Information on Vaping for learners in Scotland

Compiled by the Tobacco, Gambling, Diet and Healthy Weight Division, Scottish Government
November 2023

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Contents

This information resource has been developed for use with learners from P6 upwards. It can be adapted for use in other settings such as further/higher education, special and alternative education and other youth settings.

- Key messages P3
- What are vaping devices? P4
- How many young people are using devices in Scotland P5
- Why is there concern about vaping amongst young people? P6
- What is the law relating to vapes and vaping in Scotland? P7
- Acknowledgments P8

Key Messages

- Vaping devices should not be used by children and young people.
- It is illegal to sell nicotine-containing vaping devices to anyone under 18 or for adults to buy them on behalf of under-18s.
- There are growing numbers of illegal or illicit vaping devices on sale that don’t meet the stringent quality and safety standards within the UK. These devices can be particularly dangerous as some have been found to contain very high levels of nicotine and dangerous metals like lead. Others are labelled as being nicotine-free when they do contain nicotine. Illegal vapes have been found in schools in the UK.
- Vaping is safer than smoking, but it is not harmless. The evidence on the long-term health effects of vaping is limited as it has not been around long enough to know the risk of long-term use.
- Vaping can lead to dependence on nicotine. Dependence on nicotine can negatively affect mental health and wellbeing and can be disruptive to life and learning.
- Adult smokers can reduce the risk of harm from smoking by switching completely to vaping, however vaping is not recommended for non-smokers (and should not be used by children and young people).
- If an adult, child or young person under 18 requires support to quit smoking they should seek advice from their own GP or call Quit Your Way Scotland on 0800 84 84 84.

What are vaping devices?

Vaping devices are battery-powered devices that heat a liquid to produce an aerosol that is inhaled. The liquid usually contains nicotine, although some vapes are available without nicotine.

There has been a rapid increase in the use, availability and promotion of vaping devices. Vapes were originally marketed as an alternative to smoking cigarettes and have gained popularity amongst some adults trying to quit smoking. Vaping devices are sometimes made to look like everyday items such as pens and USB memory sticks.

The function of vaping devices is to vaporise and deliver to the lungs of the user a chemical mixture, typically composed of nicotine, propylene glycol and other chemicals.

Unlike cigarettes, there is no combustion (burning) involved in vaping devices, 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 understood to be less harmful than smoking as they do not contain the tar, carbon monoxide and other products that cause many smoking related illnesses. Switching completely from smoking to vaping significantly reduces the health harm for smokers who are unable or unwilling to quit.

Vapes are available in a range of nicotine concentrations, are either rechargeable or disposable and come in a variety of flavours.

Need to know

The terms ‘vaping device(s)’ and ‘vaping product(s)’ are used in this resource to describe e-cigarettes, ENDS (electronic nicotine delivery systems) or vapes and refill containers (e-liquids) intended for nicotine vaping. Vaping devices do not always contain nicotine. We use the term ‘vapers’ to refer to people who regularly use vaping devices and ‘vaping’ as the act of using a vaping product.

Whether a device contains nicotine or not is an important distinction in law. Vapes without nicotine can be sold to anyone at any age. Although it is not always possible to distinguish between vaping devices that contain nicotine and those that do not, if information is passed to Trading Standards about learners acquiring vaping devices from a specific source, action can only be taken relating to those that are nicotine-containing.

How many young people are using vaping devices in Scotland?

Most children and young people don't vape, however studies such as the Health and Behaviour of School Aged Children (HBSC) in Scotland have shown an increase in the number of children and young people trying e-cigarettes.

- 18% of adolescents reported having used an e-cigarette at least once in their lifetime.
- Rates were higher among older adolescents with 4% of 11-year-olds and 16% of 13-year-olds reporting using an e-cigarette in their lifetime compared to 36% of 15-year-olds.
- Gender differences were present at age 13, with girls more likely than boys to report having used e-cigarettes (19% versus 12%).

Why is there concern about vaping amongst young people?

- We do not yet fully understand the long-term effects vaping has on our health, though evidence shows it is not harm-free.
- Vapes and other nicotine products are part of a range of possible tools available to existing smokers to help stop tobacco use, but they should not be used by young people or adult non-smokers.
- The nicotine contained in many vapes is highly addictive and can stop young people from concentrating on the activities they enjoy.

What is the law relating to vapes and vaping in Scotland?

- The purchase of vaping products is age restricted. It is illegal to sell to, or buy them for, anyone under the age of 18.
- Trading Standards Officers are working across Scotland to enforce the legislation on the sale of vaping products to under 18s.
- If you think that a local retailer is selling vaping products to under 18s please contact your local trading standards officers via your local authority.

Further information can be found at nhsinform.scot/vaping.

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Getting Help and Support

If you're concerned about a child vaping, there are organisations that can help:

- **Childline** offers advice and help for young people to give up vaping.
- **Quit Your Way Scotland** offers support to anyone looking to give up vaping or smoking, no matter how old they are. You or your child can chat to an adviser on the helpline or online.
- **Young Scot** provides information, alternatives for stress relief and support.
- Contact their GP

If any parents/carers have concerns and want more information and advice they can visit:

- Vaping | Parent Club
- Vaping addiction soon takes hold - NHS inform

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Get In Touch

If you have any questions, please contact :

tobaccocontrolteam@gov.scot

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the Welsh Government for their help in developing this guidance pack.

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