

# Information

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## for County Councillors

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To:	All County Councillors
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## Electronic cigarettes (E-cigs)

### Summary

Somerset Stop Smoking Services, in common with the rest of England, has seen a substantial fall in numbers of people seeking to quit smoking through the formal Support to Stop Smoking Services. It is believed that one of the reasons for this decline is the rise of vaping with E-cigs as an alternative to smoking. This briefing is to advise you that [Smokefreelife Somerset](#), our commissioned stop smoking provider, will shortly become an overtly E-cig friendly service. This means it will actively encourage smokers who wish to quit using their own E-cig to use the stop smoking service.

### Key points for members

1. **Please encourage smokers to use the free Smokefreelife Somerset stop smoking service.**
2. Make sure smokers realize that E-cigs are vastly safer than continuing to smoke tobacco. 1 in 2 lifelong smokers die from diseases caused by smoking. **The current best estimate is that e-cigarettes are around 95% less harmful than smoking.**
3. Smokefreelife Somerset cannot provide E-cigs, but using their support alongside an E-cig will greatly increase chances of a successful quit.
4. Smokers should try vaping and vapers should stop smoking entirely.

### Detail

The Smoking in England study shows that using an E-cig for a quit attempt is now the most popular method at 41%. Other studies show that smokers who want to quit using an E-cig are much more likely to succeed with support from a stop smoking service. The latest data from services nationally shows that using an E-cig with stop smoking service support is the most successful treatment method.

At present, E-cigs are not licensed as medicines meaning stop smoking services cannot provide them. However, all stop smoking services in the North East and in Leicester have become overtly E-cig friendly services, following [advice from the National Centre for Smoking Cessation and Treatment](#) (NCSCT). This means they actively encourage smokers who wish to quit with an E-cig to make use of their support services. Smokefreelife Somerset will shortly become overtly E-cig friendly, to encourage smokers to use their highly effective support in combination with an E-cig.

Recently, Public Health England published a [review of the evidence](#) on vaping, concluding that **e-cigarettes are significantly less harmful to health than tobacco** and have the potential to help smokers quit smoking.

Key findings of the review include:

- the current best estimate is that e-cigarettes are around 95% less harmful than smoking
- nearly half the population (44.8%) don't realise e-cigarettes are much less harmful than smoking
- there is no evidence so far that e-cigarettes are acting as a route into smoking for children or non-smokers.

Professor Ann McNeill, King's College London and independent author of the review, said:

"There is no evidence that e-cigarettes are undermining England's falling smoking rates. Instead the evidence consistently finds that e-cigarettes are another tool for stopping smoking and in my view smokers should try vaping and vapers should stop smoking entirely."

The Somerset schools survey in 2014 also showed no evidence that never smokers were using E-cigs, other than brief experimentation. Virtually all usage was in current or ex-smokers. The survey will be repeated in 2016 to check if this remains the case. Fears that E-cigs will act as a gateway to smoking tobacco have so far proved unfounded. The limited evidence to date suggests the opposite effect, with smokers using E-cigs to quit smoking.

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