



A report on Vaping and Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs in Brighton and Hove

September 2025



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to quality**



healthwatch
Brighton and Hove

Contents Page

Executive Summary	3
1. Introduction.....	5
2. What we did.....	6
3. Findings.....	7
Vaping habits and behaviours and SEND needs.....	7
Advertising of Vaping.....	11
Safety and Vaping.....	12
Support to stop vaping	16
4. Conclusion and recommendations.....	20

Executive Summary

This project was funded by Healthwatch Brighton and Hove and conducted in partnership with Amaze, The Parent Carers' Council (PaCC) and Brighton and Hove City Council. The aim of the research was to find out about children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and their parents and carer's experiences of vaping.

In total, we spoke with 52 children and young people and parents and carers of young people and children with SEND to find out more about this group's experience of vaping, primarily as so little research has been conducted in this area.

Key findings include:

- 65% of the children and young people with SEND that completed our survey reported vaping or trying vaping.
- A high percentage of the children and young people with SEND we spoke to are vaping on a regular basis (for example 38% reported vaping daily).
- The research identified a potential relationship between mental health and vaping: 69% of children and young people told us that vaping helps their mental health and/or helps to relieve stress.
- 81% of parents and carers of children with SEND and 70% of children and young people with SEND told us that they thought vaping was either 'very unsafe' or 'quite unsafe'.
- When asked 'do you think vaping is safer than smoking cigarettes?', 64% of parents and carers and 50% of young people felt 'they are both as bad as each other'. Current guidance states that vapes are substantially less harmful than smoking because they do not contain tobacco. The health advice on vaping is clear: vapes, when combined with behavioural support, can help adult smokers to quit, but children and adults who have never smoked should never vape¹
- Both young people and parents and carers were also aware that vapes may contain chemicals and other ingredients such as THC (a cannabinoid that is found in cannabis) and other harmful chemicals which may make them unsafe.
- In a focus group discussion, parents and carers offered insight into why their child/ children with SEND vapes. This included fixations on flavours, peer pressure, mental health and vaping helping young people to interact with their peers through giving them a topic of conversation.
- 72% of the parents and carers who responded to our survey said they neither vape nor smoke cigarettes, 28% said they smoke cigarettes and/ or vape themselves. National data shows that if parents smoke, their children are four times more likely to smoke (Department of Health and Social Care², 2021). However, in this study 28% of parents and carers smoke or

¹ [Stopping the start: our new plan to create a smokefree generation - GOV.UK](#)

² [Children whose parents smoke are 4 times as likely to take up smoking themselves - GOV.UK](#)

vape, yet 44% of their children are vaping (either sometimes or daily). This is an interesting finding which supports other research (see [Desktop review](#)) which demonstrates that children with SEND are more likely to engage in vaping.

- Parents and carers of young people with SEND told us that they would like more information/ knowledge about the dangers of vaping. Interestingly, children and young people with SEND who completed our survey told us that they do not want more information about the dangers of vaping.
- In terms of advertising of vaping, 75% of children and young people agreed or strongly agreed that 'adverts encourage children and young people to vape'. 68% of parents and carers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'Adverts and social media encourage young people to vape'.
- Most parents and carers and young people had seen vaping advertised either in shops (80% of young people) or online (65% of young people). Tik-Tok, Instagram and Facebook were the online platforms where people were most likely to see vaping being advertised online. Young people also told us they saw advertising of vapes on Snapchat (42%).
- In terms of support to stop vaping, parents and carers of children and young people with SEND told us that they would like more practical support tailored to the meet SEND needs.

In light of our findings, we make the following recommendations:

1. More research needs to be conducted to find out about children and young people with SEND's experience of vaping. This was a small study but clearly demonstrates links between SEND, vaping and mental health.
2. More information to be provided to parents and carers around the potential dangers of vaping as parents and carers want to better understand the health implications of vaping.
3. Any potential vaping cessation support for children and young people with SEND needs to be co-designed with children and young people with SEND and tailored to meet SEND needs.
4. Support for vaping cessation in children and young people with SEND needs to be tackled sensitively and different approaches for engaging young people with SEND may be required. Sensitivity needs to be shown in regard to children and young people with SEND and vaping, especially around communication and language difficulties, poorer processing skills, sensory needs and stimming³ needs and the challenges of removing vapes as a stimming means.
5. We welcome the national legislation, in the Tobacco and Vapes Bill 2024, to stop vape companies marketing their products at children. We recommend that the council support the local implementation and enforcement of the bill where appropriate.

³ The repetitive performance of certain physical movements or vocalizations, as a form of behaviour by persons with autism or other neurodevelopmental conditions; self-stimulation. This behaviour is thought to serve a variety of functions, such as calming and expression of feelings:

1. Introduction

This project was funded by Healthwatch Brighton and Hove and conducted in partnership with Amaze, The Parent Carers' Council (PaCC) and Brighton and Hove City Council.

Brighton and Hove City Council's 2023 'Safe and Well at School Survey' (of nearly 14,000, 8-16 year olds) revealed a rise in numbers trying e-cigarettes and vaping⁴ regularly and found that older students (Key Stage 4/ 14-16 year old) are more likely to regularly vape (13%) compared with Key Stage 3 /11-14-year-old students (3%).

As a result of these findings and the speed at which vaping has arisen as a complex issue across the country, Healthwatch Brighton and Hove, Amaze, PaCC and Brighton and Hove City Council, decided to conduct some research into vaping.

There is a particular interest in learning about the experience of young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) as so little is known about this group's experiences, beliefs and knowledge around vaping.

The aim of the research was to engage with young people with SEND aged under 25 in Brighton and Hove, and their parents and carers, to find out in more detail about the reasons why young people are vaping, their experiences of vaping, their beliefs and knowledge of the harms and risks associated with vaping and their thoughts on how to encourage young people to stop vaping.

Our research included:

- A [desktop research review report](#) which summarises current knowledge on vaping in the UK.
- A survey for children and young people with SEND.
- A survey of parents and carers of young people with SEND.
- A focus group with parents and carers of young people with SEND who vape or have vaped in the past.
- One interview with a young person with SEND who vapes.

