



EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 30TH JANUARY 2024

SUBJECT: HEALTHY SCHOOLS ON VAPING

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND
CORPORATE SERVICES**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 Consider national and local concerns around vaping amongst young people. Identify how the Local Authority continues to support schools to address these concerns.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 In 2021/22, just under 125,000 11 to 16 year olds across Wales took part in the School Health Research Network survey. Data indicated that 1 in 5 young people in Gwent are reported to have tried an electronic cigarette, more commonly known as vaping.

In a commitment to reduce the increasing number of young people vaping across Caerphilly, the healthy schools team work in partnership with Public Health Wales and other external providers. Schools receive comprehensive and age-appropriate guidance to educate pupils of the adverse effects of vaping. This will, in turn, encourage informed choices around the use of vapes.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Education Scrutiny Committee to consider the contents of the report and endorse the support offered to schools.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Education scrutiny to understand the national and local issues linked to the increased use of vapes among young pupils. Recognise the range of support that can be offered to schools.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1. The 'School Health Research Network' (SHRN) aims to provide robust data about the health and wellbeing of young people to stakeholders at a local, regional, and national level. SHRN publishes a Student Health and Wellbeing Survey every two years. Pupils (academic years 7 to 11) are asked questions on a range of health behaviours such as substance use, diet and physical activity.

The most recently published survey in April 2023 was based on responses from pupils from September to December 2021. Schools receive individual reports which can be used as an evidence base to plan priorities for improvement. The healthy schools team use Local Authority level data to inform our support for schools.

The School Health Research Network survey reported the following:

- Most children and young people don't vape. However, the use of vaping devices among children and young people in Wales has been on the rise in recent years.
- 1 in 5 secondary aged learners (20%) from Year 7 to 11 have tried vapes.
- 5% of secondary aged learners reported use of vapes regularly (defined as at least weekly).
- Year 11 learners were more likely to use a vaping device at least weekly (14%) compared with Year 7 learners (1%).
- Secondary aged learners from less affluent families were the most likely to have tried vapes and to use them regularly.
- A higher proportion of year 7 to 11 girls (7%) reported vaping at least weekly compared with boys (4%).

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

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

Whether a device contains nicotine or not is an important distinction in law. Vapes without nicotine can be sold to anyone at any age. However, it is not always possible to distinguish between vaping devices that contain nicotine and those that do not.

In response to the above, the Aneurin Bevan Gwent Public Health Team produced local guidance to support young people to make informed choices in regards to their health and wellbeing. ([Health Wellbeing Vaping Schools guidance E \(final\).pdf](#)). This document was sent to all schools in Caerphilly during the Summer Term 2023, and provides information to school staff under the following headings:

- Why is there concern around vaping?
- Actions for schools/signposting services
- Advice for parents/carers
- Laws around e-cigarettes –It is illegal in England and Wales for retailers to sell vapes, e-cigarettes or e-liquids to anyone under 18
- What are e-cigarettes
- The effects on the environment – 1,000,000 single use vapes are thrown away every week
- Useful contacts

The healthy schools team commissioned an external specialist, recommended by Public Health Wales, to provide training for school staff. Forty-eight delegates attended including staff from primary schools, secondary schools and the school nursing service. Survey results were extremely positive, with 100% of delegates saying that they would recommend the training to their colleagues, and that the knowledge learnt would help inform future practice. This activity is due to be repeated before the end of the academic year with the intention that all schools take up the offer of free training.

In September 2023 the Vaping Incident Response Group (IRG) at Public Health Wales also produced a guidance document for schools. Feedback on the information was positive. Further guidance is due over the coming months as best practice evidence to address this issue becomes more readily available.

The 'health and well-being curriculum project' team in Public Health Wales hosted a Vaping Resources Development Workshop where specialists worked alongside representatives from primary, secondary and special schools to collaborate and co-construct vaping resource ideas for schools. These resources are due to be distributed to schools in the spring term.

Other projects continue to be planned by Public Health Wales, ASH Wales or the JustB Smoking Cessation project. The intention is to provide schools and educational settings with practical hands-on advice and resources that can be utilised effectively in the classroom. The Local Authority Healthy Schools team will continue to work with national partners and ensure any additional support or resources are disseminated or shared with schools. Responses from a recent survey indicated that Caerphilly schools value the support from the healthy schools team and see the officers as the main source for advice and information.

5.2. Response to a regional incident

Public Health Wales issued a vaping safeguarding alert to all Gwent schools via Directors of Education. This followed a regional incident involving five young people in Gwent who became unwell after using a vape which is thought to have contained an illicit drug or toxin. The Local Authority safeguarding team worked with schools to raise awareness and provide advice.

5.3 CONCLUSION

Reducing the number of pupils using vapes is an increasing priority for schools. Officers across the Local Authority, working with external partners, continue to provide advice and support based on the latest research and best practice. The healthy schools team will continue to monitor and evaluate the impact of the support, making adjustments where appropriate.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

6.1 No related assumptions have been felt to be necessary in relation to this report.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 Integrated Impact Assessment is not required for this report.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 No financial implications.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 No personnel implications.

10. CONSULTATIONS

10.1 All responses from the consultations have been incorporated in the report.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 This is to identify the enabling statutory power(s) for the decision under consideration. It should also state whether the power(s) are the responsibility of full Council or Cabinet and if it has been delegated to officers. If you have any queries on powers, please consult the Monitoring Officer/Head of Legal Services.

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