

Buckinghamshire Tobacco Control Alliance Vaping Position Statement

2024



Purpose of the position statement

Smoking remains the leading preventable cause of ill health and premature deaths in our county. The use of electronic cigarettes, commonly referred to as vapes, has become increasingly prevalent in Buckinghamshire and across the United Kingdom in recent years. The Buckinghamshire Tobacco Control Alliance (TCA) recognises the importance of addressing the vaping phenomenon within our community and in particular the growing use of vapes by children and young people.

The Buckinghamshire Vaping Position Statement supports the Buckinghamshire Tobacco Control Strategy (2024 – 29) however the position statement will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis. It will also be shared with the Buckinghamshire Health and Wellbeing Board for review annually. This will allow the TCA to adjust the statement based on changes and developments in legislation, guidance and evidence as they emerge.

The purpose of this statement is to outline the Buckinghamshire Tobacco Control Alliance's position on vapes so that partner organisations can develop their policies and practices and unify communications to the public on vapes. It summarises what we know about vaping locally, the evidence to date, the role of vapes in supporting smokers to quit and local actions to prevent children and young people from vaping.

This Position Statement is a consolidated consensus on vaping in Buckinghamshire. It offers a comprehensive review of key vaping issues at the time of writing.

The themes reviewed in this position statement are:

- 1. Empowering smokers towards cessation*
- 2. Prioritising Prevention - particularly focusing on youth vaping*
- 3. Assessment of Vape Marketing Strategies*
- 4. Implementing Effective Enforcement Measures*

Acknowledging the swift pace at which information, guidance, and evidence becomes available, these recommendations remain open to regular updates to stay current. Additionally, the statement highlights the ongoing initiatives in Buckinghamshire that are dedicated to addressing local vaping concerns.



Vapes as a quitting aid

Smoking is the leading cause of preventable illness and premature death in England¹ and quitting smoking is one of the best things a smoker will ever do for their health². People who quit smoking in England are more likely to have used vape products than nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) (e.g. patches, gum, spray)³ to aid them in quitting smoking⁴.

Vapes that contain nicotine offer adult smokers an evidence based alternative source of nicotine which reduces the harms of smoking⁵; this is supported by The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) who have included vaping products as a recommended stop smoking aid in the latest tobacco cessation guidance.⁶ This position is also supported by central Government's recent announcement of funding to provide adult smokers with vaping kits; the 'Swap to Stop' initiative is anticipated to launch in 2024.

The position of the Buckinghamshire Tobacco Control Alliance is that vaping is not risk free. People who do not already smoke should not start to vape. Vaping should be presented as an option for smokers who want to quit, but not as something that would attract non-smokers to start vaping.

Recommendations:

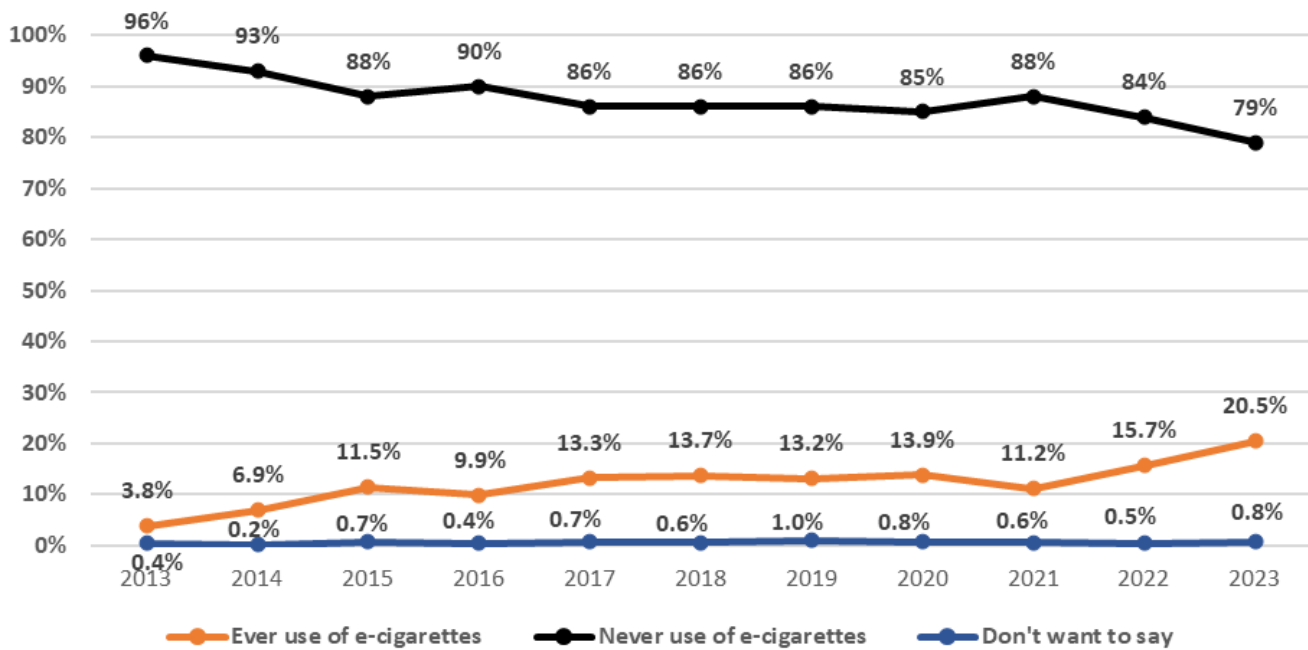
- All TCA partners to provide clear consistent messaging on vaping as a quit aid.
- All TCA partners to review their organisations' current smoking policies and ensure they include up to date guidance on smoking and vaping.
- Residents in Buckinghamshire who smoke should be referred to the local Buckinghamshire Free Lifestyle Service – Be Healthy Bucks – for smoking cessation support and guidance.
- All TCA partners to support campaigns focused on addressing smoking and vaping in Buckinghamshire.



