



Strengthening tobacco control at a local level

VicHealth Local Government Partnership



This module covers:

Impact stream

Adopting tobacco control actions to protect children and young people

Partners

We would like to thank our development partners for co-authoring this module:



We would like to thank our development partners for contributing to this module:



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Overview



Local governments have an important role to play in preventing children and young people from using tobacco products or e-cigarettes, and protecting them from being exposed to the smoke and aerosols that arise from their use.

They can design and deliver services and community spaces in a way that provides smokefree environments for children and families.

Rates of smoking have declined significantly over the past few decades. This is mostly due to fewer young people taking up smoking to begin with.

In 2001, 58% of Australians aged 18–24 reported never having smoked more than 100 cigarettes in their lifetimes. In 2019, this had risen to 80% among the same age group. In a similar trend in 2001, 56% of Victorians aged 18–24 reported they were non-smokers. In 2020, this had risen to 77% among the same age group.

However, the growing use of e-cigarettes (‘vaping’) threatens to undermine this public health success story. Results from the National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2019 showed that vaping is growing and is most prevalent among young people. Worryingly, more than a third (39%) of young people aged 18–29 who had used e-cigarettes were non-smokers before using them, suggesting the uptake of e-cigarettes is not just among people who smoke and may be trying to quit.

Vaping is both addictive and harmful. Breathing in the aerosols from e-cigarettes lodges toxic chemicals deep in people’s lungs, increasing the risk of respiratory diseases and cancer. The liquid in e-cigarettes contains dozens of toxic chemicals, including formaldehyde, nicotine and heavy metals. These chemicals are known to cause cancer and damage the brain, and do not belong in our lungs.

The declining rates of tobacco use in Australia are largely due to a shared commitment and agreement by all levels of government, public health agencies and community organisations on actions necessary to prevent and reduce smoking. A comprehensive approach to tobacco control at the local level requires a similar commitment. This means taking a whole of local government approach that includes coordinating existing tobacco control activities within council, creating cross-organisational working groups and developing public consultation frameworks and processes.

What are the benefits for councils?

This module provides how-to guides for key actions councils can adopt to promote smokefree environments, tobacco control and e-cigarette safety. Councils can create environments free from tobacco products or e-cigarettes, ensuring this vulnerable cohort of young people is not exposed to the smoke and aerosols, and associated toxins and environmental waste, that arise from their use. These actions will help to ensure these young and vulnerable Victorians get the best possible start to life.

The introduction of smokefree policies has been shown to be effective in reducing the uptake of smoking among young people. These policies also contribute to the de-normalisation of smoking and vaping. Approximately 1 in 10 Victorian adults smoke tobacco products daily. Unfortunately, up to two-thirds are likely to die from a smoking-related illness if they continue to smoke over the longer term.

These people may be highly visible to young people as parents and carers, community members or older peers. Supporting people who smoke to quit helps to prevent young people from taking up smoking and works to further de-normalise the use of cigarettes.

This module will support your council to:

- ensure that your Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan actions align with the 'reducing tobacco-related harm' focus area outlined in the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019–2023
- decrease the social acceptability of smoking and vaping among children and young people
- decrease children's and young people's exposure to tobacco smoke and aerosols from vaping in community spaces and events
- provide smoking cessation information to people who smoke through the promotion of Quit Victoria's (Quit's) anti-smoking campaigns.

Partnering with community health – health promotion

Health promotion teams in Victorian Community Health Services undertake health promotion and prevention addressing the key focus areas of the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019–2023, including reducing tobacco-related harm. Funding guidelines encourage them to collaborate with local partners, including local government, to work towards reducing tobacco and e-cigarette related harm.

The 'Strengthening tobacco control at a local level' module provides local government with advice and guidance on actions they can take to respond to the twin primary challenges facing tobacco control: the number of people who continue to smoke and the increase in vaping among children and young people.

This advice and guidance includes how councils can amplify existing anti-smoking campaigns to support people to quit and how they can introduce new smokefree spaces with a particular focus on protecting children. It also provides guidance on how councils can implement smoke-free requirements on council-run and council-permitted events that include but do not exclusively cater for children and young people.

Impact stream:

Adopt tobacco control actions to protect children and young people

This impact stream requires councils to take a coordinated and comprehensive approach to tobacco control at the local level to prevent children and young people from being exposed to or using tobacco and e-cigarettes.

This module section provides advice on some key actions councils can adopt to ensure this vulnerable cohort is not exposed to the smoke and aerosols that arise from the use of tobacco and e-cigarettes.



Implementation actions

To complete this impact stream, councils will select from:

- Quick win: Promote smokefree events and activities for children and families.
- Quick win: Promote smoking cessation programs
- Quick win: Amplify anti-smoking campaigns.
- Step up: Develop a comprehensive smokefree policy.
- Ambitious: Implement your comprehensive smokefree policy.

Minimum deliverables

To complete this impact stream, councils will have:

- mapped partners within council who are already working on tobacco control or can assist to achieve tobacco control actions as part of this module
- demonstrated support from council and local leadership for tobacco control actions to protect children and young people
- demonstrated adoption of actions that lead to tobacco control initiatives to protect children and young people
- demonstrated succession planning outlining how the activity will contribute to the outcomes of current and future Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans.

With support from the Victorian Government Department of Health and the Municipal Association of Victoria, local governments already undertake education and enforcement activities focused on:

- retail outlets – ensuring that the sale and promotion of tobacco or e-cigarette products are consistent with the requirements of the [Tobacco Act 1987 \(Vic.\)](#)
- cafes, restaurants and licensed premises – ensuring that people do not use tobacco products or e-cigarettes in areas designated as smokefree, such as outdoor dining areas and that appropriate ‘no smoking’ signage is displayed
- smokefree public spaces and events.

Councils are funded to respond to complaints from the public about smoking or e-cigarette use and can choose to participate in the Cigarette Sales to Minors Program.¹

Councils can request that the Victorian Government Department of Health, under the Tobacco Act, authorise staff to enforce certain sections of the Act (e.g. smokefree areas).

Taking a whole of local government approach presents an opportunity to coordinate processes for implementing smokefree public places or events with intelligence collected through council education and enforcement activities. In turn, as new smoke-free spaces and events are created, education and enforcement can be targeted to them. Both of these processes can be enhanced by engaging with other parts of local government.

Intelligence collected via residents’ complaints to council might demonstrate where further education and enforcement are required and where smoke-free areas could be expanded. For example, if a council receives complaints about tobacco smoke exposure and drift at a community sporting ground, council environmental health officers may assess whether this is occurring in violation of local or state laws and respond accordingly.

This could also present an opportunity to make a case for expanding an existing local law on prohibiting smoking at community sporting events involving children and young people to capture all community sporting events.

Recommended resources

The Victorian Government Department of Health provides resources relating to local government education and enforcement responsibilities, including:

- [tobacco reforms](#)
- [smokefree areas](#)
- [underage events – smoke and vape free](#)

The Municipal Association of Victoria prepares tobacco control activity reports on activities undertaken by councils to deliver the [Tobacco Education and Enforcement Program](#). These are annual statewide summaries of council activities. For specific details on your council’s education and enforcement activities, contact your council’s environmental health team.

