

Guidance On Youth Vaping For Schools And Frontline Staff



Toolkit for schools

Contents

Key messages around vaping	3
What is vaping?	4
How many young people are using vaping products?	5
What is the law around vaping?	6
Why are there concerns around young people vaping?	8
How can schools respond to young people vaping?	10
Resources	14

*Note: This toolkit has been designed incorporating information from the Haringey London: Vaping and e-cigarette guidance for schools and **Association for Directors of Public Health on managing vaping in schools**.

Key messages around vaping

“ If you smoke, vaping (e-cigarettes) is much safer; if you don’t smoke, don’t vape ”

Professor Chris Whitty (Chief Medical Officer)

- Vapes are for adult smokers to help them quit smoking.
- Young people under 18 should not use vapes, including to quit smoking.
- Vapes are far less harmful than smoking, but they are not risk free.
- It is illegal to sell vape products to anyone under 18 or for adults to buy on their behalf.



What is vaping?

A vape or “electronic cigarette” is a device heating up liquid to create a vapour you breathe in. The liquid in the vape delivers nicotine via a mouthpiece, although other harmful substances such as cannabis can be added.

Some vaping devices include pens, e-cigarettes (JUUL) and hookahs.

Vapes can be purchased from shops, some pharmacies, and online. Vape products used for adult smokers are regulated by the Medicines Health Regulatory Agency (MHRA) to ensure they are safe to use and to protect children and young people from using these products. However, the vape products children and young people have access to on the market are often unregulated and do not meet the safety guidelines outlined by the MHRA.

Latest research from Material Focus has shown the number of single-use disposable vapes thrown each week has increased from 1.3 million to nearly 5 million per week. Disposable vapes contain essential materials such as lithium and copper which are regularly binned. They are toxic and can damage the environment and wildlife if littered. The number of battery related fires linked to thrown away disposable vapes continues to increase and this makes them difficult to dispose of safely.

Regulated vapes for adult smokers wishing to quit



Unregulated vapes available on the market



How many young people are using vaping products?

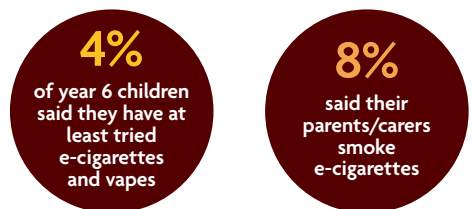
Action on Smoking and Health published its [national youth vaping survey](#) in June 2023, with the findings covering prevalence, attitudes, source of supply and promotion:

- The proportion of children experimenting with vaping has grown 50% year on year to 11.6% in 2023.
- Current vaping among 11–17 year olds is 7.6%.
- Disposable vapes such as Geek and Elf Bar are the most commonly used products among current vapers, up from 52% in 2022 to 69% in 2023.
- 53% of 11–17 year olds were aware of vaping promotion in shops and nearly a third online via social media platforms including Tiktok, Instagram and Snapchat.
- Despite it being illegal to sell vapes to under 18s, the most common source of supply for underage vapers are shops (48%).

Locally, there is limited data available around the number of children and young people using vapes. The Public Health Team at Newham Council commissioned the Schools Health Education Unit Survey (SHEU) to gain behavioural insights from children around their health.

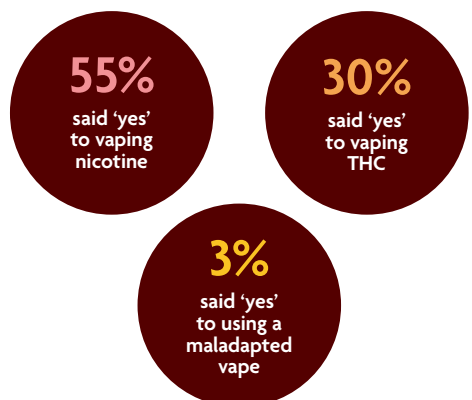
Results from the SHEU survey were obtained in spring 2022. There were questions, which focused on e-cigarette use.