Vaping among children and young people

While vaping should remain an option for adult smokers who want to use vaping as a tool to help them quit smoking, the rise of use by children and young people across the country and in Buckinghamshire is concerning. Data from the Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) 2023 survey indicates an increase in children and young people (11-17 year olds) having ever used a vape between 2021-2023.

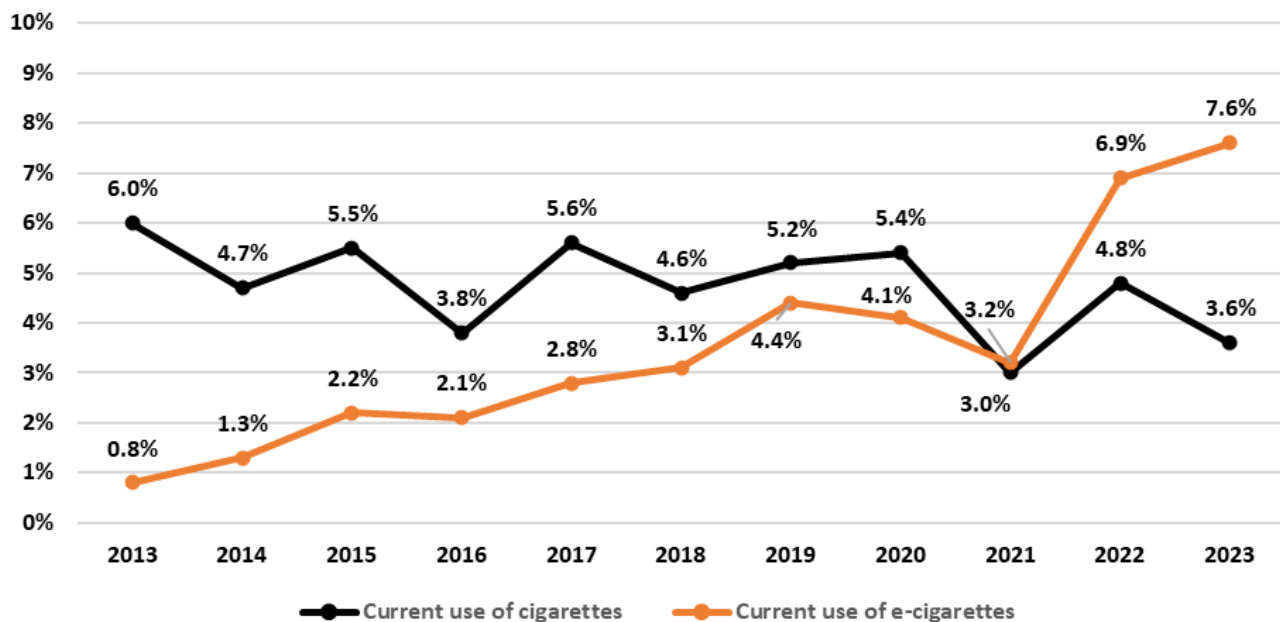
**Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) Youth Survey:
Use of e-cigarettes, GB youth (11-17), 2013-2023**



Source: Action on Smoking and Health: SMOKEFREE GB YOUTH SURVEYS, 2013-2023. Unweighted base: All 11-17 year olds (2013=1,895, 2014=1,817, 2015=1,834, 2016=1,735, 2017=2,151, 2018=1,807, 2019=1,982, 2020=2,029, 2021=2,109, 2022=2,111, 2023=2,028).