It is anticipated that results from this project could be used by mental health practitioners in schools and school mental health services in Brighton and Hove. We also hope the results can feed into the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (Brighton and Hove) priority areas of children and young people with SEND.

⁴ Note: E-cigarettes refer to the device and vaping is the act of using the e-cigarette

2. What we did

Healthwatch Brighton and Hove ran two surveys from December 2024–April 2025.

The first survey was for children and young people aged under 25 who have a Special Educational Need or Disability (SEND). The second survey was for parents and carers of young people who have SEND. Questions followed a similar structure, but the young people's survey went into greater detail about experiences of vaping, if the young people said they vape.

The survey was shared online and in face-to-face meetings with parents and carers and young people by our partners Amaze and PaCC. The survey was self-selecting, meaning that we relied on people who were willing to complete the survey and had the ability to complete it online.

We also ran an online focus group session with parents and carers of young people with SEND and held one interview with a young person with SEND who currently vapes.

Who we spoke to

In total, we engaged with 52 young people with SEND and parents and carers of children and young people with SEND about their thoughts and experiences of vaping:

This included:

- 31 parents and carers
- 21 young people with SEND.

Summary of desktop review research findings

The aim of the [desktop research](#) was to consolidate information about young people's experiences of vaping and provide some contextual knowledge for the project. Twelve reports were reviewed and summarized, drawing mostly from national data.

Key findings include that there is a significant association between vaping and ADHD, and some limited evidence around the association between mental health and vaping. The association between ADHD symptoms and vaping among adolescents is perhaps the most well documented. Evidence shows that people with ADHD are more likely to vape and /or smoke cigarettes. Researchers have found that the impulsivity and risk taking associated with ADHD means it is more likely that people with ADHD are more likely to try/ take up vaping.

The desktop review also highlighted the need to conduct further research into the experiences of children and young people with SEND around vaping as such little research has been done on the topic.

3. Findings

Vaping habits and behaviours and SEND needs

Children and young people with SEND Survey Results:

The first section of our survey started with questions to establish a snapshot of the vaping habits and behaviour amongst young people and children with SEND in Brighton and Hove. The results below show that a significant number of children and young people with SEND had tried vaping and vape on a regular basis. The most popular type of vape used by children and young people who completed our survey were disposable vapes. The majority brought their vapes from a shop.

65% of the children and young people with SEND that completed our survey, told us that they had vaped, 35% told us they had never vaped.

Of those that had vaped, 39% had been vaping for 2 years plus, 15% had been vaping for less than 6 months, and 46% did not know how long they had been vaping for.

The average age for starting to vape was 15 (the age of starting vaping ranged from 11-23 years old in this survey).

39% of those that vape told us they do so every day, 15% said they vape more than one day a week, but less than every day.

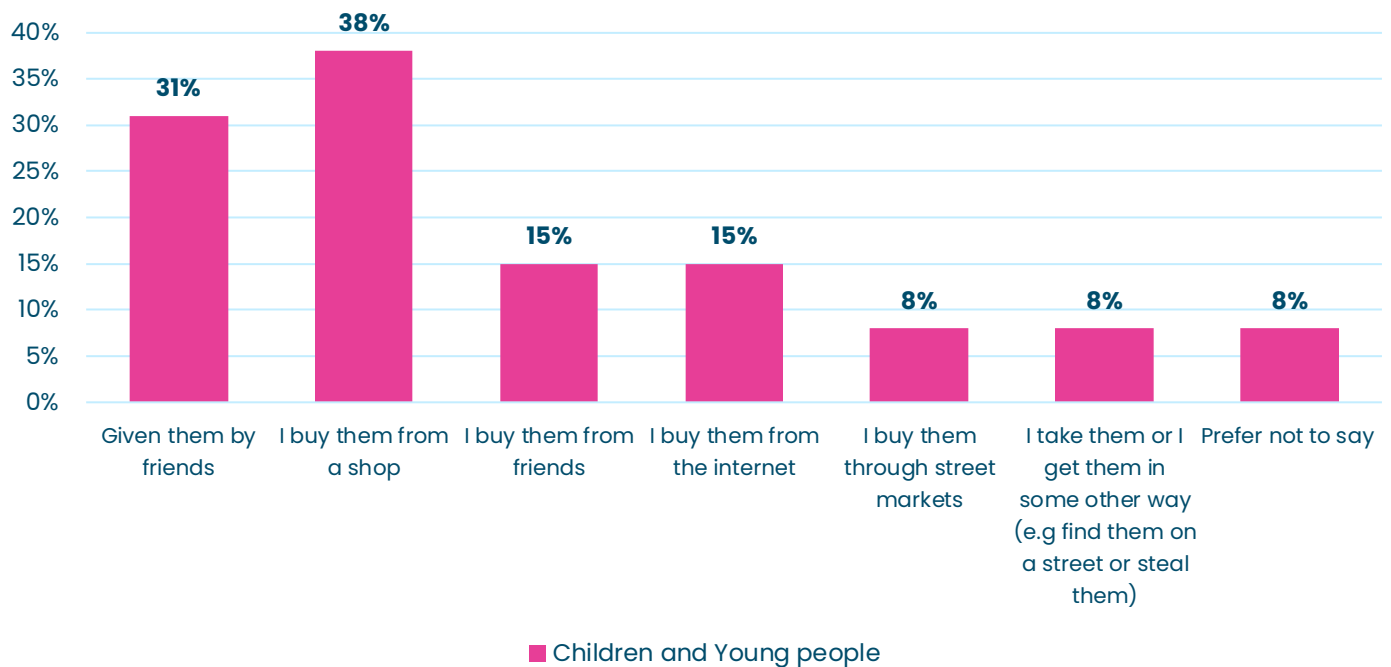
When asked 'what type of vape do you use?' (please tick all that apply)

- 77% told us that they use disposable vapes
- 30% used vapes that are rechargeable with replaceable pre-filled cartridges
- 23% said they use vapes which are rechargeable with a tank or reservoir.