The results highlighted:

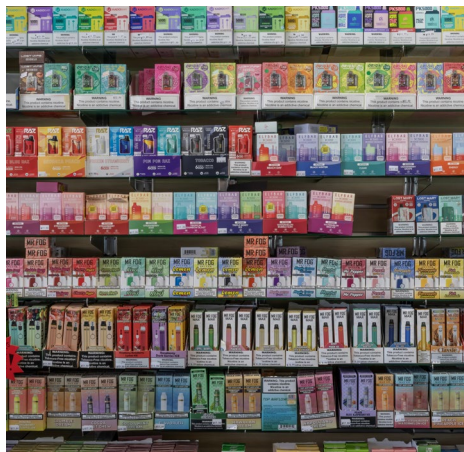


Change Grow Live Newham Rise have also collected data on vaping during an initial assessment following a referral from November 2022 – March 2024.

Out of 176 young people:



What is the law around vaping?



Under the Nicotine Inhaling Products (Age of Sale and Proxy Purchasing) Regulations 2015, it is illegal to sell vape products to anyone under 18 or for adults to purchase on their behalf. Despite the law, vendors have been found selling vape products including modified and illegal vapes to children.

The new provisions, The Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 Order 2019 controls drugs that are 'dangerous or otherwise harmful.' Synthetic cannabinoids 'spice', which can be added to vapes, is a Class B drug and anyone in possession could receive a fine or prison sentence of up to five years.

Parents or adults buying these products for underage users can be prosecuted.

Newham Trading Standards conducted illicit tobacco and vape test operations in Newham. A test operation is when they employ an underage customer to visit a bar or shop to purchase an age-restricted product.

From April–November 2023, 130 test purchase operations for vapes were undertaken, resulting in 20 failures (15.38%).

Newham Trading Standards Business Card **Report Consumer Crime Tool**

The following Trading Standards areas can be reported via the "Report Consumer Crime Tool"



- 1) People dealing in fake, illicit or unsafe products.
- 2) The sale of age-restricted products to children.

Report concerns around age-related sales and illicit vapes via Trading Standards business card

If you are concerned and know of someone who sells illegal vapes or tobacco, you can report them anonymously and directly to Trading Standards via Trading Standards Business Card (accompanying this toolkit) and in confidence via the Reporter Consumer Crime Tool website www.londontradingstandards.org.uk/report-consumer-crime/

Danger of illicit substances inside vapes:

Trading Standards has also identified the sale of products, which fail to meet UK safety standards. For example, identifying devices with nicotine capacity six times more than that permitted. They fail to meet important labelling and information requirements such as not including health warnings around the dangers of nicotine and recommendations to keep them away from children.

If you find something that you believe to be an illegal substance, please contact 101 for advice on what to do.

Keeping our young people safe from vaping exploitation

There is an increased risk of child sexual exploitation where offenders will target young people by giving vapes in exchange for sexual activity.

Recent reports have shown vapes are increasingly being used by criminal drug gangs to target children and young people, as young as 10–12 years old through county lines. The vapes are not always used for personal use, but can be distributed to enable children and young people to make a sale. If you have any concerns around a young person at risk of vaping and exploitation contact crime stoppers anonymously on **0800 555 111**



Why are there concerns around young people vaping?

What are the side effects of nicotine vaping?

Some young people turn to vaping as a way to cope with stress and anxiety. The nicotine in vapes is highly addictive and repeated use alters brain pathways related to reward, learning, attention span and self-control for children and young people. The alteration in chemical receptors caused by the nicotine can result in heightened sensitivity, making it even more difficult to break free from the nicotine dependency and for young people to quit.

Nicotine addiction itself can have the opposite desired effect, exacerbating stress and anxiety.

Key side effects of nicotine vaping for young people:

- Coughing, dry mouth and throat, shortness of breath, headaches, mouth and throat irritation [Electronic Cigarettes for Smoking Cessation, Cochrane review, April 2021]

Aside from the immediate side effects, the long-term risks of vaping, if any, are not yet known.

What is THC Vaping?

There is a growing trend among young people to add THC oil to vaping liquid.

THC oil is a sticky, thick yellowy brown liquid, which comes from the cannabis plant. Adding any type of drug to a vape is extremely dangerous. THC is a chemical that gives 'high' effect in cannabis with latest reports showing some young people overdosing, causing them to become unwell and requiring medical attention.

Why is THC becoming popular with young people?

- Vape companies are targeting young people with distinct and colourful branding
- Easily accessible and affordable
- Little or no smell once THC is vapourised, making it easier to conceal

Dangers of THC Vaping:

Vaping THC can cause the same long-term health effects as cannabis, which include:

- Loss of coordination
- Distorted senses (sound, sight and touch)
- Anxiety, paranoia and hallucinations
- Increased risk of psychotic illnesses such as schizophrenia and other mental health issues. Risk of schizophrenia increases if cannabis is used from a young age, if it is used frequently and there is a family history of schizophrenia.

