



CABINET

11 June 2025

Subject Heading:

Tobacco Harm Reduction Strategy 2024-2029

Cabinet Member:

Councillor Gillian Ford

ELT Lead:

Mark Ansell, Director for Public Health

Report Author and contact details:

Kate Ezeoke-Griffiths

01708 434 214

Kate.Ezeoke-Griffiths@havering.gov.uk

Policy context:

This strategy supports Havering Council to meet its People Theme priorities of ensuring that people are helped to live independent, socially connected and healthier lives as set out in the Corporate Plan 2022/23 – 2026/2.

Addressing the wider determinants of health, including lifestyle factors such as smoking behaviour, supports the vision and broader objectives of reducing smoking-related harms and inequalities as set out in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Place Based Partnership Strategy.

Financial summary:

Delivery of the strategy will be supported largely by government grant and public health grant. In 2023, the government announced commitment to five-year funding to local authorities from 2024/25 to 2028/29 to boost stop smoking activities as part of national drive to achieve a smoke-free England by 2030. In 2024-25 Havering was allocated £307,543 and £315,471 in 2025-26. Public health grant contribution is £36,040.

Is this a Key Decision?

Yes. Expenditure of £500,000 or more and Significant effect on two or more Wards

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When should this matter be reviewed? Not applicable

Reviewing OSC: Not applicable

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

- People - Supporting our residents to stay safe and well X
- Place - A great place to live, work and enjoy
- Resources - Enabling a resident-focused and resilient Council

SUMMARY

This five year Tobacco Harm Reduction strategy sets out the vision and aims of the Havering Tobacco Harm Reduction Partnership (THRP) group to jointly reduce tobacco harm and address the rising youth vaping in line with national ambition of creating a smoke-free society by 2030 set out in the National Tobacco Control Plan and the 2023 policy paper Stopping the start: our new plan to create a smokefree generation.

The strategy outlines a comprehensive approach to tackle tobacco use and its associated harms emphasising collaboration with various partners, enabling more people to stop smoking, preventing smoking initiation among youth, creating and expanding smoke-free environments to protect children and vulnerable from second-hand smoke whilst also strengthening regulation and enforcement.

Insight into the extent of smoking and vaping, the impact, challenges and groups disproportionately affected by smoking are highlighted in the strategy as well as the growing trend of youth vaping propelled by significant vapes marketing to young people.

Recommendations from the Tobacco Harm Reduction needs assessment such as expansion of local services, prioritised tailored support for groups with high smoking levels, training of health and social care professionals, communication and strengthened capacity of trading standards underpin the ambition and strategic objectives and the need for tailored interventions to address the inequalities caused by smoking.

There are four clear strategic priorities set out over the coming years as below:

- Supporting smokers to quit and reducing variation in smoking rates.
- Prevention - empowering individuals to avoid smoking and vaping.
- Creating smoke-free environments
- Strengthening local regulation and enforcement

Progress will be tracked by specific targets and indicators with a focus on achieving a downward trend in smoking prevalence by 2028/29. Delivery is through a yearly action plan, refreshed annually in line with funding allocation, reflecting new developments and Havering changing needs. The strategy incorporates feedback from public consultation and has been agreed by the Health and Wellbeing Board on 7th May 2025 to proceed to cabinet for approval.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is recommended to approve the Havering Tobacco Harm Reduction Strategy 2024-2029 for implementation.

REPORT DETAIL

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The Tobacco harm reduction strategy outlines the extent of smoking and vaping, impact on individual and society whilst highlighting groups most affected by smoking, the challenges and priorities to reducing smoking and youth vaping in the coming years.

Overview and Impact

Smoking harms nearly every organ of the body and causes serious harm to the health of both smokers and non-smokers. Many preventable illnesses such as cancer, heart and lung diseases, which result in premature deaths, are primarily caused by smoking. 72% of lung cancer cases in the UK are caused by smoking. Smoking in pregnancy impacts the unborn child and its development. In men it is a major risk factor for impotence whilst in women it is associated with increased risk of early natural menopause.

Havering has seen a fluctuation in adult smoking prevalence in recent years rising from 10.3% in 2021 to 15.9% 2022. A three-year range (2021 to 2023) indicates 12.4% (25,560) of adults smoke, against 11.6% for London and 12.4% for England according to data from the Office of Health Improvement and Disparities. However, there is a clear disparity in smoking in Havering. Certain demographic groups are more disproportionately affected by smoking with higher rates among the main white population, males, those with substance misuse addiction and those with severe mental health conditions. Higher levels of smoking also exist amongst those in routine and manual occupation as well as people living in rented accommodation.

Economically, smoking has costs implications for individuals, and it is estimated that 32,500 residents that smoke collectively spend £78.5M annually on tobacco, equating to around £2,400 per smoker per year according to Action on Smoking and Health, ASH. Given the prevailing high cost of living, quitting smoking will provide additional benefit in terms of savings made to incomes.

