

# Youth Vaping: Luton School Guidance



**Luton**

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# Section 1: Key Messages

“

**If you smoke, vaping (e-cigarettes) is much safer; if you don't smoke, don't vape. – Professor Chris Witty, Chief Medical Officer**

”

Youth vaping can be a complex issue, so it is important that the below key messages are used to help children and young people understand the harms and risks:

- vapes are for adult smokers to help them quit smoking
- young people under 18 should not use vapes, including to quit smoking
- vapes are far less harmful than smoking, but they are not risk free
- it is illegal for shops to sell vape products to anyone under 18, or for adults to buy on their behalf

Health promotion should focus on discouraging initiation, encouraging cessation of both smoking and vaping, and on the health benefits associated with not vaping and smoking.

**Communication should warn of the likelihood of developing dependence and explain the uncertainty about the longer-term health effects of vaping.**

It may also be worth communicating that most young people do not vape.

# Section 2: What is Vaping?

**A vape or “electronic cigarette” is a device heating up liquid to create a vapour you breathe in.** The liquid in the vape delivers nicotine via a mouthpiece, although other harmful substances such as cannabis can be added. The main ingredients are vegetable glycerine and propylene glycol, but most e-liquids also contain nicotine, which must be no more than 2% or 20mg per ml, as well as small amounts of flavourings and sweeteners.

## Safe vapes vs illicit products

Vaping devices that are not regulated **fail to meet certain product standards** including restrictions on capacity, nicotine strength (the legal maximum is 20mg/ml, equivalent to 2%) and specific and standardised health warnings. **They are illegal.**

### A legal vape device will:

- have a maximum tank/cartridge size of 2ml. Do not buy devices with tanks larger than this
- have a maximum nicotine concentration of 20 milligrams per millilitre (mg/ml); This is equal to 2%, or less
- feature a warning label covering at least 30% of the front and back packaging. It must state: “This product contains nicotine which is a highly addictive substance”; If these messages are missing, it is not a legal device
- not contain caffeine or taurine, or certain colourings
- carry a kitemark and CE mark

### E-liquid refill containers

All legal refills must:

- contain no more than 10ml of e-liquid in a single refill container
- have a tank capacity of no more than 2ml
- have a maximum nicotine concentration of 2%, or 20mg/ml
- have a warning label covering at least 30% of the front and back of the packaging saying, “This product contains nicotine which is a highly addictive substance”
- not include caffeine or taurine, or certain colourings
- be child-resistant and tamper-proof

# Smoking vs vaping

Smoking is much more harmful than vaping. Tobacco smoke contains carbon monoxide and tar, a sticky soup of around 250 toxic chemicals, 69 of which are known to cause cancer, cause diseases, disability, and early death.

## However, vapes are not harmless

There is strong evidence that vaping is less harmful than smoking, but it is not risk-free. Vaping devices should not be used by young people, especially those who have never smoked.

Short-term effects of vaping can include:

- coughing
- headaches
- dizziness
- sore throats

There is simply no current evidence on the potential long-term harms of vaping **so the potential health harms of vaping are unknown**. But if health harms do develop, we can assume that they are likely to be substantially lower than smoking.

To address this knowledge gap, some large studies have been funded that will allow researchers to study the longterm health effects, however this study will not conclude till 2035.

## Safety concerns

Latest research from Material Focus has shown the number of single-use disposable vapes thrown each week has increased from 1.3 million to nearly 5 million per week. Disposable vapes contain essential materials such as lithium and copper which are regularly binned and now banned in England.

They are toxic and can damage the environment and wildlife if littered.

The number of battery related fires linked to thrown away disposable vapes continues to increase and this makes them difficult to dispose of safely.

# Section 3: The Law and Vaping

## The Tobacco and Vapes Bill

**From 1 June 2025, it will be illegal to sell, supply or possess for sale or supply any single-use (disposable) vapes, including non-nicotine versions.**

The Tobacco and Vapes Bill aims to prevent the legal sale of cigarettes to the next generation and curb youth vaping representing a significant step toward a smokefree generation.

