

HiAP Case Study – Supporting Pregnant Smokers in Warwickshire North: a multi-stakeholder pilot

BACKGROUND

The Coventry & Warwickshire Smoking in Pregnancy Review (2020) and the recent Warwickshire 0-5 Childrens Joint strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) identified significant inequalities across Warwickshire relating to Smoking in Pregnancy and negative health outcomes associated with this. Compared to England and the rest of Warwickshire, smoking in pregnancy rates are significantly higher in Warwickshire North, as are low birthweight births, premature births, and neonatal deaths.

In line with national guidance (NICE, 2021) to reduce harm to pregnant smokers and their infants, a pilot programme providing e-cigarettes (also known as vapes) to pregnant smokers in Warwickshire North has been introduced. Funded by the Coventry & Warwickshire Local Maternity and Neonatal System (CWLMNS), vapes will be offered to participants of the 12-week Stop Smoking in Pregnancy (SSiP) programme alongside the current offer of Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) and behavioural support.

AIM

To increase engagement with the SSiP service and provide a diverse smoking cessation offer to pregnant smokers. The aim is that increased engagement with the service will result in improved 'smoking at time of delivery' (SATOD) rates in Warwickshire North, reducing the SiP inequality within Coventry & Warwickshire ICS. Evaluation by Coventry University in partnership with Bath & NE Somerset local authority aims to identify both impact on engagement and pregnant smokers' perception of the enhanced offer.

RELATIONSHIP WITH PUBLIC HEALTH

Reducing health inequalities is a major public health priority. NHS England have introduced the Core20PLUS5 model to support the reduction of health inequalities at both national and system level. One of the five key clinical areas of health inequality within this model is maternity, with smoking cessation highlighted as the single intervention which positively impacts all five areas. In 2020/21 NHS England awarded CWLMNS a reducing inequalities grant to specifically tackle smoking in pregnancy within the C&W system. WCC Public Health negotiated with CWLMNS to allocate some of this funding to support the Warwickshire North vape pilot.

PARTNERSHIP

To enhance the existing Stop Smoking in Pregnancy 12-week service by introducing vapes, the pilot working group was formed with membership from: South Warwickshire Foundation Trust (SSiP service provider), George Eliot Hospital (host hospital), WCC & CWLMNS (project management), Coventry University and Bath & NE Somerset (evaluation and research ethics).

OUTLINE OF THE WORK

The working group developed an action plan with three main stages:

Scoping and partnership – seeking out best practice, national guidelines and current evidence. This included a rapid review by Coventry University and developing a research partnership with Bath and NE Somerset local authority.

Planning and implementation – Securing supplier, research governance and adapting SSiP service provision. This included negotiating extra Carbon Monoxide (CO) screening checks with the service provider (SWFT) for participants enrolled on the pilot.

Launching & monitoring – The pilot launched on 15th July 2022. Participants receive a vape device and refills, with top-up deliveries provided at 4 weeks and 8 weeks subject to providing clear CO readings. Nicotine strength is reduced throughout the 12-week period with the aim of total smoking cessation at the end of the programme. The pilot working group meets monthly to review engagement and progress.

ENGAGEMENT

Due to e-cigarettes being a relatively new innovation for smoking cessation in pregnancy, targeted engagement with wider system was required. An engagement plan was developed to ensure key partners remained briefed and engaged with the pilot both in development and launch. Briefings and regular updates were provided to Warwickshire North Health & Wellbeing Partnership, SWFT Tobacco Group, WCC Health & Wellbeing Board, GEH Trust Management Board and Elected Members.

Evaluation of the pilot will include engagement with participants via qualitative interviews conducted by Coventry University, and service evaluation surveys developed by WCC Public Health.

CHALLENGES

As mentioned, multiple levels of engagement and buy-in from SSiP workers to Elected Members was required to support the development and implementation of the pilot. Although a partnership with Bath & NE Somerset was developed to join their existing Health Research Authority ethics for vaping in pregnancy, organising research governance still took several months to finalise.

To ensure harm reduction, increased face to face contact between SSiP and pregnant smokers to increase CO checks and complete research paperwork is required, potentially increasing SSiP workload.

Funding streams are not yet identified in the instance that the pilot is successful and rolled out to the wider system.

WHAT DIFFERENCE WAS MADE?

In the first month of the pilot, 9 pregnant smokers have signed up to the vape option and remain engaged with the 12-week programme.

The SSIP service have reported feeling enthusiastic about being involved in the pilot and good relationships have been developed between the SSIP team and wider health system.