Neither category of children 'currently vaping' nor children 'currently smoking' has grown significantly since 2022, but there is a clear upward trend in 'currently vaping' compared to when data was first collected in 2014. Since 2022 the proportion of children 'currently vaping' has been greater than those 'currently smoking' (7.6% compared to 3.6% in 2023).

**Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) Youth Survey:
Current cigarette and e-cigarette use over time, GB youth (11-17), 2013-2023**



Source: Action on Smoking and Health: SMOKEFREE GB YOUTH SURVEYS, 2013-2023. Unweighted base: All 11-17 year olds (2013=1,895, 2014=1,817, 2015=1,834, 2016=1,735, 2017=2,151, 2018=1,807, 2019=1,982, 2020=2,029, 2021=2,109, 2022=2,111, 2023=2,028).

Current initiatives delivered by partners working with children and young people should ensure that messages regarding the harms of vaping are shared. All partners should create appropriate policies and communications that discourage children and young people from vaping.

The position for the Buckinghamshire Tobacco Control Alliance is that vaping is not for children and young people; we need to reduce the uptake of vaping and the number of young people accessing vape products.

Recommendations:

- All TCA partners to provide clear and consistent messaging regarding the prevention of children and young people from vaping.
- The message is clear, children and young people should not vape.
- All partners to share the localised vaping-related resources available on the Buckinghamshire Healthy Schools website.

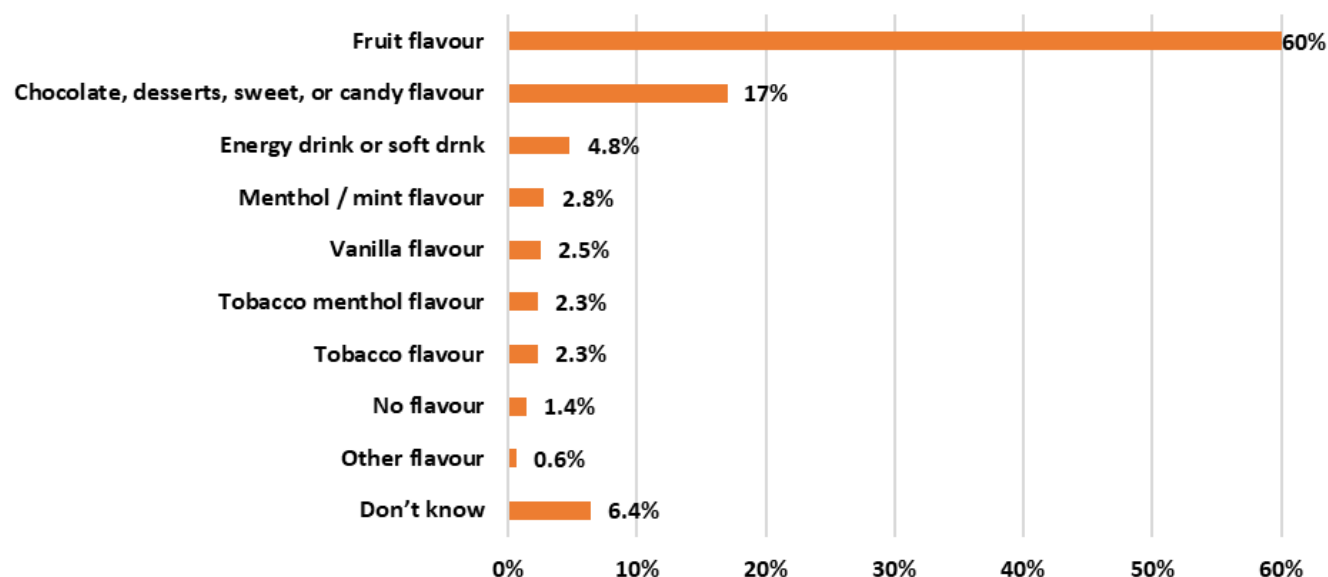
Marketing of vapes

Only 3.5% of children now say they are not aware of vapes compared to 36% who said the same in 2013 when a national survey was started by Action on Smoking and Health (ASH).

