Executive Summary

In partnership, Aberdeenshire Council, Aberdeenshire Health and Social Care Partnership and NHS Grampian applied a 'Whole School Approach' to gather information to address the rising concerns around young people vaping and smoking in primary and secondary education in Aberdeenshire. This work has been rolled out in 3 stages:

Stage 1, June - September 2023 - Primary and Academy school staff
Stage 2, February - May 2024 - Academy Pupils
Stage 3, March - July 2024 - Engagement with Parents, Carer's and Guardians of school age children from P5 and up attending an Aberdeenshire primary or secondary school.

This report presents the findings from these four surveys to explore perceptions, awareness and impacts of vaping and smoking amongst young people in Aberdeenshire. The surveys aimed to understand the increasing concerns about vaping and to evaluate the effectiveness of current regulations, awareness levels and the role of various stakeholders in addressing these issues.

This data will also support the development of initiatives and programs relating to tobacco/smoking and vaping, monitor and measure effectiveness of strategies, and determine which areas should take priority.

Introduction

Background

Effective tobacco control is crucial to help communities enjoy longer, healthier lives. Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of illness, death and disability in Scotland. Smoking negatively impacts health throughout a person's life. It exacerbates health inequalities, accounting for half of the life expectancy gap between the most and least deprived areas in society. Most smokers start in their teenage years, and many want to quit but need support overcoming nicotine addiction. Vaping is one tool for quitting smoking, but is not without risks. Emerging evidence suggests that vaping may pose dangers to both human and environmental health.

The latest figures from the Scottish Government's Health and Wellbeing Census 2021/22 indicate that 4.3% of 15 year olds and 1.6% of 13 year olds report smoking cigarettes regularly. This is a decrease from the 2018 SALSUS which showed regular smoking by 15 year olds at 7% and 13 year olds at 2%. For Aberdeenshire, 6% of 13 year olds surveyed in 2018 reported were occasional smokers, with 8% of 15 year olds smoking occasionally. The proportion of people smoking cigarettes has continued to fall, with smoking rates in school aged children at an all-time low, with 6.8% of S4 children smoking regularly.

A ban on the sale and supply of single-use vapes in Scotland is due to come into effect on 1 April 2025. The move takes forward the recommendation to ban single use vapes from a consultation on 'Creating a Smokefree Generation and Tackling Youth Vaping', which ran across the four nations in 2023. The UK-wide legislation will gradually increase the age of sale, making it an offence to sell tobacco products to anyone born on or after 1 January 2009. This means that children born on or after this date (those turning 15 in 2024 and younger) will never be able to buy cigarettes. The Bill also includes new powers to regulate displays, contents, flavours and retail packaging of vapes and nicotine products, allowing restrictions to target flavours marketed at children and to move vapes out of sight of children and away from products like sweets.

The rise in vaping among young people has become a growing public health concern, particularly in Scotland where the trend appears to be increasing. In 2022, the Scottish Health Survey reported that 10% of the population vaped, an increase from 7% the previous 5 years. Between 2019 and 2022, e-cigarette use among young adults aged 16-24 tripled from 5% to 15%. Vaping, often perceived as a safer alternative to smoking, has gained popularity among teenagers, including those who have never smoked traditional cigarettes. This shift has raised alarms among teachers, parents, and health professionals, who are concerned about the long-term health impacts and the potential for vaping to serve as a gateway to smoking.

This report is based on four comprehensive surveys conducted among key stakeholders: pupils, parents, primary schools, and academies in Aberdeenshire. It captures a broad spectrum of views and insights into the prevalence of vaping and smoking, the perceptions surrounding the habits, and how effective current awareness and current regulatory measures are.

Survey objectives

The main objectives of the surveys are:
1. To understand the awareness and perceptions of vaping and smoking among young people and parents
2. To evaluate the accessibility of vaping products and cigarettes to young people and the factors influencing their use
3. To assess the impact of vaping on school environments and the challenges faced by schools
4. To identify the support needs of schools and parents in addressing vaping and smoking among young people
5. To suggest recommendations for preventing and reducing vaping and smoking among young people

The surveys were distributed across various demographic groups to capture a diverse range of perspectives. The pupil's survey targeted students across different year groups, gathering data on their awareness, experiences, and views on vaping and smoking. The parent's survey aimed to understand parental concerns, awareness levels, and their ability to engage in conversations about vaping with their children. Both pupils and parents surveys were anonymous. Surveys conducted with primary schools and academies focused on the observed impact of vaping within school environments and the support needed to address this issue effectively.

Youth Vaping and Smoking: Key Insights and Impacts

INFOGRAPHIC

Aberdeenshire Health & Social Care Partnership

Prevalence of Vaping & Smoking
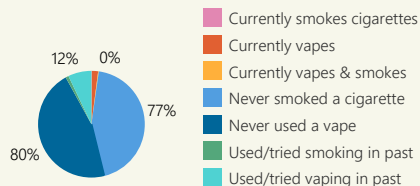
Regular Usage Rates

11% of young people regularly vape.

9% of young people used to vape.

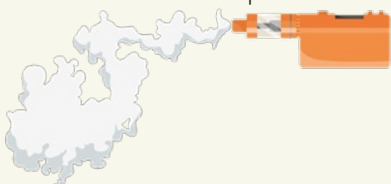**4%** of young people smoke regularly.

Parents aware whether child vapes

- Currently smokes cigarettes
- Currently vapes
- Currently vapes & smokes
- Never smoked a cigarette
- Never used a vape
- Used/tried smoking in past
- Used/tried vaping in past

12% 0%
77%
80%

3% of parents reported their child currently vaped.
12% reported that their child had vaped in the past.
2% had smoked in the past.

Awareness & Perceptions

53% of young people approve of young people who do not vape or smoke

70% of young people disapprove of cigarette smoking

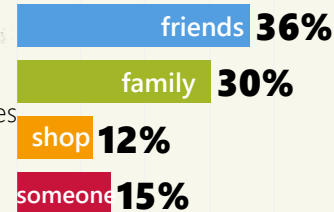**92%** of parents disapprove of cigarette smoking

Access & Influences

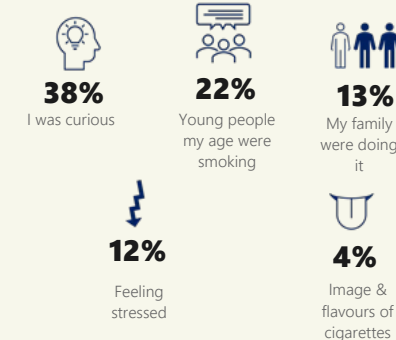**70%** of those who access vapes find it **easy**

50% of those who access cigarettes find it **easy**

Source cigarettes from
- friends **36%**
- family **30%**
- shop **12%**
- someone **15%**

Influences

38% I was curious

22% Young people my age were smoking

13% My family were doing it

12% Feeling stressed

4% Image & flavours of cigarettes

Health Risks & Awareness

Most common health effects from young people smoking include

Lung issues, including coughing, difficulty breathing or phlegm

Brain issues, including headaches and dizziness

Heart issues, including chest pain

Reduced fitness and stamina

Gastrointestinal issues, including nausea

Oral health issues, including dry throat

Regulation & Support

90% of pupils

82% of parents

aware of restrictions & regulations relating to purchase & use of cigarettes & vapes

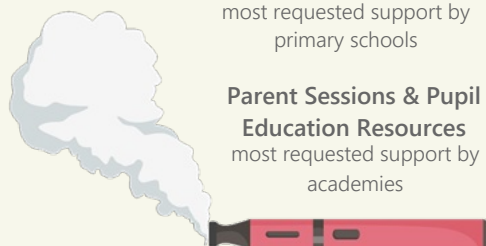**43%** of pupils know where to seek support to quit

44% of parents know where to seek support to quit
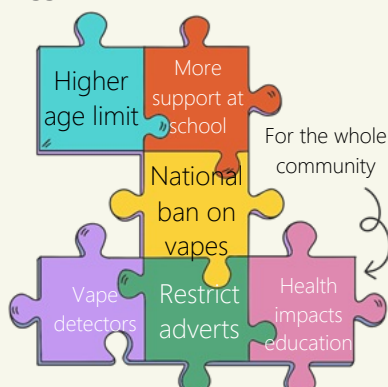
Pupil Education Resources most requested support by primary schools

Parent Sessions & Pupil Education Resources most requested support by academies

Young people first try smoking or vaping between the ages of **12** and **13**

As young people progress through school, their exposure to vaping and smoking **increases**
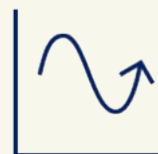
The fact that 11% of young people vape regularl & 4% smoke regularly may **hinder Scotland's target** of reducing the adult smoking rate from 15% to 5% by 2034

Solutions & Prevention

Suggested Roles & Responsibilities

Government
- Ban Vapes
- Enforce regulations
- Regulate advertising
- Control availability
- Public Campaign

Be the role model

Schools
- Education
- No Vaping / Smoking policy
- Monitoring of school areas & bathrooms

Parents
- Responsibility & Accountability
- Parental involvement
- Monitor & Support children

Suggested Preventative Measures

- Higher age limit
- More support at school
- National ban on vapes
- Vape detectors
- Restrict adverts
- Health impacts education

For the whole community

Demographics

Pupils

4,364 young people took part in the survey, from **14** academies.
 1,979 identified as male, **2,154** identified as female. **88** are 'unknown' as the response was not a gender.