To the wider society impact are wide ranging including working days lost due to sickness absence, NHS costs for treatment of smoking caused illnesses, damage as well as injury caused by cigarettes fires.

Environmental impact associated with smoking is evident in every stage of the tobacco supply chain –this includes deforestation for cultivation, energy-intensive curing processes, manufacturing and packaging and the widespread cigarette butt litter.

This five-year tobacco harm reduction strategy is in response to the 2023 Stopping the Start Policy Paper; the National Tobacco Control Plan and it is underpinned by recommendations from the tobacco harm reduction needs assessment. The strategy development has been in partnership with a range of council services including community mental health services, learning disability Team, education and trading standards as well as with key external stakeholder organisations such as BHRUT, ICB, community pharmacists and the Voluntary sector.

Recommendations and Progress

Key recommendations from the needs assessment include re-establishing and expanding local stop smoking services, prioritising tailored support to groups with high smoking levels, training of health and social care staff as well as improving public awareness and

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strengthening trading standards capacity whilst ensuring a needs assessment on vaping among young people in Havering is undertaken.

Progress has been made with commissioning of both community pharmacy and specialist adviser led services in 2024, training of frontline staff to improve their skills and knowledge together with year-long extensive public awareness campaigns. These activities have been resourced through additional government grant. Progress has also been made in engaging young people through schools and the Youth Council, but more action is needed.

A Tobacco Harm Reduction Partnership Group, has been established to drive forward the ambition of making Havering smoke free, and has overseen the strategy development. The partnership group will continue to steer the delivery of the strategy.

Strategic priorities

The strategic priorities over the next 5 years outlined are:

- Supporting smokers to quit and reducing variation in smoking rates
- Prevention - to empower individuals, particularly the youth, to avoid smoking and vaping. Measures to tackle youth vaping will include clear messaging on vaping as a smoking cessation tool rather than as a recreational activity, working with young people and educational establishments to develop effective interventions.
- Creating smoke-free environments to protect non-smokers from second-hand smoke - through measures such as encouraging organisational promotion of smokefree environments, supporting staff to quit smoking, exploring policy opportunities to widen smoke-free places in line with proposals in the new smoking and vape bill going through Parliament.
- Strengthening local regulation and enforcement against illicit tobacco sales – supporting government plans to strengthen regulation and enforcement and, working closely with local Trading Standards to step up actions to tackle illegal vapes and cigarettes sales and raise understanding of how to report them

These priorities are supported with commitments and the ultimate goal of achieving year-on-year reduction in the level of smoking across Havering to improve health and well-being of local residents.

Action plan

An annual action plan delivers the commitments set out in the strategy with clear targets and indicators to enable tracking of progress. The action plan is refreshed annually to assess progress and adapt to changing needs with a focus on achieving a downward trend in smoking rates across various demographics year-on-year

Funding

The strategy is resourced largely through the government five - year commitment to boost local authorities stop smoking activities as part of a national ambition to create a 'smoke free generation' with yearly funding from 2024/25 to 2028/29. Havering was allocated

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£307,543 in 2024-25 and £315,471 in 2025-2026. Additional funding of £36,040 comes from the public health grant. Government funding is dependent on Havering continuing to maintain the current spend of £36,040 from the public health grant

Public consultation

Public consultation was conducted from 17th February 2025 to 31st March 2025 and generated 125 responses. The consultation exercise showed that the strategy, its priorities, commitments and recommendations are supported by the respondents. Comments received led to making the strategy more explicit in some areas such as expanding the priority groups to include a focus on children as well as young people particularly, with respect to tackling vaping. The strategy incorporates key findings from the consultation exercise. The consultation report is included as an appendix.

On 7th May 2025 the Health and Wellbeing Board agreed the strategy to proceed to cabinet for approval.

REASONS AND OPTIONS

Smoking is the leading cause of avoidable ill health such as cancer, heart and lung diseases and results in premature deaths as set out in the strategy. In Havering the number of smokers has recently shown an increase reversing previous trend with clear disparity in smoking amongst different groups.

Smoking leads to costs for the individual, the wider society including children and young people as well as damaging for the environment.

Reducing smoking within these groups and in the wider population will improve overall health and wellbeing. In addition, given the prevailing high cost of living, quitting smoking will provide additional benefit in terms of savings to income.

The government's five-year funding commitment to support local authorities' activities to drive down smoking and tackle rising vapes supports a strategic and sustained plan to fulfil the ambition of a smoke free Havering by 2030.

Adoption of the strategy is therefore recommended to reduce the harm caused by smoking and vaping among residents.

