

Smoking and harm reduction

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Smoking

- Smoking major cause of preventable premature death and disease
- 8 million people in England still smoke and nearly 80,000 people die from a smoking related illness each year
- Considerable evidence that smoking is *primarily* maintained by addiction to nicotine
- Smoking tobacco delivers nicotine to the brain in seconds
- Nicotine from NRT products delivers nicotine much more slowly

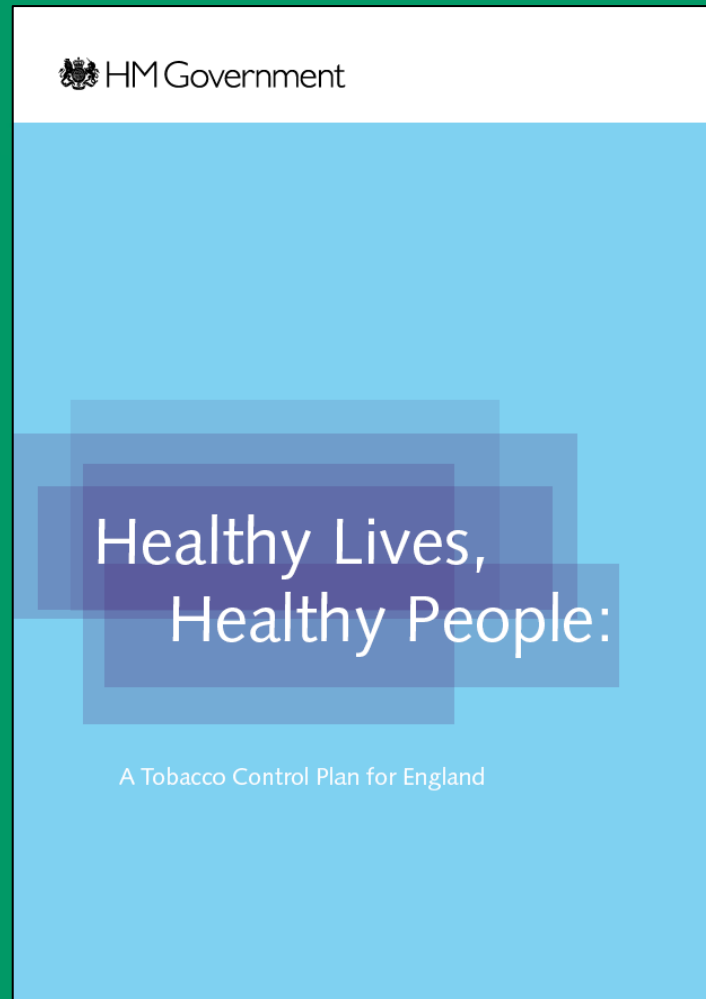
Should we be concerned about nicotine or smoking?

- *“Nicotine, while addictive, is actually a very safe drug”*
– MHRA, 2010
- *“NRT is many orders of magnitude safer than smoking”*
– Royal College of Physicians, 2007
- *“Smokers are addicted to nicotine but are harmed by the tar and toxins in tobacco smoke”*
– ASH, 2008

What is harm reduction?

- Harm reduction is defined as: *“policies and programmes which aim to reduce the health, social, and economic costs of legal and illegal psychoactive drug use without necessarily reducing drug consumption”* – BMA 2009
- Harm reduction strategies include smokefree legislations and can also mean encouraging people with nicotine addiction to use safer forms of nicotine, and discourage them from using the most harmful forms of nicotine

Government policy on harm reduction



- Government published the *Tobacco Control Plan for England* in March 2011
- Sets out how tobacco control will be delivered in the new public health system
- Focuses on action the Government will take nationally over the next five years to:
 - Drive down the prevalence of smoking
 - Reduce the uptake of smoking by young people
 - Support comprehensive tobacco control in local areas

- Government is very interested in the concept of harm reduction to reduce toll of smoking-related disease and has committed to:
 - work in collaboration with the public health community to consider what more can be done to help tobacco users who cannot quit, or who are unwilling to, to substitute alternative safer sources of nicotine, such as NRT, for tobacco
 - encourage the manufacturers of safer sources of nicotine, such as NRT, to develop new types of nicotine products that are more affordable and that have increased acceptability for use in the longer term

- MHRA will:
 - conduct scientific and market research on the use of nicotine-containing products to inform decisions about the most effective and proportionate form of regulation

- NICE will:
 - produce public health guidance on the use of harm reduction approaches to smoking cessation (to be published in spring 2013)

Thank you

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