Out of a total of 15,852 pupils (based on the 2023 Pupils' Census), 27.5% of young people attending academies took part in the survey.
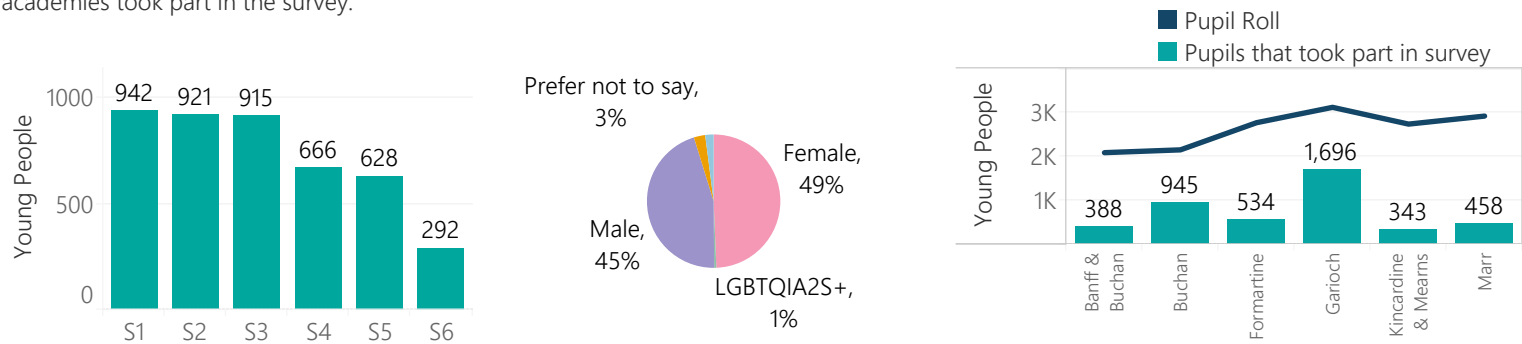
Parents

1,885 parents responded, whose children go to 17 academies and 108 primary schools.

Parents whose children go to academies

Parents whose children go to primary schools
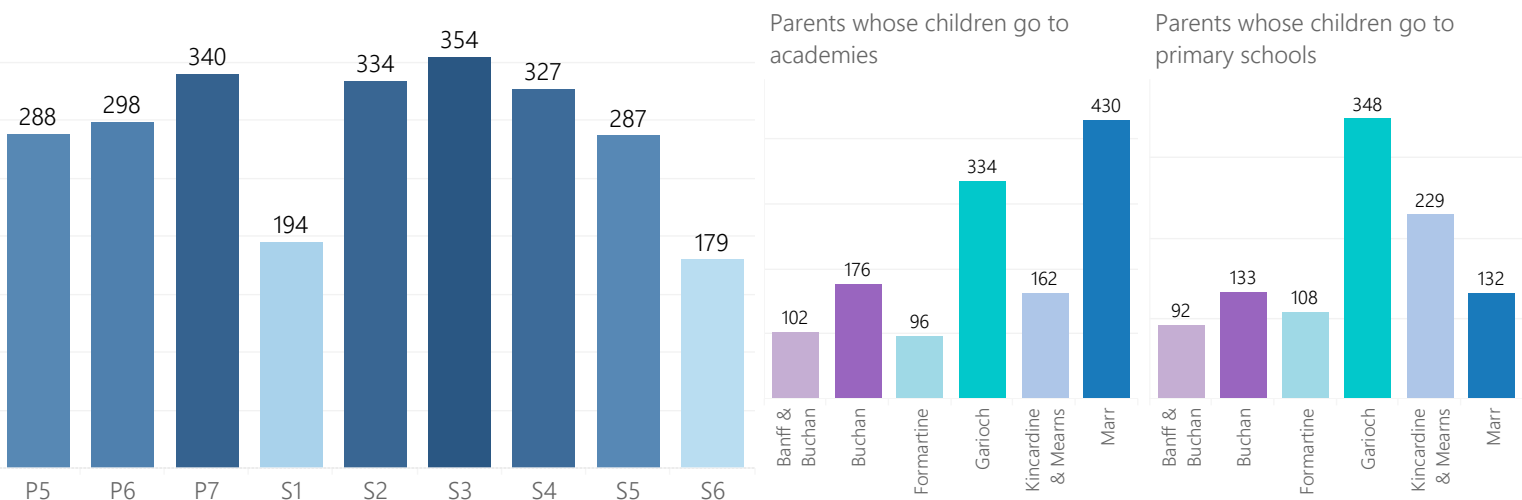
Schools

107 primary schools took part, out of a total of 147.

All 17 academies in Aberdeenshire took part in the survey.

1. Awareness & Perceptions of Smoking

Pupils' View

Views on non-vapers and non-smokers are generally positive, with **53%** approve somewhat or strongly of young people who have never smoked or vaped compared to **38%** that think that others their age would have the same opinion. Personal views differed from perceived peer views, indicating a possible discrepancy between private opinions and public behaviours.
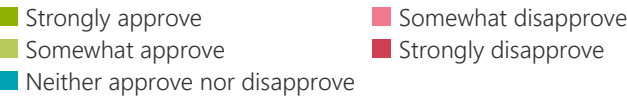
Those that strongly approve of young people that have never smoked or vaped(**47%**) is much higher than that of what they perceive their peers believe (**19%**).
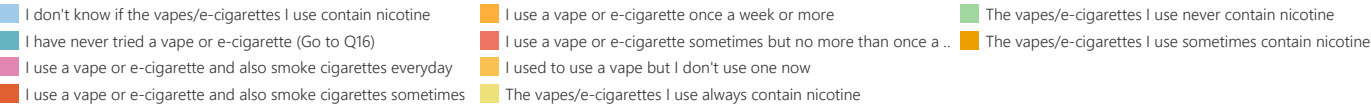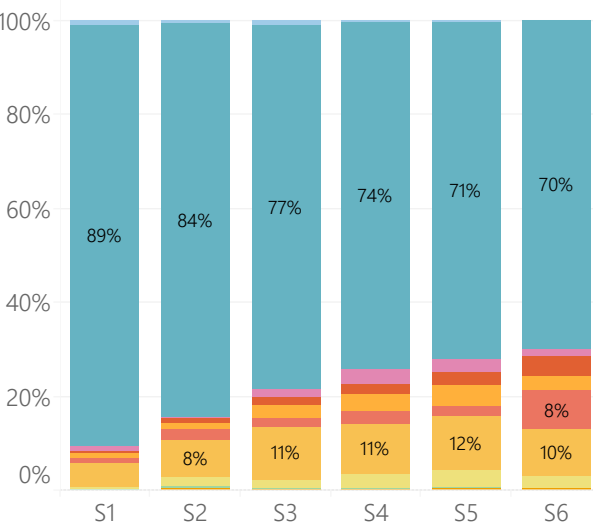
This is the same across genders and age groups.

This discrepancy between personal approval and perceived peer approval suggests that young people might underestimate the support for non-vaping and non-smoking behaviours amongst their peers.

■ Strongly approve
■ Somewhat approve
■ Neither approve nor disapprove
■ Somewhat disapprove
■ Strongly disapprove

Views on young people who have never used vapes/e-cigarettes/cigarettes

47%, 6%, 25%, 7%, 15%

How do you think others your age view young people who have never used vapes/e-cigarettes/cigarettes

19%, 19%, 41%, 13%, 7%

Views on cigarette smoking

2%, 26%, 19%, 50%

How do you think others your age view cigarette smoking

4%, 13%, 43%, 21%, 19%

As regards cigarette smoking, **70%** disapprove somewhat or strongly. **74%** of those that identify as male disapprove somewhat or strongly of cigarette smoking, compared to **67%** of those that identify as female. **8%** of those in S4 approve somewhat or strongly of cigarette smoking, the highest of any age group, suggesting that a proportion of older age groups perceive smoking as a socially acceptable behaviour. Disapproval of cigarette smoking is lowest in Kincardine and Mearns, where 65% disapprove.

This compares to **40%** that think that others their age disapprove of smoking. **49%** of those that identify as male think others their age disapprove of smoking compared to **33%** of those that identify as female.

3% of young people regularly vape and smoke cigarettes. **4%** report they smoke regularly, with **4%** who used to smoke.

11% of young people reported vaping regularly. **2%** vape once a week or more. **2%** use vapes that sometimes or always contain nicotine. This highlights a segment of the younger population with a potentially higher risk of developing nicotine dependence and other issues.

9% report having vaped in the past, suggesting a significant turnover where some young people experiment with vaping but do not continue the habit in the long-term.

79% of pupils reported they had never tried a vape or e-cigarette.

Among S6 students, **8%** of participants report they vape no more than once a month, suggesting vaping takes place socially in older age groups.

■ I don't know if the vapes/e-cigarettes I use contain nicotine
■ I have never tried a vape or e-cigarette (Go to Q16)
■ I use a vape or e-cigarette and also smoke cigarettes everyday
■ I use a vape or e-cigarette and also smoke cigarettes sometimes
■ I use a vape or e-cigarette once a week or more
■ I use a vape or e-cigarette sometimes but no more than once a ..
■ I used to use a vape but I don't use one now
■ The vapes/e-cigarettes I use always contain nicotine
■ The vapes/e-cigarettes I use never contain nicotine
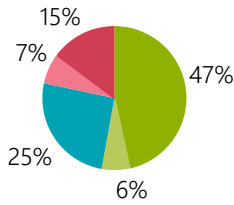■ The vapes/e-cigarettes I use sometimes contain nicotine

The rise in young people choosing to vape is a lifestyle choice compared to the use of e-cigarettes as a smoking cessation aid is concerning. The high prevalence of young people who vape regularly could increase their likelihood of trying smoking.