1. Municipal Association of Victoria, 2017, Local government tobacco control activities 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017.



Quick win: *Amplify anti-smoking campaigns*

In this implementation action, councils will use and amplify messaging from key organisations like Quit, and deliver a local program to promote awareness of anti-smoking and anti-vaping messages to target groups in the community. Councils may choose to focus on people whose smoking may affect children in their care or other population groups with higher smoking rates or greater risk of harms.

Anti-smoking public education campaigns are one of the most important means to motivate and support quit attempts and to deter initiation of smoking by young people. Anti-smoking campaigns educate people on the health risks of tobacco use. Also, they build support for the implementation of smokefree environments and other measures designed to help people lead lives free from nicotine addiction.

Mass-media public education campaigns have also been shown to support better health of young people by de-normalising tobacco use, thereby preventing uptake in young people. This extends to reducing secondhand smoke exposure in young people by encouraging parents and carers to not smoke or to quit smoking, and more generally reduce secondhand exposure in the community as a result of more people quitting smoking.

Quit, Victoria's peak anti-smoking body, is funded by VicHealth, Cancer Council Victoria and the Victorian Government Department of Health to run mass-media public education campaigns designed and tested to reach Victorians on a large scale and support changes in attitudes and behaviours.

Councils are well placed to amplify statewide anti-smoking public education campaigns through applying local knowledge of community and identifying the most suitable local communication channels.

Councils are encouraged to identify innovative ways of tailoring these campaigns to engage members of their local community, and to work closely with trusted leaders to ensure campaigns are culturally safe and resonate with their intended audience.

In amplifying Quit's social marketing campaigns, councils benefit from the extensive research and insight testing and comprehensive evaluation (undertaken by the Centre for Behavioural Research in Cancer) that underpin them. This, together with council applying their deep understanding of the local community, results in impactful campaigns tailored to local context.

Quick Note

Other strategies to prevent young people from smoking

It is important not to focus local anti-tobacco campaigns on young people explicitly, as there is the potential for unintended consequences.

Programs that aim to improve a young person's sense of self-efficacy and self-determination can help prevent smoking uptake in young people. School and community programs that take a broader approach have been effective in reducing alcohol and tobacco use among young people. Many school- and community-based programs work with young people and have been shown to improve resilience and self-efficacy.

For example, [Communities that Care](#) is underpinned by a social development strategy that aims to build protective factors by ensuring that families, schools, communities and peer groups model positive health standards and behaviours while building prosocial attachment to those groups among children and young people.

A [Murdoch Children's Research Institute evaluation](#), which used data from 1999–2015, found more significant reductions in alcohol, tobacco and cannabis use among young people in council areas with a Communities that Care program than those without.



How-to guide to: *Amplify anti-smoking campaigns*

Involve people

Councils can involve local people in this action by:

- seeking their input on smoking and vaping awareness messages
- helping identify trusted information sources
- helping identify suitable communication opportunities including those through council and partners
- engaging them as champions to support awareness-raising activities.

Consider any existing teams or working groups that might already exist within council and look for opportunities to see if this work can be embedded within existing priorities or actions. This might include staff from areas including family, children and youth services, healthy communities, community services, sport and recreation, aged and disability services, homelessness services, on-street compliance, and media and communications.

Crossover opportunity

This implementation action can work alongside or in tandem with another action in this module:

'Strengthening tobacco control at a local level' stretch module

- [Quick win: Promote referrals to smoking cessation programs.](#)



Plan

Establish a working group that brings together relevant council teams or local stakeholders. The working group will be responsible for developing, implementing and monitoring a localised anti-smoking campaign strategy.

Review available campaigns and resources

It can be helpful to first understand the range of resources available and potential audiences you could address before identifying which campaign objectives will be best suited for your community.

Quit develops a range of media assets that can be used by councils to amplify mass-media campaign messages. Develop a relationship by [contacting Quit](#) for information and advice on what councils can do to support anti-smoking campaigns within the local context, and [subscribe to the Quit e-newsletter](#) to receive information on programs and latest tobacco control evidence.

The Quit resources have been designed with specific consideration of the needs and framing suitable for people who are planning to start a family, or who have young children in their care.

See the Recommended Resources box at the end of this how-to-guide for further resources and communications materials that can be used or adapted.

Quick Note

Supporting a smokefree first 2,000 days

Quit has designed resources specific to the needs of people who are planning to start a family, or who have young children in their care.

Objectives could be to raise awareness of one or more of the following topics:

- [dangers of exposure to secondhand smoke during the first 2,000 days](#)
- [risk of tobacco-related health problems from thirdhand smoke in young children](#)
- [dangers of e-cigarettes and e-liquids around children](#)
- [risks of tobacco or e-cigarette use during pregnancy or when planning a pregnancy](#)
- [positive role modelling in relation to tobacco and e-cigarettes for young children](#)
- [where to find support for families in relation to tobacco or e-cigarette use.](#)

Assess

Consider if there are people within your community who have high rates of smoking or are at greater risk of harm from smoking.

Review local level smoking prevalence data, such as Victorian Population Health Survey data, to identify priority cohorts and settings where they may be reached.

At a Victorian level, data shows that priority groups include both people who are more likely to smoke and people who face an elevated health risk from smoking:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- people who identify as LGBTQIA+
- people experiencing homelessness, mental illness or social and economic disadvantage
- pregnant people
- sole parents and carers.

Councils can also consider a focus on people planning to start a family, pregnant people and people who care for young children to ensure that children are protected from smoke and aerosol harm in their first 2,000 days.

Seek input from the community

Consider surveying, engaging or conducting focus groups with local people to support key stages in the development of the action. Including local perspectives can assist in:

- informing campaign objectives
- identifying types of smoking, tobacco and e-cigarette use in the community
- learning about trusted communication channels in the local community
- testing and refining messages and strategies for the program
- seeking feedback to ensure the approach is culturally safe, inclusive and relevant
- collecting baseline data for evaluation of the program.

Quick Note

People smoke, use tobacco and e-cigarettes in different ways and for different reasons. All forms of tobacco use have concerning health impacts in the community and can exacerbate other inequalities that people may already face.

Review the [Topic in Focus section](#) at the end of this module for more information.

Assess council policies and processes

Consider how this work can support integration of 'enabling smokefree communities' and smoke-free environments into council policies, procedures and plans such as the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.

Investigate opportunities in council's budget process or grants programs to seek funding for the campaign.



Design

The campaign strategy will help the working group manage the different mechanisms needed to get the message out to the community.

Decide on the objectives and target groups or audiences for the campaign. This should be informed by evidence, and by surveys conducted at the Assess stage.

Consult with key stakeholders and representatives from priority cohorts to identify suitable opportunities to amplify the anti-smoking campaigns through council settings, facilities, programs and formal and informal communication channels.

Prioritise council-owned, operated or managed settings and communication channels that are likely to connect with the priority groups you have identified, or settings with significant community visitation.