Any adverse effects of using vapes should be reported via the MHRA Yellow Card and you should contact **999**.

Why are there concerns around young people vaping?

Synthetic cannabinoids (Spice):

The production and distribution of THC has fallen to dealers who look at other ways of making money including selling THC labelled products with other substances inside. Due to this, a large number of 'THC vapes' and vape liquids contain spice instead of cannabis.

Dangers of synthetic cannabinoids (spice):

Spice is a very addictive substance causing a range of negative health effects including:

- Chest pain
- Heart palpitations and increased anxiety
- Paranoia
- Vomiting
- Acute kidney injury
- Inability to move being left in vulnerable state
- Risk of overdose and death

Youth voice sharing concerns around vaping

The Children's Society and Newham's children and young people co-production team conducted vaping engagement workshops with children and young people within schools in East Ham.

Themes and trends from professionals:

Professionals noticed the following concerns associated with vaping:

- Children effectively concealing vapes at schools by regularly visiting the bathroom

- Some parents/carers purchasing a vape on behalf of their child
- Misinformation around vaping

Themes and trends from young people

The key themes, which were prominent from the vaping workshops, included:

- Young people are using social media applications to advertise vapes
- Vape usage across all age groups
- Street vocabulary associated with vaping to sell, purchase or exchange a vape



How can schools respond to young people vaping?

A whole school approach is the most effective way to build trust, respect and improve the health and wellbeing of all within the wider school community. This will also support with reducing vaping, smoking and drug use within the school premise.

Newham Public Health recommends schools adopt the following actions, which will support the wider implementation of a whole schools approach in reducing vaping and improve health and wellbeing for all.

Action 1: Adopt the Healthy Schools Vaping and Smoking Silver Toolkit

This toolkit has been designed for schools looking to achieve the silver award and view vaping and smoking as a priority area. It provides activity ideas, supporting information and free resources for Newham schools with outcomes and evaluation methods to measure progress. There are also recommendations around creating a vaping/smokefree policy, which should accompany any existing policies related to drug use.

Regular meetings are held with the healthy schools lead considering effective strategies to integrate information about tobacco and vaping within the PSHE curriculum.

Schools have a **statutory duty** to deliver health education on drugs, alcohol and tobacco. For more information on the toolkit, (see page 14).



How can schools respond to young people vaping?

Action 2: Review behaviour policies and practices associated with vaping

Adhering to the NICE guidance, develop a whole school vaping/smokefree policy in consultation with young people and staff which should align with any existing drugs policy to ensure there is consistency. The policy should consider including the following:

	State 'vaping devices are prohibited within the school premises, as it applies to any form of tobacco products'
	Incorporate vaping and smoking prevention activities led by young people and staff
	Adapt vaping policy to link to wider school ethos, values and motto
	Apply the vaping policy to everyone using the premises for any purpose, at any time. Do not allow vaping and smoking in any areas of the grounds including outside the school grounds
	Apply to school-related activities outside of the premises (i.e., school trips)
	Build staff confidence by increasing their vaping knowledge through training including risks/benefits for adult smokers, law and additional resources
	Confiscation of prohibited items including vape devices and cigarettes
	Identify support for young people looking to reduce, quit or understand how to use vapes more safely
	Working with other local agencies such as trading standards and promoting the business card to report known sources of illicit tobacco or vape products
	Consider how the physical environment promotes or detracts opportunities for young people to vape in schools
	Review health and safety policies, particularly in scenarios where first aid may need to be administered where an illegal substance is mixed in the vape, leading to a side effect

Vaping and e-cigarettes guidance for young people

It is advisable schools support children and young people to reduce vaping amongst pupils, in a similar way to other age-restricted products including tobacco, substance misuse and alcohol. This is only possible by prohibiting the products from being available in the school premises. If a child or young person has brought a vape into school, the next step would entail **confiscating and disposing** of them safely. If a young person has mixed with illegal substances, first aid may be required. Schools should refer to their first aid policy in that instance and keep this updated.

