

# **Endgame:**

Managing the disposable vapes ban and the journey to a smokefree future



This research report from Future Health has been commissioned and funded by Kenvue\* the makers of Nicorette®\*\*. The report was authored by Future Health and the final content is editorially independent

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<sup>\*</sup>Kenvue (Kenvue UK Limited)

<sup>\*\*</sup>Nicorette contains nicotine. Stop smoking and quit nicotine vaping aid. Requires willpower. Always read the label.

#### **FOREWORD**

Every day 350 young adults start smoking.

Having taken up the habit, on average, it takes thirty attempts to stop and many never succeed.

As the UK's Public Health Minister, I introduced the last Tobacco Control Plan in 2017 which had the ambition of making England smokefree by 2030 at its heart. The measures we introduced then saw strong progress in reducing smoking rates across the board.

Rishi Sunak's personal leadership accelerated action towards this goal through the introduction of legislation to achieve a generational smoking ban and action to curb youth vaping. This was coupled with more funding to help smokers to quit. It is welcome that the Labour Government has picked this up and brought forward the Tobacco & Vapes Bill – along with action on disposable vapes – to make a smokefree future a reality.

However, and as this welcome report shows, this is not a time for complacency. Smoking rates are falling but vaping rates continue to rise. Whilst it is positive to see smokers switching to less harmful products – including vapes – there are worrying signs that the rise in the vaping rate is coming from younger people, some of whom have never smoked.

Part of this has been driven by an increase in the use of cheap disposable, one-off vapes marketed heavily towards younger age groups. Moves to ban these vapes are to be applauded; but will have wider (perhaps unintended) implications – with as many as 200,000 more people smoking as a result of the ban and many of these being younger people.

To mitigate these impacts, this striking research makes a series of practical recommendations that I believe should be supported by current Ministers. They all fit neatly into their wider health mission and Plan for Change, including but not exclusively, the shift from sickness to prevention.

These include re-committing to broad reaching media campaigns on tobacco and nicotine harm, moving quickly on tougher regulatory actions in the Tobacco and Vapes Bill and evolving local health services to meet the needs of both smokers and vapers to help more people in going smoke and nicotine free. The Government's devolution agenda across England presents a genuine opportunity to go further and faster in this respect.

The disposable vapes ban and the Government's wider action in tackling smoking present a massive step in the right direction for England achieving my original smokefree ambition. But we are not there yet and any complacency will have serious ramifications.

As this report shows, we need to work carefully and methodically together to reach our desired destination.

Steve Brine MP, Former Public Health Minister and Chair of the Health and Social Care Select Committee

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Reducing smoking rates has undoubtably been a major public health success in recent decades. The current Labour Government's decision to prioritise the Tobacco and Vapes Bill and the disposable vapes ban presents the latest policy package aimed at getting us more quickly to a smokefree future.

However, in taking these next steps the landscape to be navigated is complex. The rise of vaping as a smoking cessation aid has helped many people quit smoking. However we have also seen a worrying rise in the numbers of young people vaping who have never smoked. Vapes have been developed that have been heavily marketed to children, that are affordable, easily accessible and disposable. The contents of these products can also be unclear, with a growing illicit market and contamination with other banned substances. The NHS has recorded over 400 vaping related hospital admissions a year.<sup>1</sup>

Tackling vaping needs to be addressed carefully. It is an intervention that for public health professionals should be offered alongside others such as nicotine replacement therapies to support adults in quitting smoking, but one also that needs to not be promoted and easily accessible to those who have never smoked, children and young people.

The Government's latest tobacco and vaping control reforms seek to manage this difficult balance.

One of the priority reforms to reduce youth vaping (and to deliver environmental benefits) is the introduction of a ban on disposable vapes. Younger people are more likely to be users of disposable vape than older groups. The disposables ban is due to come into force in June 2025.

This research shows that this ban, whilst welcome, presents challenges for the Government's smokefree ambitions. Our polling finds that up to 200,000 extra people could start smoking as a result of the disposables ban, including greater proportions of younger people. Younger people starting smoking are more likely to become addicted, with associated poorer health outcomes and longer term costs.<sup>2</sup>

For the Government there is now a need to re-commit to the mass media funding announced by the last administration to communicate the benefits of quitting smoking and going nicotine free, using their new regulatory powers to crackdown on the inappropriate promotion of vaping to younger people and the illicit vapes market. New targets should also be set for reducing youth vaping rates.

Within the health service the new ten year plan can help better integrate support across primary care to help people in going nicotine free, with pharmacies having an important and expanded role to play. This should be supported by better data collection that includes people's smoking and vaping status.

<sup>1</sup> https://integratedcarejournal.com/will-disposable-vape-ban-save-nhs-another-health-epidemic/#:~:text=While%20there%20have%20not%20been,young%20children%20are%20exposed%20to

<sup>2</sup> https://ash.org.uk/health-inequalities/youth-smoking

The research also finds that between 630,000 and 1.36 million people could switch to another vaping product as a result of the ban. Using the disposables ban to try and encourage more of these people to go nicotine free is a potential opportunity that is currently being missed.

Ultimately the ambition for Government should be to reduce both the numbers of smokers and vapers and helping more people go nicotine-free. The advice of the UK Chief Medical Officer is clear 'if you smoke, vape. But if you don't smoke, don't vape. '3

<sup>3</sup> https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/chief-medical-officer-for-england-on-vaping

# Key findings: The potential impact of the disposable vapes ban

To understand what might happen as a result of the disposable vapes ban, Future Health undertook polling with YouGov asking the public what changes to their vaping and smoking habits, they may make as a result of the ban.

The following questions were asked of a sample of over 4,000 adults UK wide:

- · Whether respondents smoke/vape/both/neither?
- Whether as vapers they previously smoked?
- · Whether as a vaper they use disposable vapes?
- How as vapers they would respond to a ban on disposable vapes?<sup>4</sup>

The following summarises the results from the polling:

- 45% of those surveyed who said they vaped said they 'always', 'often' or 'sometimes' used a disposable vape
- Of those using disposable vapes, 54% plan to switch to another vape, 15% plan to stop vaping, 12% will switch to smoking and 9% will switch to nicotine replacement therapies following the ban
- The polling records higher rates of disposable vapes use amongst those aged 18-24 than other age groups
- 18-24s were more likely than other age groups to say that they would stop vaping as a result of the ban (20% vs 14%). They are also more likely to take up smoking as a result of the ban (16% vs 11%) and switch to nicotine replacement therapies (16% vs 7%). They were less likely to say that they would carry on using another vaping product than those in older age groups (46% vs 59%)
- Modelling scenarios based on the polling indicate that the smoking rate could increase by between 90,000 and over 200,000 as a result of the disposable vapes ban
- To put this in context this could add between 0.2 and 0.4% to the overall smoking rate, the equivalent to a five month period of smoking reduction progress typically recorded
- The disposable vapes ban could see between 175,000 and 378,000 people stopping vaping, and between 630,000 and 1.36 million people switching to another vaping product<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Methodology to polling in Annex A. Survey conducted in December 2024