In your campaign strategy, outline:

- objectives and theory of change and success measures for the work
- primary and secondary audiences
- communication strategies, channels and activities
- existing resources that can be used or adapted
- key stakeholders that can support campaign objectives and key messages
- measures to ensure culturally safe approaches and how the work will be informed by local community
- support and communication required to councillors, staff or volunteers who interface with community members in the communication channels identified
- materials and content that will be developed (e.g. posters, fact sheets, website, social media channels)
- available budget and staff resources
- an evaluation plan, including methods and key measures.

Design key messages

Work with community groups to develop localised key messages and communication activities that align with mass-media campaign messages. Draw on the existing messages, materials and resources that best align with the audience you are focused on.

If developing your own materials and messaging, ensure messages are informed by and consistent with values-based messaging advice. Base messages on attitudes and behaviours the program is aiming to encourage. For example:

- 'All children and families should be supported to be healthy and well'
- 'Staying smokefree while you are pregnant or trying to get pregnant will help keep you and your baby healthy'.

See VicHealth's values-based messaging for health promotion guide for more information, and [register for updates](#) to keep informed about this work.

Use a wide range of channels to ensure the best possible reach. Consider:

- offering free seminars or workshops for people who are pregnant or planning a pregnancy, and parents and carers of young children
- integrating awareness messages in antenatal and parenting programs, community health initiatives and group programs
- publishing news items on council's communication channels, including the council website and social media
- displaying posters, brochures and/or fact sheets in local community centres and facilities, including maternal and child health services, sports and recreation centres, youth services, arts facilities and libraries
- promoting messages at other community events
- sharing posters, brochures and/or fact sheets with council service providers.

Deliver

Amplify the campaign as outlined in your localised campaign strategy. Ensure council staff and other partners are aware of key amplification periods within the campaign, and encourage them to share messages more widely during these phases.

Work with council's communications team to identify ongoing opportunities to promote the awareness messages, including in local media and via local champions.

Publish information resources on the council website, and communicate messages on council social media, local media and other channels. The council website should set out information about where families and individuals can find support with smoking and vaping cessation. This should include support services offered by council, and specialised support services. See the Recommended Resources section on page 13.

Disseminate awareness messages and materials to stakeholders and local services, including maternal and child health services, early childhood services and council facilities. Encourage them to publish the information on their websites and share messages via their social media channels, email and newsletters.





Review and embed

Monitor and evaluate impact and reach

Building on information captured in baseline surveys, strategically capture feedback after key campaign periods to understand if the campaign reached the intended audience, and the impact of this.

Seek feedback on any seminars, or on smoke-free messages that were shared through group programs services and events provided to people in the target groups. Review feedback and implement changes to improve the content of these seminars and programs.

Share results

Share and publish key results from the program via the council website and social media.

Share results with council leadership to encourage funding and support for sustained delivery of awareness and education.

Embed

Work with council's budget processes to secure ongoing commitment and annual allocation of resources to deliver local smokefree awareness and education programs. Seek to embed objectives and programs on awareness and support for families and children in relevant council policies.

Vaping presentation package

With input from Common Cause Australia, Quit has developed a suite of e-cigarette and vaping PowerPoint presentations with speaker notes to enable you to present to the settings you work with. The suite includes a messaging guide, a how-to guide and vaping FAQs.

To obtain the resources, complete the [Vaping Presentation Package Sign-up Form](#).

Recommended resources

- [E-cigarettes fact sheet](#) Better Health Channel
- [Sudden unexpected death in infants \(SUDI and SIDS\) fact sheet](#) Better Health Channel
- [Kids Health Information: E-cigarettes and teens](#) Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne
- [Secondhand smoke and your family](#) Quit
- [Secondhand smoke, thirdhand smoke: effects on children](#) raisingchildren.net.au
- [The dangers of liquid nicotine in vaping liquid](#) Quit
- [Victoria's tobacco and e-cigarette laws](#) Victorian Government Department of Health
- [What is thirdhand smoke?](#) Thirdhand Smoke Resource Center



Quick win:

Promote smokefree events and activities for children and families

Children and families should be able to attend enjoyable local events and activities in safe and healthy environments that are free from tobacco smoke and e-cigarette aerosols.

This helps show children that smoking and vaping does not need to be part of these types of activities. It prevents young children and expectant parents being exposed to secondhand smoke.

Promoting smokefree community activities can help influence positive cultures in the community, and change social and cultural norms. Councils can deliver and promote smokefree events and activities

in partnership with other agencies, or support other organisations with funding, venue hire or promotion.

In this 'quick win' implementation action, councils will undertake to deliver and promote smokefree community events and activities for children and their families.

Crossover opportunity ↻

This implementation action can work in tandem with or build on a number of other actions in the VicHealth health promotion modules for local government. These are:

'Strengthening tobacco control at a local level' stretch module

- [Step up: Develop a comprehensive smokefree policy.](#)
- [Ambitious: Implement your comprehensive smokefree policy.](#)

'Increasing alcohol harm prevention at a local level' stretch module

- Quick win: Promote alcohol-free events and activities for young children and families.

Alternatively, this may be a useful action for councils without a smokefree policy to pilot smokefree activities and events and gauge or build community support for a future policy.

Building Better Food Systems for Healthier Communities' core module

- Quick win: Deliver a community food festival or forum
- Quick win: Create and run a local healthy food for children campaign for community events and activities



How-to guide to:

Promote smokefree events and activities for children and families

Involve people

This is a great opportunity to involve children and families in planning and promoting fun, local smokefree events and activities. Including children and families can help council identify the types of activities they'd like to enjoy in smokefree spaces and can help remind adults involved in the event in event planning and coordination of their role in protecting children's healthy development.

You may need to work with council staff who are familiar with council event planning, local laws and environmental health processes, and staff who work with children and families, to shape this action.



Plan

Identify existing council policies that support smokefree community events, such as the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan, and policies on smokefree public spaces and events. Refer to these when seeking funding or support for the project from council leadership.

Make a list of existing local events and activities suitable for young children and families, and find out whether they are being held in spaces where smoking and vaping are allowed.

- If they are being held in a smokefree public space, consider how you will enforce the smokefree policy at the event, including signage and communications.
- If they are being held in a space that usually allows smoking and vaping, consider who you should work with to ensure the event can be smokefree.

Prepare a project plan

Prepare a high-level project plan, setting out:

- objectives for the action
- smokefree events and activities that will be delivered or supported by council
- relevant policies you are drawing on
- stakeholders and partner roles
- available budget and resources.

Review existing event plans

If your council has formalised event-planning processes or templates, review these documents to see how and where the smokefree component could be included. Sections that could reflect and celebrate the smokefree nature of the event include:

- purpose of the event
- what information will be included in event promotion and messaging
- how you will convey the smokefree aspect of the event to managers, venue owners and event staff
- how you will convey the smokefree aspect to community attending the event
- a risk plan to manage how smoking and vaping would be addressed, if it occurs
- signage or other information required at the event.

If your council doesn't have any event-planning frameworks, consider developing a 'healthy events' or 'family-friendly events' commitment and checklist for council. This could assist council staff running other events in the future and set a standard for the type of event council wants to be seen to offer.

Hot tip!

Providing healthy options

If food and drink will be sold or provided, plan healthy food and healthy, alcohol-free drink options that meet [Healthy Choices guidelines](#). Make sure free water will be provided at all events and activities.