- The Tobacco and Vapes Bill (2024) is crucial to protecting children and young people.
- Not only will the bill create the first smokefree generation it will further regulate vapes and vape products. The bill will give the government powers to stop vapes and other consumer nicotine products (nicotine pouches) from being deliberately branded and advertised to appeal to children and young people.

**The Government have provided two reasons behind the rationale for the ban, however, it is being enacted under environmental legislation and this should be seen as it's primary purpose:**

- 1. To protect the environment. Nearly five million disposable vapes were littered or discarded every week in 2024, according to Material Focus.**
- 2. To reduce youth vaping. The introduction of a new generation of disposable vapes in 2021 coincided with a significant increase in youth vaping. These new disposables were cheap, attractive, easy to use and widely promoted.**

Vapes and vaping products containing nicotine, like tobacco, are age restricted. It's illegal to sell them to under 18s, and for adults to buy them on their behalf. If you know of anyone who does sell vapes or tobacco illegally, you can report **anonymously** to Trading Standards via 'Keep it Out' website [www.keep-it-out.co.uk](http://www.keep-it-out.co.uk). Alternatively, you can contact them directly at [tradingstandards@luton.gov.uk](mailto:tradingstandards@luton.gov.uk).

# Section 4: Having Conversations with Children and Young People

## Find the right moment

– when you see someone vaping, a vape shop, or advertisements

## Listen to them

– learn from them but also use your knowledge to help them understand the facts and that vapes are not harmless.

## Ask questions

– what do they think about vaping? Do they know people who vape? Why do they think people vape?

## Talk about your expectations

– explain your concerns and tell them why you don't want them to vape or smoke and to make clear that although neither are recommended, smoking is the far greater risk.

## If your child is vaping, try to understand why

– ask questions like “What do you enjoy about vaping?” Or “How does vaping make you feel?”. Understanding this might help you to understand their needs and discuss other ways to meet those needs.

## Talk about the different reasons why children may vape

– give examples such as wanting to fit in, curiosity, stress.

**Let them know that you care about them** – explain that those who knowingly sell vapes to under 18s don't care who they sell to and they are just interested in making money

**Talk through effective ways to respond** – if they ever feel pressured to try it and practise responding together.



**Our advice to children and young people is:  
Don't smoke? Don't start to vape.**



# Section 5: How can Schools Respond?

A whole school approach is the most effective way to build trust, respect and improve the health and wellbeing of all within the wider school community. This will also support with reducing vaping, smoking and drug use within the school premise.

Luton Public Health recommends schools adopt the following actions, which will support the wider implementation of a whole school approach to reducing vaping.

## Action 1: Adopt a whole school approach to vaping

Schools have a statutory duty to deliver health education on drugs, alcohol and tobacco. This toolkit has been designed for schools looking to achieve a smoke- and vape-free setting and view this as a priority area. It provides activity ideas, supporting information and free resources for Luton schools with outcomes and evaluation methods to measure progress. There are also recommendations around creating a smoke- and vape-free policy, which should accompany any existing policies related to drug use within the school setting. An action plan and audit tool are available to help you get started with support from the local Public Health team if required.

## Action 2: Review behaviour policies and practices associated with vaping

Adhering to the NICE guidance, develop a whole school vaping/ smokefree policy in consultation with young people and staff which should align with any existing drugs policy to ensure there is consistency. Parents can also be informed of the policy and encouraged to reinforce the message at home. A letter has been drafted for alerting parents and included for your use.

