



Public Health Guidance on Vaping/E-cigarettes for Schools and Colleges in Gwent



March 2023



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Most children and young people don't vape or smoke. Vapes containing nicotine are age restricted products, it is illegal to sell them to under 18's and for adults to buy them on their behalf. Vapes are not harmless.
Don't smoke? Don't start to vape!

Why is there concern about vaping and young people?

Nicotine is the addictive ingredient in a cigarette and is often present in e-cigarettes / vapes.

The amount of nicotine contained in vapes can vary between and within brands. The latest evidence shows that in the short and medium term, e-cigarettes pose a small fraction of the health risks of tobacco cigarettes (Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, 2022). However, vaping is not risk free, particularly for those who have never smoked such as children and young people, and it can have a negative effect on their heart and lungs (Virgilli et al 2022).

Although vapes may be presented as a 'safe' way to smoke, they may provide a route to nicotine addiction for children and young people. There are concerns that vaping may act as a gateway to tobacco smoking, whereby young people who do not use tobacco cigarettes may experiment with vapes and then go on to try cigarettes. The School Health Research Network Survey 2019/20 found that more than 1 in 5 (22%) young people reported having ever tried a vape (Page et al 2021).

Vaping, vapes, E-cigarettes, ENDS (electronic nicotine delivery systems) are interchangeable terms when talking about this topic.

The appearance of some vapes mimics smoking a cigarette and could play a role in normalising smoking behaviour. Considerable progress has been made in de-normalising smoking but there is much more to do.

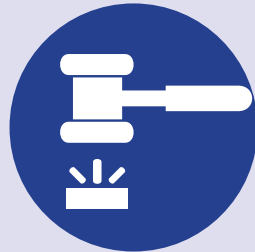
There are also concerns about the effects of the marketing of vapes on young people. Some marketing of these products appear to have been aimed at a younger adult demographic and may appeal to young people. A number of vapes are offered in flavours and colours that can be particularly attractive to adolescents.



Actions for Schools and Colleges

Based on the current evidence and NICE Guidance (2023), Aneurin Bevan University Health Board advises schools to take the following action:

1. Ensure pupils, staff (including agency), visitors and contractors are aware of the changes in the law regarding smoking in public places. The Public Health (Wales) Act 2017 and the Smoke-free Premises and Vehicles (Wales) Regulations 2020, came into force on 1 March 2021. This legislation means that hospital grounds, school grounds and public playgrounds, as well as outdoor day care and child-minding settings, are required to be smoke-free. It is against the law to smoke in these settings.



3. Pupils and staff who wish to quit smoking should be signposted to NHS stop smoking services, Help Me Quit via <http://bit.ly/HMQ-Gwent>
Telephone: 0800 085 2219
Email: helpmequit@wales.nhs.uk
Text: HMQ to 80818.



2. School smoke-free policies should clearly prohibit the use of vapes as well as cigarettes, on school sites and travel to and from school. This should apply to pupils, staff (including agency), visitors and contractors.



4. As part of the whole school approach to health and wellbeing pupils should be educated about vaping as part of substance misuse education. A list of useful resources to support this has been provided.



5. **Participate in the Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes (WNHSS)** which aims to promote the health and wellbeing of children, young people and the whole school community in schools across Wales.

6. **Participate in the School Health Research Network (SHRN).**

Schools that join the Network receive an individualised Student Health and Wellbeing Report **every two years**. This is based on learner responses to an electronic Student Health and Wellbeing Survey which schools undertake. See SHRN website for further information. School Health Research Network (shrn.org.uk).



7. **If available to your school participate in JustB.** Developed and delivered by Public Health Wales JustB is a targeted, evidence-based school smoking prevention programme for Year 8 (12-13-year-olds) to enable them to discuss the risks of smoking and the benefits of being smoke-free.

The programme has been revised to include more of a focus on vaping. **Home - Public Health Wales (nhs.wales)**



Advice for parents

If a young person wishes to quit smoking/vaping, free support is available from the NHS. This support is available from Help Me Quit, GP Practices and some Pharmacies. For more information visit: <http://bit.ly/HMQ-Gwent> or visit your GP.

Young people should be encouraged to access behavioural support to quit smoking or quit vaping from an NHS service. Those over the age of 12, where there is evidence of addiction to nicotine from tobacco products (licensed cigarettes **not vapes**), may use licensed stop smoking medications such as Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) - patches, gum and a range of other products - alongside behavioural support. NRT should only be used as part of a supervised regime with behavioural support from a trained health professional. (NICE, 2023). Currently, vapes are not used as an aid to quit smoking tobacco in Gwent (including among children under the age of 18).

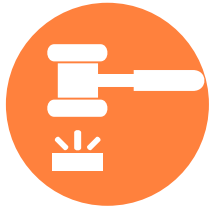


Safety

E-cigarettes/vapes and e-liquids/juice should be kept away from children, as should all products containing nicotine. Nicotine is highly poisonous to children and even a small amount can have immediate adverse health effects, especially if consumed incorrectly or in a large volume.

Symptoms of nicotine poisoning may include one or more of the following:

- Burning in the mouth and throat
- Stomach pains, sickness and/or diarrhoea
- Headaches, dizziness and/or confusion
- Sweating and excessive saliva in the mouth
- In severe cases – seizures (fits) and coma
- Seek medical advice immediately (**999**) if you suspect a child has indigested any type of nicotine product



E-cigarettes and the law

On 1st October 2015, it became illegal in Wales and England:

- for retailers to sell vapes, electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) or e-liquids to anyone under 18
- for adults to buy (or try to buy) tobacco products, vapes or e-cigarettes for anyone under 18. This is known as 'proxy purchase'

A proxy purchasing offence is committed when someone over the age of 18 purchases, or attempts to purchase, tobacco or a nicotine product (such as an e-cigarette/vape) on behalf of a child or young person under 18 years of age. Trading Standards Officers can issue fixed penalty notices and fines for proxy purchasing. Failure to pay a fine may result in the matter being pursued in court.