The [Vic Kids Eat Well](#) program and VicHealth's [Toolkit for creating healthy food and drink environment in community food retail outlets](#) include guidance and resources for planning healthy food and drink options and menus.

Prepare a communication plan

Prepare a communication plan to promote the events or activities to local children and families. This should cover how council will generate excitement, encourage attendance and promote positive messages about smokefree events to the community.

Prepare to use values-based key messages to promote the events. See VicHealth's Values-based messaging for health promotion guide for more information and guidance. Ground your promotion in the positive attitudes and change the project is aiming to influence. For example: 'Children and families want community events that are healthy, safe and enjoyable for everyone'.

Plan for opportunities to involve children, parents and carers in developing the smokefree message and promoting the smokefree events.

Identify a variety of communication channels to promote the events and activities, such as:

- seeking children, parents and carers who can promote the events on local radio, news and in other forms of publicity
- publishing news items on council's communication channels, including the council website and social media
- displaying posters and promotional materials in local community centres and facilities, such as maternal and child health services, recreation centres and libraries
- sharing promotional materials and communication templates with early childhood education and care services and schools
- asking local businesses to display promotional materials.



Design

Involve children in designing promotional materials for the events or activities. Include their ideas, words and artwork. Work with them on key promotional messages about why they value smoke-free events in the community.

Children could contribute in their own words, pictures and communications about why it is important to them that the event is smokefree, healthy or family-friendly.

Crossover opportunity

The [Kids Co-designing Healthy Places](#) web resource can provide some initial ideas and tools for involving children in co-design of healthy places and could be adapted for co-designing healthy and fun events and activities.

Quick Note

Protecting children from 'harmful industries'

Smokefree events are one pillar of creating holistically healthy environments to model the type of environment that should be freely accessible to children in their local area. Consider the range of relationships that your council directly or indirectly promotes to children through the locations, sponsors, partnerships and marketing opportunities that may occur at council events.

VicHealth encourages all arms of government to commit to leveraging every opportunity to ensure children are protected from harmful industries such as tobacco, alcohol, gambling and unhealthy food and drink when they are out in their community.

Work with healthy sponsors

Consider if you need to seek sponsorship for council-run events from companies that do not seek to profit from products that are harmful to health and wellbeing. These include:

- children- or family-focused service providers and retailers (e.g. retailers of toys, books or children's clothes and children's entertainment, or education providers)
- health service providers (e.g. physiotherapy, dental services, allied health)
- gardening or trades businesses (e.g. building, plumbing, landscaping)
- sport, homeware, furniture, clothing and equipment retailers
- sport and recreation centres
- other local businesses such as banks, hairdressers, real estate agencies, local tourism operators, gardening businesses and trades businesses (e.g. building, plumbing, landscaping).

Deliver

Promote and deliver council-run, smokefree events or activities, following the event plans and communication plans.

Ensure the smokefree message is promoted and celebrated throughout the day. Capture images or video footage for continued council use to celebrate children and families enjoying the event in a safe and healthy environment.

Review and embed

Monitor and evaluate impact and reach

Ensure any participant or stakeholder feedback surveys seek perspectives about the support for and feasibility of the smokefree aspect of the event.

Track participation in the smokefree events and activities, and seek feedback from children and families.

Share key results with council leadership and work with council's budget processes to secure ongoing commitment, funding and resources for delivery of smokefree events and activities.

Consider how council could support partners or organisations to deliver and promote smokefree community events and activities. For example, share the successful aspects of the action, highlight the good work of the partners involved, and share the communication plan as well as key messages developed by children.

Council may be able to offer some funding, venues and promotional support to partner events that similarly provide smokefree events for children and families.

Recommended resources

- [Kids Co-designing Healthy Places](#) (Monash University project supported by VicHealth)
- [Smoke-free outdoor dining guide for businesses and event organisers](#) (Victorian Government Department of Health)
- [Under-age events: smoke and vape free](#) (Victorian Government Department of Health)
- VicHealth's [Values-based messaging for health promotion](#) guidance (register for access to guides)



Quick win: *Promote smoking cessation programs*

Councils can raise awareness of the impacts of smoking and vaping while helping connect families to the support they need to quit smoking. The only effective way to protect children from secondhand and thirdhand smoke, and e-cigarette aerosols, is for adults to stop smoking and vaping around children.

Pregnancy and early parenthood present opportunities to connect with parents and other adults involved in a child's care and support their aim of protecting their child from tobacco-related harm. Councils can ensure they are prepared to offer support to parents and carers to quit vaping and smoking, and promote the use of evidence-based smoking cessation services. They also present opportunities to provide people who do not, or no longer, use cigarettes or e-cigarettes with affirmation of this decision.

Smoking cessation programs are an effective tool for people who need additional support to quit smoking or vaping, and to establish behavioural strategies to manage personal triggers such as stress, boredom or anger. Many expectant parents quit during pregnancy but then relapse back to smoking or vaping soon after their baby is born.

Often the tiredness and stress that come from early parenthood erode motivation to ignore nicotine cravings, and most people have not had time to develop alternative behavioural strategies to manage personal triggers to smoke or vape.

Councils are well placed to lead this action because they have a view over the range of services available in the local area, may be communicating to expectant or new parents through existing services and have a wide range of communication channels that are publicly accessible.

This implementation action is focused on promoting smoking cessation programs to target groups in the local community, such as people who are pregnant or planning a pregnancy, and parents and carers of young children.



Quick Note

Accessing smoking cessation programs

Affirmation of not smoking and not vaping can have a positive reinforcing effect across the community, particularly for those who have quit but are at risk of relapse. Providing non-judgemental encouragement to people who have relapsed to smoking or vaping can be powerful in supporting them to keep on trying to quit for their own health and wellbeing, and for the health and wellbeing of the children around them.

Quit recommends:

- calling Quitline on 13 78 48
- visiting the Quit website, which has a range of quitting tools and resources
- visiting a GP or pharmacist for advice around smoking cessation medications.

Quit does not recommend or endorse local smoking cessation programs. This is because a significant amount of training and practice is required for counsellors to provide effective behavioural counselling. However, there is no validated behavioural counselling training available in Australia.

Evidence shows that appropriately trained counsellors are much more effective.²

Once people trying to quit have tried behavioural counselling, they are unlikely to try it again. So the best possible behavioural counselling really needs to be administered the first time.



How-to guide to:

Promote smoking cessation programs



Plan

Identify council or local services in the community that have contact with expectant or new parents. This could include health providers in primary and antenatal care; relevant council staff including health promotion, community services, children and youth services, and maternal and child health services; and other community stakeholders delivering services within the council area, such as

Best Start, Child FIRST, the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, and settlement services. Consider any existing teams or working groups in council and look for potential opportunities to embed this work within existing council priorities or actions.

Consider opportunities to consult families such as community advisory committees or support groups.



Assess

Identify priority groups, settings and programs

In consultation with key stakeholders, identify which settings or programs you will prioritise for action. This includes when and how to embed processes for providing encouragement and support, or settings in which static or proactive information and resources will be provided.

Councils could consider prioritising activities that would reach communities in which extended families play a significant role in caring for young children.