In terms of cigarette smoking, **4%** of young people currently smoke regularly. **4%** report they previously used to smoke. **92%** reported they had never smoked a cigarette.
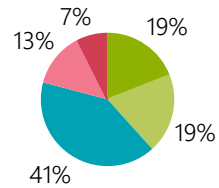
This appears to increase with age. While only **3%** of S1 pupils regularly smoke cigarettes and **1%** report they are former smokers, these figures rise to

5% of S6 pupils regularly smoke cigarettes and **10%** report they previously used to smoke. This trends suggests that as students progress through school, their exposure to and engagement with smoking increases.
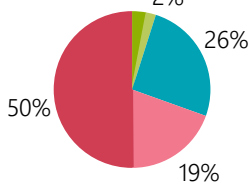
■ I have never tried/smoked cigarettes
■ I smoke between 1-9 cigarettes a week
■ I smoke between 10-20 cigarettes a week
■ I smoke more then 20 cigarettes a week
■ I used to smoke cigarettes but I don't now

1. Awareness & Perceptions of Smoking

This data underscores the importance of targeted interventions that address both vaping and smoking behaviours among young people, particularly as they transition through different school years. It also highlights the need for continuous education on the risks associated with nicotine use and the importance of preventative measures to curb the initiation and regular use of vapes and cigarettes among young people.

Views of young people who have never vaped or smoked vs how they view cigarette smoking

How do you view young people who have never smoked, used vapes or e-cigarettes?

Strongly approve	63%	18%	15%
Somewhat approve	23%	35%	33%	7%
Neither approve nor disapprove	17%	19%	58%
Somewhat disapprove	49%	35%	14%
Strongly disapprove	77%	11%	6%	6%

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

How do you view cigarette smoking?
- Strongly disapprove
- Somewhat disapprove
- Neither approve nor disapprove
- Somewhat approve
- Strongly approve

Whether they have tried to quit vaping or smoking vs how they view cigarette smoking

I have never tried to quit vapes or cigarettes (Go to question 25)	35%	13%	33%	15%
I have tried to quit cigarette smoking	28%	6%	32%	10%	24%
I have tried to quit cigarette smoking and vaping	13%	15%	51%	10%	10%
I have tried to quit vaping	22%	17%	44%	9%	8%

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

Approval of Vaping use among non-smokers:
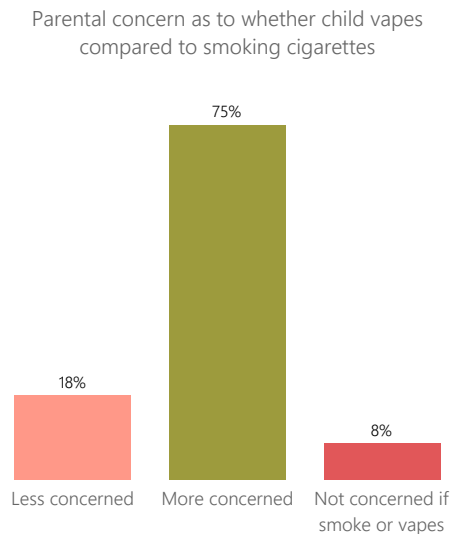Approval of young people who have never vaped or smoked varies based on the participants' experiences with quitting smoking or vaping. Those who have tried to quit cigarette smoking are more likely to strongly approve (**40%**) compared to those who have tried to quit both smoking and vaping (**31%**). Strong disapproval is higher among those who have never tried to quit smoking or vaping (**15%**) compared to other groups.

Views on young people who have never vaped or smoked vs whether they have tried to quit vaping or smoking

	I have tried to quit cigarette smoking	I have tried to quit cigarette smoking and vaping	I have tried to quit vaping	Never tried to quit vaping or cigarette smoking
Strongly approve	40%	31%	27%	48%
Neither approve nor disapprove	22%	50%	47%	24%
Strongly disapprove	18%			15%

How do you view young people, who have never smoked, using vapes or e-cigarettes?
- Strongly approve
- Somewhat approve
- Neither approve nor disappr..
- Somewhat disapprove
- Strongly disapprove

Views on Cigarette Smoking:
Views on cigarette smoking are influenced by whether the participants have tried to quit vaping or smoking.
Those who have never tried to quit vaping or smoking show the highest strong disapproval (**35%**).
Those who have tried to quit cigarette smoking and vaping show the lowest strong disapproval (**13%**) and highest neutral stance.

Correlation between approval of vaping and disapproval of cigarette smoking:
Participants who strongly approve of young people who have never vaped also strongly disapprove of cigarette smoking (**63%**).
Conversely, those who strongly disapprove of young people who have never vaped are more likely to strongly disapprove of cigarette smoking (**77%**).
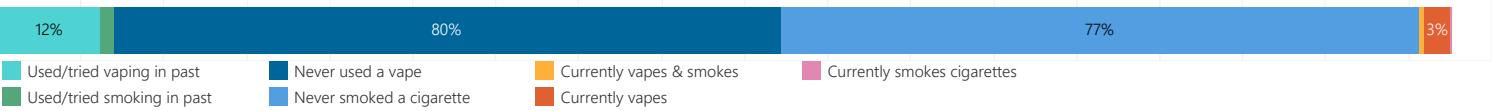
Parents' View

Parental concern as to whether child vapes compared to smoking cigarettes

Less concerned	More concerned	Not concerned if smoke or vapes
18%	75%	8%

75% of parents reported they would be more concerned if their child vaped instead of smoked. Parents expressed equal concern for vaping and smoking, viewing both as serious risks due to aggressive marketing, easy availability, and peer pressure influencing their children. They also worried about the addictive potential and health risks associated with these habits, despite some misconceptions that vaping is safer.

While some parents believe open communication and education can deter substance use, others highlighted a lack of information on vaping's long-term effects. Additionally, concerns were raised about behavioural changes, such as rebellious attitudes, and the increasing social acceptance and trendiness of vaping among young people.

1. Awareness & Perceptions of Smoking

| 12% | 80% | 77% | 3% |

- Used/tried vaping in past
- Used/tried smoking in past
- Never used a vape
- Never smoked a cigarette
- Currently vapes & smokes
- Currently vapes
- Currently smokes cigarettes

3% of parents responded that their children currently vaped. **12%** reported that their children had vaped in the past, with **2%** had smoked in the past. **80%** reported that their child had never vaped and **77%** had never smoked. **0.37%** reported their child vaped and smoked, which increased when comparing what year their child attended, to **1%** in S6.

When comparing what year the child attends, **89%** of parents with a child in P5 reported their children had never smoked a cigarette before. This decreases with age, in which **61%** of those with a child in S6 had never smoked. A similar pattern is seen when reporting they know their child has tried smoking, which increases from **2%** when they have a child in P5 to **6%** in S5.

The majority of parents reported they were aware their child had not tried vaping or smoking. While vaping and smoking appear to not be prevalent long-term habits among most children, there is a significant level of experimentation of vaping as children grow older, from 1 in 20 parents with a child in P5 to a quarter of parents with a child in S5. There are variations between localities and variations between parents of children attending academies and primary schools, suggested a need for targeted interventions.

Parental views on cigarette smoking are overwhelmingly negative, with **92%** of parents disapproving (**78%** strongly disapproving). When comparing those with children attending academies or primary schools, views are similar.

151
8% 242
13%

1,478
78%

Schools' View

Academies did note positive impacts of vaping, in which there was a reduction in public smoking in and around school gates and less confrontations with the local community regarding smoking. They also noted a reduction in litter associated with smoking with the rise of vaping.

- Strongly approve
- Somewhat approve
- Neither approve nor disapprove
- Somewhat disapprove
- Strongly disapprove

Summary

The data reveals a complex landscape of awareness and perceptions surrounding smoking among parents and pupils. Whilst most people generally disapprove of smoking, there is a proportion of young people that continue to smoke or try smoking. Peer pressure and social norms within certain peer groups continue to influence young people starting smoking. Parents, although well-informed may struggle to detect or address their child's smoking habits effectively.

Given the increase in dual usage of vaping and smoking, there is a risk that vaping, often perceived as a less harmful alternative to smoking, could serve as a gateway to cigarette smoking, especially as young people become more exposed to nicotine and potentially escalate their use. This could exacerbate the public health challenge of reducing smoking prevalence to 5% in Scotland, as it not only sustains but potentially increases the population of young smokers.

Schools recognise the declining trend in smoking due to increased awareness and the rise of vaping, yet smoking remains an issue. Strengthening educational initiatives, increasing parental engagement and fostering a school environment that consistently discourages smoking are essential to solidify these changes.