Awareness of the promotion of vapes has grown due to product placement in shops and very strong marketing tactics by vaping companies, suppliers and retailers. This includes fruity and 'fun' flavours and colours that are appealing to children and young people.

The most popular vape flavour among young people is fruit flavour, chosen by 60% of current users. The second most popular flavour is a variety of sweet flavours, including chocolate, candy, energy, or soft drink flavours, chosen by 17% of users.

Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) Youth Survey 2023: Most frequently chosen e-cigarette liquid flavour

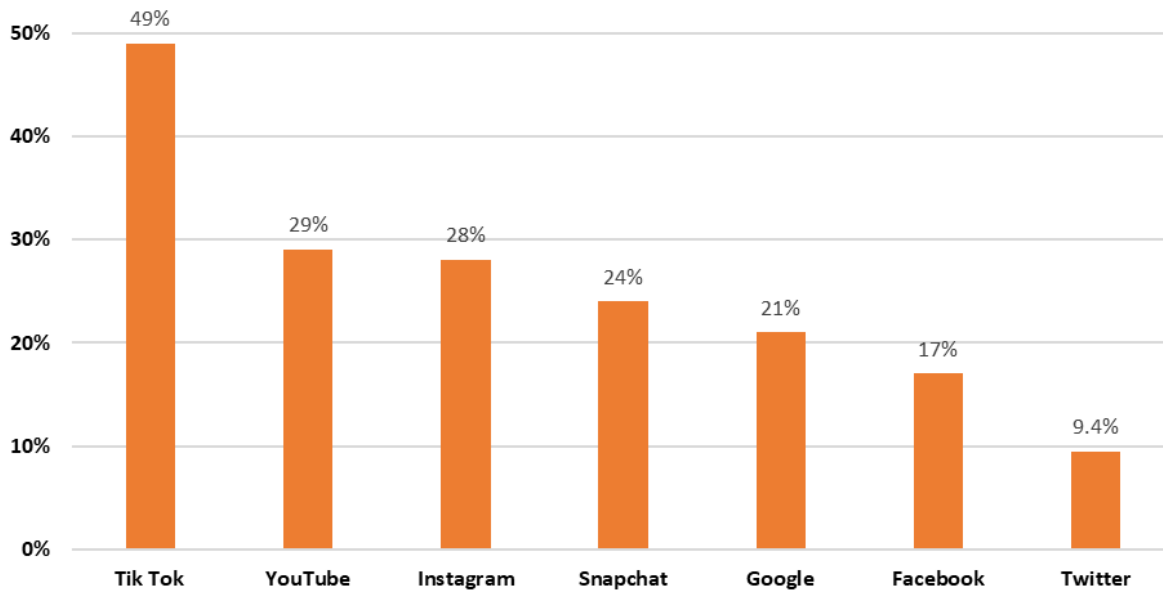


Source: Action on Smoking and Health: SMOKEFREE GB YOUTH SURVEYS, 2013-2023. Unweighted base: All 11-17 year olds, respondents who are current users of e-cigarettes:187

According to findings from the Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) survey in April 2023⁷, this is particularly true in shops where more than half of surveyed children reported seeing vapes being promoted. Most corner shops sell vapes, and these products are front and centre on their till counters, frequently at eye height⁸.

Of those children and young people who reported seeing vapes promoted online, the most common place was on TikTok (49%), followed by YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat and Google. These media and social media platforms are frequented by children and young people daily.

