

Creating a smokefree generation and tackling youth vaping: WithYou response

- Details [here](#)
- Closes 6 December 2023.

Questions

Tackling the rise in youth vaping

Option 1: limiting how the vape is described.

Vape flavours can be restricted by the way they are described. For example, New Zealand has done this by mandating vape flavour descriptions, in their Smokefree Environments and Regulated Products Amendment Regulations 2023, to a specified list that includes generic flavour names such as 'tobacco' or 'berry'. This means that vapes could be called 'blueberry', but not 'blueberry muffin' for example.

Option 2: limiting the ingredients in vapes.

Vape flavours can be restricted by only permitting certain ingredients to be used in the product. In the Netherlands, for example, there is a specified list of ingredients that can be used in vapes, which are those that produce a 'tobacco' taste and pose almost no health harm.

Option 3: limiting the characterising flavours (the taste and smell) of vapes.

The characterising flavours of vapes (the way a vape smells or tastes to a consumer) can be restricted. In 2020, when menthol flavoured cigarettes were banned in the UK, they were restricted based on the characterising flavour of menthol. Finland, for example, has restricted all characterising flavours for vapes, apart from the flavour of tobacco.

Do you agree or disagree that the UK Government and devolved administrations should restrict vape flavours?

- **Agree**
- Disagree
- Don't know

Which option or options do you think would be the most effective way for the UK Government and devolved administrations to implement restrictions on flavours?

- **Option 1: limiting how the vape is described**
- **Option 2: limiting the ingredients in vapes**
- **Option 3: limiting the characterising flavours (the taste and smell) of vapes**

We believe that vaping should only be used as a smoking cessation tool. There is therefore no need for flavoured vapes.

Limiting the ingredients, description, and taste of vapes would be an important step in reducing their appeal to young people. At present, it appears that vape manufacturers are deliberately appealing to young people through using descriptors which mimic popular sweets. We know that young people are drawn to these descriptors and to the colourful packaging of many vape products, particularly disposable vapes. We have heard of different colours and flavours becoming 'collectibles' in schools. We have also heard young people say that the description of fruit flavour vapes makes them seem like a "healthy" choice.

Which option do you think would be the most effective way for the UK Government and devolved administrations to restrict vape flavours to children and young people?

- **Option A: flavours limited to tobacco only**
- Option B: flavours limited to tobacco, mint and menthol only
- Option C: flavours limited to tobacco, mint, menthol and fruits only

In our experience working with young people, limiting the flavours of vape available would significantly decrease their appeal.

Mint and menthol flavourings may still be of value as part of the prescription offering for people looking to stop smoking.

We emphasise that any changes to availability of vapes would be likely to fuel an illicit market, including over social media platforms and online retailers. Increased regulation of these markets must be considered in tandem with changes to availability to maximise the efficacy of the policy. We also know from our experience that illicit vapes are more likely to contain harmful chemicals.

Do you think non-nicotine e-liquid, for example shortfills, should also be included in restrictions on vape flavours?

- **Yes**
- No
- Don't know

If flavoured non-nicotine e-liquid is still available to purchase, it would be easy for nicotine e-liquid to be mixed in to create a flavoured nicotine vape. We already see young people modifying vape pens so believe this would be a likely outcome.

Regulating point of sale displays

Which option do you think would be the most effective way to restrict vapes to children and young people?

- **Option 1: vapes must be kept behind the counter and cannot be on display, like tobacco products**
- Option 2: vapes must be kept behind the counter but can be on display

As previously stated, we know that young people are drawn to the colourful packaging of vape products, and vaping manufacturers have been able to exploit this by having large, attractive displays in supermarkets and corner shops. Action on Smoking Health's 2022 youth survey found that young people are most aware of vape promotion in shops, and their exposure to this type of promotion increased by 16% between 2022 and 2023.

We believe that vaping should only be used as a smoking cessation tool. There is therefore no need to promote vape products using displays.

Regulating vape packaging and product presentation

Which option do you think would be the most effective way for the UK Government and devolved administrations to restrict the way vapes can be packaged and presented to reduce youth vaping?

- Option 1: prohibiting the use of cartoons, characters, animals, inanimate objects, and other child friendly imagery, on both the vape packaging and vape device. This would still allow for colouring and tailored brand design
- Option 2: prohibiting the use of all imagery and colouring on both the vape packaging and vape device but still allow branding such as logos and names
- **Option 3: prohibiting the use of all imagery and colouring and branding (standardised packaging) for both the vape packaging and vape device**

As previously stated, packaging including bright colours and recognisable brand names, plays a significant role in the appeal of vapes to young people. It also contributes to

young people viewing vapes as a status symbol and a collector's item.

Restricting the supply and sale of disposable vaping products

Do you agree or disagree that there should be restrictions on the sale and supply of disposable vapes? That is, those that are not rechargeable, not refillable or that are neither rechargeable nor refillable.

- **Agree**
- Disagree
- Don't know

As noted in the DHSC paper accompanying this consultation, the use of disposable vaping products has increased substantially in recent years, with 69% of young people who vaped in 2023 using disposable products. Research on vape disposal found that over 1.3 million disposable vapes are thrown away every week, and due to their construction, the recycling of the plastic and lithium contained within them is extremely difficult to recycle. In addition to this significant environmental impact, the chemicals within disposal vapes can be polluting and are highly flammable.

There is also some evidence that disposable vapes contain higher nicotine levels and do not always display the nicotine content clearly. This increases the likelihood of users developing a dependency on nicotine.

In our work with young people, we have observed that disposal vapes are especially appealing to young people due to their price, convenience, and attractive packaging. We therefore believe that banning these vapes would play an important role in reducing the appeal of vaping to children and young people.

Affordability

Do you think that an increase in the price of vapes would reduce the number of young people who vape?

- Yes
- No
- **Don't know**

Some young people would likely be deterred by an increase in the price of vapes. However, this would only be effective if introduced alongside stricter regulation of retailers. Otherwise, it is highly likely that young people would continue to purchase illicit, cheaper vapes. Our young people services report that the majority of young people are already buying cheaper vapes from illicit sellers. We have also heard from the young people we work with that have purchased vapes containing THC from their local vape shops. All retailers which sell vapes should be subject to test purchasing from

trading standards. In addition, as previously stated, online sales must be subject to increased regulation. This may take the force of fines for social media sites who are not taking sufficient action to prevent the sale of vapes to young people on their sites.