<sup>5</sup> Future Health and YouGov's polling found a similar level of smoking and vaping amongst the population as other surveys

#### Recommendations

 The Government should ensure that reducing smoking is a clear priority for the health mission and that new related targets are set for reductions in youth vaping rates and in people going nicotine free as well as smokefree

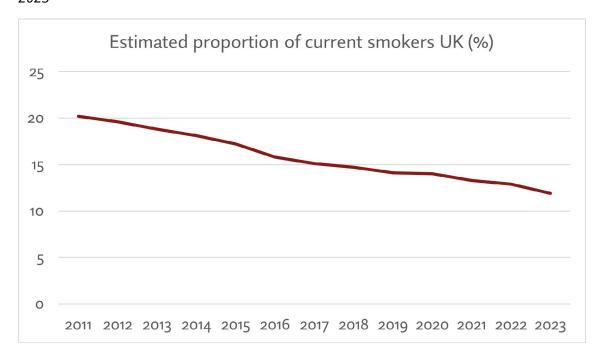
- The Government should re-commit to mass media funding in support of efforts to reduce smoking and in communicating the benefits of the Tobacco & Vapes Bill and the disposable vapes ban
- Following passage of the Tobacco and Vapes Bill the government should prioritise vaping regulations on branding, packaging and displays as well as restricting the use of flavour descriptors. Such action will ensure vaping is not being inappropriately promoted
- The Government should ensure sufficient resource is put behind enforcement action relating to the forthcoming Vaping Products Duty and efforts to crackdown on illicit vapes. The Government should report annually to Parliament on actions taken
- The Government and royal colleges working alongside partners such as the National Centre for Smoking Cessation and Training (NCSCT) should publish materials supporting improvements in clinical education on smoking, vaping and nicotine addiction. Similar evidence based guidelines for service planners should be rolled out across local authorities and the NHS
- The Government's ten year health plan should ensure co-ordinated action to reduce smoking is taken through the planned move towards more preventative healthcare and the use of integrated neighbourhood teams. Pharmacies should be given a clear, funded role in supporting people in going smoke and nicotine free.
   A person's vaping status should be captured and recorded through primary care consultations in a similar manner to a person's smoking status
- Local health services and local authorities should use Government funding for stop smoking services to support the evolution of such services from supporting people to go smokefree to nicotine free<sup>6</sup>
- Local health services should ensure that the disposable vapes ban is factored into their future efforts to tackle wider health inequalities

<sup>6</sup> A recent Healthwatch report identified an example where someone accessing a stop smoking service for help in quitting vaping was turned away. Support needs to available to those looking to quit both smoking and vaping: https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/blog/2025-01-15/how-can-we-better-support-people-stop-smokingand-vaping

INTRODUCTION: THE DECLINE OF SMOKING AND THE RISE OF VAPING

According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) 6 million people aged 18 years and over (11.9%) smoked cigarettes in the UK in 2023; this is the lowest proportion of current smokers since the population survey began in 2011.<sup>7</sup> Smoking rates have been on a steady decline since the first General Household/General Lifestyle Surveys started recording smoking rates annually in 1974 – when the smoking rate was 45.6%.<sup>8</sup>

Figure 1: Current smokers as a percentage of all persons aged 18 years and over, 2011 to 2023<sup>9</sup>



The largest reductions in the smoking rate in recent times have been seen in younger age groups. Those aged 18-24 have seen a 15.9% reduction from 2011 to 2023 whilst over 10% reductions have also been seen in the 25-34 and 35-44 age groups.

<sup>7</sup> https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandlifeexpectancies/bulletins/adultsmokinghabitsingreatbritain/2023

<sup>8</sup> https://ash.org.uk/uploads/Smoking-Statistics-Fact-Sheet.pdf?v=1731432998

<sup>9</sup> https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandlifeexpectancies/bulletins/adultsmokinghabitsingreatbritain/2023

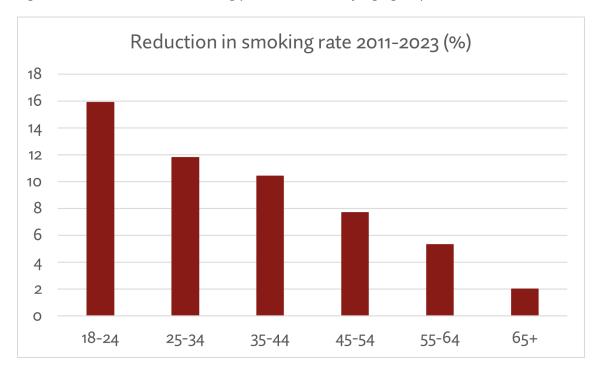


Figure 2: Reduction in UK smoking prevalence rate by age group<sup>10</sup>

Smoking rates still vary significantly across the country. The local authorities with the highest percentage of current smokers are Fenland (22.1%) and Blackpool (21.3%). By contrast local authorities with the lowest percentage of current smokers are Woking (5.3%) and St Albans (5.7%).<sup>11</sup> Men are still more likely to smoke than women, those working in jobs classified as 'routine and manual' are more likely to smoke than those in work classified as 'managerial' and those who are unemployed have a higher smoking prevalence rate than those in employment.<sup>12</sup>

The reduction in smoking rates over the last fifty years is a great public health success. This has been based on a range of strong Government policy including:

- Financial measures e.g. increasing taxes on tobacco
- Promotional measures e.g. advertising bans, health warnings and plain packaging
- Raising the age of sale e.g. from 16 to 18 in 2007
- Banning smoking in certain places e.g. the ban on smoking in public places and the ban in cars with under 18s
- Health service measures e.g. establishing and funding smoking cessation services and providing support to pregnant women to quit smoking
- Setting clear targets for reducing smoking rates e.g. within regular central government Tobacco Control Plans

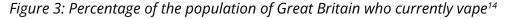
<sup>10</sup> https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandlifeexpectancies/bulletins/adultsmokinghabitsingreatbritain/2023

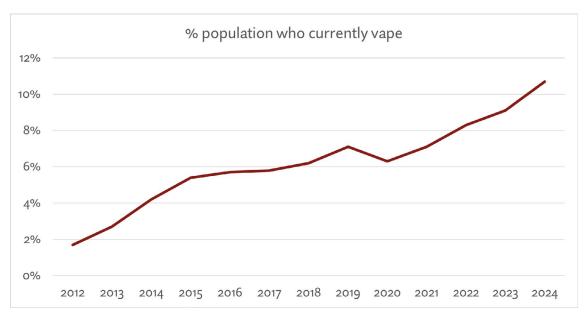
<sup>11</sup> https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandlifeexpectancies/bulletins/adultsmokinghabitsingreatbritain/2023

<sup>12</sup> https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandlifeexpectancies/bulletins/adultsmokinghabitsingreatbritain/2023

Alongside this, the development of smoking cessation medicines such as nicotine replacement therapies, and products such as vapes, have provided smokers with tools that can support them in quitting.