Safeguarding and managing behaviour according to vaping policy: Schools may need to tackle behaviour associated with vaping including the following:

- Child bringing a vape on to school property
- Child reported to vape within the wider community
- Child selling vapes to others including peers
- Child being exploited (sexually) to sell vapes to peers
- Child being given vape by a parent as a harm reduction measure, as it is safer than smoking

It is advised children should not be permanently excluded from school for vaping or smoking, unless it is associated with other disruptive behaviour, which

justifies this. The aim should be to offer support to young people. The following steps should be taken if a student is found to be vaping:

1. Discuss concerns with the designated safeguarding lead
2. Establish where the young person is sourcing their vape material and report to Trading Standards via business card or the police in other necessary cases.
3. Consider a warning letter or phone call home, sharing information on the health risks of vaping with a consent letter from the parent highlighting their responsibility to reinforce the message
4. Refer the young person for support if they have been identified vaping to either CGL Newham Rise if the young person is using harmful substances in their vapes or Quit Well Newham for nicotine vaping*



*To note: specialist advisors from CGL and Quit Well Newham will conduct an initial screening and following consent from the young person or parent/carer, adopt the Gillick competency. The young person will receive a harm reduction intervention and full assessment. **See more information on page 13.**

How can schools respond to young people vaping?

Action 3: Reporting health harms from vaping:

In January 2024, the Metropolitan Police informed the Department of Health of five young people aged 14–16 in London who were hospitalised with serious health harms having used vapes, which contained spice. If you report a similar incident in Newham, the reporting form can be found on wellnewham.org.uk/advice/young-people-and-vaping and send the completed form to newham.ldis@newham.gov.uk.

Appendix 4. Local drug information system (LDIS) reporting form

Please complete on behalf of the local authority and return to (Email LDIS mailbox)

Your completed form will be processed and stored securely

Location where incident occurred: geographical area and location (house no, home, street, nightclub, public house, etc.)

Substance(s) involved: name, quantity, appearance, colour, odour, taste, texture, etc.

Effect of drug: the effect of drug on individual(s)

Other information: any other relevant information

Reported by: name, address, telephone, email, etc.

Date of report: day, month, year

Signature: name, address, telephone, email, etc.

Other information: any other relevant information

Thank you for your cooperation

Action 4: Utilising the support available in Newham:



Rise

Newham



Queen Mary
University of London

Change Grow Live (CGL) – Newham Rise:

Change Grow Live Newham Rise support children and young people in Newham who are using drugs and/or alcohol including vapes, particularly modified vapes containing THC and other known drugs.

- The service has a team of experts who can support the young person to reduce their use, stop or understand how to do things more safely.
- CGL offer education and awareness workshops to schools, colleges and youth zones including training for professionals and partners in the community.

Contact details:

Online:

changegrowlive.org/rise-newham/referrals

Opening hours: Mon–Fri (9am–5pm)

Telephone: 0800 652 3879

Email: NewhamYP@cgl.org.uk

Quit Well Newham:

Our specialist stop smoking service, Quit Well Newham, offers Newham residents aged 12+ with free advice and support to quit smoking, also offering nicotine vaping cessation.

Contact details:

Online:

wellnewham.org.uk/advice/stop-smoking

Opening hours: Mon–Fri (8.30am–5.30pm)

Telephone: 0207 882 8230

Email: bhnt.smokersclinic@nhs.net

Resources

School Leadership:

1. Healthy Schools Programme – Vaping toolkit:

The Healthy Schools programme is designed to highlight schools' contribution to pupil's health and wellbeing. For more information about the Healthy Schools programme, including the vaping and smoking silver toolkit, contact Amy.Hayfield@newham.gov.uk

2. Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) – Guidance for schools:

ASH has developed guidance for schools to support staff in developing policies around vaping. For more information, visit ash.org.uk/uploads/ASH-guidance-for-school-vaping-policies.pdf

3. Association for Directors of Public Health South East

– Advice and guidance on managing vapes in schools:

thelink.slough.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-07/1.%20Managing%20Vaping%20in%20Schools_links%20v2.pdf

4. London Tobacco Alliance:

Children and young people with information on vaping:

londontobaccoalliance.org.uk/resources/vaping-toolkit/children-and-young-people

Young People and Vaping webinar series:

londontobaccoalliance.org.uk/resources/young-people-vaping-webinar

5. North West Schools Vaping Policy Framework

developed by Office for Health Improvement and Disparities:

wirralsafeguarding.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/North-West-Vaping-Policy-Framework.pdf