2. Behavioural Insights: Access and Influences

Age of first smoking attempt



At what age did you first try cigarette smoking?
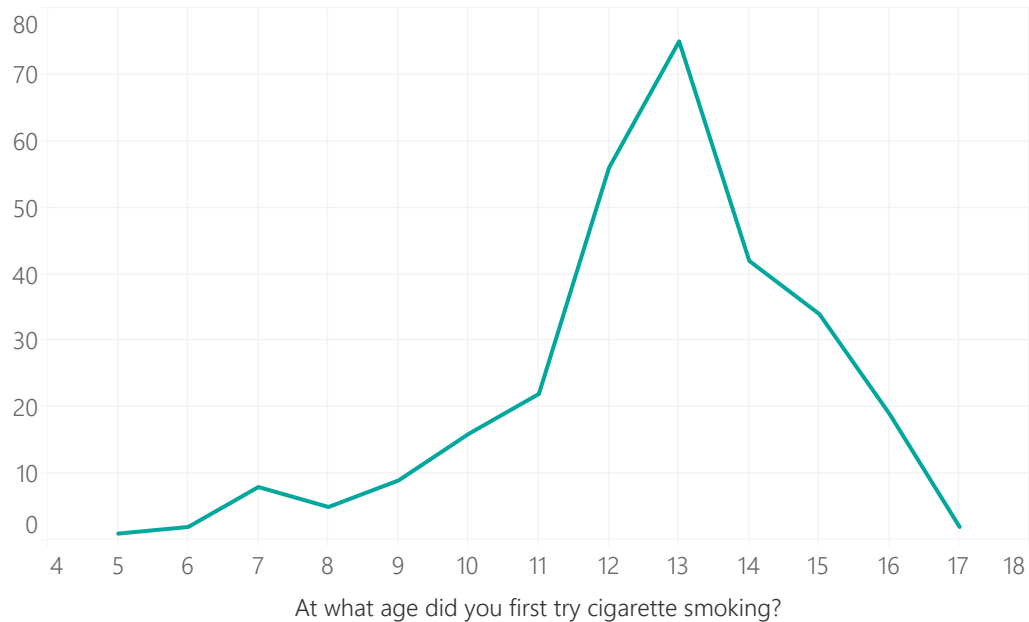
12.6 years old is the average age a young person tried smoking, with the youngest someone tried was 5 years old. This compares to vaping, where the average age to try vaping was 12.7. This suggests that most young people experiment with these habits between the ages of 12 and 13.

This early initiation of vaping and smoking is concerning, as it indicates that adolescents are experimenting with these behaviours during critical developmental years. The youngest instances for trying vaping and smoking, although rare, highlight the urgent need for parental and community awareness and intervention to prevent such early exposure.

2. Behavioural Insights: Access and Influences

Access to cigarettes, while not as prevalent as access to vapes, still poses a significant issue. **50%** of those that access cigarettes reporting they find it somewhat or very easy to. **25%** finding it very easy to access cigarettes. These figures increased with increasing age.

50%
of those who access cigarettes find it **easy**
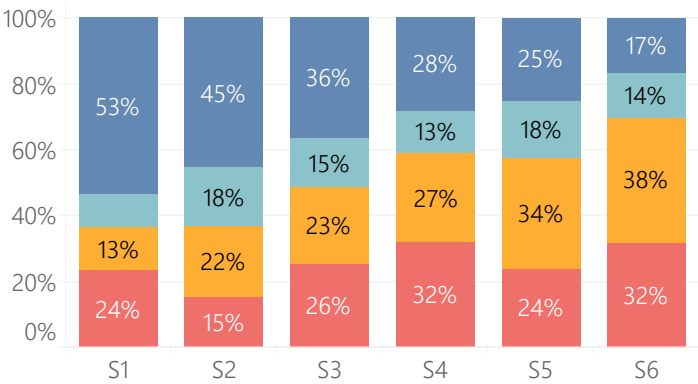
Sources for obtaining cigarettes

Young people primarily obtain cigarettes from their social networks.

36% of those that access cigarettes buy or get them from their friends. **15%** ask someone else, to purchase them and **12%** source them from local shops.

Family appears to influence cigarette access hugely, with **31%** getting them from family, with or without their knowledge.
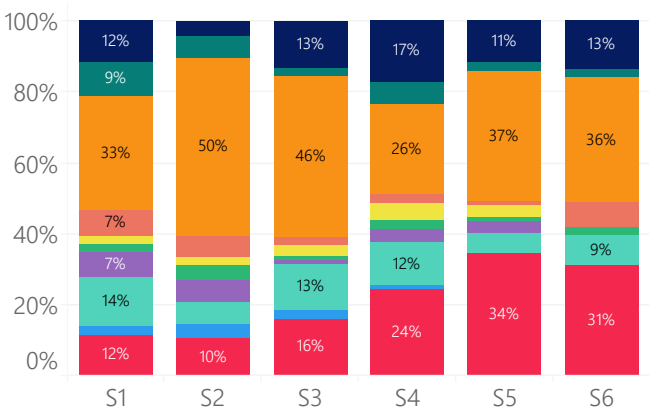
Influences for trying vaping or smoking

38% of those that tried smoking tried out of sheer curiosity. **22%** of young people reported they tried smoking because their peers were smoking. 9 young people reported they felt pressured to try smoking. When comparing genders, **40%** of boys tried out of curiosity compared to **39%** of girls. **50%** of those that identify as LGBTQIA2S+ reported trying because influencers on social media were smoking.

As age increases, the proportion of those that try smoking because others were smoking increases.

12% of pupils also cited stress relief as a reason for trying smoking, suggesting that more support should be in place for academy students to tackle mental health throughout their school journey.
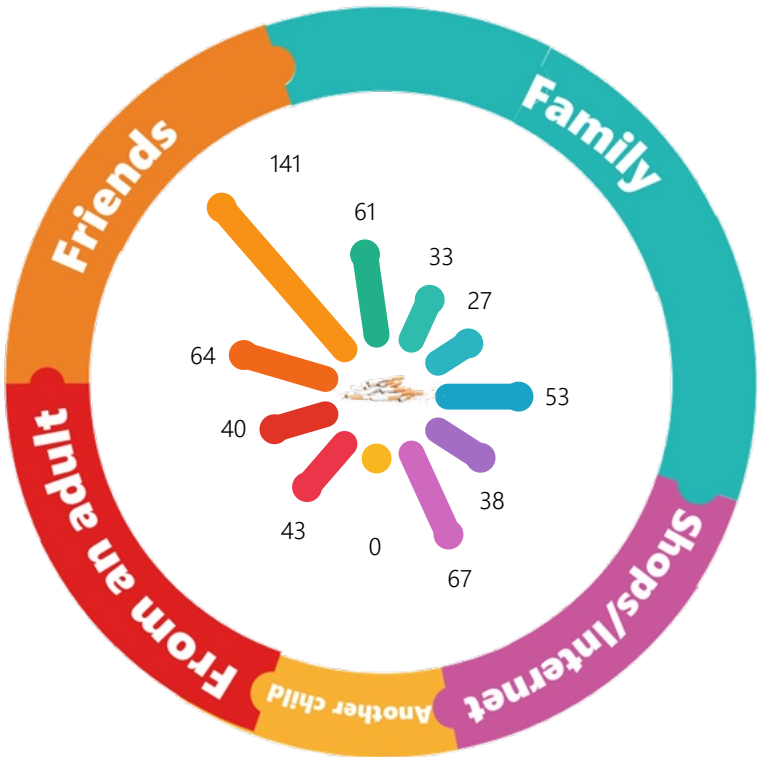
Motivations for trying vaping and smoking show common trends of curiosity and peer influence. These figures emphasise the role that social environments and peer groups play in the initiation of both vaping and smoking among young people.

Legend:
- Feeling stressed
- I thought it would help improve my im..
- I was curious
- Image and taste of flavors of cigarettes
- Influencers, models, singers, actors in ..
- Media/Advertising influence
- My older brothers or sisters were doing..
- My parents were doing it
- Online promotions
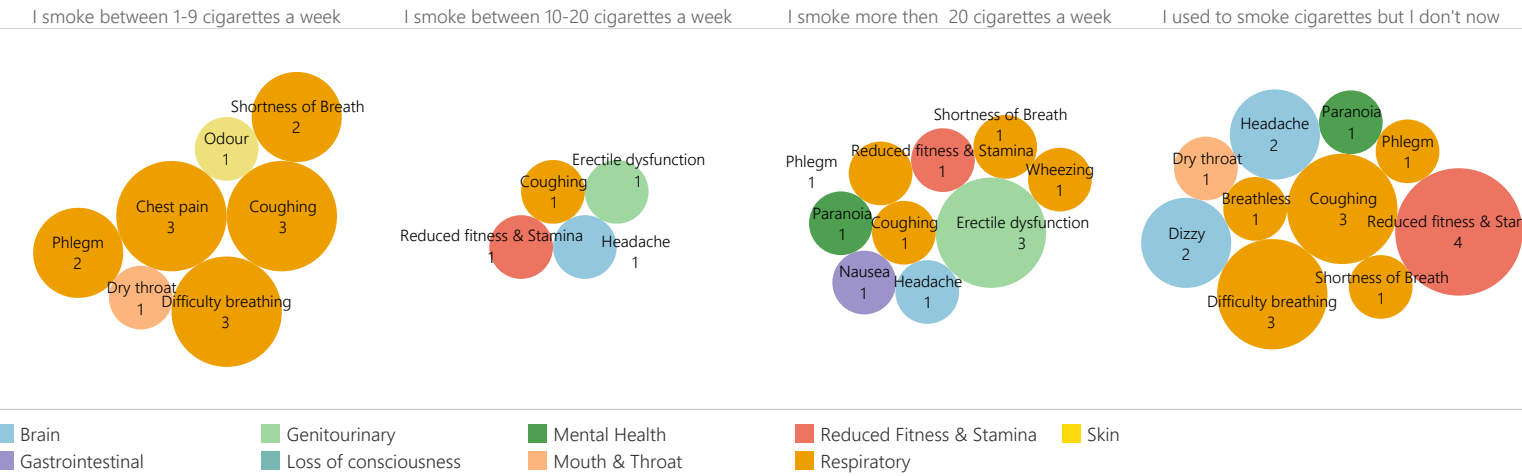- Young people of my age were doing it

Summary

Despite age restrictions and regulations, many young people find it relatively easy to access cigarettes, often through social networks, peers or family. This ease of access undermines public health efforts and suggests a need for stricter enforcement of regulations.