The number of people using e-cigarettes has grown significantly from around 800,000 in 2012 (1.7% of the population) to 5.6 million (10.7% of the population) in 2024. The vaping rate has increased every year since 2012, except between 2019 and 2020 where the impact of the pandemic saw a 0.8% reduction in use.<sup>13</sup>





<sup>13</sup> https://ash.org.uk/uploads/Use-of-vapes-among-adults-in-Great-Britain-2024.pdf?v=1730387868

<sup>14</sup> https://ash.org.uk/uploads/Use-of-vapes-among-adults-in-Great-Britain-2024.pdf?v=1730387868

The age group with the highest recorded usage of e-cigarettes daily or occasionally was the 16-24s, with a recorded rate of 15.8%. The lowest recorded rate was in the 60+ with just 4.6%.

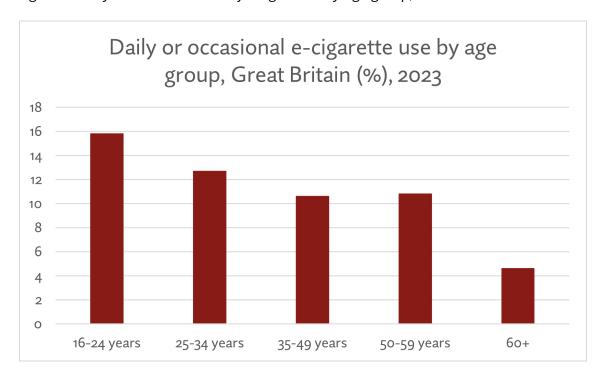


Figure 4: Daily or occasional use of e-cigarettes by age group, Great Britain<sup>15</sup>

As e-cigarette use has increased, the range of products and how they are marketed has also evolved rapidly. Figure 3 shows that there have been two major increases in the vaping rate since 2012. The first from 2012 to 2015, saw rates treble from a low base. Between 2015 and 2020 rates slowed before another big increase (70%) between 2020 and 2024.

Part of the reasons for this has been the development of disposable vapes. These vapes are relatively cheap and easy to use and deliver nicotine through a single-use electronic device that is pre-filled with e-liquid and a pre-charged battery.<sup>16</sup>

As e-cigarette use has increased, there has been particular concern about a rise in youth vaping, with disposable vapes particularly being marketed and promoted to those under 18. The youth vaping rate has increased from 0.8% in 2013 to 7.2% in 2024.<sup>17</sup> Evidence suggests that young vapers are more likely to become addicted to nicotine and either vape, smoke or both in the future.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandlifeexpectancies/bulletins/adultsmokinghabitsingreatbritain/2023

<sup>16</sup> https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2666776224000917#:~:text=5,became%20popular%20 among%20young%20people

<sup>17</sup> https://ash.org.uk/uploads/Use-of-vapes-among-young-people-in-Great-Britain-2024.
pdf?v=1725288402#:~:text=ASH%20Smokefree%20GB%20Youth%20Surveys%2C%202013%2D2024.,Unweighted%20base%3A%20All&text=In%202024%2C%2018.0%25%20had%20tried,in%20the%20
previous%204%20years

<sup>18</sup> https://www.yalemedicine.org/news/vaping-nicotine-addiction



In 2019 the UK Government's Prevention Green Paper, *Advancing our health: prevention in the 2020s*, announced a commitment for England to go smokefree by 2030.<sup>19</sup> This was defined as 5% or less of the population smoking.<sup>20</sup> Secretary of State for Health and Social Care Sajid Javid subsequently commissioned Javed Khan to do a review of smokefree 2030 and to look at what was necessary to achieve it.

Khan's review published in June 2022 found that England would miss the smokefree 2030 target by at least 7 years, with the poorest areas not meeting it until 2044. If there was no change in policy half a million more people in England would die from smoking.<sup>21</sup>

Khan's most eye catching recommendation was to increase the age of sale for cigarettes by one year every year.<sup>22</sup> Other recommendations included increasing investment in stop smoking services, a national mass media campaign to support efforts at reducing smoking and offering vaping as a substitute for smoking.

On vaping, Khan noted that there was an important balance to strike:

I have also heard from school and college leaders that vaping has become a problem in their playgrounds and common rooms. They say vapes have become too easily available to young people under 18. They have seen a rise in related disciplinary action and fear that numbers will rise further. They want to see restrictions on accessibility, in shops and online, and to reduce the marketing appeal of vapes to young people. They also believe the school curriculum should be adopted to include sessions about vaping, alongside smoking and alcohol. Finally, it seems to me that our regulations on promoting vapes do not always have quite the effect we intend them to have. On the one hand, there is a loophole which means it is lawful for tobacco companies to give free vape samples to school children. On the other, we make it hard for vape shops to promote the benefits of quitting smoking to their customers. Protecting our most vulnerable children means restricting access to nicotine products, but it also means helping the adults in their lives to quit smoking.<sup>723</sup>

Initially Boris Johnson's Government refused to take the measures forward from the Review.<sup>24</sup> However Rishi Sunak as Prime Minister announced support for the plans at the 2023 Conservative party conference.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>19</sup> https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/advancing-our-health-prevention-in-the-2020s/713af73f-5588-4757-b643-ed940dcbc930

<sup>20</sup> https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/advancing-our-health-prevention-in-the-2020s/advancing-our-health-prevention-in-the-2020s-consultation-document

<sup>21</sup> https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/62a0c3f38fa8f503921c159f/khan-review-making-smoking-obsolete.pdf

<sup>22</sup> https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/62a0bc4e8fa8f5039927d1de/khan-review-summary-of-recommendations-visual.pdf

<sup>23</sup> https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/62a0c3f38fa8f503921c159f/khan-review-making-smoking-obsolete.pdf

<sup>24</sup> https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/1530852/smoking-street-boris-johnson-snubs-savid-javid-ban

<sup>25</sup> https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-66997108

The measures in Sunak's plan included:

Raising the age of sale so that no one born after 1 January 2009 could legally smoke

- An additional £70 million for stop smoking services
- An additional £30 million for enforcement agencies to tackle underage sales
- Tackling youth vaping by restricting vape flavours, regulating vape packaging and point of sale displays, and restricting the sale of disposable vapes<sup>26</sup>

The measures were included within a Tobacco and Vapes Bill debated in Parliament. The Bill however failed to progress following the announcement of the General Election in July 2024.<sup>27</sup>

The incoming Labour Government committed to follow through on the Bill in their manifesto.<sup>28</sup> The party's health mission identified reducing smoking as a priority.