The young people who completed our survey are therefore using a variety of vape types which is interesting given that single use vapes were banned in June 2025, and this showed that young people have already switched to using reusable vapes.

When asked 'where do you get your vapes from?' (please tick all that apply), the most frequent response was buy them from a shop (39%) and given them by friends (31%) 15% brought them from friends or buy them through the internet. Please see the bar chart on the following page:

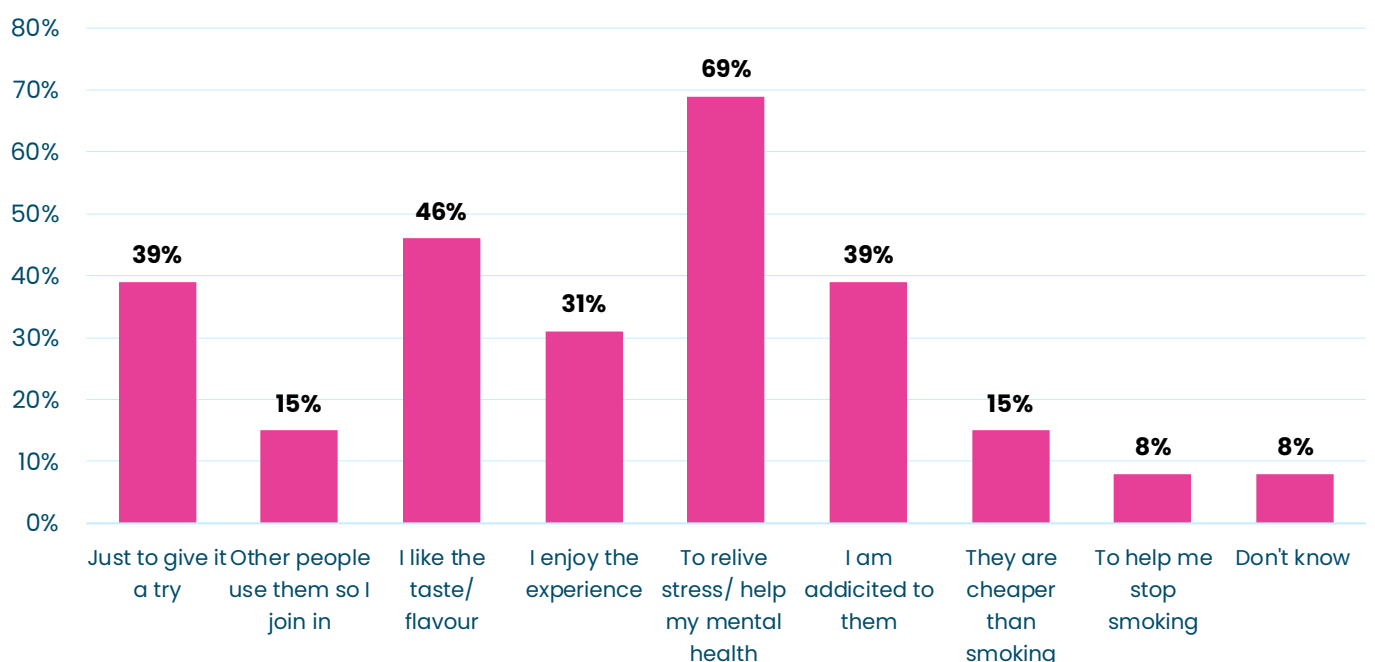
Where do you get your vapes from? Please tick all options that apply



62% of young people told us that they do not keep their vaping hidden from their parents, whilst 39% do keep it hidden.

Worryingly, 69% of the young people who completed our survey told us their main reason for vaping was 'to relieve stress/ help my mental health'. This was the most popular response to this question as the graph below shows:

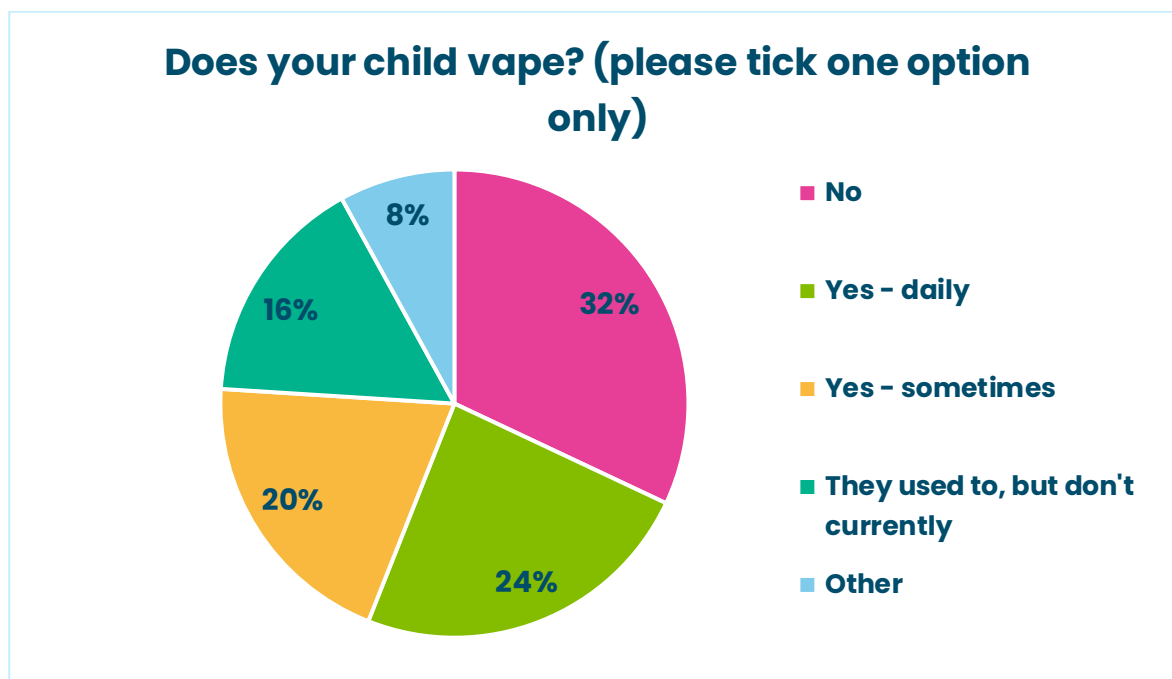
What are your main reasons for vaping (Please tick your top 3 reasons)



