

Lancashire Health and Wellbeing Board
Meeting to be held on 5 March 2024

Corporate Priorities:

Caring for the vulnerable
Delivering better services

Sports Stadia Sponsorship by Vaping Companies

Contact for further information:

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Brief Summary

To understand how widespread vaping sponsorship of sports stadia is in England.

Recommendation

The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to discuss the findings and the work to mitigate vaping sponsorship in sport stadia.

Detail

The Health and Wellbeing Board held on the 5 September 2023, received a report, 'Tackling Illicit Vapes and Youth Vaping in Lancashire'. The discussion about the report highlighted concern regarding vaping companies sponsoring sports stadia and the impact this could have on young people vaping. An action was agreed that further research be carried out to find out how widespread such sponsorship is and report the findings to the Health and Wellbeing Board.

A literature search was undertaken which identified that only two sports clubs are currently sponsored by the vaping firm Totally Wicked, which is based in Blackburn with Darwen. The clubs are Blackburn Football Club and St Helens Rugby Football Club. Blackburn Football Club have been sponsored since 2018 and St Helens since 2013. St Helen's stadium was also renamed 'The Totally Wicked Stadium' in 2017.

Whilst the sponsor's name and logo appear on the match day kits and adult replica kits are available in the club shop, it is not on the kit on sale to children. This is similar to the situation at Preston North End when they were sponsored by Tennent's (alcohol) and the children's kit were sponsored by their Community Trust. The company take sales to children and young people very seriously and are the chair of



the Independent British Vape Trade Association, they are also a responsible provider with a Check 25 approach.

Sponsorship to advertise and market products at sports stadia by industry is not a new phenomenon, e.g. previously there has been tobacco sponsorship, which was made illegal in 2005. Sport sponsorship works by increasing brand awareness and driving positive consumer perceptions about a brand which, in turn, lead to brand loyalty and anticipated increases in sales. The challenge with vapes is combatting the marketing and promotion of products to children and recognising that vaping is an evidence-based method of support to help adults quit smoking, as recognised by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE). A bigger issue identified by this piece of work was that sports fans are routinely exposed to sponsorship by alcohol and gambling industries. Alcohol-related harm costs NHS England approximately £3.5bn each year, and the annual economic burden of harmful gambling is estimated to be around £1.27bn. Seven out of the twenty teams in the Premier League are sponsored by gambling firms as well as over half of the teams in the Championship. The English Football League is sponsored by Skybet. Positively the Premier League has announced that clubs have agreed to 'withdraw gambling sponsorship from the front of their matchday shirts' from the 2026/27 season onwards. Teams can still partner with gambling companies as sleeve partner or for in-stadium visibility.

Positive action – Healthy Stadia

Sports stadia are in a unique position to influence health and wellbeing of a significant number of people. There is a well-established programme called Healthy Stadia which is a non-governmental organisation based in Liverpool and aims to work with clubs, sports stadia, and non-government bodies to positively influence the health of fans through stadium-based policies and community programmes. Further information can be found at <https://healthystadia.eu/healthy-stadia-concept/>.

Lancashire County Council's Public Health Team will continue to work with relevant agencies to promote healthy lifestyles and tackle youth vaping through the newly formed Lancashire Smokefree Alliance.

Conclusion

This piece of work has identified limited sport stadia sponsorship by vaping companies and acknowledges where there is sponsorship those sponsors are undertaking mitigating actions, so products are not endorsed by children. This piece of work has identified a concerning amount of sport stadia that have gambling sponsorship. We will continue to work to develop positive health messages with stadia as per the Healthy Stadia Concept.

List of background papers

None