There are many influences on smoking behaviour, with peer pressure, social acceptance, curiosity, stress and to a lesser extent, family influence, all playing critical roles. Peer influence emerges as the main factor, where smoking could be viewed as a normal social activity or a means of fitting in. Curiosity and the desire to experiment continue to drive young people to try smoking despite the known risks.

Reducing access to cigarettes and counteracting the social and peer influences that encourage smoking require coordinated efforts from parents, schools and government. These efforts should focus on stricter regulation, enhanced education and more robust support systems to guide young people away from smoking.

3. Health Risks & Awareness

Legend:
- Brain
- Gastrointestinal
- Genitourinary
- Loss of consciousness
- Mental Health
- Mouth & Throat
- Reduced Fitness & Stamina
- Respiratory
- Skin

Health effects reported correlate with smoking frequency. Those that smoke between 1-9 cigarettes a week report mainly respiratory issues including coughing. With increasing smoking frequency, a broader range of health effects are reported, including mental health, reduced fitness and stamina, nausea and headaches. Those that used to smoke reported a wide range of health effects, with reduced fitness and stamina, difficulty breathing and coughing the most common.

Legend:
- I smoke between 1-9 cigarettes a week
- I smoke between 10-20 cigarettes a week
- I smoke more then 20 cigarettes a week
- I used to smoke cigarettes but I don't now

At what age did you first try cigarette smoking?

Those who started between 4 and 8 have a significant representation among heavy smokers (smoking more than 20 cigarettes a week. Those who smoke between 1-9 cigarettes per week have a more consistent and lower presence across ages. Those who started around 12-14 is associated with moderate smoking frequency, but many in this age group are former smokers.

There is a peak in former smokers who started smoking between ages 14 and 16 suggesting that starting smoking later in teenage years correlated with a higher likelihood of quitting.

In summary, the age of initiation is a significant factor in predicting smoking frequency and cessation likelihood.

The data reveals a wide range of health effects reported by young people who smoke cigarettes, spanning respiratory, mental health, fitness, genitourinary, skin, neurological and gastrointestinal categories. The most frequently reported health issues are respiratory-related.
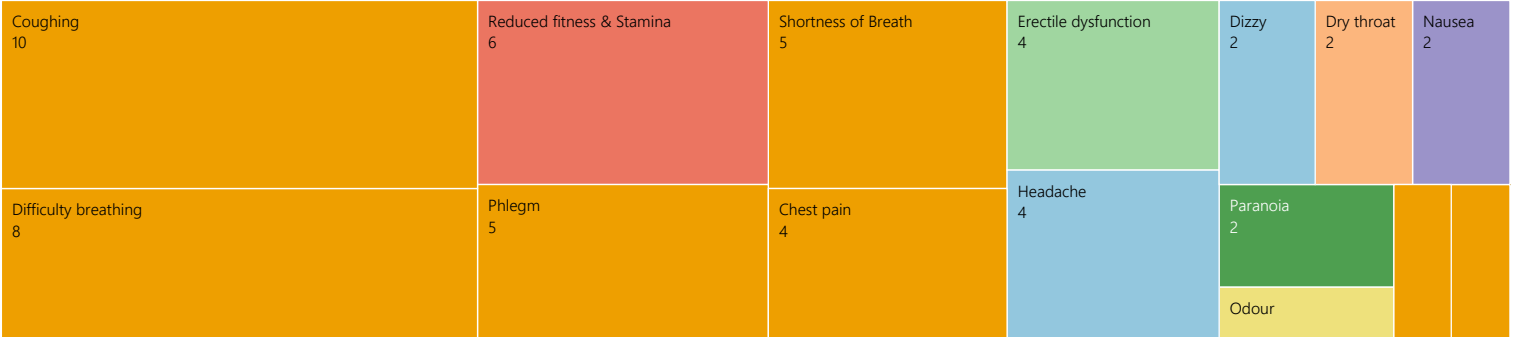
5. Efforts to Quit Smoking & Support Available

Awareness of legal age restrictions and regulations was high, with **90%** reporting they are aware of the restrictions and regulations relating to the purchase and use of cigarettes and vapes. **200** young people reported that they were not aware of any restrictions and regulations.

82% of parents reported they were aware of restrictions relating to the purchase and use of vapes and cigarettes.

This increases to **86%** of parents with children in academies, but decreases to **80%** of parents with children in primary schools.

5. Efforts to Quit Smoking & Support Available

Experiences and Success Rates in attempting to quit

8% had attempted to quit vaping and/or smoking, using various methods such as nicotine replacement and support from friends. This indicates a portion of young people are aware of the harms and are motivated to stop these behaviours. **23%** quit by substituting smoking or vaping with something else, including exercise or other nicotine containing gums, patches or nicopods. **55%** "just quit" going cold turkey with varying results. Success rates varied, indicating a need for more effective cessation programs and resources tailored to young people.

The proportion of those that have tried to quit smoking increases with age, from **2%** in S1 to **5%** in S5.

The data on quitting attempts among participants highlights various methods used and their relative effectiveness, emphasising the complexity and challenges of cessation for young people. This data indicates a need for more prominent and effective cessation programmes specifically tailored to young people. The programs should address the unique challenges young people face and offer multiple strategies to accommodate different preferences and situations. Very few participants used support networks or apps to quit. More emphasis on these networks could be beneficial. Encouraging healthy substitutions, such as exercise and healthy eating, while discouraging potentially harmful ones like alcohol and drugs.

Where to seek Support

Only **43%** of students surveyed reported they would know where to seek support if they wanted to quit vaping or smoking. This varied across localities, with those attending schools in Marr with the highest proprtion of those that would not know where to seek support to quit.
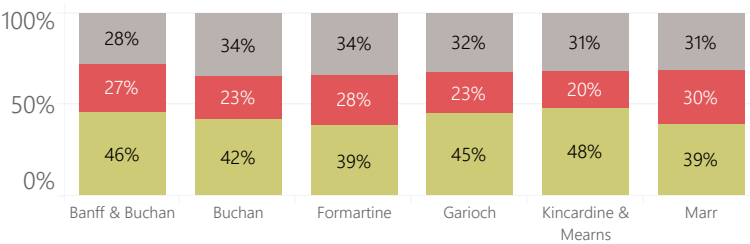
For parents, this is similar to pupils, in which **44%** of parents reported they knew where to seek support if their child wanted to quit vaping or smoking. Those with a child attending school in Garioch had the highest proportion who would not know where to seek advice, with **59%** of parents.

Parents that noted they did know of where to seek support, responses have been categorised into the below themes:

1. Chemist/Pharmacist
123 parents mentioned seeking help from chemists or pharmacists, indicating the initial reliance on medical professionals for accessbile over-the-counter solutions and advice.

2. Online services
This was the most common response, with 156 parents noting this was the main place to seek support. The prominence of online services suggests a preference for digital resources, including websites, forums and telehealth options for support and information.

3. School Support
Schools are noted as crucial environments for providing support, with 112 suggesting this as somewhere to seek support, with teachers and educational programs playing a significant role in intervention and prevention.

4. Doctor/GP
Medical professionals suchs as GPs and other doctors are trusted sources for more formal medical advice and potentially prescriptions or referrals to specialised services.
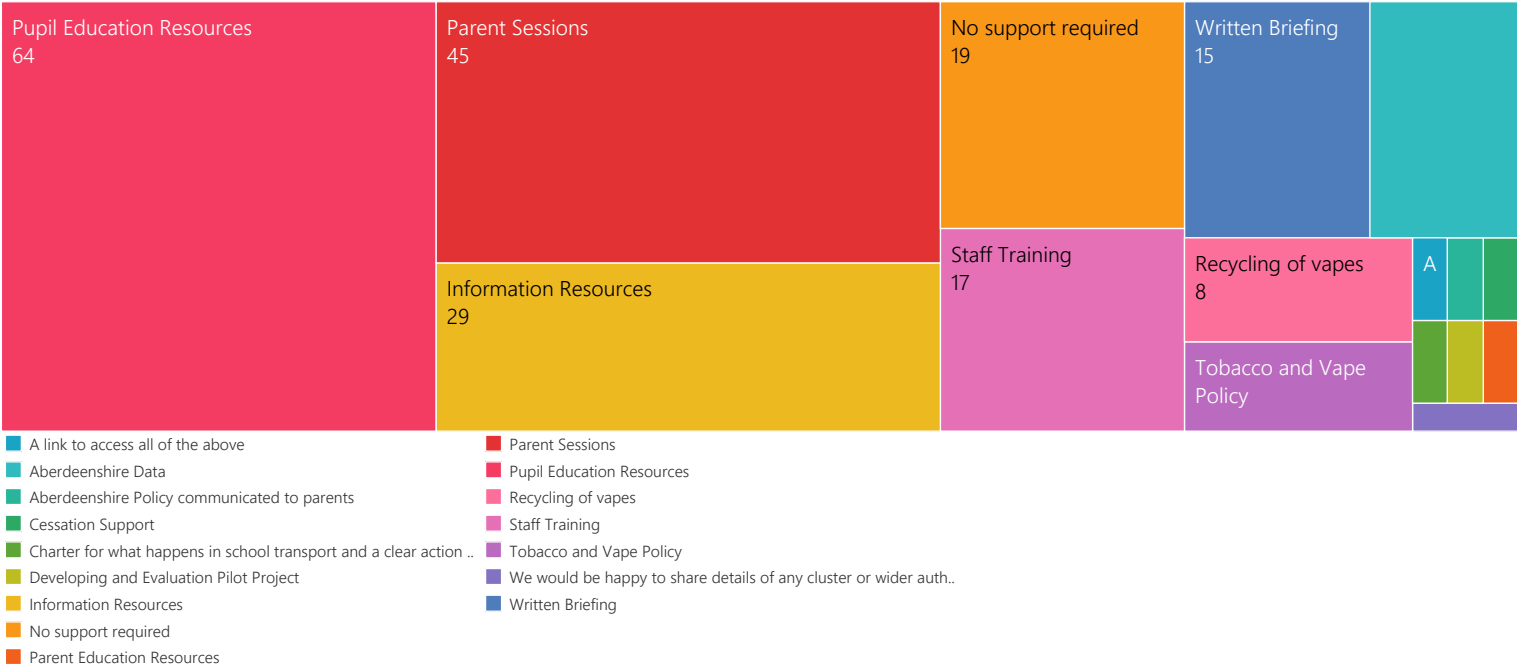
5. Family Support
25 suggested family support, recognised for its importance in providing a supportive environment and encouraging open discussions about quitting.