Parents and carers of young people with SEND Survey Results:

Of the parents who completed our questionnaire

- 60% told us that their child currently vapes or had vaped in the past.
- 44% told us that their child vapes either daily or occasionally
- 16% told us their child 'used to vape, but does not currently vape'
- 32% told us that their child does not vape as the pie chart below shows:



72% of the parents and carers we spoke to said they neither vape nor smoke cigarettes and only 28% said they smoke cigarettes and/ or vape themselves. This is an interesting finding as national data shows that if parents smoke, their children are four times more likely to smoke (Department of Health and Social Care⁵, 2021). However, in this small study 28% of parents and carers smoke or vape, yet 44% of their children are vaping (either sometimes or daily). This provides some further evidence that children with SEND are more likely to engage in vaping as identified in our desktop research.

When asked why do you think your child vapes:

- 71% said they think it's to fit in with their friends/ peers
- 65% said they think their child vapes to relieve stress and anxiety
- 53% said because their child is addicted.

One person commented that they think their child vapes '*as it satisfies in the same way as stimming toys work for ADHD*'

⁵ [Children whose parents smoke are 4 times as likely to take up smoking themselves - GOV.UK](#)

Parents and Carers of Children and Young People with SEND Focus Group discussion results:

In the focus group discussion parents and carers offered some further insight into why their child/ children with SEND vapes. Reasons given as to why their children vaped included fixations on flavours, peer pressure, mental health and vaping helping young people to interact with their peers through giving them a topic of conversation:

"They obviously like the taste, and I think it's a bit of peer thing you know. Different flavours, different colours you know, especially with a SEND child can get a bit fixated on them as well. There's quite a bit of a fixation on it a bit like the energy drinks, and well, they're getting the nicotine hit" (Parent and Carer Focus group participant)

"Oh, this one's this flavour, this one's that flavour.. . So maybe with a SEND child, it's also a conversation especially when a lot of SEND children really struggle to interact with each other.. It's a way in, isn't it? It's a way to communicate with people. It's a common subject" (Parent and Carer Focus group participant)

"I think maybe it's kind of depression, you know. I don't really know his reasons for vaping. [I think] it's because of his mental health," (Parent and Carer Focus group participant)

"It's just kind of a way that he feels he can just relax, you know and still be friends with his friends". (Parent and Carer Focus group participant)

SEND need survey results:

In terms of SEND we asked respondents what special educational need or disability(s) they have:

- 40% of respondents to our survey said they have Autistic Spectrum Disorder
- 35% have an emotional or mental health needs
- 30% said they have ADHD
- 35% of the young people said they are on a waiting list for an assessment or treatment of a mental health concern and 18% had been on a waiting list, but were not currently on one
- Of those on a waiting list 22% had been on one for up to 6 months. 22% had been on one for 6 months to a year, 33% had been on one for 1-2 years and 22% had been on one for more than two years.

Of the parents and carers we spoke to:

- 72% said their child had Autistic Spectrum Disorder

- 56% their child had ADHD
- 56% said their child have an emotional or mental health need,
- 24% said their child had a moderate learning disability and 16% said their child have speech, language and communication needs.
- 37% said their child is currently on a waiting list for an assessment or treatment of these parents
- Of those on a waiting list, 27% had been on a waiting list for up to 6 months, 9% had been waiting 6 months to a year, 26% had been waiting for 1-2 years and 27% had been waiting for more than two years.

Advertising of Vaping

The second section of the survey's focused on advertising of vaping:

- 75% of children and young people agreed or strongly agreed that 'adverts and children encourage young people to vape'.
- 68% of parents and carers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'Adverts and social media encourage young people to vape'.
- Only 4% of parents and carer disagreed with the statement, no young people disagreed with the statement.

Most parents and carers and young people had seen vaping advertised either in shops (80% of young people) or online (65% of young people). Tik-Tok, Instagram and Facebook were the online platforms where people were most likely to see vaping being advertised online. Young people also told us they saw advertising of vapes on Snapchat (42%). Advertising of vaping and cigarettes was also raised in the parent carer focus group discussion in response to being asked 'Why do you think your child vapes?'. Two parents felt that advertising of vapes had encouraged their children with SEND to vape as the following quotes demonstrate:

"Is it because it's shiny? It's because they are beautifully marketed, aren't they?"
(Parent and Carer Focus group participant)

"It's branding. They're branding it a lot to young people..... They know it's a good or a big market". (Parent and Carer Focus group participant)

The recently passed Government Tobacco and Vapes Bill, 2024 will hopefully challenge the way vapes are currently marketed. The Government will also be able to regulate product design, standardising what vapes look like⁶ to make them less appealing to children and young people.

[What does the Tobacco and Vapes Bill actually do? - ASH⁶](#)

