



TRADING STANDARDS NICHE TOBACCO EDUCATION PROJECT (LEEDS)



West Yorkshire Trading Standards (WYTS) has the responsibility for enforcing legislation in relation to underage sales of tobacco, alcohol, fireworks, knives, solvents and aerosol spray paints. Issues surrounding the supply and use of products are tackled in a number of ways, with emphasis being on both enforcement and education. The sale of underage products to children and young people can often result in anti-social behaviour within the community.

What is the project?

West Yorkshire Trading Standards (WYTS) is working in partnership with Leeds city council and NHS Airedale, Bradford and Leeds to raise awareness of the health risks of using niche tobacco to the BME communities of Beeston, Harehills, Hyde park and Burley. The sessions can be delivered on weekdays, evenings and weekends if necessary to suit the needs of service users.

WYTS is also offering free training for health and non-health professionals who work in these particular areas so they can provide their service users with information, raise awareness and signpost to support for Niche Tobacco as appropriate to their role.

The training will provide information about the availability of niche tobacco products, the health impacts of using niche tobacco and what support services are available for users.

What is niche tobacco?

Niche tobacco products such as Gutkha, Zarda or Khaini, Nasal snuff, Shisha, Biri or Beedi cigarettes have been in existence for thousands of years among populations in South America and Southeast Asia. Over time, these products have gained popularity throughout the world.

Smokeless tobacco is consumed without burning the product, and can be used orally or nasally. Oral smokeless tobacco products are placed in the mouth, cheek or lip and sucked (dipped) or chewed and are frequently mixed with other ingredients, including areca nut and slaked lime, within a betel leaf.



Tobacco pastes or powders are used in a similar manner and placed on the gums or teeth. Fine tobacco powder mixtures are usually inhaled and absorbed in the nasal passages.

A new sensation which has grown in popularity rapidly amongst young people is the smoking of Shisha or water pipe. It has become a social occasion like going to the movies or going out for a meal. Young people will plan and go out to cafes for a smoke and to relax. Parents may allow young children to participate as they think it is a safe alternative to cigarette smoking when in fact one full shisha session can contain the same amount of smoke as up to 100 cigarettes.

What are the issues affecting communities?

The Locality Plans and area priorities indicate that the use of tobacco and the water pipe amongst young people is an issue across the district. Also raising the awareness of the wider implications of underage sales and purchases is essential in order to address such issues as the smoke free legislation of 2007.

The niche tobacco pilot project in Bradford and Kirklees in 2011 reported that almost 40% of participants in the project were users of niche tobacco. This is significantly higher than the national average of niche tobacco users. With a large BME community in a number of districts in the county, anecdotal evidence from those workshops suggests that many younger members are actively participating in shisha smoking sessions in the family environment, and are unaware of the health risks associated with this and other niche products.

The workshops found that children as young as 8 were participating in using niche tobacco at celebrations such as Eid and weddings. The project also identified that unlike cigarette smoking older members of the community are tolerant and supportive of niche tobacco usage due to the cultural significance of the products and the lack of awareness about the risks associated with using them.

Mouth cancer has increased in the UK by a staggering 41% in the last 10 years and the last decade has seen an increasing number of patients from BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) backgrounds being treated for various mouth related illnesses. The World Health Organisation reports that the Indian Sub Continent accounts for one third of the world's burden of mouth cancer. Further investigation has identified that many of these illnesses relate to the use of tobacco.



There is sufficient evidence that the use of niche tobacco causes cancer in humans. Niche tobacco contains carcinogens, which contribute to cancers of the oral cavity and the risk of other head and neck cancers. Niche tobacco use also causes a number of noncancerous oral conditions such as gum disease and tooth decay and can lead to nicotine addiction similar to that produced by cigarette smoking.

Addressing cultural issues

Research has shown that amongst BME communities in the UK, especially those from South Asian backgrounds, smokeless and chewing tobacco is extremely popular, it is part of daily life and culture and it is now of growing concern that children may be allowed to use these tobacco products due to a lack of knowledge regarding the harmful effects.

Most communities are unaware of the risk to health caused by niche tobacco as the products rarely carry health warnings. As warning labels are more widely associated with cigarettes, this leads to the misconception and belief that other forms of tobacco are a healthier alternative.

Aims and Objectives

The niche tobacco project aims to

- raise awareness of the impact of using niche tobacco products amongst South Asian communities
- encourage people to reduce their usage and eventually quit the use of such products
- promote access to NHS Stop Smoking Services for niche tobacco users wanting support to quit
- train healthcare professionals to conduct brief intervention with users
- discourage future take up of niche tobacco, particularly amongst young people

Working with members of the community

To raise awareness of the health risks associated with niche tobacco use and to support the south Asian community to make informed health choices West Yorkshire Trading Standards is working with community centre's, Imams from the mosque, youth centre's, community leaders, children's centre's as well as primary and secondary schools enabling interaction with people in a setting in which they are comfortable in.



Each session is tailored to the specific needs of the school, community groups and its young people, in order to achieve the best possible learning outcomes.

Encouraging young people to explore the wider implications of what they often assume is a behaviour that affects only them, and educating them we hope to influence the decisions they make throughout their life, and choose a lifestyle that not only benefits them directly, but all generations to come.

If you would like more information or would like us to deliver training sessions or workshops regarding the effects of niche tobacco please contact:

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