6. Counselling
Counselling services highlight the need for mental health support and professional psychological help in quitting vaping or smoking.
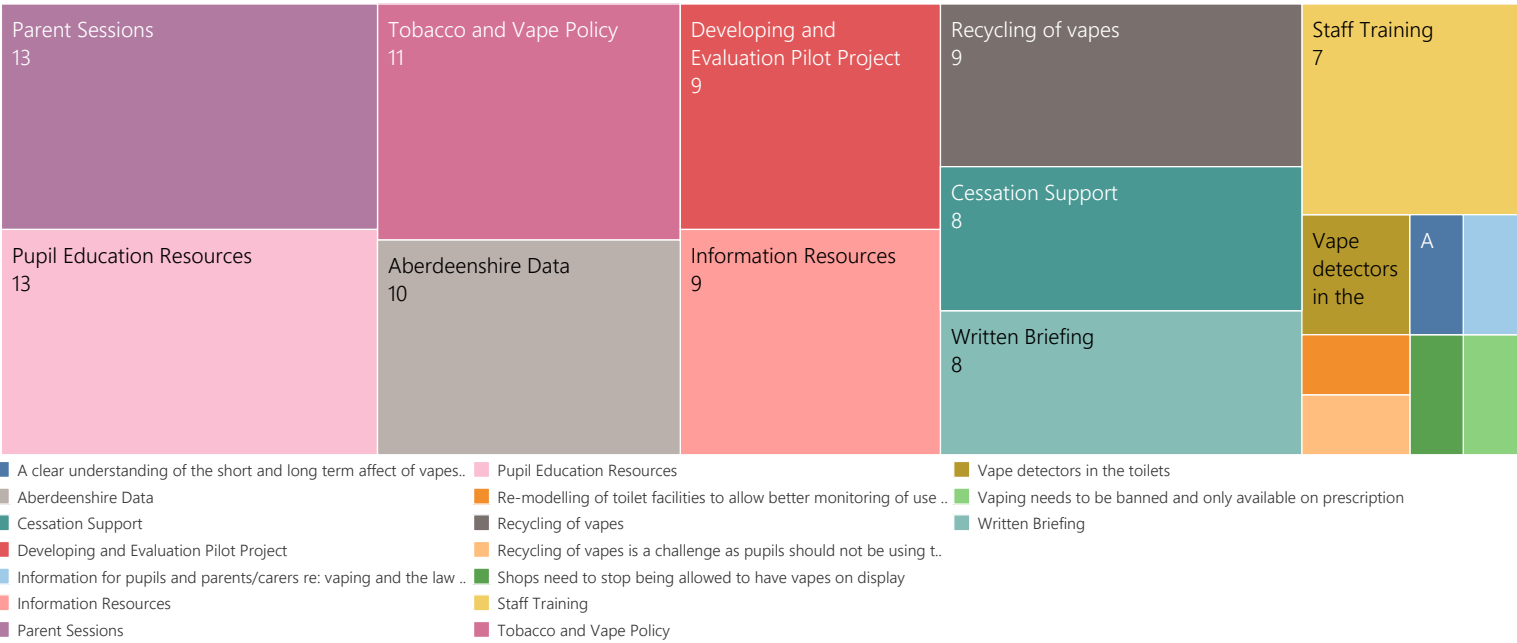
5. Efforts to Quit Smoking & Support Available

Schools

Pupil Education Resources 64	Parent Sessions 45	No support required 19	Written Briefing 15
	Information Resources 29	Staff Training 17	Recycling of vapes 8
			Tobacco and Vape Policy

Legend:
- ■ A link to access all of the above
- ■ Aberdeenshire Data
- ■ Aberdeenshire Policy communicated to parents
- ■ Cessation Support
- ■ Charter for what happens in school transport and a clear action ..
- ■ Developing and Evaluation Pilot Project
- ■ Information Resources
- ■ No support required
- ■ Parent Education Resources
- ■ Parent Sessions
- ■ Pupil Education Resources
- ■ Recycling of vapes
- ■ Staff Training
- ■ Tobacco and Vape Policy
- ■ We would be happy to share details of any cluster or wider auth..
- ■ Written Briefing

60% of primary schools highlighted they would like to be supported with pupil education resources. **42%** of primary schools reported they would like support with parent sessions.

All academies reported they would like to be supported. **76%** of academies highlighted that they would like to be supported with parent sessions and pupil education resources.

Parent Sessions 13	Tobacco and Vape Policy 11	Developing and Evaluation Pilot Project 9	Recycling of vapes 9	Staff Training 7
Pupil Education Resources 13	Aberdeenshire Data 10	Information Resources 9	Cessation Support 8	Vape detectors in the
			Written Briefing 8	

Legend:
- ■ A clear understanding of the short and long term affect of vapes..
- ■ Aberdeenshire Data
- ■ Cessation Support
- ■ Developing and Evaluation Pilot Project
- ■ Information for pupils and parents/carers re: vaping and the law ..
- ■ Information Resources
- ■ Parent Sessions
- ■ Pupil Education Resources
- ■ Re-modelling of toilet facilities to allow better monitoring of use ..
- ■ Recycling of vapes
- ■ Recycling of vapes is a challenge as pupils should not be using t..
- ■ Shops need to stop being allowed to have vapes on display
- ■ Staff Training
- ■ Tobacco and Vape Policy
- ■ Vape detectors in the toilets
- ■ Vaping needs to be banned and only available on prescription
- ■ Written Briefing

Summary

The data reveals a mixed level of awareness across parents and pupils. Among pupils, while there is a general awareness of age restrictions and regulations related to vaping, many still find it relatively easy to access vaping products. This suggests that existing regulations may not be effectively enforced or communicated to young people, leading to a disconnect between knowledge of the law and actual behaviour.

Parents are somewhat informed about age restrictions, although this differs when they have a child in primary vs secondary education. This uncertainty is compounded by a lack of clear, accessible resources and support services aimed at helping parents navigate this issue.

Schools, both primary and secondary, face significant challenges providing educational support to students on vaping. Many schools reported the need for additional resources, such as educational materials, online resources and training for staff, to better address the issue of vaping. There is also a strong desire for more effective engagement strategies with parents and guardians, indicating a need for a collaborative approach to regulation and support.

In conclusion, while there is a general awareness of the age restrictions around vaping, the enforcement and practical application of these regulations are inconsistent and insufficient. To bridge this gap, there needs to be a concerted effort to strengthen regulatory enforcement, improve the accessibility of support services, and foster collaboration between schools, parents, and policymakers. This approach will ensure that all stakeholders are better equipped to manage and mitigate the risks of vaping among young people.

6. Solutions and Prevention Strategies

Pupils' View
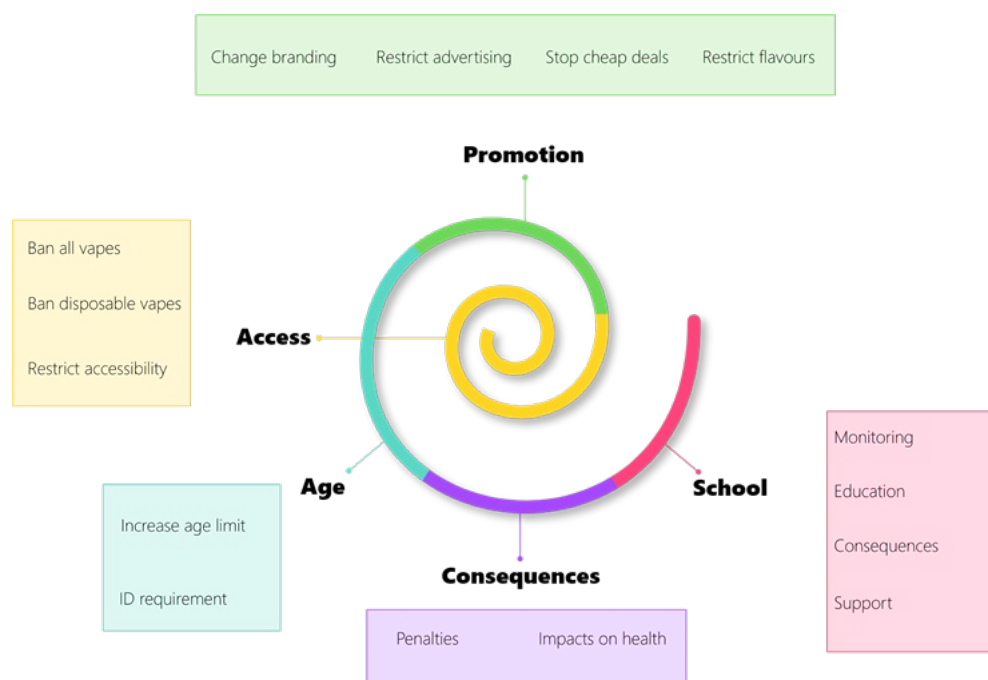
Young people suggested a range of potential effective measures to reduced vaping and smoking in young people. This has been grouped into five main themes: access, promotion, age, consequences and schools.