Safety and Vaping

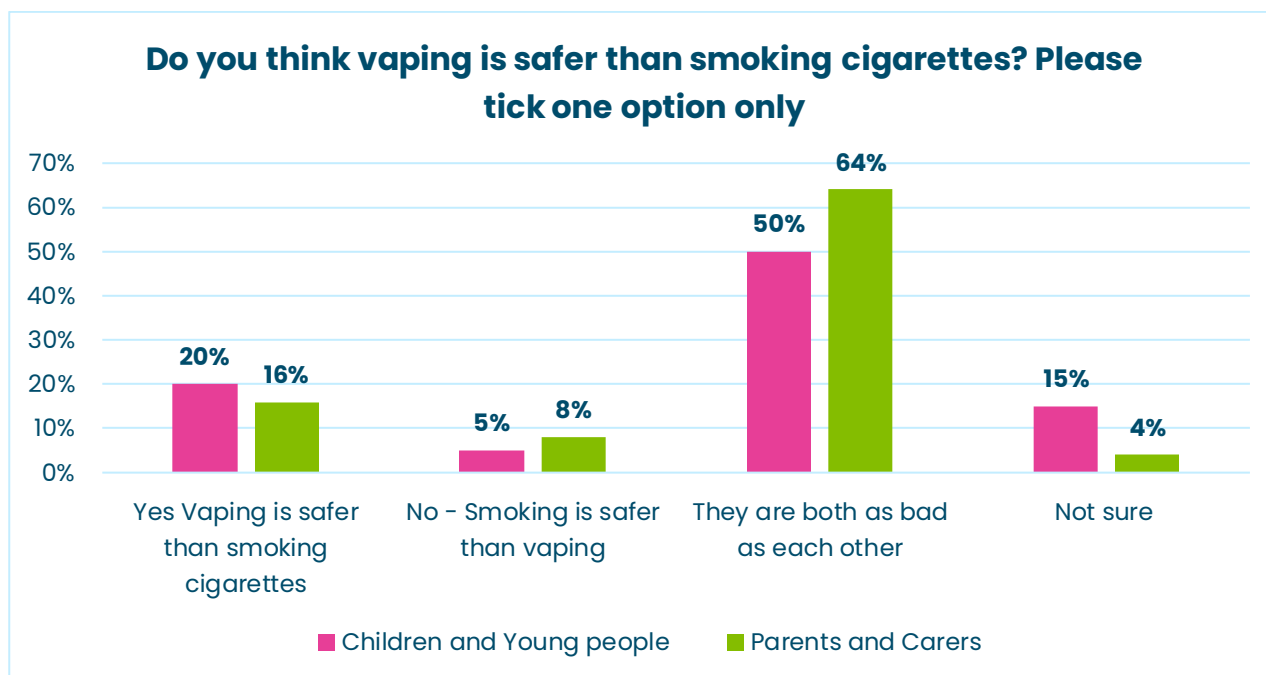
The third section of the survey's, focused on the safety aspects of vaping. We wanted to find out how safe both parents and carers and children and young people with SEND view vaping as and examine how much knowledge people have of what can be found inside vapes.

We found that the majority of both children and young people and parents and carers who responded to our survey view vaping as unsafe:

- 56% of parents and carers and 20% of children and young people said they felt vaping is 'very unsafe'.
- 50% of children and young people and 25% thought it was 'quite unsafe'.
- No children/ parents or carers believed vaping was very safe or quite safe.

When asked 'do you think vaping is safer than smoking cigarettes?',

- 64% of parents and carers and 50% of young people felt 'they are both as bad as each other'.
- 20% of children and young people and 16% of parents and carers felt vaping is safer than smoking cigarettes.
- 8% of parents and carers 5% of children and young people felt smoking is safer than vaping.
- 15% of children and young people and 4% of parents are carers were unsure.

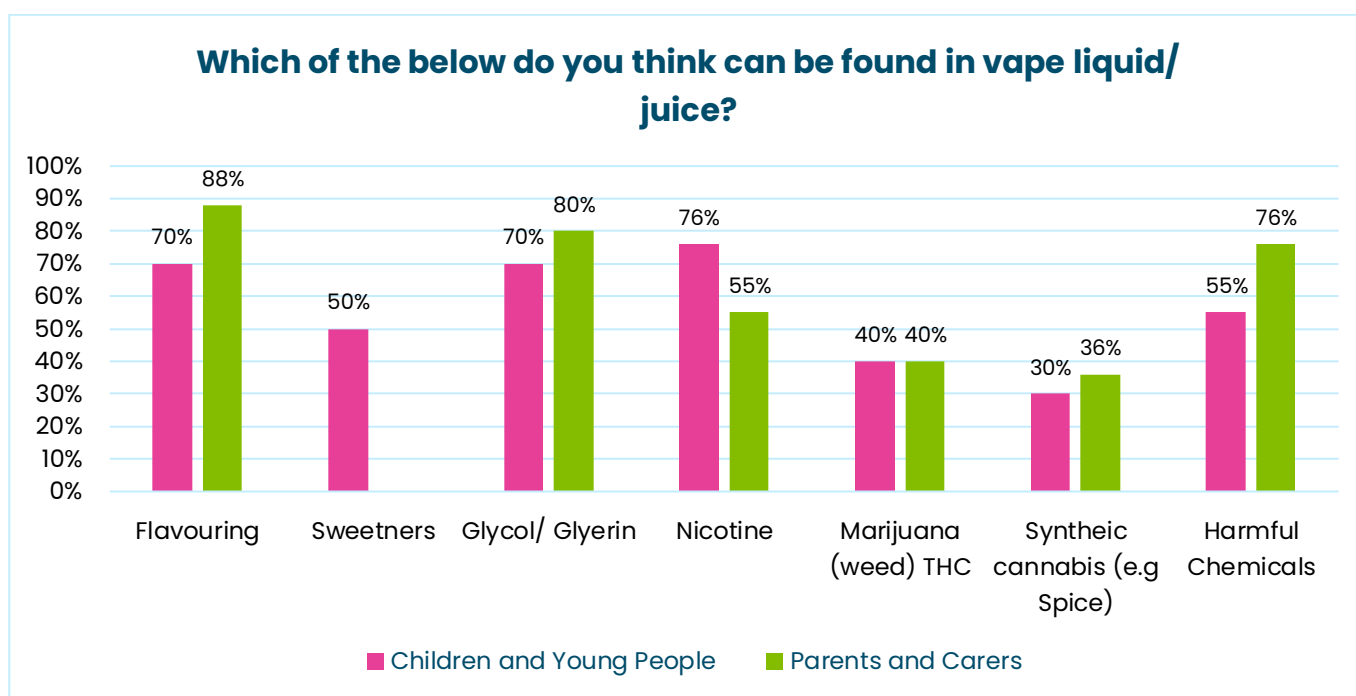


The findings above are interesting as most children and young people and parents and carers who responded to our survey believed vaping and smoking cigarettes to

be 'as bad as each other'. Evidence on the possible health risks of vaping is still being gathered, and the long-term impacts of vaping are not yet known.