The policy should consider including the following:

	State 'vaping devices are prohibited within the school premises, as it applies to any form of tobacco products'
	Incorporate vaping and smoking prevention activities led by young people and staff
	Adapt vaping policy to link to wider school ethos, values and motto
	Apply the vaping policy to everyone using the premises for any purpose, at any time. Do not allow vaping and smoking in any areas of the grounds including outside the school grounds
	Apply to school-related activities outside of the premises (i.e., school trips)
	Build staff confidence by increasing their vaping knowledge through training including risks/benefits for adult smokers, law and additional resources
	Confiscation of prohibited items including vape devices and cigarettes
	Identify support for young people looking to reduce, quit or understand how to use vapes more safely
	Working with other local agencies such as trading standards and promoting the business card to report known sources of illicit tobacco or vape products
	Consider how the physical environment promotes or detracts opportunities for young people to vape in schools
	Review health and safety policies, particularly in scenarios where first aid may need to be administered where an illegal substance is mixed in the vape, leading to a side effect

## Action 3: Reporting health harms from vaping

In January 2024, the Metropolitan Police informed the Department of Health of five young people aged 14–16 in London who were hospitalised with serious health harms having used vapes, which contained spice. If you experience something similar or adverse side effects, you can report these on the <https://yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk> website by completing and submitting a form.

It is advisable that schools support children and young people to reduce vaping amongst pupils, in a similar way to other age-restricted products including tobacco, substance misuse and alcohol. This is only possible by prohibiting the products from being available on the school premises.

If a child or young person has brought a vape into school, the next step would entail confiscating and disposing of them safely. If a young person has mixed with illegal substances, first aid may be required. Schools should refer to their first aid policy in that instance and keep this updated.



# Section 6: Safeguarding and Managing Behaviour

Schools may need to tackle behaviour associated with vaping including the following:

- a child bringing a vape on to school property
- a child reported to vape within the wider community
- a child selling vapes to others including peers
- a child being exploited to sell vapes to peers
- a child being given vape by a parent as a harm reduction measure, as it is safer than smoking

## Having conversations with your students:

If you're speaking to a young person about vaping, the chances are that you found a vape in their possession, saw them vaping, or someone else reported them to you for vaping. In the mind of the young person, this creates a negative expectation of what is going to follow.

Your experience of working with young people will have taught you that **simply telling them what to do rarely works**, and that sometimes a direct approach is counterproductive.

**Very Brief Advice on Vaping (VBAV)** is designed to:

- establish whether they have any concerns about vaping (**ASK**)
- inform them of the risks of vaping and that help is available (**ADVISE**)
- respond to their individual needs (**ACT**)



# Section 7: Guidance for Supporting

It is advised that children should not be permanently excluded from school for vaping or smoking, unless it is associated with other disruptive behaviour, which justifies this. The aim should be to offer support to young people. The following steps should be taken if a student is found to be vaping.

1. Discuss concerns with the designated safeguarding lead.
2. Establish where the young person is sourcing their vape material and report to Trading Standards via business card or the police in other necessary cases.
3. Consider a warning letter or phone call home, sharing information on the health risks of vaping with a consent letter from the parent highlighting their responsibility to reinforce the message. A template letter has been included for your use.
4. Refer the young person for support to ResoLUTiONs **with consent of the parent**. Your school may need to set up a meeting to consult with the parents/pupil before referring to a drug service. The only exception to this is, if there is a safeguarding concern or the young person is considered at risk of significant harm

## Training Opportunities:

The Substance Impact Champion Programme is designed to help raise the drug service profile within schools, equipping school staff to feel confident to identify and engage children identified as at risk or using substances. ResoLUTiONs offer assemblies and workshops for schools or targeted groups; if you would like further information or to book please contact [resolutions.info@cgl.org.uk](mailto:resolutions.info@cgl.org.uk).

# Section 8: FAQs

## Questions young people might ask about stopping vaping

**I'm worried that if I stop vaping, I'll lose my friends as they all vape**

It's hard when a lot of your friends vape, but you can still be friends with them and not vape. It's not that you're telling them that they're wrong, you're just choosing to do something different. Do you think any of your friends would consider stopping vaping with you?

**Is vaping as bad as smoking in terms of harm? My dad used a vape to quit smoking!**

Vaping is not risk free, but it is less harmful than smoking. Evidence shows that vapes are an effective aid to giving up smoking.

**I smoke and vape. I've heard so much about how bad vaping is, even my mum says that I might as well keep on just smoking when my vape has run out.**

Sometimes it feels like we have lost sight of the fact that smoking is more harmful than vaping. If you are going to stop anything, stop the cigarettes first and then, when you are sure you're not going to smoke again, you can look at stopping using a vape.

