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Dear Parent or Carer,

As the Acting Director of Public Health for Cumbria I am writing to bring to your attention two worrying trends that are becoming more common with young people.

It is important as parents and carers that we know about new trends or fads that affect our children, so that we can help them to cope and stay safe.

You may well already have had experience of them, so I have provided some contact details below if you want to speak to someone regarding your child. Alternatively, a member of your child's school staff will be able to help.

### **'Neck' Nominations**

This involves someone challenging a friend to 'neck' a pint of alcohol or some other liquid in an unusual place. It is often alcohol which can be any combination of beer, lager, spirit but also laced with other items such as urine, shampoo, mouthwash etc. In several cases live goldfish have also been swallowed. This is then recorded as a movie file and uploaded to social networking sites. The participant then nominates two other friends to drink something in a chain.

This is obviously a dangerous fad and has already resulted in the death of a young person. If the child doesn't complete the challenge, they may suffer from bullying.

I would encourage you to speak to your child about this and to help them resist peer pressure. If you would like to speak to someone about your child's use of alcohol, please contact your school nurse, or the young people's alcohol service on 01946 68520.

### **Cigarette-like devices**

There is a growing range of devices those look like, and are used like; 'traditional' cigarettes, but which are not currently controlled like cigarettes. These come in two forms, electronic delivery and non-electronic.

Electronic cigarettes (E-cigs) are widely available and provide the user with an unknown amount of nicotine which is the addictive part of a traditional cigarette. Currently they are unregulated and we are waiting for the results of trials to see if they are safe. Adults use them to replace

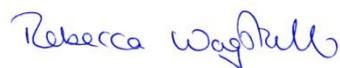
traditional cigarettes, but there is growing evidence that these adults are returning to smoking traditional cigarettes and that children are using them before going on to smoking traditional cigarettes. Until these products are regulated, it is important that children do not use them. The Government is currently considering introducing a law to prevent their sale to children under 18 years.

Electronic shisha pens are available via the internet and contain flavoured herbs, but do not contain nicotine. They are made to imitate traditional cigarettes and are mainly marketed for children's use. There is also concern that they are leading children into smoking traditional cigarettes and so children should be discouraged from using them.

A non-electronic plastic cigarette has also been developed that provides the user with nicotine but does not heat the nicotine fluid. This is a very new product so we know little about it. It does, however, look just like a traditional cigarette and could be very attractive to children and young people.

It is very important that children do not think that smoking any product is safe or that it is something that is 'normal'. If you would like to talk to someone about your child's smoking, please speak to your school nurse or ring the Stop Smoking Service on 01900 324239.

Yours sincerely



Dr Rebecca Wagstaff  
Interim Director of Public Health Cumbria