Current guidance promotes vaping as a safer than smoking as vapes do not contain tobacco. In 2022, UK experts reviewed the international evidence and found that "in the short and medium-term, vaping poses a small fraction of the risks of smoking"⁷. The health advice on vaping is clear in that, vapes when combined with behavioural support, can help adult smokers to quit, but children and adults who have never smoked should never vape⁸.

In terms of knowing what chemicals could be found in vapes, parents, carers and children and young people were aware that a variety of different chemicals can be found in vape liquid, for example 76% of parents and carers said harmful chemicals such as Lead/ Tin/ Diacetyl could be found in vapes compared to 55% of children and young people. Parents and carers were generally slightly more aware than young people as the table below demonstrates:



48% of parents and carers also said they knew that vapes often contain chemicals that are not listed on their package compared to 45% of children and young people.

When asked 'What do you think would make a vape potentially unsafe?'

- 60% of Parents and carers and 50% of children and young people felt if a vape is damaged in any way it would be unsafe,

⁷ [Vaping myths and the facts - Better Health - NHS](#)

⁸ [Stopping the start: our new plan to create a smokefree generation - GOV.UK](#)

- 60% of parents and 55% of children and young people felt or the nicotine strength is more than 20mg/ml it would be unsafe.
- 52% of parents and carers and 40% of young people felt a vape is unsafe if it does not have nicotine ingredient warnings and
- 48% of parents and carers and 30% of children and young people felt a vape would be unsafe if it had a puff count above 600.
- 60% of young people and 48% of parents and carer felt a vape would not be potentially safe if it was not a recognisable brand.
- One parent commented that they think a vape would be unsafe *'if it was given by others or brought from people, not a reputable shop'*.

Parent and Carer Focus Group discussion on safety of vapes

The question of safety of vapes and vaping was also covered in the parent and carer focus group discussion. There was a general acceptance amongst the parents and carers we spoke to that vaping is not considered healthy. Parents however were aware of the lack of data that is currently available on the health outcomes of vaping as the quote below demonstrates:

"Well, we don't know, do we? Because there's no data on it? So I mean, there's been reports of people having lung problems and difficulties, you know, popcorn lungs and things like that. I mean smoking [you] used to be told that that was great for you and all the nicotine in some ways. I suppose they're not getting the same chemicals as you would be smoking, which is a good thing. However, what is in these vapes?"
(Parent and Carer Focus group participant)

There was also some concern raised by parents and carers in the discussion that the amount of nicotine in a vape was higher than in a cigarette and that some vapes contain cannabis:

"I've been told, the nicotine content is much higher than if you have a normal cigarette and judging by the amount that's left on their desk..... they're probably getting so much more nicotine, [...] My young person's quite unhealthy, anyway, in in lots of ways. So this probably isn't gonna help" (Parent and Carer Focus group participant)

"I don't know if this is true, but I've heard on the grapevine from kids [that] some of them can put weed in it as well" (Parent and Carer Focus group participant)

When asked "if you they felt they would benefit from further information about the potential harms of vaping?"

- 80% of parents and carers felt 'parents and carers would benefit from further information about the potential harms of vaping'
- However, only 25% of children and young people felt they would like to be given more information about the potential harms of vaping whilst 55% of children and young people did not want more information and 15% were unsure.

The case study below comes from an interview with a young person with SEND who vapes and smokes cigarettes. This young person demonstrated less concern than parents and carers who were involved in this research, about the safety of vapes, as they believed the cost of vapes reflect the content:

Case study of a young person with SEND who currently vapes



"I vape and smoke cigarettes. I vape because I like it and because I can do it inside. I also like the taste, they do taste nice and I like the lemon and lime flavour best. I tend to have about ten puffs of a vape every day and I think I started vaping when I was about 13. . Vaping can make me a little less stressed but only slightly I vape because I like it. I do think vaping is worse than cigarettes in terms of health. You can vape more often as you can do it anywhere. And it hurts my throat.

The safety of vapes and what's inside them? I am not too worried about that.. I can tell if a vape contains Spice or THC as you know they will cost more. And you won't get them in shops. You get them from dealers.

I have no idea where I would go for any help if I wanted to give up. I think cigarettes are going to be harder to give up though as I can take or leave vapes. I would probably just try and smoke less each day..... do it myself and you know reduce it bit by bit if I decided I wanted to stop. But I don't want any help to give up at the moment⁹."



This case study links to the final section in two survey's which focused on supported needed for young people with SEND to stop vaping (if desired).

⁹ If Children and Young People are keen to stop smoking support or vaping can be found at Brighton and Hove City Council Healthy Lifestyles Team's stop smoking service which offers free support from a trained stop-smoking advisor (Please also see last page or the report)

Support to stop vaping

Our survey's contained questions about readiness levels to stop vaping and support needed to stop vaping. We asked young people 'if you currently vape, how ready are you to quit?'

- 15% of children and young people told us they would like to quit vaping now or within the next month.
- 5% would like to quit sometime but not within the next month.
- 15% told us they were not interested in quitting.
- 10% told us that they had already quit.