Other options considered:

Do nothing -Not recommended due to the harm caused by smoking and disproportional impact to specific groups. A 'do nothing' option will not demonstrate Council's commitment and duty to improve the health and wellbeing of its residents. Reducing smoking prevalence and enabling people not to smoke cannot be achieved in a short timescale hence, a long-term collaborative strategy is required to achieve measurable and sustained progress.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

This report is seeking approval from Cabinet to implement the Havering Tobacco Harm Reduction Strategy 2024-2029.

The strategy outlines four strategic aims including preventing take up of smoking, helping people who smoke and vape to quit, creating smoke free environments and strengthening regulation and enforcement against illicit tobacco sales.

The strategy will be funded predominantly through the government's five-year smoking cessation grant. In 2024/25 Havering was allocated £307,543 and in 2025/26 the Council will be in receipt of £315,471. The supplementation of this funding by £36,040 of Public Health core grant is a condition of the grant; the Council has budgeted for this annual contribution from the Public Health funding it receives.

The cost of implementing the strategy will be containable within the available funding. The funding will be spent on costs such as pharmacy services, stop smoking devices, commissioning costs and information and advertising campaigns.

It is anticipated that implementation of the strategy will benefit both the health and the finances of residents as well as benefiting wider society through less working days lost due to sickness, less costs for the NHS and social care and less injury and damage from cigarette fires.

There are no foreseen financial risks associated with the implementation of the Tobacco Harm Reduction Strategy 2024-2029.

Legal implications and risks

In accordance with section 2B of the NHS Act 2006 (as amended by Section 12 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012) the local authority must take such steps as it considers appropriate for improving the health of the people who live in its area.

Whilst a smoking reduction strategy is not a mandatory requirement, the implementation of the objectives and recommendations should support local authority's commitment to reduce inequalities in health.

When developing a strategy, the local authority must consider the impact of that strategy on the inhabitants in the area in accordance with the Public Sector Equality Duty as set out below.

Human Resources implications and risks:

The recommendations made in this report do not give rise to any identifiable HR risks or implications that would affect either the Council or its workforce

Equalities implications and risks

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have due regard to:

- i) the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- ii) the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share protected characteristics and those who do not, and;
- iii) foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not.

Note: 'Protected characteristics' are age, sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnerships, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment.

The Council is committed to all the above in the provision, procurement and commissioning of its services, and the employment of its workforce. In addition, the Council is also committed to improving the quality of life and wellbeing for all Havering residents in respect of socio-economics and health determinants.

Tobacco harm reduction strategy aims to focus provision on groups disproportionately affected by smoking including those with severe mental conditions and protected characteristics such as disabled individuals, pregnant women, young people as well as the wider population. Implementation of the strategy will enable better access to stop smoking services for those living in more deprived areas thereby helping to reduce inequality and improving health and wellbeing. An Equality and Health Impact Assessment will be completed for the Tobacco harm reduction strategy

Health and Wellbeing implication and Risks

Under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 local Authorities are responsible for improving and protecting the health and wellbeing of local residents and Havering Council is committed to this duty.

Tobacco harm reduction strategy will have a positive impact on local population as it aims to work in partnership to offer support to reduce smoking, particularly amongst groups most affected, to make smoking less visible, improve our environment to be smoke-free for children and other vulnerable groups as well strengthen enforcement and regulation to tackle extensive vapes marketing to young people which will be supported by the upcoming tobacco and vape bill.

Services such as community pharmacy stop smoking service and specialist stop smoking service have been established in last year providing more local and accessible support for residents including people with severe mental illness and those with substance misuse.

Risks and Mitigation:

Delivery of the strategy, particularly the continuation of new services is dependent on continuation of government grant from 2024/25 to 2028/29 financial years as the cost for

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delivering the strategy is largely met from government grant supported by public health spend. Changes to government funding commitment will likely impact on the strategy delivery and pose a risk to continuation of some services. The council recognises the risk and there is provision within the public health grant to continue key services such as the community pharmacy service with potential to explore other funding opportunities should this scenario arise.

An equality health impact assessment is being undertaken to demonstrate the impact of the strategy.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Tobacco production and smoking impacts the environment, and this is evident in every stage of the tobacco supply chain including land deforestation for cultivation of tobacco, energy-intensive curing processes, manufacturing and packaging and widespread cigarette butt litter. In addition, the proliferation of disposable vapes has been damaging to the environment and has resulted in legislation to ban all disposable vapes from sale and possession starting June 1, 2025 to protect children and reduce environmental damage. Implementation of the strategy will help to reduce environmental damage caused by tobacco and vapes through the key priorities outlined including prevention of smoking and creating a more smoke free environment.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Appendices

Appendix A: Tobacco Harm Reduction Strategy (2024 – 2029)

Appendix B: Consultation report on the Tobacco Harm Reduction Strategy

Appendix C: Equality Health impact Assessment-Tobacco Harm Reduction Strategy
(available online)