

Advice for schools on vaping

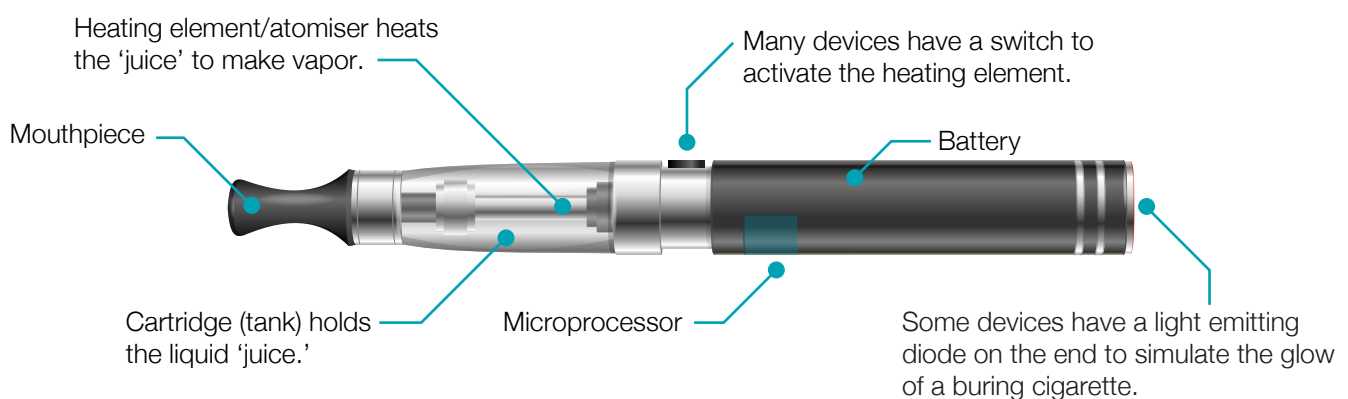
Vape use among young people has increased both locally and nationally.¹ While vapes are safer than cigarettes and are recommended to help adults quit smoking, their long-term effects are still unknown.²

Vapes are not completely harmless and are not recommended for children and young people, or people who have never smoked. By emphasising the message **if you don't smoke, don't vape**, we can foster a healthier, smokefree generation. Ensuring that vapes are not used by children is paramount to protecting their health and future.

This document sets out key information about vaping and local support to quit, as well as including vaping in your smokefree policies.

What are vapes?

E-cigarettes (or vapes) are devices which deliver nicotine within an inhalable aerosol by heating a solution that typically contains nicotine and flavourings. E-cigarettes usually consist of three main components: a battery, an atomiser and a cartridge containing nicotine. When a user sucks on the device, a sensor detects air flow and heats the liquid in the cartridge so that it evaporates. The vapour delivers the nicotine to the user. There is no side-stream smoke, but some nicotine vapour is released into the air as the smoker exhales. The most recent 'tank' e-cigarettes mimic cigarettes in the delivery of nicotine.



¹ Action on Smoking and Health (ASH). Use of vapes (e-cigarettes) among young people in Great Britain, July 2024

² Nicotine vaping in England: 2022 evidence update main findings - GOV.UK

Evidence suggests that e-cigarettes are considerably safer than smoking cigarettes (since they do not involve the harmful effects of burning tobacco) and have the potential to help people quit smoking.³

What is the law relating to vapes?

In the UK, vapes are regulated under the **Tobacco and Related Products Regulations 2016** (TRPR). These regulations aim to ensure product safety, provide consumers with information to make informed choices, and protect children from using them. For example, certain product regulations are outlined such as a maximum nicotine strength of 2% or 20mg/ml. All e-cigarettes and e-liquids must also be notified to the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) before they can be sold. In the UK, a **ban on the sale and supply of disposable vapes** came into effect on 1 June, 2025.

However, some vapes that are sold in shops and online are **illegal** and have **not been properly regulated**, therefore we don't know what they contain – and they could contain harmful ingredients.