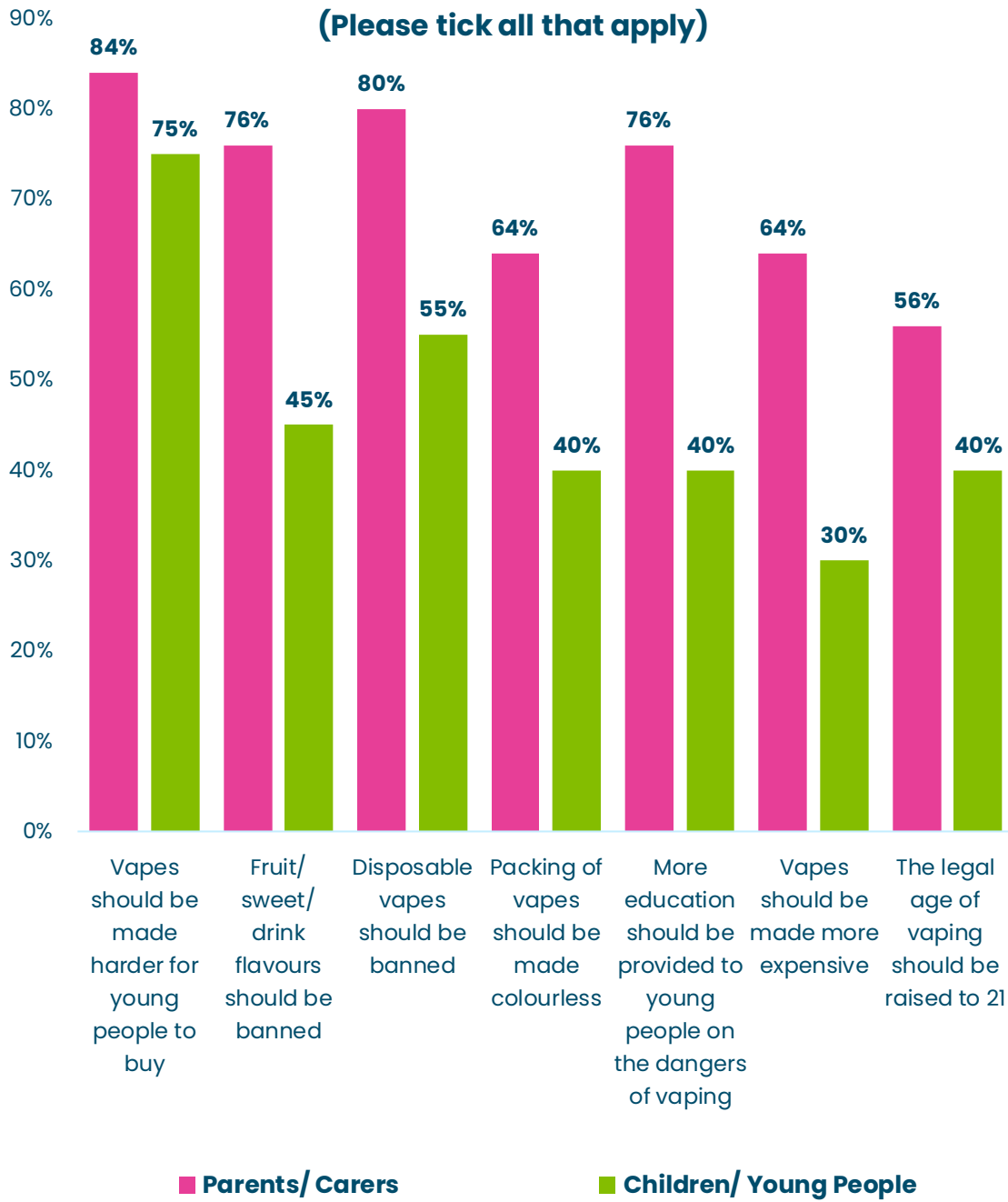
When asked 'how ready do you feel your child with SEND is to quit vaping?'

- 24% of parents and carers said they believed that their child was not interested in quitting.
- 12% believed that their child would like to quit now or quit sometime in the future.
- 16% told us their child would like to quit in the future but have no plans to do so now.

56% of parents and carers told us 'they do not know where to go for information and support if your child wanted to stop vaping'. 32% were unsure and only 12% said they did know where to go for support and information. 25% of children and young people told us they would like to have more information and support available if they wanted to stop vaping.

In terms of encouraging young people to stop vaping the most frequent response from 84% of parents and carers and 75% of children and young people was that vapes should be made harder for young people to buy as the graph below demonstrates. 80% of parents and carers felt disposable vapes should be banned compared to 55% of children and young people:

How could young people be encouraged to stop vaping? (Please tick all that apply)



Parent and Carer Focus Group discussion on how to support children and young people with SEND to stop vaping

How to support young people with SEND to stop vaping was also discussed in the parent and carer focus group discussion. Parents and carers once again felt that more information about vaping and the harms of vaping would be beneficial to help young people to quit vaping;

"Maybe discussion groups or workshops for young people. Educate them because I feel a lot of them do not know that vaping is not good. [..] Yeah, we need to educate them of [the] side effects and [that] vaping can be addictive". (Parent and Carer Focus group participant)

"And educational sessions, like a counselling [session] for all teenagers, not individual sessions. if you can gather 20 to 50 teenagers that do vape maybe online or in person, [and] teach them the negative effect of vaping like, and show them examples of what vaping have [sic] done to people. (Parent and Carer Focus group participant)

Others were concerned about the impact of peer pressure on their children's vaping habits and being able to stop vaping as the quote below demonstrates:

"One of the problems we have with young teenagers vaping, is bad friends and having bad friends, and even if they stop there's this friend that that will always lure you to go back to what you're trying to come out from" (Parent and Carer Focus group participant)

In terms of SEND and vaping, our parents and carers in the focus group session believed some adaptations would need to be made to general information/ support around vaping cessation that targeted towards young people. One parent was particularly keen to emphasis using more practical elements of training/ support to better engage young people with SEND:

"Don't sit them down and expect them to sit there. with SEND [what you should do] is something practical with them like, take a vape apart or something, and then try and figure out what's inside it. Something practical rather than lots and lots of words. Heavy, deep, meaningful conversations don't always hit the spot! [..] If you make it fun for the young person, then you're more likely to catch their enthusiasm". (Parent and Carer Focus group participant)

The final question in our survey's asked if anyone had any other comments about vaping that they would like to share. Children and young people had nothing they wanted to add but parents and carers had this to say:

6

"I think the flavours encourage them. The nicotine levels should be lower than normal cigarettes and they should not be any higher than 10mg if not lower. My child started due to her friends vaping and not wanting to be left out when she already didn't drink or do drugs. She felt it was a safer option to try to show she was part of them".