Hot tip!

It may be particularly impactful to focus on community groups with high smoking rates. Councils can review local level smoking prevalence data, such as [Victorian Population Health Survey data](#) or Quit's [Community Health Promotion Framework for Action: Reducing Tobacco-Related Harm](#) to identify some of these priority community groups with high smoking rates.

2. R West, M Raw, A McNeill, et al, 'Health-care interventions to promote and assist tobacco cessation: a review of efficacy, effectiveness and affordability for use in national guideline development', *Addiction*, 2015, 110(9): 1388-1403, doi:10.1111/add.12998.



Design and Deliver

Develop and implement a localised strategy

Develop engagement strategies, key messages and communication materials that are appropriate for the primary audiences:

- Consult with council and other staff in target settings or programs to understand their needs for appropriately and compassionately raising the harms of smoking and suggesting supports available for quitting.
- Collaborate with community groups to develop key messages and communication materials that are appropriate for the primary audiences and meet council and other staff needs.
- Pilot engagement strategies, messages and materials with families.
- Identify channels and settings for proactive engagement and sharing of communication materials (e.g. verbal and written information shared with new-parent groups).
- Consider strategies such as providing peer support for expectant or new parents who smoke or vape, and embedding information on smoking and vaping in relevant antenatal or new-parent programs or classes.

Support local professional development

Quit Education has a range of online training resources for professionals working in different settings including those working in maternal health, and in community and social services. The training equips professionals with the skills, confidence and knowledge to provide smoking cessation care. VicHealth recommends promoting this training to key stakeholders in your community who are providing smoking cessation advice.

Stakeholders and services can also refer people to the Quit website and Quitline. Quitline (13 78 48) is a free, confidential telephone counselling service that offers strategies and tips to help people quit smoking.

You can also order [resources](#) from Quit such as posters and brochures, to distribute to your key stakeholders and services.



Review and embed

Monitor and evaluate impact and reach

Monitoring and evaluation identify those activities that met work objectives and those activities that require reconsideration or were not as effective.

The learnings and reflections from this evaluation can then inform the development of future activities or how to strengthen the continuation of the program.



Step up: *Develop a comprehensive smokefree policy*

There is scope for local governments to create comprehensive smokefree environments – particularly for children, young people, young adults and families.

The [Tobacco Act 1987](#) requires some outdoor areas to be smokefree. Councils are encouraged to establish local laws and policies that create additional smokefree areas based on local drivers.

By making tobacco and e-cigarette use less prevalent in public places, smokefree areas de-normalise smoking which can reduce the likelihood that young people will start to use tobacco or e-cigarette products. They also help people who smoke or vape to quit and support former smokers to remain smokefree which benefits children and young people who have parents or carers that smoke.

In addition, councils can undertake broader tobacco control activities to improve the health of their communities such as amplifying anti-smoking campaigns, supporting and encouraging smoking cessation and encouraging state government to further regulate the sale and promotion of tobacco and e-cigarette products.

Developing a comprehensive smokefree policy can:

- provide councils with a vision for the change they would like to see implemented in their municipalities
- draw upon local data and contexts to determine where smokefree environments could be implemented
- identify ways in which they can support other tobacco and e-cigarette initiatives.
- develop a timeline for achieving this.



How-to guide to:

Developing a comprehensive smokefree policy for council

Involving council leaders and teams

Gaining buy-in from senior leadership and relevant teams is essential for a whole-of-council smokefree policy. Consider developing a key internal stakeholder list and engaging with senior leadership and relevant teams early in the policy development process. An example of this could be to include the smokefree policy as an agenda item to discuss at a future management team or executive meeting and discuss the benefits of the smokefree policy for council and the community it serves.



Plan and Assess

Develop and implement a localised strategy

- Allocate a staff member or team to have responsibility of coordinating and developing a comprehensive smokefree policy for council.
- Research international and local best practice and examples of comprehensive smokefree policies. Refer to the recommended resource section below for a few local and international examples.
- Research current tobacco related statistics and the local context for the municipality. Consider engaging with relevant council departments such as children and youth services, sports and recreation, aged and disability services, homelessness services to gain an insight into the local community trends and identify challenges and opportunities for the council.
- Based on the information gathered through the research and internal consultation within council, develop a discussion paper outlining local context, current statistics, challenges and opportunities for your local government area.
- Present the discussion paper to senior management and executive team to get buy in for the rationale and support for the smokefree policy for council.



Design and Deliver

Develop and implement a localised strategy

- Begin development of draft policy including a vision through consultation with internal stakeholders to ensure perspectives and insights are captured from across the organisation and to gain buy in.
- Consult with external stakeholders and in particular tobacco control and public health experts to ensure your policy is comprehensive and evidence based. This could include Quit Victoria, the Victorian Department of Health and/or the Municipal Association of Victoria.
- Begin community engagement: Share your draft policy with your community highlighting the vision of what you hope the policy will achieve for the community. Community engagement can be a great way of educating people of the harms of smoking, current local situation and areas where Council impact change. Consider tying in this community engagement with any existing or upcoming community engagement activities for the council.
- Collate feedback from community engagement and update the policy to ensure it aligns with community expectations.
- Seek endorsement of the policy from executive management team and councillors.
- Develop an implementation plan to guide the work.
- Deliver initiatives to protect the community from the harms of smoking and vaping.
- It's important to consider communication methods for each of the steps above. Keep everyone updated via all available channels including social media, media releases, newsletters, briefing papers, meetings etc.

Case Study

Taking a comprehensive approach – City of Melbourne’s Smokefree Melbourne policy

Outlines a vision: A smokefree city where our community is protected from the harms of smoking.

Includes a **comprehensive framework** to guide action in 4 domains:

- **Protect** our community from secondhand smoke and aerosol and discourage and de-normalise smoking by creating more smokefree areas and events.
- **Educate** and raise awareness of the harms of smoking, promote behaviour change and the benefits of quitting.
- **Communicate**, promote and increase awareness of our policy with a focus on people who smoke, those from diverse backgrounds or with additional needs.
- **Regulate** smoking activities including the sale and promotion of tobacco and e-cigarette products.

City of Melbourne’s Smokefree Melbourne Policy aims to increase the number of smokefree areas across the municipality focusing on high-density retail areas, entry to transport hubs, pedestrianised malls, major developments and upgrades as well as City of Melbourne premier and permitted events.

The Policy takes a phased approach for the rollout of smokefree spaces in consultation with local community, businesses and stakeholders

The Policy also highlights how the introduction of more smokefree spaces aligns with other tobacco control activities that Council can deliver and identifies partners to help with delivery

More information about the [Smoke-free Melbourne policy](#).



Recommended resources

Examples of best practice smokefree policies:

- [Smoke-free Melbourne Policy, City of Melbourne](#)
- [Kaupapa Here Auahi Kore Smokefree Policy, Auckland City Council](#)
- [Smokefree Wellington Action Plan “Kia wātea te ātea” me auahi kore a Pōneke, Wellington City Council](#)



Ambitious: *Implement your comprehensive smokefree policy*

By making tobacco and e-cigarette use less prevalent in public places, smokefree areas and events de-normalise smoking and vaping which can reduce the likelihood that young people will start to use tobacco or e-cigarette products. Smokefree spaces also help people who smoke or vape to quit and support former smokers to remain smokefree which benefits children and young people who have parents or carers that smoke.

