

PRACTICE BASED TEMPLATE

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Driving Change: A whole of systems approach to understanding vaping in young people

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Background/Purpose:

Vaping is an emerging public health concern. Data indicates that over 20% of young people aged 16-24 years in NSW are current vapers. The use of e-cigarettes has been associated with harms including burns and poisoning, increased risk of respiratory and cardiac conditions, nicotine addiction, impacts on brain development and the potential 'gateway' affect into tobacco smoking. Liverpool and Fairfield are diverse communities within south west Sydney, experiencing high levels of socioeconomic disadvantage and cultural diversity.

Approach:

This study uses a whole of systems approach to engage stakeholders in developing a causal loop diagram, through group model building and focus groups it captures diverse perspectives to create a shared understand of the drivers of vaping. The model will be used to inform and generate a community-led response in the Fairfield and Liverpool Local Government Areas.

Outcomes/Impact:

The vaping systems map combines insights from young people, health, education, youth, community and cultural organisations alongside local, state and federal government. This study provides deep insights into the complex system influencing vaping in young people and articulates the causal relationships between behaviours, determinants of health and other variables. This approach ensures researchers, decision makers and community champions are informed about the systemic and behavioural drivers and apply this understanding to changes to program, policy, practice and environments.

Innovation and Significance:

The study engages all sections of the community, whilst empowering young people, to identify locally tailored solutions and build on the strengths of the community. It provides a robust, local understanding of what influences a complex behaviour, shifting from an individual lens to a systems focus. It describes the dynamics within the system, leverage points for change and acts as an iterative feedback loop to understand impacts both intended and unintended.

Disclosure of Interest Statement (example):

The Health Promotion Service, South Western Sydney Local Health District and all researchers involved in this study have no conflicts of interest to declare.

Author Bio:

Sheree is a Senior Health Promotion Officer with over 10 years experience planning, implementing and evaluating projects in South Western Sydney Local Health District. Sheree has led research projects addressing childhood obesity, vaping and tobacco. She has expertise in applying systems thinking, translating evidence to practice and working with complex, diverse communities.