



Vaping factsheet for professionals working with young people

This factsheet has been prepared for any professional working with children and young people in the North East. This includes, but is not limited to, designated safeguarding leads, PSHE leads and professionals developing school policies on vaping, in the context of the far greater risk from smoking. It has been adapted for local use from the [ASH guidance on developing school policies on vaping](#) and [ASH brief for local authorities on youth vaping](#). This factsheet is part of a suite of resources developed by North East Association of Directors of Public Health, including [the NE ADPH position statement on Vaping](#) and a Communications guide.

Key message

- *Vaping is not for children. Whilst it can help adults to quit smoking, it isn't risk-free. Those who don't smoke should not vape.*

Information

Parents, carers and anyone working with young people can make sure they understand the facts about vaping. This includes the risks relative to smoking, the absolute risks from vaping, the law on sales and proxy purchase, and levels of use among young people.

- Smoking tobacco will kill up to 2 out of 3 long term users. Tobacco remains the single biggest cause of preventable illness and death with approximately 4300 people in the North East dying each year from smoking related diseases.
- Vaping is an effective quitting aid and can help adults to stop smoking.
- Nicotine itself is not very harmful and has been used safely for many years in medicines to help people stop smoking.
- Nicotine-containing vapes provide nicotine without burning tobacco. This removes, or greatly reduces, exposure to many of the carcinogens which cause the harm from smoking.
- Vaping is much less harmful than smoking, but it isn't harmless and so is not recommended for young people under 18.
- Vaping exposes the user to some toxins and we don't yet fully understand the risk from longer term use.
- Vapes are a regulated product in the UK. It is illegal to sell nicotine vaping products to anyone under 18 or for adults to buy them on behalf of under 18s.
- Most 11-17 year olds have never tried or are unaware of vapes (83.8%).
- Most young people who try vaping have also tried smoking.
- Use amongst young people who have never smoked remains low and largely experimental.
- The likelihood of trying or currently using vapes increases with age and smoking status.
- 2022 ASH-Y survey data (11-18 year olds) showed nationally:
 - Smoking prevalence (including occasional and regular smoking¹) was 6.0% in 2022 (compared with 4.1% in 2021 and 6.7% in 2020)

¹ Occasional vaping or smoking is defined as **more than once a month but less than once a week**; regular vaping or smoking is defined as **more than once a week**.

- Vaping prevalence (including occasional and regular vaping¹) was 8.6% in 2022 (compared with 4.0% in 2021 and 4.8% in 2020)
- In 2022, the most frequently used vape product was disposable vapes (52.0%).
- There is no strong evidence that vaping is a gateway into smoking. A 2022 study among 16-24 year olds in the journal [Addiction](#) found no significant or substantial association between prevalence of e-cigarette use and ever having smoked regularly at population level, suggesting that if there is a gateway effect, either into or away from smoking, this would be small.

How to report underage sales and other breaches of legislation

- Nicotine containing e-cigarettes are age restricted products regulated by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).
- Sales to under 18s are illegal. To be legally sold in the UK, nicotine containing e-cigarettes must also:
 - Contain 20 mg/ml or less of nicotine (equivalent to 2% or less)
 - Carry the health warning 'This product contains nicotine which is a highly addictive substance.'
 - Be notified to the MHRA and listed on its [website](#).
- Complaints about illicit sales and about advertising or promotion of vaping in shops can be made to local trading standards teams within your local authority – find their contact details [here](#). Children under 18 should be asked where they got their vape (or cigarette) from. Complaints about inappropriate advertising and promotion of vaping to under 18s for example on social media can be made to the Advertising Standards Authority [online complaints portal](#).
- Adverse reactions associated with vaping of both nicotine and non-nicotine containing e-cigarettes can be reported to the MHRA via the [yellow card scheme](#).

Further guidance and resources²:

- ASH factsheet, July 2022: [Use of e-cigarettes among young people in Great Britain](#)
- <https://ash.org.uk/uploads/ASH-brief-for-local-authorities-on-youth-vaping.pdf>
- <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng209/chapter/Recommendations-on-policy-commissioning-and-training>.
- <https://ash.org.uk/uploads/ASH-guidance-for-school-vaping-policies.pdf>
- <https://ash.org.uk/resources/view/foster-care-adoption-smoking-and-vaping>
- The PSHE Association provides [resources to support teaching on smoking and vaping](#) (note: these are included within 'Drug and alcohol education'). Vaping content is being updated.
- [FRANK website: information for young people about vaping](#)
- <https://www.healthforteens.co.uk/lifestyle/e-cigarettes/e-cigarettes-just-the-facts/>
- [NICE guideline NG209](#) recommends a whole school approach to smoking and vaping.
- If you are a professional working with young people and are considering making a quit attempt yourself, a range of support is available to you too. The [Better Health website](#) is a great place to start.

² Information accurate as of 24/11/22