Implementing more comprehensive smokefree areas and events is likely to be the key focus of any council's Comprehensive Smokefree Policy. The Act prohibits smoking and vaping indoors and in a number of outdoor settings such as within 10 metres of children's playgrounds and skate parks and during underage sporting events.

However, areas which the Tobacco Act covers are not comprehensive nor are rules applied consistently in some settings. As such, councils have an opportunity to expand and simultaneously simplify how smokefree rules apply within their community.

Some councils have passed local smokefree laws that apply to outdoor areas that are not fully covered by the prohibitions in the Act. These areas include:

- outdoor licensed and unlicensed drinking areas on public land, such as on a street, footpath or public park
- updating outdoor dining permits to ban smoking even when food is not being served
- pedestrian mall areas
- beaches and foreshores
- council-owned sporting grounds and parks
- areas encompassing directly affected streets, footpaths and council land used in staging commercial and community events
- areas where families and children meet or play.

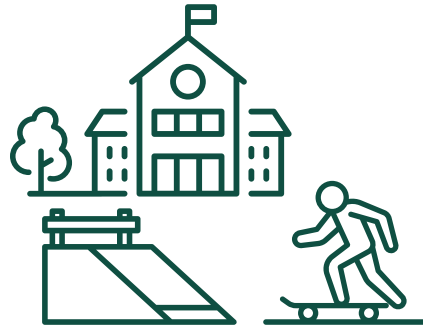
These areas represent spaces where smoking is in direct conflict with community expectations and healthy pursuits (e.g. smoking at sporting events or community events where children and young people are frequent participants) and/or where people are in close proximity to each other and so at greater risk of exposure to secondhand smoke and aerosol (e.g. outdoor drinking areas, pedestrian malls). As such they should be considered priority areas for council action. Further rationale for why this is important can be found in Quit Victoria's "[Actions Councils can take](#)" information sheet.

Councils can also identify events that may be temporary in nature where current laws do not apply, where children, young people and families may still be exposed to smoking and vaping. This could include implementing smokefree policies for events such as regular farmer's markets, annual Arts Festivals, Food Fairs or children's concerts or recreational events.

Smokefree environments can operate at several levels:

- 1. Directly focusing on areas and events that are used by young people, including skate parks, in and around schools and underage sports.**

The rationale for this is that it will directly reduce children and young peoples' exposure to the harmful chemicals found in tobacco smoke and e-cigarette aerosol, while also de-normalising smoking and vaping.



- 2. Focusing on environments that are used by different community groups, including children and young people. This includes pedestrian malls, beaches, public parks more broadly and transport hubs.**

The rationale for this is it reduces both exposure to harmful smoke and aerosol as well as smoking behaviours. By targeting the broader community it also encourages quit attempts among people who smoke.



- 3. Areas that are explicitly council owned and operated, including in and around council owned buildings.**

This not only helps to make smokefree environments more comprehensive but also demonstrates council commitment to keeping all residents healthy and well.



City of Monash smokefree council run and permitted events

In 2011 the City of Monash implemented a local law prohibiting smoking inside a building on council land, within 10 metres of the entrance to a building on council land, within 10 metres of a building on a reserve located on Council Land; or more broadly on Council Land. It also prohibited smoking at council run or sponsored events. The following events were included as a schedule to the local law:

- Clayton Street Festival
- Clayton Road Flavours of Oakleigh Festival, Warrawee Park
- Oakleigh Activation Festival, Batesford Reserve
- Chadstone Mulgrave Fun Day, Wellington Reserve Community Centre, Mulgrave
- Monash Carols by Candlelight, Jells Park, Wheelers Hill
- Glen Waverley Chinese New Year and Lantern Festival, Kingsway, Glen Waverley

The successful implementation of the smokefree law was due to several factors, including:

- the issue of smokefree environments was championed by City of Monash councillors consistently over time
- extensive community consultation with residents, local businesses and sports and recreation groups
- legal advice on how the implementation of smokefree environments should best be conducted
- strong alignment with existing council priorities and strategic plans
- support from public health organisations including Quit Victoria, Cancer Council Victoria, Heart Foundation and VicHealth.

Further, the community consultation process revealed strong support for environments becoming smokefree:

- council-owned swimming pools (87%)
- sport and recreation areas (76%)
- areas adjacent to the entrance to council-owned buildings (80%)
- council run or sponsored events (72%)

The process for implementing the smokefree law began in September 2010 when councillors brought forward a motion to commence public consultation to assess community support for smokefree spaces and events. The results of the consultation were reported to Council in February 2011, with notice of a motion to implement a local smokefree law. The [Smoke-free Environments Local Law No.4](#) was introduced and accepted by council at their meeting on 31 May 2011.

This local law was replaced in June 2021 with a more expansive [Smoke Free Areas Local Law \(2021\)](#) which will:

- prescribe any area that is:
 - within 10 metres of the entrance to any building owned by, or under the control and management of, Council; and
 - Council Land on, and during the times at, which an Event organised or sponsored by Council is held,
- as smokefree areas.^{3,4,5}



3. City of Monash 2011 [Local Law No. 4 Prohibition on Smoking](#)

4. City of Monash 2021 [Notice of making smoke free areas local law 2021](#)

5. Quit Victoria 2021 [Action by councils on outdoor smokefree areas guide](#)



How-to guide to:

Comprehensive smokefree areas and council run and permitted events



Plan and Assess

Work across council to identify which business units are involved in overseeing smokefree areas and running or approving council run and permitted events.

Create a working group that brings together council staff from business units that are likely to oversee or operate within potential smokefree areas, run council events or have some responsibility for permitted events. This would include for example: Environmental Health Officers, events staff, sport and recreation staff, on-street compliance staff, community and youth staff, staff who develop grant opportunities and assess grant applications, and teams that provide maintenance for areas, facilities or events that would become smokefree.

Identify potential smokefree areas

Prioritise outdoor areas or council-run events that children, young people and their families often attend and where smokefree environments could be implemented or extended.

As outlined above, some councils have passed local smokefree laws that apply to outdoor areas that are not fully covered by the prohibitions in the Act. These provide a good starting point for consideration by the working group. Council may also identify other areas within the community they wish to make smokefree based on community feedback (such as complaints about being exposed to secondhand smoke) or locations that priority populations frequent (e.g. youth groups, Aboriginal Health Services).

The working group should compile a list of existing or planned events and identify those which are council run and which are being run by outside organisations. The working group should also identify potential future events for which smokefree policies should apply, such as funding rounds for community run events.

Case Study

Ensuring comprehensive smokefree outdoor dining areas during the coronavirus pandemic

In 2020, the Victorian Government provided many municipalities with funding to create more outdoor dining spaces for traders to offset the impacts of coronavirus restrictions.

In May 2021 the City of Monash had resolved to implement a new local law prohibiting smoking in all public spaces in municipal activity centres except in outdoor spaces which are designated as outdoor drinking areas.

