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ALDERNEY

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25 March, 2022



Dear parents / carers,

### **Re Electronic Cigarettes / Vapes and Young People**

The most recent Young People's Survey in Guernsey and Alderney (2019) found that 29% of boys and 23% of girls, in years 8 and 10, said that they had at least tried electronic cigarettes and 3% of boys and 1% of girls responded that they used electronic cigarettes 'regularly' (once a week or more). However, young people's services and educational settings have recently reported an increase in the number of students vaping, particularly amongst younger pupils in years 7 and 8. As there are various misconceptions of the health risks to young people of vaping, this information aims to provide you with the up-to-date health information and key messages to communicate to your child around the use of electronic cigarettes / vapes.

#### What are electronic cigarettes?

- There are different types of electronic cigarette. The first generation looked like regular cigarettes, but they now come in different sizes and shapes. They consist of an atomizer, a power source and a container such as a cartridge or tank. Instead of smoke, the user inhales vapour.
- Electronic cigarettes work by super heating liquid nicotine and turning it into vapour (a bit like steam). When this vapour is inhaled it is absorbed by the mouth and lungs and enters the blood stream. When the nicotine hits the brain, it produces effects similar to smoking.

#### What are the facts about electronic cigarettes?

- Electronic cigarettes are thought to be far less harmful for health than smoking tobacco, as the user doesn't inhale the many harmful substances such as carbon monoxide and tar. However, e-cigarettes can produce other toxic chemicals and have not been around long enough for us to know the long-term impacts on health. What we do know is, that if young people have never smoked, they should not start vaping.
- Using an electronic cigarette generally means that someone will remain addicted to nicotine (unless they always use a zero-nicotine e-cig).
- Nicotine can have a negative impact on teens and young adults. Nicotine adversely affects the parts of the adolescent brain responsible for attention, learning and memory. It can also worsen anxiety.



- A number of e-cigarette companies are owned by big tobacco companies. With cigarette smoking rates dropping, these companies need to find new customers – they claim they don't target young people, but research shows most young people try vaping because of the appealing flavours.
- There is a risk that young people will use vapes, become addicted to nicotine and / or move on to tobacco smoking.
- If guidelines are not followed, e-cigarettes represent a fire hazard when charging or using the batteries.
- If an electronic cigarette is modified or altered, it can be highly dangerous. Modifying electronic cigarettes is an increasingly popular pursuit.
- It can be difficult to identify, just by looking, if an e-cigarette has been modified to burn cannabis or another illegal drug. Electronic cigarettes are not currently regulated in Guernsey which means that there is no restriction on the content of products sold in Guernsey, increasing risk.

#### Key messages to young people about using electronic cigarettes/vapes:

- Using electronic cigarettes is safer than smoking tobacco, however, people would only be advised to use e-cigarettes as an aid to quitting smoking and preferably after they have already tried licensed nicotine replacement products, such as patches or gum.
- The long-term health impacts of using electronic cigarettes are unknown and therefore they are not appropriate for any child to use.
- Most electronic cigarettes contain nicotine. Nicotine is highly addictive and affects two different chemicals in the brain. If young people want to stop using e-cigarettes that contain nicotine, they might find this difficult as they will be addicted to the effects of the nicotine. Nicotine also changes adolescent brain cell activity in the parts of the brain responsible for attention, learning and memory and can also worsen anxiety.
- The strength of e-liquids ranges from zero nicotine, up to or 2%. Again, it's difficult to tell, just by looking, what exactly is in the e-liquid so most young people do not know what they are vaping.
- It is illegal for retailers to sell any nicotine products to under 18's.

#### What to do if you're concerned:

- If you have concerns that your child is vaping, then we would encourage you to have an open conversation with them about the facts of using electronic cigarettes.
- You can contact Quitline Guernsey or Action for Children for advice on talking to your child about using electronic cigarettes and the risks involved.

#### Contact details:

Action for Children – 01481 700218 / <https://www.facebook.com/AFCguernsey>

Quitline Guernsey – 01481 220021



The Health Improvement Commission – [grace.lindsay@healthimprovement.gg](mailto:grace.lindsay@healthimprovement.gg) / 01481 210423

Yours sincerely,



Mr M A Winward  
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