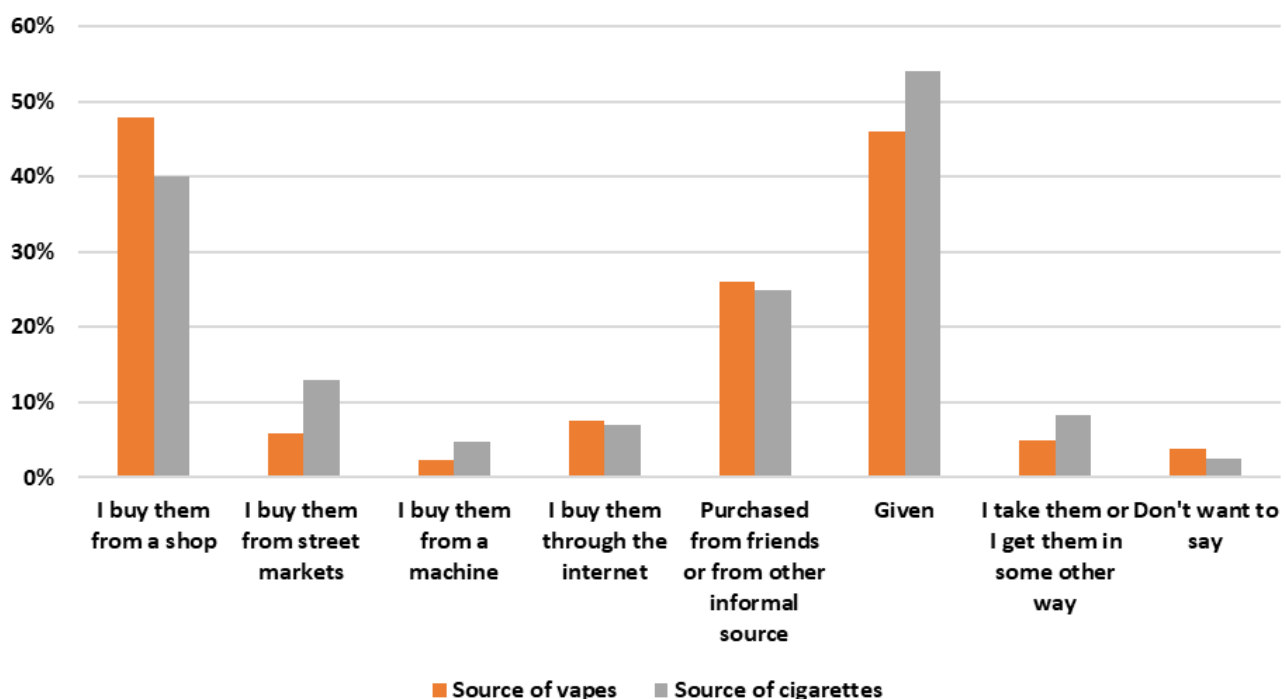
**Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) Youth Survey 2023:
Location of online e-cigarette promotion seen (11-17)**



Source: Action on Smoking and Health: SMOKEFREE GB YOUTH SURVEYS, 2013-2023. Unweighted base: 11-17 year olds aware of e-cigarettes who have seen them promoted online (n=640).

Although selling vapes to those under 18 is illegal, giving these products out for free is not. It is therefore of huge concern that 2.1% of children who have ever tried vaping, report that their first vape was given to them by a vape company.

**Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) Youth Survey 2023:
Sources of cigarettes and e-cigarettes among current users (11-17)**