It is also **illegal** for nicotine-containing vapes to be sold to anyone **under the age of 18**, or for an adult to purchase one on their behalf (also known as proxy purchasing). If you know of anyone selling vapes to under 18's, you can report them anonymously to trading standards via:

- Reporting to our local trading standards team by calling **0300 999 6999**.
- Or via Citizens Advice by calling **0808 223 1133** or by using their **online form**.

Currently, e-cigarettes are not regulated under smokefree law in the UK. In general, users are free to use them in most public places such as bars, restaurants and on public transport, although the managers of some premises have prohibited their use.

What are the harms of vaping?

Vaping is less harmful than smoking cigarettes as they do not contain the toxic and cancer-causing chemicals found in cigarettes like tar and tobacco. This is why vapes are recommended to help adults quit smoking. However, they are **not harmless**, and the long-term effects are still unknown. Short-term effects of vaping include coughing, headaches, dizziness and sore throat. Most vapes also contain nicotine, which is a **highly addictive** substance. Vapes should not be used by children and young people or people who don't smoke. **The message is clear – if you don't smoke, don't vape!**

There are also **environmental harms** to consider – vapes can break down in landfills and can leak chemicals and pollute soil and water. This is harmful to the environment, humans and animals.

³ Evidence review of e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products 2018: executive summary - GOV.UK

What are THC vapes?

Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) is the part of the cannabis plant that makes people feel 'high'. THC oil can be added to vape liquid and when vaped, can make users feel similar effects to smoking cannabis – depending on the amount of THC in the vape. THC vapes are illegal in the UK and are not regulated, therefore, may also contain other harmful ingredients such as synthetic cannabinoids (SCRAs). SCRAs are substances designed to mimic the effects of cannabis but are much more potent and unpredictable. The most commonly known SCRA is spice.

If a young person is known to be using a THC vape, they can be referred to Catch 22 for support. Visit www.catch-22.org.uk/find-services/hampshire-247

Why do young people start vaping?

From October 2015, it has been against the law to sell vapes to under 18's, however their use has increased. There is often more than one reason why young people may take up vaping. Young people who have family members that vape are more likely to vape themselves and many young people say they try vapes because of **peer influence**. The tobacco and vaping industry also use tactics to **specifically target** children and young people with appealing features such as fruity or sweet flavours and bright coloured packaging.

Some young people say they vape because they feel it helps with stress and anxiety. This is not accurate, as the nicotine in vapes can actually make feelings of anxiety, stress and low mood worse. It is important to encourage and support young people with other ways to cope.

Should vapes be covered in our school smokefree policy?

Hampshire County Council encourages schools to prohibit e-cigarettes in their smokefree policies to promote a healthy environment and act as a 'smokefree' role model. Specific reasons include:

- To provide an environment that is free from the harmful effects of vapes and nicotine for young people.
- To de-normalise vaping within the school community - whilst vapes can be a useful quit aid for adults, they should not be used by children or young people. Seeing others vape and the effect of peer influence can contribute to young people taking up vaping.
- To promote a consistent message regarding the harms of vaping and nicotine for young people and people who don't smoke, and to provide good role models.
- Concerns over safety issues of vapes, particularly in relation to battery charging which may be a fire hazard.
- Most e-cigarettes contain nicotine, which is highly addictive and can affect the developing brain. Nicotine withdrawal can cause irritability, difficulty concentrating and feelings of anxiety and low mood.

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- Controls on the use of nicotine within school – you may wish to consider ways of supporting students and staff who currently smoke or vape and are trying to quit, to cope with nicotine withdrawal through Nicotine Replacement Therapy. The **Hampshire Stop Smoking Service**, (see below), can provide guidance in helping pupils or staff to stop smoking or vaping, or in managing their withdrawal cravings.

Please see the template smoke and vape free policy on the Smokefree Me webpages.

Hampshire Stop Smoking Service – support to quit vaping

Smokefree Hampshire offer free support and advice to anyone over the age of 12 who lives, works, studies, or has a registered GP in Hampshire who is looking to stop smoking, **vaping** or using nicotine products. They can accept self-referrals or professional referrals via their website, by phone on **0800 772 3649** or by texting **QUIT to 80011**. Visit **www.smokefreehampshire.co.uk** for more information.