Access:
1 in 4 young people believe that there should be a national ban on vaping (24%), with participants noting "unless there's a full ban, people will always find a way to vape underage". Disposable vapes were also suggested to be banned. A number of participants also suggested restricting availability of vapes, including through prescription-only availability, increasing prices and making vapes "less visible" in shops: "Put them in chemists for people stopping smoking.... make vapes more expensive and harder to get"

Promotion:
Participants suggested restricting vaping advertising could reduce the influence on young people, "social media/trends influence young people quite a lot, so if there was less advertising, not as many influencers/celebrities smoking"
Changing branding was also suggested, such as making vapes less attractive to young people: "They should have covers like fags and change the packaging so they are less appealing to kids".
A number of participants suggested stopping "cheap deals" on vapes in shops, with some suggesting "vapes are advertised on posters, shops do deals 2 for a tenner 3 for £12, stop that".
Lastly, 4% suggested changing, reducing or ensuring there was no flavour at all. 4% suggested making them less colourful and more 'bland'.

Age:
5% suggested that there should be a higher age limit, with shops requiring an ID to be shown in order to buy a vape: "NZ approach: increase legal age to buy them each year until nobody can legally buy them... make people who purchase them show ID".

Consequences:
6% believe there should be stricter regulations and greater enforcement of the law. Some participants suggested fines, "whoever sells vapes to people underage should get a large fine and a ban to sell them... fine people who are under age vapers, increase action taken against vaping underage".

The consequences of vaping on health were also emphasised, 1 in 20 participants believe there should be a campaign/education awareness highlighting the negative impacts: "strongly emphasising that vapes are just as bad as cigarettes.... show all the health consequences, showing people what happens to ur body when u vape".

Schools:
A number of participants suggested greater monitoring in schools, such as vape detectors or the ability for staff to search those suspected with carrying vapes: "allowing teachers or trusted adults to search the student/bag if suspected of using vapes or cigarettes...vape detectors in the toilets would be useful... or in entrance of schools".
Having more education in school on vaping, such as "bring in a NHS nurse/doctor to explain to the kids why vaping is bad... posters and information around the school about the dangers of vaping... teach it in primary school and highlight the health risks".
A number suggested more consequences at school for vaping, including "disciplinary measyres when caught vaping... speak to parents if their child vapes or smokes... expel people who smoke/vape with a zero tolerance policy".
Lastly, more support was suggested, including "amnesty bins... accessible support for those trying to quit...making sure people are feeling OK, mental and physical".

6. Solutions and Prevention Strategies

Parents' View
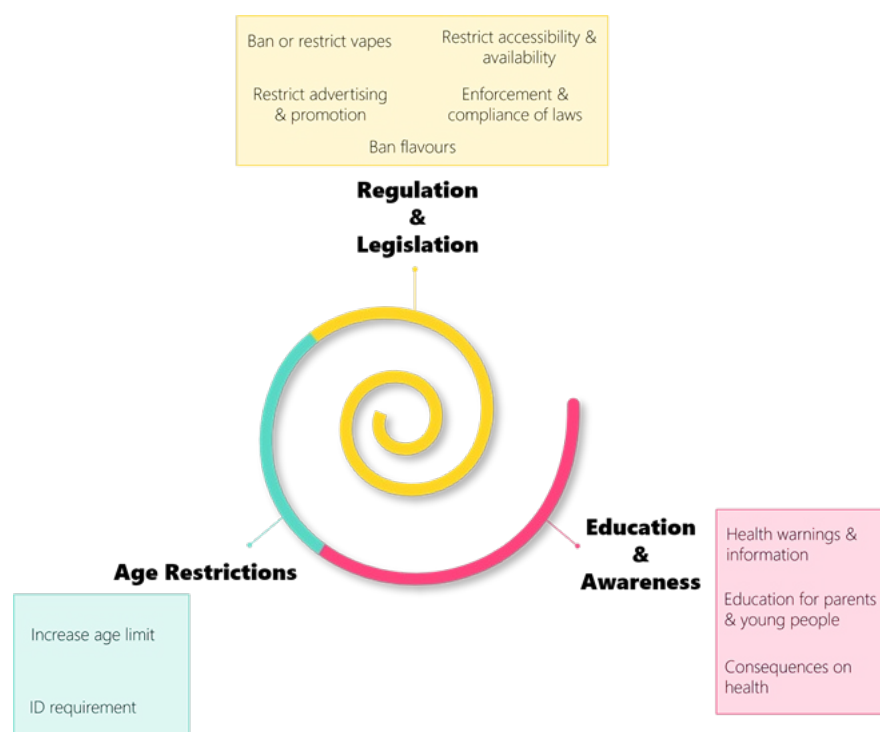
Parents suggested the following preventative measures:

Regulation and Legislation - Ban or Restrict Vapes
Many parents believe that a ban on selling vaping products, with 563 suggesting an outright ban or banning disposable vapes could be effective: "A ban on vapes except for those trying to quit smoking"…"Ban it entirely or at least for anyone under 25"

Regulation and Legislation - Accessibility and Availability Control
Parents suggested making it more difficult and expensive to obtain vaping products: "Make it harder to buy"… "Restrict access"… "make it expensive and make harsher punishments for selling to minors"

Regulation and Legislation - Advertising and Promotion Regulations
Calls for stronger regulations on advertising to reduce the appeal of vaping were also suggested by parents: "stop promoting it, stop making it look pretty and attractive"… "a viral campaign making it unacceptable/uncool"

Regulation and Legislation - Enforcement and Compliance
It was suggested that existing laws are not enforced rigorously, leading to continued access by underage along with calls for stricter policies at schools and stronger legal penalties for violations: "increase funding for enforcement agencies, conduct regular compliance checks and impose severe penalties for violations"… "stricter rules and stronger punishment at school"… "larger fines for shops selling to underage""

Regulation and Legislation - Ban flavours
Flavours are believed to attract young users, so banning particular appealing flavours was suggested: "policy changes to ban or restrict the sale of flavoured vaping products"

Age Restrictions - Increase age limit & requirement of ID
There was a consistent call for stronger age restrictions, ensuring that vapes could only be bought with photo ID: "Stronger age restrictions and proof of age."… "implementation of advanced age verification technologies and stricter penalties for non-compliance"

Education and Branding - Health Warnings and Information
Increasing the visibility and intensity of health warnings is seen as a key measure to deter vaping:: "More health warnings"… "promote the health risks they can have"… "Vapes need to be treated like cigarettes. Packaging should be dark colours and have warnings on them, they should be hidden away from sight in shops."

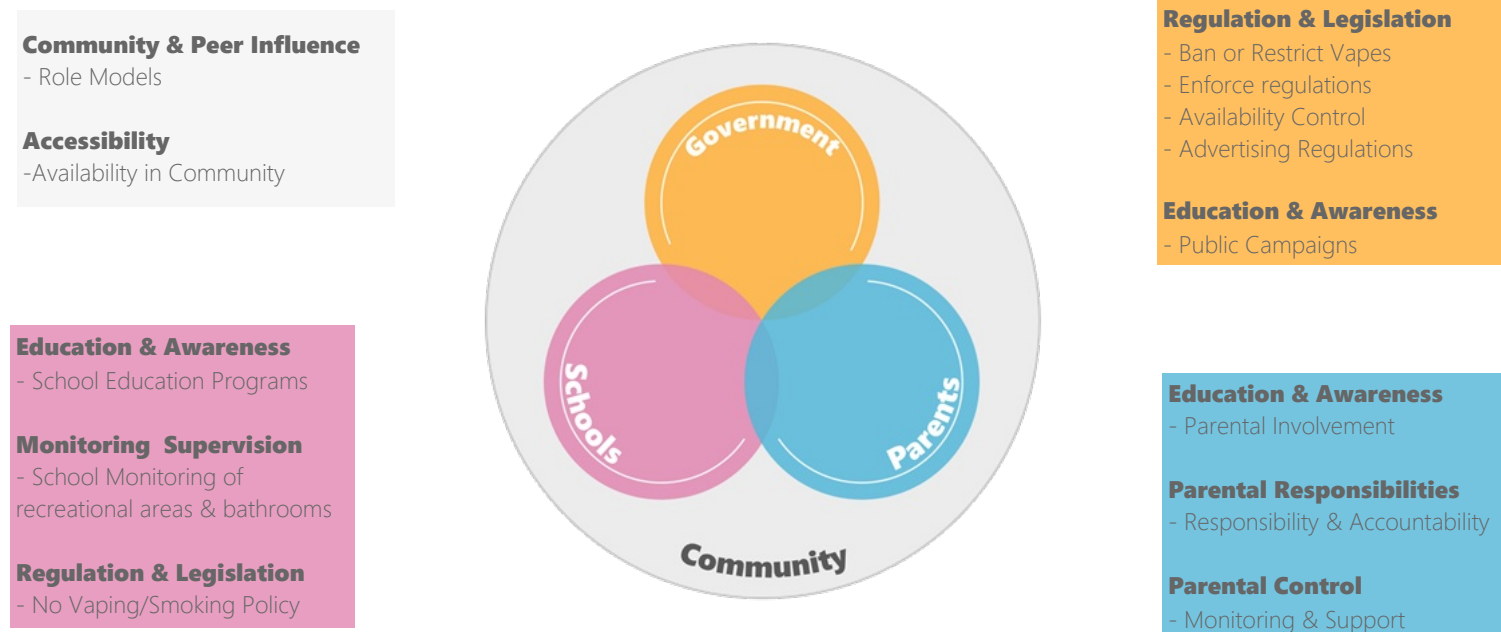**Education and Awareness - Parents and Young People**
There is a significant belief that informed parents and young people would be less likely to engage in vaping, "develop comprehensive education programs targeting both demographics, possibly through school curricula and community workshops"