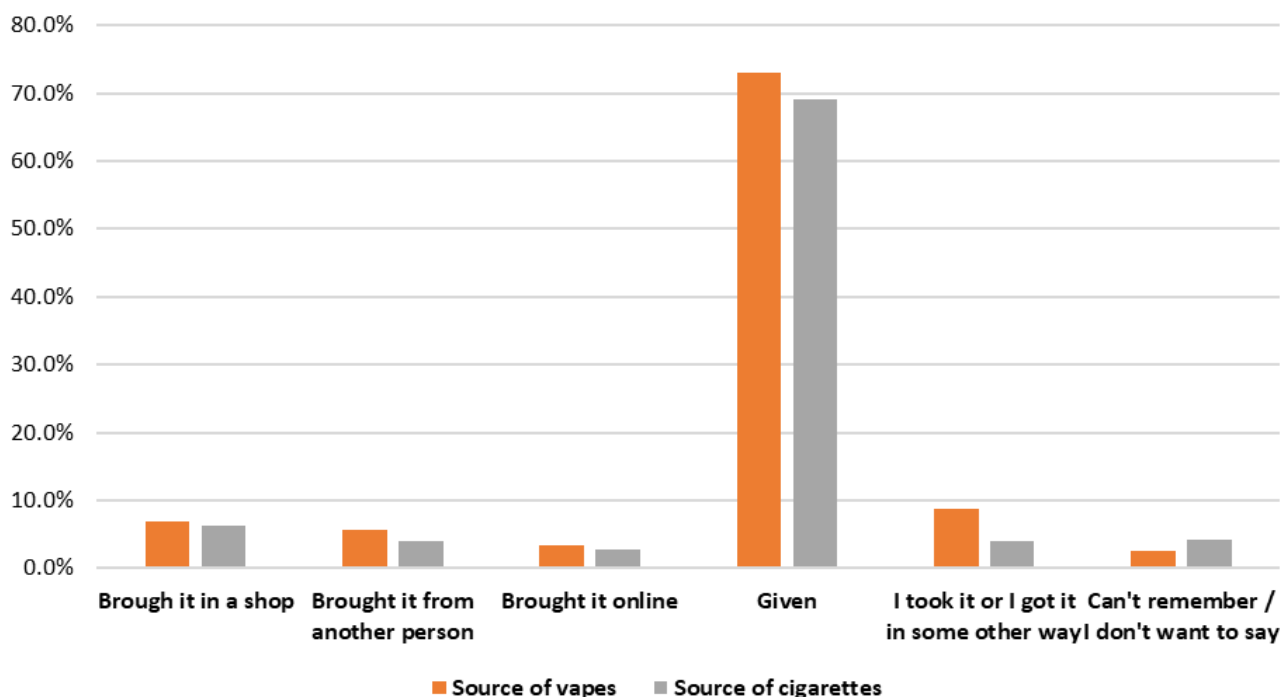


Source: Action on Smoking and Health: SMOKEFREE GB YOUTH SURVEYS, 2013-2023. Unweighted base: 11-17 year olds who currently smoke or use e-cigarettes (respondents who currently use cigarettes: 88, respondents who currently use e-cigarettes:187). Respondents are allowed to tick more than one box if more than one usual source.

Nonetheless, 48% of 11-17 year olds who vape and 40% of smokers commonly purchase these products from stores. A considerable portion of current vapers (26% for vapes and 25% for cigarettes) obtain them from informal sources, despite the illegality of proxy purchases. Online buying is less frequent, reported by 7.6% of current vapers and 7% of smokers. Street markets serve as a more prevalent source of cigarettes (13%) compared to vapes (5.8%)⁸.

Children are predominantly introduced to their first cigarette (69%) or vape (73%) by friends, while a smaller fraction purchase their initial vape (16%) or cigarette (13%).

Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) Youth Survey 2023: First source of e-cigarettes or cigarettes for children who have ever tried vaping or smoking (11-17)



Source: Action on Smoking and Health: SMOKEFREE GB YOUTH SURVEYS, 2013-2023. Unweighted base: 11-17 year olds who have tried e-cigarettes (472), 11-17 year olds who have ever tried cigarettes (323).

Enforcement and strict regulations that prohibit the marketing of vapes to children and young individuals are required to tackle the concern of youth vaping. Implementing age verification measures, limiting flavours appealing to younger demographics, and educating both retailers and the public about the risks associated with vaping are crucial steps to safeguarding the youth from harmful marketing tactics.

Recommendations:

- Central Government should take actions to regulate the flavours and packaging of vapes to ensure these do not appeal to children.
- Tighter regulations should be developed on the placement and promotion of vape products in convenience stores and shopping centres.
- Relevant partners should prioritise appropriate enforcement for repeat offenders who sell vapes to children and young people.



Disposable vapes - health and environment

Disposable vapes are one of the models easily available to children and young people. They are also illegally imported and sold utilising organised crime networks. All nicotine-containing vaping products must be notified to the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA)⁹ and must meet the requirements of the European Union (2014) Tobacco Products Directive¹⁰ (definition informed by the MHRA's e-cigarettes regulations for consumer products)⁹. Unfortunately, illegal products are rampant in the market, so underage and illegal sales of vapes are a key area of focus for Trading Standards locally.

Beyond the health impacts of vapes directly on those who use them (legally or illegally), the impact of disposable vapes on the environment and waste management facilities is drastically increasing.

Disposable vapes are designed for single use and make up a considerable volume of waste sent to landfills. These products can be toxic to the environment due to the metals, battery acid and nicotine that can leak from them into the environment. They also contain lithium batteries which makes them prone to causing fires if damaged when binned in the general waste or recycling. Single use vapes are typically made of plastic, which can take up to 1000 years to decompose, having a detrimental impact on the environment and waste hierarchy.

Due to these reasons, Buckinghamshire Council recently passed a motion calling for a national ban on the sales of disposable vapes. The Tobacco Control Alliance advocates for the use of reusable and rechargeable devices over single use products.

Recommendations:

- Partners to collaborate on appropriate disposal and recycling programmes.
- Where appropriate, share messages regarding the proper disposal methods for vapes.
- Advocate for policies that promote responsible disposal practices for vape waste.