#### **Labour Health Mission**

**Create a smoke-free Britain:** Smoking is still one of the leading causes of cancer and lung disease. We will build on the success of the last Labour government with a roadmap to a smoke-free Britain. The first steps of this will be to make all hospital trusts integrate 'opt-out' smoking cessation interventions into routine care, making every clinical consultation count in health improvement, report on progress in their annual reports, and have a named lead on smoking cessation. We will also legislate to require tobacco companies to include information in tobacco products that dispels the myth that smoking reduces stress and anxiety. And we will ban vapes from being branded and advertised to appeal to children and we will work with local councils and the NHS to ensure they are being used as a stop smoking aid, rather than a new form of smoking<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/stopping-the-start-our-new-plan-to-create-a-smokefree-generation/stopping-the-start-our-new-plan-to-create-a-smokefree-generation

<sup>27</sup> https://www.gov.uk/government/news/smokefree-generation-one-step-closer-as-bill-introduced

<sup>28</sup> https://labour.org.uk/change/build-an-nhs-fit-for-the-future/

<sup>29</sup> https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Mission-Public-Services.pdf

Labour introduced the updated Tobacco and Vapes Bill in November 2024 with some additional measures including a licensing scheme for tobacco and vapes and extending smokefree places.<sup>30</sup> The Bill aims to:

- Create a smoke-free generation, gradually ending the sale of tobacco products across the country and breaking the cycle of addiction and disadvantage
- Strengthen the existing powers to ban smoking in public places to reduce harms of passive smoking, particularly around children and vulnerable people
- Ban vapes and non-medicinal nicotine products from being deliberately branded, promoted, and advertised to children to stop the next generation from becoming hooked on nicotine<sup>31</sup>
- Provide powers to introduce a licensing scheme for the retail sale of tobacco, vapes and non-medicinal nicotine products, extend the retail registration scheme in Scotland, and strengthen enforcement activity to support the implementation of the above measures
- The Bill sits alongside wider support across the health service to support smokers to quit<sup>32</sup>

On vaping specifically the Bill aims to:

- Ban vaping products and non-medicinal nicotine products from being sold to under 18s and ban the free distribution of these products
- Ban advertising, promotion and sponsorship agreements for vapes and nonmedicinal nicotine products mirroring impactful restrictions on tobacco
- Provide regulation making powers to regulate the flavours, packaging, and other product standards of vapes and non-medicinal nicotine products
- Provide powers to regulate the display of vapes and non-medicinal nicotine products; ban vape and non-medicinal nicotine product vending machines
- Introduce powers to introduce a new registration scheme for all vapes and non-medicinal nicotine products. This scheme would also cover tobacco products
- Introduce powers to extend smoke-free laws so that they could also prohibit the use of vapes and heated tobacco products in specified areas where smoking is prohibited<sup>33</sup>

<sup>30</sup> https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3879

<sup>31</sup> The Tobacco and Vapes Bill refers only to non-medicinal nicotine products e.g. vapes and pouches: https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/60034/documents/6282

<sup>32</sup> https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/59-01/0121/en/240121en.pdf

<sup>33</sup> https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/59-01/0121/en/240121en.pdf

Alongside the Tobacco and Vapes Bill, the Government also brought forward legislation to ban the sale of disposable vapes, on environmental grounds.<sup>34</sup> It is estimated that five million single use vapes are thrown away in the UK every week.<sup>35</sup> The legislation will see disposable vapes banned from the 1 June 2025. The Government's first budget also announced a new tax on vapes of £2.20 per 10ml of e-cigarette liquid to start in October 2026.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-crackdown-on-single-use-vapes

<sup>35</sup> https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-crackdown-on-single-use-vapes

<sup>36</sup> https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cj0j2mj763do#:~:text=The%20cost%20of%20vaping%20and,kick%20in%20from%20October%202026

#### Vaping policy and the disposable vapes ban

Strong Government regulatory action to reduce smoking and youth vaping rates is highly welcome.

The latest data from Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) show that the costs of smoking have risen by 25% to £21.8 billion. This includes £1.9 billion of costs to the NHS, £1.2 billion in social care costs to local authorities and £18.3 billion of lost productivity costs.<sup>37</sup>

Current and past Chief Medical Officers have noted that whilst vaping is less harmful than smoking, it is not harm free and their message to the public is that if people do not smoke, they should not vape.<sup>38</sup> The Government's explanatory notes for the Tobacco and Vapes Bill states that 'the addictive nature of nicotine means that a user can become dependent on vapes, especially if they use them regularly.<sup>39</sup> It adds that the latest data show that there has been a record 400 identified hospital admissions for vaping related conditions and that this number is rising.<sup>40</sup>

Looking ahead, concerns have been raised that a ban on disposable vapes could increase health inequalities and see a reverse in the decline of the smoking rate. The Government's impact assessment for the Disposable Electronic Cigarettes (Prohibition of Sale) Bill noted that: 'if the ban increased use of cigarettes, there could be health disbenefits. As mentioned above, we do not have any evidence for consumers' behaviour as a result of the ban.'41

To understand what might happen as a result of the ban, Future Health undertook polling with YouGov asking the public what changes to their vaping and smoking habits, they may make as a result of the disposable vapes ban.

The following questions were asked of a sample of over 4,000 adults UK wide:

- Whether respondents smoke/vape/both/neither?
- · Whether as vapers they previously smoked?
- Whether as a vaper they use disposable vapes?
- How as vapers they would respond to a ban on disposable vapes?<sup>42</sup>

<sup>37</sup> https://ash.org.uk/media-centre/news/press-releases/latest-figures-show-cost-of-smoking-in-england-up-25-to-at-least-21-8-billion

<sup>38</sup> https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/smoking-and-vaping-the-need-for-action

<sup>39</sup> https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/59-01/0121/en/240121en.pdf

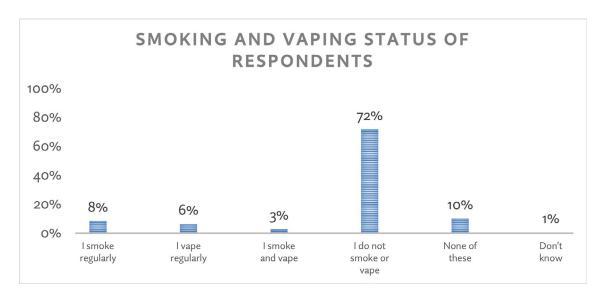
<sup>40</sup> https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/59-01/0121/en/240121en.pdf

<sup>41</sup> https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65eb1dac62ff489bab87b371/disposable-vapes-impact-assessment.pdf

<sup>42</sup> Methodology to polling in Annex A

The following summarises the results from the polling

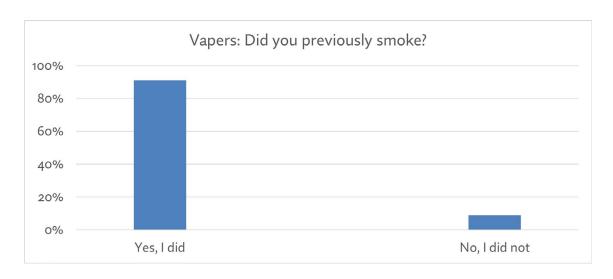
Figure 5: Future Health/YouGov polling on smoking and vaping status of respondents



From our sample 11% of respondents said they either smoked (8%) or smoked and vaped (3%). 9% said they either vaped regularly (6%) or smoked and vaped (3%).

