempts not involving a vaping product).
- 7.2. Research from University College London suggests that vapes could help up to an extra 70,000 smokers quit in England.
- 7.3. In 2021, only 34% of adults who smoked *accurately* believed that vaping was less harmful than smoking. Only 11% of adults who smoked knew that none or a small proportion of the risks of smoking were due to nicotine. Inaccurate perceptions need to be addressed in order to reduce the significant harm caused by tobacco smoking.

8. Corporate & Strategic Implications

- 8.1. **Strategic Implications** - As the leading cause of poor health and inequalities, comprehensive tobacco control is crucial to the success of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy. To maximise the potential for reducing smoking-related harm, the City and Hackney TCA's efforts must be informed by the latest evidence, ensuring equitable access to proven support for quitting. The TCA's vaping position statement directly contributes to a key outcome of the Corporate Plan: the delivery of excellent services.

9. Financial implications - N/A

10. Resource implications - N/A

11. Legal implications - N/A

12. Risk implications - N/A

13. Equalities implications

- 13.1. Tobacco use continues to be the leading preventable cause of death, disease, and disability in our communities. Reducing smoking rates among disadvantaged groups is the most effective way to tackle health inequalities.
- 13.2. By implementing a vaping position statement that maximises the benefits and minimises the risks of vaping within local City smoking cessation programs, the TCA will help reduce smoking prevalence and alleviate the health burden caused by tobacco use, particularly among the most vulnerable populations

14. Climate implications

- 14.1. Every stage of the tobacco supply chain poses serious environmental consequences, including deforestation, the use of fossil fuels and the dumping or leaking of waste products into the natural environment. Action to reduce use of tobacco products will, consequently, have positive environmental impacts. An important amendment to the Tobacco and Vapes Bill was proposed to ban all filters for cigarettes.
- 14.2. The single use vape ban goes into effect on June 1, 2025, a significant success given the environmental impact from improper disposal. Ensuring the safe disposal and recycling of vapes is critical to mitigate their environmental impact and reduce harm to the climate. The TCA vaping position statement directs all retailers to fulfill their legal duty to provide recycling facilities for used and unwanted vape products.

15. Security implications - N/A

16. Conclusion

- 16.1. Although significant progress has been made in addressing tobacco smoking both nationally and locally in recent years, it remains the leading cause of preventable disease and death, and continues to be one of the most significant contributors to health inequalities. Offering effective smoking cessation programs, based on the latest evidence and including the use of vapes to aid in quitting, is essential to reducing smoking-related harm - as part of a broader tobacco control strategy.

17. Appendices

Appendix 1: Full presentation by Professor Ann McNeill to be delivered to the City of London Corporation Health and Wellbeing Board

Appendix 2: City and Hackney Tobacco Control Alliance Vaping Position Statement

Nickie Bazell

Senior Public Health Specialist

E: nickie.bazell@cityandhackneyph.hackney.gov.uk