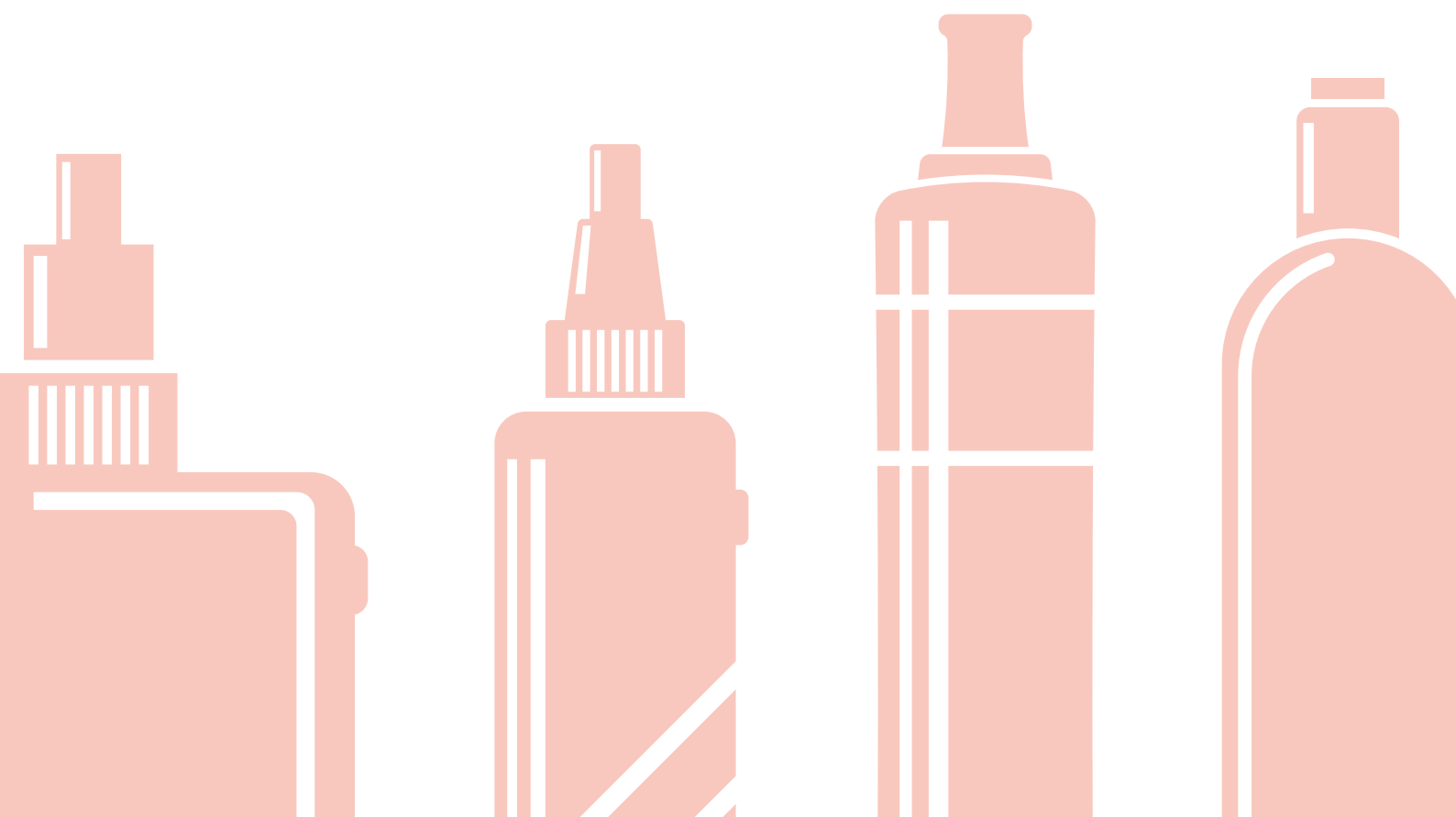
Next steps

In December 2023, the Council submitted an organisational response to the Government's consultation on vapes. The consultation asked for views on three areas:

- ***Creating a smokefree generation:*** the consultation gathers views on the smokefree generation policy and its scope to inform future legislation.
- ***Tackling youth vaping:*** the consultation gathers views on several options to tackle youth vaping. The proposals in the consultation include restricting vape flavours, regulating point of sale displays of vapes, regulating packaging and presentation of vapes, and considering restricting the sale of disposable vapes.
- ***Enforcement:*** the consultation asks about introducing new powers for local authorities to issue on-the-spot fines (Fixed Penalty Notices) to enforce age of sale legislation of tobacco products and vapes.

Buckinghamshire Council submitted an organisational response to this consultation. Following the consultation period, the Government intend to bring forward legislation as soon as possible.