The sample findings are similar to the population surveys from the ONS and ASH, which record a smoking rate of 11.9% for smoking and 10.7% e-cigarette usage rate in their latest data.<sup>4344</sup>

Figure 6: Future Health and YouGov polling on whether those who vape have previously smoked

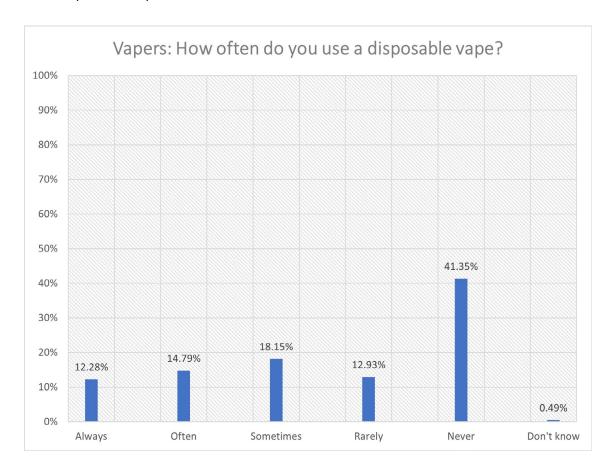


<sup>43</sup> https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandlifeexpectancies/bulletins/adultsmokinghabitsingreatbritain/2023

<sup>44</sup> https://ash.org.uk/uploads/Use-of-vapes-among-adults-in-Great-Britain-2024.pdf?v=1730387868

From our sample the vast majority, 91%, of vapers said that they had previously smoked, with 9% saying that they had not. This aligns with the latest ASH estimates that 440,000 of the current 5.6 million vapers are those who have 'never smoked.'45

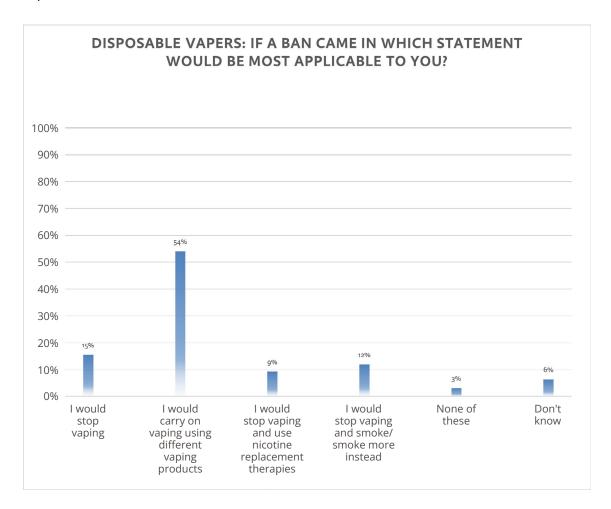
Figure 7: Future Health and YouGov polling on whether those respondents who vaped used disposable vapes



Our polling found that 27% of those who said that they vaped used a disposable vape either 'always' (12%) or 'often' (15%). This increased to 45% when those who said they 'sometimes' (18%) used a disposable vape were included. 41% of vapers said they had never used a disposable vape whilst 13% said they used disposable vapes 'rarely'.

<sup>45</sup> https://ash.org.uk/uploads/Use-of-vapes-among-adults-in-Great-Britain-2024. pdf?v=1730387868#:~:text=Of%20the%205.6%20million%20current,(53%25%20in%202024)

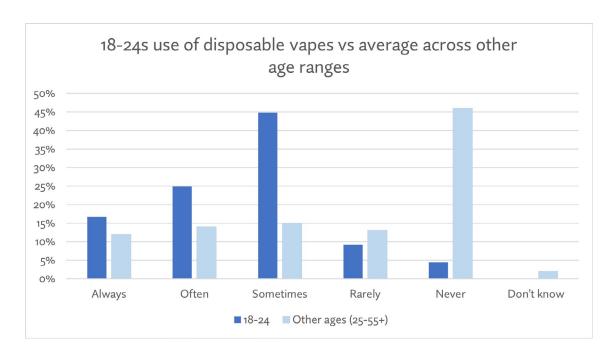
Figure 8: Future Health and YouGov polling on the response of vapers to the disposable vapes ban



15% of those vapers surveyed said that they would stop vaping in light of the disposable vapes ban. Over half (54%) said they would carry on vaping using different products. 12% said that they would stop vaping and smoke more instead, whilst 9% would switch to nicotine replacement therapies.

Given the concerns regarding the uptake of disposable vapes amongst younger people, the following two charts look to capture the differences between those polled aged 18-24 against the responses from other age groups.

Figure 9: Future Health and YouGov polling on the usage of disposable vapes amongst 18-24s when compared to the average use across other age ranges



The findings from this survey reflect other studies and show a higher use of disposable vapes amongst those aged 18-24 than the wider population. 86% of those aged 18-24 say they 'always', 'often' or 'sometimes' use a disposable vape; more than double those aged 25 or over. Only 4% of 18-24 vapers say they have never used a disposable vape. By comparison the number in the wider population is ten times higher at 46%.

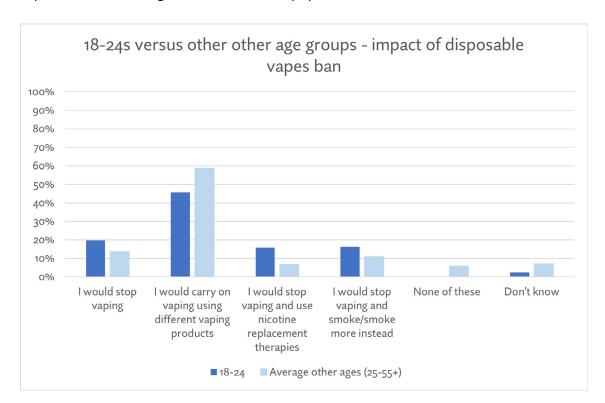


Figure 10: Future Health and YouGov polling comparing the impact of the disposable vapes ban on those aged 18-24 and older populations

18-24s were more likely than other age groups to say that they would stop vaping as a result of the ban (20% vs 14%). They were also more likely to take up smoking as a result of the ban (16% vs 11%) and switch to nicotine replacement therapies (16% vs 7%). They were less likely to say that they would carry on using another vaping product than those in older age groups (46% vs 59%).

