

Equipping frontline workers to address youth vaping: The Vape Check initiative

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Background:

Dovetail, a Queensland-based statewide service, assists professionals working with young people who use alcohol and other drugs. In early 2021, Dovetail noted a surge in requests for support related to vaping among high school-aged young people. These requests, predominantly from frontline workers, stemmed from an influx of referrals for intervention involving young people caught vaping. Many workers expressed a lack of knowledge about vaping and apprehension regarding intervention due to the lack of empirical evidence. Consequently, confidence levels to address vaping-related issues, particularly where young people were not ready to quit, was notably low.

Approach:

Dovetail devised a phased strategy to produce a suite of resources aimed at bolstering worker confidence and knowledge in responding to youth vaping. This initiative included the creation of a brief intervention called Vape Check, supplemented by instructional materials including written guides, brief videos, factsheets, and online training. Recognising that youth often exhibit pre-contemplative behaviour regarding vaping, guidance on harm reduction was also developed. In the absence of substantial empirical data, established principles from tobacco cessation and harm reduction were applied along with sector consultation.

Outcome:

Resources were launched in 2023 on the Dovetail website within the vaping "toolkit" which has received 12,100+ visits. The Vape Check tool has been downloaded over 4,200 times and 2,500 hard copies distributed. A follow-up survey indicated increases in worker confidence and knowledge after using Vape Check.

Innovation and Significance:

Dovetail's provision of user-friendly, youth-centric vaping resources filled a crucial gap for workers who were not smoking cessation professionals to confidently engage with young people who vape. These resources offer much-needed practical support and strategies for harm reduction, particularly for young people not ready to quit vaping, thus addressing a pressing need for adolescent-specific intervention.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

Dovetail recognises the contributions of the Queensland youth alcohol and other drugs sector, as well as the wider youth sector, in the development of many of these resources. We have no conflicts of interest to declare.