This position statement will be reviewed annually by the Tobacco Control Alliance to ensure it remains fit for purpose.



Current vaping initiatives in Buckinghamshire

To move Buckinghamshire towards a smokefree generation whilst also minimising the impacts of vapes on children, young people and the environment, a variety of initiatives are currently being delivered in Buckinghamshire. Additional schemes and proposals are being developed by Public Health along with TCA partners. Below is a list of current vaping projects in Buckinghamshire.

Vapes as a quit aid

Smokers who want to quit smoking using a vape are supported by Be Healthy Bucks to utilise this quit aid along with the evidence-based behavioural support provided by the service.

Smokefree Parks and Playgrounds

Our Smokefree Parks and Playgrounds initiative is voluntary and designed to educate the public and promote positive behaviour change through smoke and vape free signage. This awareness-raising campaign involves the local community, children in local schools are actively involved in the 'design a sign' process.

Smokefree Sidelines

Smokefree Sidelines is a collaboration between Buckinghamshire Public Health and the Bucks & Berks Football Association (FA) that aims to introduce a culture of not smoking or vaping on football match sidelines across Buckinghamshire. Smoke and vape free signage are placed around the sidelines to ensure that youth are not exposed to this. Smokers are signposted to local stop smoking services.

Schools pack

Schools have been sent numerous vaping resources that highlight the myths and facts around vaping. Resources include posters, leaflets and videos. There are also resources targeting parents and teachers, to support them to be able to talk to children and young people about vaping.

Focused enforcement activity for underage and illegal sales

We have recruited a Trading Standards Officer who will be dedicated to detecting underage sales (of vapes, tobacco, alcohol and nitrous oxide) and supporting successful enforcement actions.

Schools survey

The schools survey now includes questions on vaping. It will explore whether children and young people currently vape, where they buy these from, and if anyone in their household vapes. Baseline data will enable Public Health to understand local vaping prevalence, as well as spot trends over time.

Smokefree generation vape consultation response

In October 2023 the UK Government proposed actions they will take to tackle smoking and youth vaping. A national consultation was launched, asking for feedback on proposed actions to create a smokefree generation. Public Health led in coordinating a response with heavy input from Trading Standards. Other services that may be impacted by any outcome of the consultation include Waste, Licensing and Children's Services. These services were consulted and have provided feedback for the response. A response from Buckinghamshire Council has been submitted.

References

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- ² NHS. (2023). Better Health. <https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking/>
- ³ Hartmann-Boyce, J,m McRobbie, H., Butler, A., Lindson, N., Bullen, C., Begh, R., Theodoulou, A., Notley, C., Rigotti, N., Turner, T., Fanshawe, T. and Hajek, P. (2022). Electronic Cigarettes for Smoking Cessation. Cochrane Living Systematic Review, 9. <https://www.cebm.ox.ac.uk/research/electronic-cigarettes-for-smoking-cessation-cochrane-living-systematic-review-1>
- ⁴ Buss, V., West, R., Kock, L., Kale, D. and Brown, J. (2023). Smoking Toolkit Study: Trends in electronic cigarette use in England. <https://smokinginengland.info/>
- ⁵ GOV.UK. (2022). Nicotine vaping in England: 2022 evidence update. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nicotine-vaping-in-england-2022-evidence-update>
- ⁶ National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE). (2023). Tobacco: preventing uptake, promoting quitting and treating dependence NICE guideline [NG209]. <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng209>
- ⁷ Parris, W., Cheeseman, H., Arnott, D., Bunce, L., Hopkinson, N. and Laverty, A. (2023). Use of tobacco and e-cigarettes among youth in Great Britain in 2022: Analysis of a cross-sectional survey. Tobacco Induced Diseases, 21(5). <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9865634/>
- ⁸ Action on Smoking and Health (ASH). (2023). Use of E-Cigarettes Among Young people in Great Britain. <https://ash.org.uk/resources/view/use-of-e-cigarettes-among-young-people-in-great-britain>
- ⁹ GOV.UK. (2016). E-Cigarettes: Regulations For Consumer Products. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/e-cigarettes-regulations-for-consumer-products>
- ¹⁰ Eur-Lex. (2023). Directive 2014/40/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 3 April 2014 on the approximation of the laws, regulations and administrative provisions of the Member States concerning the manufacture, presentation and sale of tobacco and related products and repealing Directive 2001/37/EC Text with EEA relevance. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32014L0040>