However, in practice the state government initiative and the proposed local law could potentially lead to an increase in outdoor drinking spaces within the municipality, expanding opportunities for people to smoke or vape within these environments. This in turn would lead to a greater exposure to harmful smoke and aerosol for other people using these spaces.

Recognising this, the City of Monash moved to amend its Footpath Trading and Access Policy so that traders using the newly available public spaces for outdoor dining also had to ensure that food was available for consumption at all times. This ensures that the newly created outdoor dining areas remain smoke and aerosol-free⁶



6. City of Monash 2021 Minutes of the meeting of Council on held on 25 May 2021 accessed on 19 July 2021

Undertake community consultation to identify enablers and barriers to implementation of smokefree areas and events

Community engagement and consultation is key to successful implementation. Once priority smokefree areas and events are identified, council should consult with the broader community and also those that may be specifically impacted (e.g. sporting clubs or traders, as well as event organisers, and relevant partner agencies, local businesses, community organisations and members). Councils are likely to already have procedures in place for how they consult with their local communities on change, and these should be followed.

Consultation should allow those impacted to raise concerns and provide input, giving council the opportunity to dispel any myths if required, provide information on the positive outcomes of the proposal and also identify ways in which the community can work with council to best support and implement the changes. Consultation will also assist to identify supportive voices in the health sector as well as allies or ambassadors. Development of responses to frequently asked questions will help further inform the community.

Assess the consultation results and develop an implementation plan

The implementation plan should identify the rationale and the areas and events – both existing and future events – to which the smokefree requirements will apply. Councils may wish to implement a number of new smokefree areas/events at the same time, or to prioritise the implementation of certain areas/events and implement others at a later date. The overarching criteria should be to provide the most comprehensive protection from exposure to tobacco and e-cigarette use to the greatest number of people as possible, particularly children, young people and families.

An implementation plan will need to consider a number of factors and it is likely that legal advice will be required as to the most effective way to implement the changes for your particular council. Options may be to:

- a. introduce a new local law
- b. amend an existing local law
- c. introduce the changes via the smokefree events policy itself.

There is no legal impediment to local councils extending smokefree laws already implemented under the Act. For example, the Act requires sporting grounds to be smokefree when underage sporting and training events are taking place but there is nothing to stop councils from introducing a requirement that all sporting and training events are to be smokefree if taking place on council owned land.

An implementation plan should also document any new assets required such as signage, timelines for implementation, council business units impacted and their responsibilities and communication strategies.

Case Study

Using local laws to preventing smoking on council-owned or maintained spaces

- The City of Monash in 2011 implemented a local law banning smoking on council properties that were included in a schedule to the law. This included sporting reserves, tennis clubs and golf courses.
- In 2014 Warrnambool City Council introduced smoking bans on all sports facilities and buildings owned by the Council. Recognising the higher than average smoking rate among residents, Council extended state requirements that smoking be banned within 10 metres of sporting venues during underage sporting events to cover all sports facilities.^{7,8}
- Kingston City Council amended a local law to ban smoking and e-cigarette use on council beaches, foreshore areas, parks and reserves. This also included major shopping precincts within the municipality.⁹
- In 2019, City of Melbourne introduced a smokefree area in the iconic CBD destination of Bourke Street Mall following very strong support from community and city businesses.



7. Warrnambool City Council 2021 [Smoking restrictions at sports grounds](#)

8. Quit Victoria 2021 [Sporting clubs & grounds](#)

9. Quit Victoria 2021 [Action by councils on outdoor smokefree areas guide](#)

Implement smokefree areas and events with strong educative approach

Prior to, during and following the implementation of smokefree areas and events, council should ensure a strong education campaign to ensure the community are aware of the change in law. Importantly, councils need to ensure they have communicated directly with highly impacted vulnerable groups (e.g. the homelessness sector and Aboriginal Communities).

Education should include: clear and effective signage (temporary and permanent) developed with internal council branches (including a budget allocation to ensure signage is maintained); a communications and media plan including social media; and resources to educate the community.

Quick Note

What to consider when introducing a new smokefree area

- Ensure a strong communications plan in the lead up to an area becoming smokefree as well as regular reminders to the community of the area being smokefree.
- It is important to recognise key or highly impacted stakeholders in the area and keep the updated on the work (e.g. businesses, universities, schools, hospitals, sporting clubs). Having buy in from these stakeholders early and throughout the implementation of a new smokefree area is crucial to its overall success.
- Prepare positive messaging to promote the new area. For example, rather than “Don’t smoke here” City of Melbourne have used the tag line “Breathe Easy” for their smokefree areas and this has been well received. It also provided branding for the work which is useful for all future communications.
- Plan for temporary signage to be installed immediately after a council decision to endorse an area as smokefree. This will give you time to design, produce and install permanent signage.
- Displacement of smokers can occur with new smokefree areas being introduced. Factors for council to consider include:
 - Where people who smoke are likely to relocate to
 - Whether the air ventilation intakes of nearby buildings are likely to be affected
 - Providing appropriate butt bin facilities to avoid litter issues.
- Ensure On-Street Compliance staff are aware of new smokefree areas and work closely with them on an education first approach. Community members will need time to adapt to the changes and it’s important education is a key focus for new smokefree areas.
- Ensure there is a channel or email where members of the public can report people smoking within a smokefree area.
- Regular review and maintenance of signage in smokefree areas is required. It will become evident where signage may need strengthening. Additional signage may be only needed for a short time frame to assist with behavior change.
- Consider using a range of languages on signage to reach culturally and linguistically diverse groups who may have higher smoking rates and may be using the space.



Review and embed

Monitor and evaluate reach and success of the communications plan

Collecting evidence for the first areas and events in which the policy is implemented will help to determine whether the smokefree policy has been successfully complied with, identify ways to improve the policy's implementation, justify any use of resources, and allow the policy to be amended if required. The Victorian Department of Health provides [resources to assist local governments](#) with fulfilling their education and enforcement obligations under the Act.

Evaluation doesn't have to be resource intensive. It could involve something as simple as council staff visiting the smokefree area or event and noting

how the policy has been implemented and if it is being complied with. Councils can also evaluate the effectiveness of signage in terms of visibility and comprehension and update and maintain as required. A more extensive evaluation may involve seeking feedback from community organisations that use the areas or were involved in the event, businesses impacted and the community who frequent the areas/attended the event as to their experience and any suggestions they may have for improvement. For the most part, if smokefree policies are communicated well then compliance is high amongst the public and those responsible for its implementation.

Recommended resources

- City of Melbourne [Smoke-Free Melbourne policy](#)
- Quit Victoria [Actions by councils on outdoor smokefree areas guide](#)

Topics in focus

Types of tobacco and e-cigarette use and their impacts

Water pipes and other types of smoking

The use of water pipes ('shisha' or 'hookah') is common among some population groups.¹⁰ Despite perceptions that these are safer than traditional cigarettes, water pipe users are typically exposed to smoke for longer periods, and during a session may inhale up to 100 times the volume of smoke delivered by a cigarette.

Water pipe smoke contains harmful substances including carcinogens and heavy metals.

Health effects of water pipe smoking include increased risk of lung cancer, head and neck cancers, cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, mental health problems, and transmission of infectious diseases due to sharing of water pipes.¹² It also causes harm to non-smokers through secondhand smoke exposure.