On 20 May 2016 regulations stipulated that e-cigarettes/vapes must either be licensed as medicines or, if unlicensed, are subject to quality and safety standards, packaging and labelling requirements and restrictions on advertising. All legitimate e-cigarette/vaping products, including e-liquids must carry the following warning on their label: "This product contains nicotine which is a highly addictive substance."



The U.K. Committee of Advertising Practice and the Broadcast Committee of Advertising Practice (2014) launched a new code to ensure that e-cigarettes are promoted responsibly. The rules require that e-cigarettes and vape adverts should not target children.

How to report illegal sales

If you are aware of retailers in your community selling any tobacco products or e-cigarettes to children under the age of 18 please report them to Trading Standards. You can do this by visiting: **NO IFS. NO BUTTS. - Report Illegal Tobacco (noifs-nobutts.co.uk)**

Further information:

What are e-cigarettes and vapes?

Electronic cigarettes, (e-cigs), vapes, or ENDS (electronic nicotine delivery systems) are devices whose function is to vaporise and deliver to the lungs of the user a chemical mixture, typically composed of nicotine, propylene glycol and other chemicals. Some of these products claim to contain no nicotine but tests have shown that some do contain nicotine.

Unlike cigarettes, there is no combustion (burning) involved in vapes, so there is no smoke and no other harmful products of combustion, such as tar and carbon monoxide. This does not mean they are entirely safe, but they are less harmful than smoking as they do not contain the tar, carbon monoxide and other products that cause many smoking related illnesses.

Vapes are sometimes made to look like everyday items such as pens and USB memory sticks. Some products are currently being marketed as e-shisha. E-shisha products, like vapes, consist of devices that vaporise liquid containing different types of chemical flavourings and a solvent. E-shisha are normally described as nicotine free. However, the e-liquid or 'e-juice', which is normally sold separately from the device, may or may not contain nicotine. They are available



in a range of nicotine concentrations, either rechargeable or disposable, and with a range of flavours. There is therefore, no meaningful distinction between e-shisha products and vapes, other than marketing.

There has been a rapid increase in the use, availability and promotion of vapes. There is potential for vapes to reduce the harm of smoking, if smokers of combustible tobacco switch to these devices (Bullen and Jackson 2022). Research into this is ongoing.



Vaping and the environment

There is growing concern about vape waste and its threat to the environment and public health.

In an **open letter**, written in November 2022, to the Environment Secretary Thérèse Coffey and Health Secretary Steve Barclay, 18 environment and health groups, including Green Alliance, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, Marine Conservation Society and RSPCA, demand the government ban the sale of single-use vapes to stem their "rapidly escalating threat" to public health and the environment. Please follow the links below for further information.

One million single use vapes thrown away every week contributing to the growing e-waste challenge in the UK - Material Focus

Leading environmental and health groups demand ban on disposable vapes – Green Alliance

Do booming disposable vape sales spell disaster for the environment? – The Grocer



Useful contacts



NHS Wales Help Me Quit

<http://bit.ly/HMQ-Gwent>

Freephone **0800 085 2219** or

Text HMQ to **80818**



ASH Wales

Phone **029 2049 0621**

Email: enquiries@ashwales.org.uk

Sources of further information

1. **ASH Wales - Action on Smoking and Health Wales**
2. **Tobacco (bma.org.uk)**
3. **Vaping - Action on Smoking and Health (ash.wales)**
4. **Electronic nicotine and non-nicotine delivery systems: a brief (who.int)**
5. **Guidance for licensing electronic cigarettes and other inhaled nicotine-containing products as medicines - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)**
6. Elen deLacy et al. (2017). Cross-sectional study examining the prevalence, correlates and sequencing of electronic cigarette and tobacco use among 11-16-year olds in schools in Wales. *BMJ Open* 6:e012784
<http://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/7/2/e012784.full>
7. The Lancet article: **Vaping in adolescents and young adults: it's time to act**
8. JustB: JustB - **Home - Public Health Wales (nhs.wales)**
9. No Ifs, No Butts campaign: **NO IFS. NO BUTTS. - Report Illegal Tobacco (noifs-nobutts.co.uk)**

References

Bullen, C. and Jackson, S. 2022. "UK Report Underscores Potential of e-Cigarettes to Reduce Smoking Harms." The Lancet (British edition) pp: 1747–1750. doi: 400.10365

NICE guidelines, 2023. Tobacco: preventing uptake, promoting quitting and treating dependence. Available at: [Recommendations on preventing uptake | Tobacco: preventing uptake, promoting quitting and treating dependence | Guidance | NICE](#) [Accessed on: 27/01/23]

Office for Health Improvement and Disparities. 2022. Nicotine vaping in England: 2022 evidence update - Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/nicotine-vaping-in-england-2022-evidence-update [Accessed on 20/03/2023]

Page N., Hewitt G., Young H., Moore G., Murphy S. (2021) Student Health and Wellbeing in Wales: Report of the 2019/20 School Health Research Network Student Health and Wellbeing Survey. Available at: [SHRN-NR-FINAL-23_03_21-en-AMENDED06.08.21.pdf](#) [Accessed on: 27/01/2023]

Virgili et al. 2022. E-cigarettes and youth: an unresolved Public Health concern. E-cigarettes and youth: an unresolved Public Health concern. Italian Journal of Paediatrics doi: 10.1186/s13052-022-01286-7

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Thank you to the Heathly Schools team and the young people from Platform for their contribution to this resource.