Education and Awareness - Consequences Education
Awareness of health risks has been suggested: "launch awareness campaigns that highlight the short and long-term impacts of vaping, leveraging social media and other platforms popular among youth"

6. Solutions and Prevention Strategies

Community & Peer Influence
- Role Models

Accessibility
-Availability in Community

Education & Awareness
- School Education Programs

Monitoring Supervision
- School Monitoring of recreational areas & bathrooms

Regulation & Legislation
- No Vaping/Smoking Policy

Regulation & Legislation
- Ban or Restrict Vapes
- Enforce regulations
- Availability Control
- Advertising Regulations

Education & Awareness
- Public Campaigns

Education & Awareness
- Parental Involvement

Parental Responsibilities
- Responsibility & Accountability

Parental Control
- Monitoring & Support

Government

Schools

Parents

Community

Parents were asked to what roles and responsibilities government, schools and parents play in preventing vaping and smoking in young people. These have been split into the below themes:

Government Role

1. Regulation and Legislation - Ban or Restrict Vapes
There is a strong call for banning or significantly restricting the availability of vapes, with some suggesting making them prescription-only, "Vapes need to be banned or much less accessible."... "Government should make vapes prescription only."

2. Regulation and Legislation - Regulation Enforcement
Some parents highlighted the need for the government to enforce existing regulations more strictly: "Government should regulate it the same way they regulate tobacco."...""Ensure compliance with laws through regular inspections and penalties for violations"

3. Regulation and Legislation - Availability Control
Some responses suggest that the government should make vapes less accessible, either by limiting where they can be sold or making them more expensive, "Make access prohibitive - expensive, unavailable in many places."

4. Regulation and Legislation - Advertising Regulations
Calls for stronger regulations on advertising to reduce the appeal of vaping:"The government play a big part in limiting the advertising of products and legislating against use of these products"... " "Need to strongly advertise the negative effects."

5. Education and Awareness - Public Campaigns
Parents highlighted a need for public campaigns similar to anti-smoking campaigns to raise awareness about the dangers of vaping to all individuals, beyond young people: "A campaign like the dangers of smoking ones should be launched."... "Launch nationwide campaigns to educate the public, especially youth, about the dangers of vaping and smoking"... "More awareness of the cold hard facts."

Parental Role

6. Education and Awareness - Parental Involvement
There is a significant focus on involving parents in the education process and making them aware of their role in preventing vaping, "Parents need to get in young. Vaping is not a harmless habit."..."Have open and honest conversations with their children about these risks and the importance of making healthy choices."... "It's the role of parents and teachers to educate them of the risks of vaping/smoking"

7. Parental Responsibilities - Responsibility and Accountability
Emphasising the primary role of parents in preventing vaping through responsible parenting and accountability was also suggested: "Parents are the first who have responsibilities."... "How any parent could stand by and do nothing when their child vapes is beyond me."

8. Parental Control - Monitoring and Support
Emphasis on parents monitoring their children's behaviour and controlling their access to money to prevent purchasing vapes, "Parents monitoring their children's access to money."... "As parents - Not giving the children money to buy vapes."... "Being approachable for them if they are having difficulty through peer pressure"... "provide support and resources if their child is already vaping or smoking, including seeking professional help if necessary" ..."Be aware of their children's activities and social circles" ... "ultimately parents need to have the initial conversation"

6. Solutions and Prevention Strategies

Schools Role

9. Education and Awareness - School Programs
Schools are seen as important in educating students about the dangers of vaping through structured curriculum:, "Educating our children on the dangers."..."Education in schools on the dangers of vaping."..."schools should be highlighting the negatives, how unhealthy and bad for you pumping unknown chemicals into your body is. Showing what addiction looks like and how it WILL ruin your life."

10. Monitoring and Supervision - School Monitoring
Policing at schools, including patrols of toilets and outdoor areas, to prevent vaping was also suggested: "Policing at school, patrols of toilets and recreational areas."... "better patrolling of schools during breaks and toilet monitors"... "Bathrooms should be alarmed/monitored at all times as well as outdoor areas"

11. Regulation and Legislation -No Vaping/Smoking Policy
Parents also suggested for schools to have a no vaping and no smoking policy on school grounds, to prevent vaping: "schools should have a no vape/no smoking policy in place within the school buildings & premises and anybody caught breaching these policies should be firmly dealt with."

Community Role

12. Community and Peer Influence - Role Models
Parents highlighting the importance of having non-smoking/vaping role models, both as parents and in the wider community, and the influence they have on young people: "As a non-smoker & non-vaper, keep being that example."... "Set a positive example by not smoking"

13. Accessibility Issues - Availability in Community
Parents raised concerns about the general availability and access to vapes within communities: "It should not be so easy for children to buy these products."

Collaborative Approach

14. Joint Responsibility - Collaborative Effort
Overall, parents emphasised that preventing vaping requires a collaborative effort from government, schools, and parents, "Joint responsibility." "By working together, the government, schools, and parents can create a comprehensive and effective strategy to prevent and reduce vaping and smoking among young people."

Schools' View

Both primary schools and academies emphasised that engagement with parents or carers of children attending their schools regarding vaping should include regular emails or letters, in-person and virtual engagement sessions, either through parents' evenings or workshops. Schools also recommended resources, such as posters, leaflets or an online resource of information for parents, teachers and pupils.

Summary

The suggested solutions and preventative measures to reduce vaping and smoking among young people highlight an approach involving access restrictions, regulation of vaping promotion and advertising, stricter enforcement of age limits and a greater awareness of health consequences. Many young people and parents called for banning or heavily restricting access to vaping prodcuts, including making them prescription-only or increasing prices. There is a strong demand for limiting the visibility and marketing of vapes, especially towards younger audiences, with suggestiong to reduce their appeal through bland packaging and eliminating flavours that attract children.

Enforcement of age restrictions and tougher consequences for underage vaping were emphasised, with suggestions for fines and stricter school policiese. Health education in schools, alongside public campaigns and parental involvement, was also seen as critical to increasing awareness about the dangers of vaping. Schools and communities are encouraged to work collaboratively, with consistent engagement with parents and guardians through various channels, to ensure a unified effort in addressing the issue.

The overall consensus is that a comprehensive strategy, combining regulation, education and community involvement, is necessary to effectively prevent and reduce vaping and smoking among young people.

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

The findings from the surveys offer a comprehensive view of the current state of cigarette smoking among young people in Aberdeenshire, highlighting areas such as awareness, perceptions, access, influences, the support schools and parents need and potential solutions. Despite substantial public health campaigns and increased awareness of the dangers of smoking, significant challenges remain in curbing smoking initiation and persistence amongst young people. Together with the normalisation of vaping within social circles, combined with the ease of access of vapes and cigarettes, this presents significant challenges for public health initiatives. While there is a general awareness of the health risks, the perceived gap between personal views and peer norms indicates a need for more targeted education that addresses these misperceptions.

Whilst only 3% of pupils reported regularly smoking and vaping, 4% of pupils reported that they smoked cigarettes regularly, 11% of young people reported vaping on a regular basis. This highlights a concerning trend that could hinder Scotland's national target of reducing adult smoking prevalence from 15% in 2022 to 5% by 2034. The fact that these behaviours appear to increase with age suggests that smoking habits established during adolescence may persist into adulthood, contributing to the overall smoking population in the future.

Vaping, often perceived as a less harmful alternative, could serve as a gateway to traditional cigarette smoking, especially as young people become more exposed to nicotine and potentially escalate their use. This could exacerbate the public health challenge of reducing smoking prevalence, as it not only sustains but potentially increases the population of young smokers.

To achieve the target of reducing adult smoking rates to 5% by 2034, it is critical to address smoking behaviours early in life. Schools and parents play a pivotal role in combating this trend, yet they require more support and resources to engage effectively with young people on this topic.

The upcoming legislation banning single-use vapes and increasing the legal age for tobacco sales is likely to have a significant impact. However, the success of these measures will largely depend on their enforcement and the continued education of young people about the risks of vaping and smoking. Moreover, the role of social media and influencers in promoting these habits cannot be overlooked, suggesting that interventions must also extend into digital spaces where young people are most influenced.

Overall, this report highlights the need for a many-layered approach that combines legislative action, education, and community engagement to reduce vaping and smoking among young people. By addressing the root causes of smoking and vaping initiation and providing clear, consistent messaging about its risks, stakeholders can work together to curb this growing public health concern.

Conclusion

The findings from the surveys conducted across Aberdeenshire reveal that a proportion of young people continue to smoke cigarettes. Whilst awareness of the risks is high, social influences continue to drive smoking behaviours. Access to cigarettes remains a significant issue and peer influence plays a powerful role in smoking initiation and continuation into adulthood.

Parents and schools are key stakeholders in the effort to reduce smoking among young people, but they need more support and resources to fulfil this role effectively. By strengthening restrictions, enhancing education and providing more robust support systems, significant progress can be made in reducing smoking rates among teenagers. Collaboration between families, schools and communities is essential to creating a future where smoking is no longer an issue.