Collaborating with local communities to develop culturally relevant strategies is important when addressing water pipe use. This includes working

with local leaders, trusted health professionals and the broader community to develop tailored health education strategies to raise awareness of the health risks and support available to quit.

Information on health risks associated with water pipe use, and stories about quitting shisha, can be found on the [Quit Explainer: Shisha pipes vs. cigarettes](#).

Councils can complement these activities by providing smoking cessation resources in relevant community-based settings and promoting the tobacco-relevant sections of the [Cancer Council Victoria Achievement Program](#) to workplaces, schools and early childhood education and care services.



10. Shisha that contains tobacco is regulated through the Tobacco Act 1987 (Vic.) but herbal shisha is unregulated.

E-cigarettes (vaping)

Rates of smoking have declined significantly over the past few decades. This is mostly due to fewer young people taking up smoking to begin with. However, the growing use of e-cigarettes ('vaping') threatens to undermine this public health success story. E-cigarettes cause immediate toxicity through inhalation, with seizures being the most serious symptom. E-cigarette use also negatively impacts the cardiac system, including blood pressure and heart rate. Most oncology experts agree that long-term e-cigarette use is likely to cause cancers in the mouth and lungs.

The greatest risk of vaping for children and young people is to the lungs, because lung development continues into the early 20s. Children who vape will likely have lower lung function as adults. This means they will be far more vulnerable to the development of pneumonia, and to lung diseases such as emphysema, chronic bronchitis and chronic asthma.

Vaping comes with other risks for young Victorians. Nicotine e-liquid (the fluid used in an e-cigarette) has the potential to cause poisoning if swallowed or absorbed through the skin, and can be fatal. The risk of nicotine poisoning is very concerning given that most e-cigarettes and e-liquid products are not made with basic safety features. E-cigarettes and e-liquid containers may leak, causing a hazard when nicotine is absorbed through the skin, and e-liquid containers are easily opened.

In recent years, calls to poison information centres because of unintended swallowing of e-liquid, particularly by children, have increased. E-liquid products are typically sold in a range of confectionery, fruit and other 'fun' flavours, and are often packaged in a way that is likely to appeal to children.

A range of fact sheets and resources have been developed for children, young people and families, and people who work with these groups. These resources provide information on the harms of vaping. Quit, Victoria's peak anti-smoking body, is funded by VicHealth, Cancer Council Victoria and the Victorian Government Department of Health to run mass-media public education campaigns designed and tested to reach Victorians on a large scale and support changes in attitudes and behaviours.

Protecting children from e-cigarette harm

People who use e-cigarettes can minimise the risks for children by:

- keeping e-cigarettes and e-liquids where children cannot see or reach them
- not using their e-cigarette in front of children
- not discarding their e-cigarette in front of children or where children can find them.

If anyone believes a child has swallowed e-liquid, immediately call the **Victorian Poisons Information Centre on 13 11 26**.

If a child is very unwell from inhaling aerosol, has collapsed or stopped breathing, or is having a seizure or anaphylactic reaction, **ring triple zero (000) for an ambulance**.

E-cigarettes and young people

The use of e-cigarettes by young people is increasing. Harms associated with vaping for young people include nicotine in e-cigarettes impacting brain development (memory and concentration), increased likelihood to transition to cigarettes, short-term health effects such as nausea and vomiting, and long-term use causing damage to the heart and lungs.

Better Health Channel has developed [fact sheets and resources](#) for young people, parents and carers, and teachers.

Secondhand smoke

Smoking or vaping, and exposure to secondhand smoke during pregnancy, significantly increases the risk of poor pregnancy outcomes. These outcomes include pregnancy complications, miscarriage, stillbirth, pre-term birth and low birthweight.

Therefore, all pregnant people, and the people living with them, should be strongly (but respectfully and compassionately) encouraged and supported to quit smoking and vaping. To support sustained quitting and avoid relapse, the decision by people who have already quit should be affirmed and their success in quitting acknowledged.

Exposure to secondhand smoke during the first 2,000 days of life can cause a variety of illnesses, such as asthma attacks, chest infections (e.g. bronchitis, pneumonia), and ear infections that can lead to hearing impairment. Secondhand

smoke is suspected to also limit weight and height growth in the first four months of life, and to reduce lung function into adulthood. Sadly, exposure to secondhand smoke during and after pregnancy is a leading risk factor for sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

In addition, there is growing evidence around the impact of secondhand smoke and secondhand aerosols. These can linger for hours and settle on surfaces to create thirdhand smoke and thirdhand aerosol, which are particularly dangerous to children.

Thirdhand smoke

Thirdhand smoke is the residue, which includes nicotine, left behind when cigarette smoke settles on surfaces. Some studies have demonstrated that the aerosol emission from e-cigarettes, which can include nicotine, also settles on indoor surfaces – as thirdhand aerosol residue.

People are exposed to chemicals in thirdhand smoke, including nicotine, by touching contaminated surfaces or breathing in where thirdhand smoke is 'offgassing'. Rooms in which someone has been smoking over time have a slightly bitter, 'stale cigarette' smell, which is thirdhand smoke offgassing from surfaces. Thirdhand smoke clings to clothes, furniture, curtains, walls, bedding, carpets, dust and soft furnishings long after smoking has stopped.

Thirdhand smoke can't be eliminated by airing out rooms, opening windows, using fans or air conditioners, or confining smoking to certain areas of a home. The residue builds up over time and can only be removed by regular and thorough cleaning.

Young children are particularly at risk of tobacco-related health problems from thirdhand smoke because they are more likely to touch contaminated surfaces and then put their fingers in their mouths, or to mouth on objects, such as toys or teething rings, that have thirdhand smoke on them. Researchers are still studying the possible effects of inhaling or swallowing residue from cigarette smoke.

In the meantime, the risks of thirdhand smoke and aerosol emission from e-cigarettes (and from secondhand smoke and emissions) can be minimised by adults always smoking and vaping outside the home, cars or other enclosed spaces.

The best way to protect children from thirdhand (and secondhand) smoke and e-cigarette aerosols is for adults around children to stop smoking and vaping.

Extra implementation support resources



Quit Victoria supports tobacco control activity to reduce the prevalence of smoking. In consultation with health professionals, Quit has developed a range of online training for professionals working in health or community and social service organisations. This training provides professionals with the knowledge and skills required to link clients/patients with best practice tobacco dependence treatment. Quit Victoria also have additional resources for local government and examples of smokefree policies. These can be found [here](#).

Community of Practice

A community of practice will be provided to fast-track councils working through the health promotion modules, giving them the opportunity to share with, learn from and support each other through implementation.

Together, councils with expert partners and young people will share experiences and insights about the suggested activities within the stretch modules. They will also look at topics related to the VicHealth Local Government Partnership more broadly and the development and adoption of Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans 2021–25.

Council staff interested in finding out more about the VicHealth Local Government Partnership health promotion modules can get in touch with our team at lgp@vichealth.vic.gov.au.





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VicHealth acknowledges the Traditional
Custodians of the land. We pay our respects
to all Elders past, present and future.



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