#### Scenarios exploring the possible impacts of the disposable vapes ban

Future Health then moved to develop some outline scenarios for what might happen as a result of the disposable vapes ban. The scenarios explored estimates for what the ban could do to the following:

- The number of smokers and the smoking rate
- Those switching to a different vape from a disposable vape
- Those switching to smoking from vaping who 'have never smoked'
- Those stopping vaping altogether

Three scenarios were developed using ONS population data for the following:

- Scenario 1 This modelled changes in behaviour for those who said they 'always and often' use a disposable vape
- Scenario 2 This modelled changes in behaviour for those who said they 'always, often and sometimes' use a disposable vape
- Scenario 3 This modelled changes in behaviour for those who said they 'always, often, sometimes and rarely' use a disposable vape

#### The following summarises the findings

Figure 11: Scenarios exploring the impact of the disposable vapes ban based on Future Health and YouGov polling findings

### Scenario 1 – 'Always and often'

- 93,771 additional smokers
- 0.19% rise in population wide smoking rate
- 8,439 switchers to smoking who have 'never smoked'
- 63ok switching to other vaping products
- 175k stopping vaping

## Scenario 2 – 'Always, often and sometimes'

- 156,285 additional smokers
- 0.32% rise in population wide smoking rate
- 14,066 switchers to smoking who have 'never smoked'
- 1.05 million switching to other vaping products
- 293k stopping vaping

#### Scenario 3 – 'Always, often, sometimes and rarely'

- 201,434 additional smokers
- 0.42% rise in population wide smoking rate
- 18,129 switchers to smoking who have 'never smoked'
- 1.36 million switching to other vaping products
- 378k stopping vaping

The scenarios indicate that there may be between an additional 90,000 and just over 200,000 smokers as a result of the disposable vapes ban. Of these, the scenarios indicate that between 8,439 and 18,129 switchers would be those who have 'never smoked'.

This increase in smoking would see the population smoking rate rise by between 0.2% and 0.4%. To put this in context the average annual reduction in the population smoking rate recorded between 2011 and 2023 is 0.75%. Taking the rise from scenario 2 (0.32%) indicates that the estimated rise in smokers from the disposable vapes would be the equivalent of five months of ongoing action to reduce smoking rates.

The scenarios also estimate that between 175,000 and 378,000 people could stop vaping altogether, with between 630,000 and 1.36 million switching to other vaping products.

#### **Summary of findings**

 Future Health and YouGov's polling finds a similar level of smoking and vaping amongst the population as other surveys

- 45% of those surveyed who said they vaped said they 'always', 'often' or 'sometimes' used a disposable vape
- Of those using disposable vapes 54% would switch to another vape, 15% would stop vaping, 12% would switch to smoking and 9% would switch to nicotine replacement therapies
- The polling records higher rates of disposable vapes use amongst those aged 18-24 than other age groups
- Those 18-24 are more likely to stop vaping as a result of the disposable vapes ban. They are also more likely when compared to other age groups to switch to smoking. They are also less likely to switch from using a disposable vape to another vape
- Modelling scenarios based on the polling indicate that the smoking rate could increase by between 90,000 and just over 200,000 in light of the disposable vapes ban
- To put this in context this could add between 0.2 and 0.4% to the overall smoking rate, the equivalent to a five month period of smoking reduction progress typically recorded
- The disposable vapes ban would see between 175,000 and 378,000 people stopping vaping, and would see between 630,000 and 1.36 million people switch to another vaping product



The disposable vapes ban will bring environmental benefits and see some people stopping vaping altogether. When coupled with the range of other measures to deter youth vaping in the Tobacco and Vapes Bill, the belief is that youth vaping rates should start to fall.

However there is also a concern – as highlighted in the scenarios – that the disposable vapes ban could lead to a rise in smoking rates.

To understand the challenges and opportunities for action, Future Health convened an expert roundtable of public health, NHS, representative groups, think tank, academic and charitable bodies in February 2025. The following provides a summary of the main discussion points and recommendations from the discussion.

Keeping up with the market – with the disposables ban set to come in this year, the vaping industry has already moved quickly away from disposable vapes to rechargeable vapes. Research from attendees found rechargeable vapes available at a cheaper price than their disposable vape equivalent (albeit with additional upfront costs on coils) along with appealing marketing aimed at driving sales amongst younger people.<sup>46</sup>

There are opportunities through the Tobacco & Vapes Bill to push for stronger regulatory action including banning vaping marketing displays, introducing standardised packaging for vapes and restricting points of sale.<sup>47</sup> Education is important, but history on reducing smoking tells us that only with regulatory and population health wide measures will the rates of people who are nicotine free increase significantly.

Tackling Illicit products – concerns were raised amongst roundtable attendees about the size and impact of the illicit vapes market and the strength of Trading Standards to enforce the rules. CBD vapes were noted as being particularly subject to contamination – with vapers not being completely sure about what they are buying.<sup>48</sup>

The forthcoming introduction of the Vaping Products Duty is a potential opportunity for tougher action on the illicit vapes market as this would see an enforcement role for HMRC and Border Force in policing the market.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Lost Mary disposable is £3.90 for 1 unit: https://www.haypp.com/uk/lost-mary/lost-mary-strawberry-kiwi-bm600-20mg; Lost Mary Tappo (reusable) costs less at £3.49 https://www.haypp.com/uk/lost-mary/lost-mary-tappo-pod-kit-green-pink; And two replacement pods cost £4.99 https://www.haypp.com/uk/lost-mary/lost-mary-tappo-pods-blue-razz-lemonade-20mg – all data captured in early February 2025

<sup>47</sup> https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3879

<sup>48</sup> https://www.bath.ac.uk/announcements/english-school-children-unwittingly-smoking-spice-spiked-vapes-finds-university-of-bath/

<sup>49</sup> https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6756bef7f1e6b277c4f799fd/Vaping\_Products\_Duty\_ consultation\_response.pdf

Improving access to services and support – research from Cancer Research UK (CRUK) has shown that those of greatest risk of returning to smoking are dual users (i.e. those who both smoke and vape).<sup>50</sup> Public health services have faced significant budgetary reductions in recent years which have led in some cases to the deprioritisation of smoking cessation and prevention programmes. Some local tobacco control leads have been lost. While some services have been maintained, coverage across the country is variable.<sup>51</sup>

Funding for both the Public Health Grant and Trading Standards have been drastically reduced in recent years creating challenges for services in meeting local population health needs.<sup>5253</sup> Parts of the health service such as pharmacies remain under-utilised when it comes to smoking and vaping cessation. There was also concern raised amongst roundtable attendees that many disposable vapes have higher strength nicotine. For those moving off a disposable vape this may present difficulties in finding a vape that meets their needs – and could lead to people switching to smoking if the ban is not complemented with additional emphasis on vaping cessation and vaping cessation pathways for existing disposable vape users.

The regional distribution of Stop Smoking Services remains patchy but new investment should help improve access. The Government's re-commitment to invest in expanding these services has been widely welcomed. *It will be important for Stop Smoking Services to evolve from focusing on a pure smoking cessation model to a nicotine cessation model.* 

Reducing youth vaping rates<sup>54</sup> – when young people are surveyed, vaping is now ahead of alcohol and cannabis in its ease of availability. There is a growing challenge around nicotine addiction in young people. Alder Hey Children's Hospital has opened the first child vaping clinic.<sup>55</sup> There are also new emerging trends such as nicotine pouches and nicotine edibles being pushed at young people through social media and by influencers. 1 in 4 vapes bought by a young person is illicit and 1 in 6 contain Spice – with products increasingly bought through social media platforms such as Snapchat and Telegram.<sup>5657</sup> Older friends and siblings are often the source of supply for under 18s.

