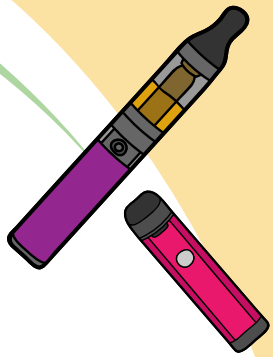
Bitesize Briefing: Vaping

GATESHEAD safeguarding children partnership

1 Vaping: What's the Harm?

There are a number of safeguarding risks associated with vaping:

- Addiction to nicotine is particularly harmful to developing brains.
- Increased risk of respiratory harm and other physical health effects.
- Possible exposure to illicit or unsafe devices and substances.
- Illicit vapes are linked to organised crime and exploitation.



Marketing can be misleading and 'targeted' towards children (e.g. colourful packaging, sweet flavours etc.)

2 Vaping and the Law



It is illegal for anyone under the age of 18 to be in possession of a nicotine, CBD or THC vape.

CBD is widely available in many forms (oils, gummies, creams). It comes from the cannabis plant, but it doesn't impair thinking or perception like THC.

THC (Tetrahydrocannabinol) is the main psychoactive ingredient in the cannabis plant, which causes the 'high'.

It is illegal for anyone to sell or supply vapes to anyone under the age of 18.

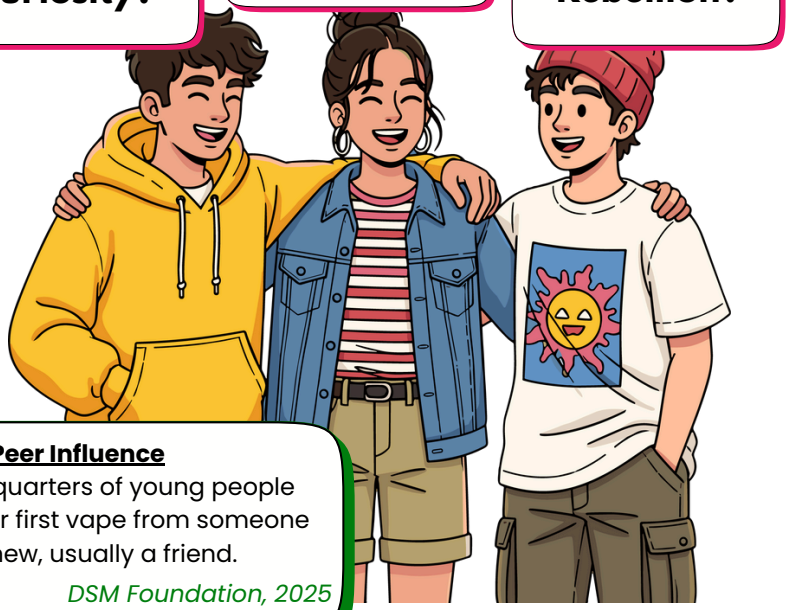
It is illegal for businesses to sell or supply single-use (disposable) vapes in any form.



3 Why Might Young People Vape?

Vaping has quickly become part of modern youth culture, but why?

Curiosity? **Fun?** **Rebellion?**



Peer Influence

Over three quarters of young people received their first vape from someone they knew, usually a friend.

DSM Foundation, 2025

Flavour

Fruit and sweet flavours are the most popular choices for young people. They are less likely to opt for tobacco or menthol flavourings.

Action on Smoking and Health, 2025

Promotion

Young people consistently report seeing vape advertising in shops and promotions online, most commonly on Tik Tok and Instagram.

DSM Foundation, 2025

Accessibility

46% of 11-17 year olds report buying vapes directly from shops, despite this being a criminal offence.

Action on Smoking and Health, 2025

DID YOU KNOW?

Click to View **Use of Vapes Among Young People in Great Britain (ASH, 2025)**

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4 Links to Organised Crime and Exploitation

Illegal vapes are a growing problem. They are not compliant with UK regulations, and often contain harmful chemicals, including illegal substances.



Illegal vapes are often sold alongside other illicit goods, such as fake tobacco. This increases the risk of children becoming embedded into criminal supply chains.

Illegal vapes can be used to groom and exploit children. Criminals may distribute vapes for free, and later claim that the child 'owes them' something in return. **This is debt bondage**.

Criminal networks may use illegal vapes to initiate contact with young people and build rapport, later leading to serious forms of child exploitation.

Illegal vapes can be filled with harmful substances, which increases health vulnerabilities and the risk of addiction, making children more susceptible to exploitation.



Unregulated/illegal vapes that have been tested in the UK have been found to contain...



Acrolein
Commonly used as a pesticide.

Synthetic Cannabinoid
More commonly known as 'Spice'.

Acetone
The chemical found in nail varnish remover.

Lead and Nickel

Diacetyl
A harmful chemical linked to 'popcorn lung'.

Formaldehyde
A known carcinogen (cancer-causing substance)

Ketamine

6 Learning & Development: Additional Training for Practitioners

Training Presentation
Substance Misuse & Young People

Change Grow Live | Positive Futures Gateshead

Training Presentation
Vaping & Young People

We would like to give special thanks to Positive Futures for their contributions to this Bitesize Briefing.