Teachers:

5. **FRANK website** – it is important for young people to know the facts about vaping, so they can make an informed choice. A national 24-hour helpline offering information and advice regarding drugs and substance misuse concerns.
Call: [0300 123 6600](tel:03001236600) Email: talktofrank.com/drug/vapes
6. **Personal Social Health and Economic Association (PSHE)** – shared a year 9-lesson plan on youth vaping, exploring consequences and challenges influencing a young person to vape.
pshe-association.org.uk/resource/vaping
7. **Sheffield City Council resources on youth vaping** – posters for school toilets, short animated film for PSHE lessons and teacher toolkit
ash.org.uk/resources/view/ash-brief-for-local-authorities-on-youth-vaping
8. **New Zealand Ministry of Health Vape free Schools Website** – a range of materials to empower students to make informed decisions around vaping
vapingfacts.health.nz/vapefree-schools
9. **Wiltshire Healthy Schools** – educational resources on vaping and smoking for PSHE lessons wiltshirehealthyschools.org/core-themes/pshee/drugs-alcohol-and-tobacco/vaping/smoking-and-vaping-education
10. **Delivery of Youth Vaping Training for professionals** – for more information on delivery of vaping training to staff please contact Sumaiyah.Rahman@newham.gov.uk

Support for parents:

1. **Sheffield City Council resources on youth vaping** – electronic leaflet for parents/carers on having conversations with a child if they vape.
ash.org.uk/resources/view/ash-brief-for-local-authorities-on-youth-vaping
2. **New Zealand supporting parents** – Information and guidance around support available for parents to empower their children with the facts.
vapingfacts.health.nz/vapefree-schools/supporting-parents.html
3. **Cumbria Youth Substance Misuse Vaping Factsheet for parents/carers**
cumbria.gov.uk/elibrary/Content/Internet/537/38232/38404/4511715140.pdf

Mental health support:

Vaping can worsen symptoms of depression and anxiety. There is a wide range of mental health support available for children, young people and parents, which includes the following:

Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

CAHMS offers assessment and support to children, young people and their families, including those dealing with significant emotional, behavioural and mental health difficulties. The service has specialist clinics providing assessments for all ages and ASD assessments for those aged 13 and over. For more information, visit families.newham.gov.uk/kb5/newham/directory/service.page?id=Q0RWUx94H7Q

CAHMS' Wellbeing in Newham Schools Team (WINS)

The team offers support to staff, parents and pupils directly on site in 70 schools in the borough with early mental health intervention and wellbeing support. WINS practitioners at the school can refer a young person to CAHMS for support around managing anxiety, which could help to reduce dependency on other coping methods such as vaping. For more information, email elft.mhst-newhamcamhs@nhs.net. Any school in Newham can access the teacher-training programme or School Mental Health Lead forums. eventbrite.co.uk/o/newham-camhs-workshops-23209370238

Anna Freud Mentally Healthy Schools – brings together quality assured mental health resources, information and advice for schools and further education settings in England mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk

Young Minds:

There is a helpline available for advice, support and signposting for a child or young person under the age of 25. Call **0808 802 5544**. Opening hours: Monday–Friday (9.30am–4pm) For more information, visit youngminds.org.uk

Kooth:

Kooth is an anonymous, personalised and free service offering support to those aged 11–25. For more information, visit kooth.com

For more information on the local mental health support available, visit our Well Newham website: wellnewham.org.uk/advice/helping-young-minds-thrive

Well Newham

Supporting you and your family with your health and wellbeing

Many of us need a little help to be healthier.

For some of us, it's about doing a bit more exercise or giving up smoking. For others, it's about connecting with our community or getting help with things that can cause stress, like money.

Well Newham is here to help you achieve your goals, in a way that works for you. If you have a long-term health condition, Well Newham can help you look after it and feel better.

Some of the support available:

- Advice about managing money
- Help and activities for you and your family
- Social events in your area
- Someone to talk to about your mental health
- Learn about eating to prevent diabetes
- Support to stop smoking
- Free cooking classes
- Make friends at a local gardening group
- Help with housing
- Legal advice
- Services for children and young people
- Help to find good work

Visit the Well Newham website and in-person Hubs to find out about support available for your health and wellbeing.

✉ wellnewham@newham.gov.uk

☎ 020 8430 4841

🏠 www.wellnewham.org.uk