The best way to understand children and young people is to talk directly to them.

<sup>50</sup> https://natcen.ac.uk/publications/dual-use-e-cigarettes-and-tobacco

<sup>51</sup> https://ash.org.uk/uploads/New-paths-and-pathways.pdf?v=1675686021#:~:text=Key%20findings%20for%20 2022,-%E2%80%A2&text=One%20third%20of%20surveyed%20local,stop%20smoking%20support%20from%20 pharmacists.

<sup>52</sup> https://www.health.org.uk/reports-and-analysis/briefings/options-for-restoring-the-public-health-grant#:~:text=Since%202015%2F16%20it%20has,on%20a%20more%20equitable%20basis

<sup>53</sup> https://www.localgov.co.uk/Trading-standards-cuts-expose-millions-to-danger-/61876

<sup>54</sup> https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/resources/policy-briefing-vaping-young-people

<sup>55</sup> https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cdxeglz27g4o#:~:text=The%20vaping%20cessation%20service%20 in,solutions%22%20to%20meet%20their%20needs

<sup>56</sup> https://www.nationaltradingstandards.uk/news/millions-of-illicit-vapes-and-tobacco-products-seized-by-trading-standards/

<sup>57</sup> https://www.bath.ac.uk/announcements/english-school-children-unwittingly-smoking-spice-spiked-vapes-finds-university-of-bath/

They are not a homogenous group. It is only by undertaking such engagement that policymakers will be able to understand what is and is not effective in terms of approaches to ensuring that young people do not take up vaping.<sup>58</sup> It should be hoped that the disposable vapes ban will act as an important tool to prevent very young people (e.g. those currently under five) and future generations from taking up vaping and this should be a new policy goal, with new targets set to reduce youth vaping rates.

Communicating the ban and its importance – the ban on disposable vapes requires careful and co-ordinated public health and Government communication to succeed. On the one hand there is a need to reduce the number of young people who have never smoked who are taking up vaping. On the other, there is a need to ensure that adult smokers who want to quit have confidence in vaping as a mechanism to do so. Without the right communication plan in place proponents of harm reduction worry there is a danger that the ban creates an impression that vaping is as harmful or more harmful than smoking. However whilst the Government has committed to a targeted campaign focused on young people and vaping<sup>59</sup> it has not committed to the national mass media anti-smoking campaign originally envisaged.<sup>60</sup>

It is important to invest in a tailored communications campaign on the Government's smokefree and nicotine free ambitions. This campaign needs to balance messages from public health professionals to current smokers that vaping is an effective tool to quit smoking, whilst at the same time protecting children and young people from taking up vaping. The use of pack inserts could be helpful to target older smokers. <sup>61</sup> The Government should re-commit to the communications funding supporting smoking cessation efforts set out by the last Government. <sup>62</sup>

Improving data and evidence<sup>63</sup> – an absence of data and evidence was highlighted as an issue for (a) identifying what solutions and actions would support people in quitting vaping and going nicotine free, and (b) building services that could not only help people go smokefree but also nicotine free. It was noted that many existing Stop Smoking Services did not work for children and young people as many had not established clear patterns of smoking and vaping behaviour.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>58</sup> https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/resources/engaging-children-young-people/how

<sup>59</sup> https://www.gov.uk/government/news/10-year-study-to-shed-light-on-youth-vaping

<sup>60</sup> https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/stopping-the-start-our-new-plan-to-create-a-smokefree-generation/stopping-the-start-our-new-plan-to-create-a-smokefree-generation

<sup>61</sup> https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/mandating-quit-information-messages-inside-tobacco-packs/mandating-quit-information-messages-inside-tobacco-packs-consultation

<sup>62</sup> https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prime-minister-to-create-smokefree-generation-by-ending-cigarette-sales-to-those-born-on-or-after-1-january-2009

<sup>63</sup> https://www.rcp.ac.uk/policy-and-campaigns/policy-documents/e-cigarettes-and-harm-reduction-an-evidence-review/

<sup>64</sup> https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/16998171/

There is a need to understand what services and support would be most helpful to support people in quitting vaping – particularly children. The Government's planned ten year research project into youth vaping should help in this regard. Evidence from the United States has highlighted that vaping is easier to quit than smoking amongst 18-24s. There is also a need for health services to better understand the numbers of smokers and vapers in their area to support service planning and design. *Primary care consultations which record a person's current smoking status should also be used to capture a person's vaping status.* 

Reducing health inequalities – there are worries that the disposable vapes ban could have a greater impact on those experiencing poorer health outcomes, such as those in mental health and prison services.<sup>67</sup>

Moves to restrict the availability and promotion of vapes, along with the introduction of VAT on vapes could be helpful in reducing their desirability (specifically ease of accessibility and low cost) and mitigate the potential health inequalities impacts of the disposables ban. Local authorities and local health systems should ensure that the potential impacts of the disposable vapes ban are factored into future health inequalities strategies and plans.

Supporting a more preventative healthcare system – one of the Government's three shifts as part of the ten year NHS plan is to move towards a more preventative healthcare system. Increasing the numbers of people who are smoke and nicotine free can support this goal and help reduce pressures on the NHS. However, delivering will require a fully connected system response across primary care, community care and secondary care. It will be crucial as part of this that all partners are playing an active role and that pharmacies are effectively utilised. Pharmacies were central for example to the successful Salford 'Swap to Stop' scheme.

There may also be opportunities for pharmacies to play a greater role in vaping cessation efforts and in turn supporting the environmental agenda associated with the disposable vapes ban. For example, there are measures in place to encourage people with asthma to return their inhalers to pharmacies on environmental grounds and there may be an opportunity to extend this to vapes and vaping products.<sup>71</sup>

Improving professional education – the General Practitioner curriculum is wide ranging and there has traditionally been limited focus on nicotine addiction and smoking cessation within it. Pressures within primary care, particularly on GP consultation time have also reduced the opportunities to have discussions about health promotion with patients.