"Online platforms make vapes too easy to buy. My son has been able to set up an account using my details to buy them".

"The childlike flavours make them extremely appealing to children".

"I think vapes are a future health crisis waiting to happen and am baffled at the lack of regulation".

"Stop colleges facilitating under 18s vaping on site"

SEND and vaping:

"It's very hard to argue when your child states they need to vape for their mental health, particularly when they have a history of self-harm".

"SEND children are particularly vulnerable especially when outside of the school system".

"Vaping by those with SEND is not straight forward. Consideration to the following should be considered; poor processing, communication and language challenges. OCD behaviours, use of things like vapes for stimming purposes and the dangers of removing that stim, collecting colourful vapes, sensory need, vulnerability from others a way of masking or fawning, choosing a smell or vaping utensil for self, sense of being in control"

"I think vapes were designed to help people quit smoking but in fact it had the opposite affect with more people using a vape that never smoked, children vaping and those like me that couldn't quit so now for some peculiar reason do both!"

9

4. Conclusion and recommendations

Vaping is a complex issue that has arisen at speed across the country. The aim of this research was to find out more about the experiences of young people and children with SEND with regards to vaping in Brighton and Hove. Primarily because so little is known about this group's experiences of vaping.

Our key findings include:

- A significant percentage (65%) of the children and young people with SEND that completed our survey reported vaping or trying vaping.
- A high percentage of the children and young people with SEND we spoke to are vaping on a regular basis (e.g. 38% reported vaping daily).
- The research identified a potential relationship between mental health and vaping as 69% of children and young people told us that vaping helps their mental health and/or helps to relieve stress.
- 81% of parents and carers of children with SEND and 70% of children and young people with SEND told us that they thought vaping was either 'very unsafe' or 'quite unsafe'.
- When asked 'do you think vaping is safer than smoking cigarettes?', 64% of parents and carers and 50% of young people felt 'they are both as bad as each other'. Current guidance states vaping is not risk-free, but is less harmful than smoking¹⁰
- 72% of the parents and carers who responded to our survey said they neither vape nor smoke cigarettes, 28% said they smoke cigarettes and/ or vape themselves. This is an interesting finding as national data shows that if parents smoke, their children are four times more likely to smoke (Department of Health and Social Care¹¹, 2021). However, in this study 28% of parents and carers smoke or vape, yet 44% of their children are vaping (either sometimes or daily). This provides further evidence that children with SEND are more likely to engage in vaping.
- Parents and carers of young people with SEND told us that they would like more information/ knowledge about the dangers of vaping. Interestingly, children and young people with SEND who completed our survey told us that they do not want more information about the dangers of vaping.
- In terms of advertising of vaping, 75% of children and young people agreed or strongly agreed that 'adverts and children encourage young people to vape'. 68% of parents and carers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'Adverts and social media encourage young people to vape'.

¹⁰ [Vaping myths and the facts - Better Health - NHS](#)

¹¹ [Children whose parents smoke are 4 times as likely to take up smoking themselves - GOV.UK](#)

- In terms of support to stop vaping, parents and carers of children and young people with SEND told us that they would like more practical support tailored to the meet SEND needs.

Our findings compliment other research conducted in this area – for example, children with ADHD are more likely to engage in risky behaviours such as vaping.

We also identified some ways in which young people with SEND could be supported to stop vaping. This is something that there is very little previous research has investigated.

In terms of the limitations of this research, we acknowledge that this was a small study, and it was especially hard to engage children and young people with SEND. Even with the support of Amaze, we could not engage enough children and young people with SEND to run a focus group. This was our original intention and could potentially have provided some very interesting insights.

We also did not distinguish between nicotine vaping and vaping of other substances by young people such as THC and Spice. Work should be done with children and young people to spot and differentiate between nicotine vaping and the vaping of other substances and raise awareness of differing potential harms.

As the result of this research, we make the following recommendations:

1. More research needs to be conducted to find out about children and young people with SEND's experience of vaping. This was a small study but clearly demonstrates links between SEND, vaping and mental health.
2. More information should be provided to parents and carers around the potential dangers of vaping as parents and carers want to better understand the health implications of vaping.
3. Any potential vaping cessation support for children and young people with SEND needs to be co-designed with children and young people with SEND and tailored to meet SEND needs. For example, we have identified through this research that support with more practical and interactive elements would be more engaging to young people with SEND than information sharing exercises.
4. Support for vaping cessation in children and young people with SEND needs to be tackled sensitively and different approaches for engaging young people with SEND may be required. Sensitivity needs to be shown in regards to children and young people with SEND and vaping, especially around communication and language difficulties, poorer processing skills, sensory needs and stimming ¹²needs and the challenge of removing vapes as a stimming means.
5. We welcome the national legislation, in the Tobacco and Vapes Bill 2024, to stop vape companies marketing their products at children. We recommend that the council support the local implementation and enforcement of the bill where appropriate.

¹² The repetitive performance of certain physical movements or vocalizations, as a form of behaviour by persons with autism or other neurodevelopmental conditions; self-stimulation. This behaviour is thought to serve a variety of functions, such as calming and expression of feelings:

For further Advice and Guidance around Smoking and Vaping please see:

Brighton and Hove City Council's Healthy Lifestyles Team: The Healthy Lifestyles Team offers free support from a trained stop-smoking advisor.

What the Healthy Lifestyles Team (HLT) offers

The service includes:

- 1-2-1 behaviour change support
- Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) and swap to stop vapes supplied
- 12 weeks of support
- Carbon monoxide (CO) monitoring

They also provide:

- A dedicated stop smoking worker
- Longer appointment times
- Support in person, over the phone, and through video call
- Interpreter support
- A specialist children and young people stop smoking advisor (for over 12 years old)

Please see: [**The Healthy Lifestyles Team's stop smoking service**](#)

For further information about vaping please see:

[Vaping myths and the facts – Better Health – NHS](#)

[Talk To Frank: Go To Guide For Youth Vaping | Vape Escape](#)

[Youth vaping: the facts – ASH](#)

[Young people and stopping Vaping](#)



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