<sup>65</sup> https://www.gov.uk/government/news/10-year-study-to-shed-light-on-youth-vaping

<sup>66</sup> https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/fullarticle/2779740

<sup>67</sup> https://www.yorkshirecancerresearch.org.uk/insights/disposable-vaping-ban-could-affect-some-of-the-most-vulnerable

<sup>68</sup> https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-term-plan/

<sup>69</sup> https://cpe.org.uk/national-pharmacy-services/advanced-services/smoking-cessation-service/

<sup>70</sup> https://cpe.org.uk/?our-services=swap-to-stop-pilot-salford-area; https://salfordnow.co.uk/2023/04/19/project-launched-to-reduce-smoking-across-salford-and-greater-manchester/

<sup>71</sup> https://cpsc.org.uk/application/files/5016/2911/7495/Patient-sheet-inhaler-disposal.pdf

A greater focus on preventative healthcare at a policy and system level should translate through into a re-balancing and focusing of the medical education curriculum. The RCGP's focus on preventative medicine presents an opportunity for this education and developmental pivot within primary care, with an opportunity to include the latest data and research on interventions that can support people in going smoke and nicotine free as part of it.<sup>72</sup> The NCSCT will also shortly be publishing a briefing for healthcare professionals on young people and vaping cessation.<sup>73</sup>

Co-ordinating cross government action – a concern was raised amongst roundtable attendees that vaping was being positioned politically as an industry that could positively contribute to economic growth – which is the Government's number one policy priority.<sup>74</sup>

Efforts to deliver a smoke and nicotine free generation will require important cross government action and co-ordination. *Reducing smoking rates and supporting people in going nicotine free should be a priority for the Government's health mission. It will also be important that the goals of the health and economic mission are aligned behind an objective of improved public health.* 

<sup>72 &</sup>lt;a href="https://elearning.rcgp.org.uk/course/info.php?id=300">https://elearning.rcgp.org.uk/course/info.php?id=300</a>

<sup>73</sup> https://www.ncsct.co.uk/publications/topCategory/briefings-practice-guidance

<sup>74</sup> https://www.gov.uk/missions/economic-growth

#### **Summary of recommendations**

 Following the expected passage of the Tobacco and Vapes Bill, the Government should prioritise vaping regulations on branding, packaging and displays as well as restricting the use of flavour descriptors. Such action will ensure vaping is not being inappropriately promoted – particularly to children

- The Government should ensure sufficient resource is put behind enforcement action relating to the forthcoming Vaping Products Duty and efforts to crackdown on illicit vapes. The Government should report annually to Parliament on actions taken
- The Government should ensure that reducing smoking is a clear priority for the health mission and that new related targets are set for reductions in youth vaping rates and in people going nicotine free
- The Government should re-commit to national mass media funding in support of efforts to reduce smoking and in communicating the benefits of the Tobacco & Vapes Bill and the disposable vapes ban
- The Government and Royal Colleges working alongside partners such as the NCSCT should publish materials supporting improvements in clinical education on smoking, vaping and nicotine addiction. Similar evidence based guidelines for service planners should be rolled out across local authorities and the NHS
- The Government's ten year health plan should ensure co-ordinated action to reduce smoking through the planned move toward preventative healthcare and the use of integrated neighbourhood teams. Pharmacies should be given a clear, funded role in supporting people in going smoke and nicotine free and a person's vaping status should be recorded through primary care consultations
- Local health services and local authorities should use Government funding for Stop Smoking Services to support the evolution of such services from supporting people to go smokefree to nicotine free<sup>75</sup>
- Local health services should ensure that the disposable vapes ban is factored into their future efforts to tackle wider health inequalities

<sup>75</sup> A recent Healthwatch report identified an example where someone accessing a stop smoking service for help in quitting vaping was turned away. Support needs to available to those looking to quit both smoking and vaping: https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/blog/2025-01-15/how-can-we-better-support-people-stop-smoking-and-vaping

#### CONCLUSION

Successive Governments have taken important and at times radical actions to reduce smoking rates.

The Starmer Government is the latest, bringing forward wide-ranging legislation to phase out smoking and crack down on a worrying rise in youth vaping.

There is though a clear challenge regarding vaping – between a position for adults that supports them in quitting smoking and a position for children and young people that seeks to protect them from vaping.

The disposable vapes ban stands at the apex of this tension. On the one hand the ban will help tackle youth vaping, as young people are currently the most likely to use disposable vapes. But on the other, it will remove products for some vapers who will then make choices that could be more harmful to them, such as switching to smoking instead.

This is why the disposables vapes ban and the Government's wider efforts to reduce smoking need to be in the short term backed up by a clear communications campaign that ensures the opportunity for people to go nicotine-free is seized. The Government should also set clear targets for reducing youth vaping rates, work with the NHS and local authorities on expanding and re-designing stop smoking services to support those looking to quit vaping as well as smoking, take tough regulatory and enforcement action through its new legislative powers, work with clinicians in improving medical education on nicotine addiction and more widely and in the medium term commit to more people being not just smokefree but nicotine free.

The endgame for smoking has been set with the Government's generational ban. But there is still more work to do to get there.

# ANNEX A: NOTE ON POLLING AND METHODOLOGY FOR CALCULATING FUTURE SCENARIOS ON SMOKING AND VAPING RATES FOLLOWING THE INTRODUCTION OF THE DISPOSABLE VAPES BAN

Future Health commissioned polling from YouGov to support the research. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 4393 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 19th - 20th December 2024. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 18+).

Future Health then used ONS population data to develop the scenarios.<sup>76</sup> The scenarios were based on different cohorts of disposable vapers identified from the polling.

Scenario 1 covered a cohort who said they used a disposable vape 'always', or 'often', and projected changes in behaviour based on this population sub group.

Scenario 2 covered a cohort who said they used a disposable vape 'always', 'often' or 'sometimes' and projected changes in behaviour based on this population sub group.

Scenario 1 covered a cohort who said they used a disposable vape 'always', 'often', 'sometimes' or 'rarely' and projected changes in behaviour based on this population sub group.

Any modelling such as this has a series of inherent limitations. People are being asked to forecast future behaviour which is multifactoral and subject to change. The use of the scenarios approach is designed to build a range of possibilities, but any modelling based on polling such as this can only ever be an estimate for what may happen in practice.

<sup>76</sup> https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/populationestimatesforukenglandandwalesscotlandandnorthernireland

#### **ANNEX B: ROUNDTABLE ATTENDEES**

As part of the research Future Health held a roundtable to discuss the polling and early research findings in February 2025. Future Health would like to thank the following for their participation. All views expressed in this report are those of Future Health only and should be attributed as such.

The following people attended the roundtable:

Attendee	Organisation
Lord Bethell	House of Lords
Liam Sollis	Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health
Emily James	Company Chemist Association
Alex Bobak	GP
Adam Briggs	Health Foundation and Association of Directors of Public Health
Alizee Froguel	Cancer Research UK
Darush Attar-Zadeh	Clinical Pharmacist
Helena Conibear	Talk about Trust
Deborah Arnott	University College London
Daragh Doyle	Department of Health and Social Care
Kirstie Soar	National Centre for Smoking Cessation and Training
Helen Poole	NHS Wales
Adrian Hayter	Royal College of General Practitioners
Catherine Taylor	Fresh
Steve Brine	Former Chair, Health Select Committee (Event Chair)
Richard Sloggett	Future Health
Thomas Lyon	Kenvue

Future Health would like to thank those who were unable to attend the roundtable but provided views and insights that also contributed to this publication.