**I don't think vapes are as addictive as cigarettes so why is it a problem?**

Using nicotine in any form can lead to dependence and this can be problematic. When you get regular doses of nicotine from vaping, you may find it difficult to get through the school day, or even a single lesson, without needing a top-up of nicotine from your vape. Visits to the cinema, indoor music events and travelling on public transport where vaping and smoking aren't allowed may start to become something of an ordeal if you can't vape. Have you noticed this?

## **Vaping helps me feel relaxed, especially when I'm stressed or anxious. I'll miss that if I stop.**

When you vape, you get a dose of nicotine which then reduces over time until you next vape. This regular need to top up the nicotine may be felt as irritability, anxiety, restlessness and strong urges to vape. When you stop vaping these highs and lows of nicotine stop, and this can help you feel less stressed. We can look at other less risky ways that can help with stress.

### **I'm worried that I'm vaping all the time, what should I do?**

Worrying about vaping all the time is a good motivator for starting to set limits. This is a very normal way of curbing behaviours that worry us, such as too much phone use, or snacking on chocolate and crisps. We can talk about how you can develop some helpful ways to start to reduce vaping (with a view of quitting a vape), such as keeping your vape in a drawer and not your pocket, asking someone to keep your vape for you, setting the times in the day when you'll vape and setting vape-free areas for yourself, like your bedroom or garden.

## **Questions that colleagues, parents and carers might ask about stopping vaping**

### **How do I talk to a young person about their vape use?**

As with every other 'serious' conversation with a young person, it is best to be clear, calm, non-judgemental and to listen more than you talk. Be prepared to have the conversation in several stages, so that you don't overwhelm them and shut down the conversation. Asking how they feel about vaping in general, what they hear from other people and what others are doing may be a good introduction rather than focusing on their behaviour. Thank them for being honest with you and make it safe for them to tell you the truth. Make sure you have the facts straight yourself before you begin.

## **How do I deal with resistance to stopping vaping from a young person who has been referred via school, or under the pressure of a parent?**

No one can compel a young person, or an adult for that matter, to stop smoking or vaping. You can use open-ended questions to explore what has been said by the school, or by parents, and try and better understand what is going on in the dynamics between the people who are worried about the young person and the individual themselves. You can try and tease out the thoughts and feelings behind the resistance to stopping, but this may be a slow process; the more you try and make it an urgent matter, the more the walls are likely to go up. Take it slowly and assure the young person that you will continue to be there to listen to them.

### **If vapes contains nicotine, does it count as smoking?**

Vaping is not smoking. A vape produces vapour, not smoke. You do not smoke a vape. It's important to get the language right, so as not to confuse people who need to stop smoking tobacco. Tobacco smoke contains tar, carbon monoxide and many other toxins which cause cancers, lung disease and heart disease. This affects not only the person smoking, but also those around them who are affected by secondhand smoke. Vaping does not involve burning anything and so it is less harmful than smoking. Current evidence suggests that short-term exposure to secondhand vapour is not harmful to health, although it is possible that regular exposure to people vaping indoors for long periods of time carries some low-level risk. Any potential risks from passive vaping are likely to be significantly lower than the proven harms from passive smoking.

### **I was told that my son could go to the Stop Smoking Service to get help to stop vaping, but they said they couldn't give him anything.**

Stop Smoking Services are set up to help people who smoke tobacco. Total Wellbeing Luton may give support to people who vape and some will provide quit aids, but many are not set up to support young people to stop vaping. This briefing will give you some guidance on how to support your son and the use of nicotine replacement therapy that might be of benefit to him.

## **I'm worried that my teenager might be using illegal vapes that have been spiked with other substances. What can I do to protect them?**

This is a very real concern. If we were talking to an adult, we would emphasise that the safest way to buy a vape is to go to a specialist shop, rather than a mixed goods shop where illicit vapes may be sold. As you know though, the sale of vapes to someone under 18 and proxy buying (buying a vape on behalf of a young person) are unlawful. The biggest risk of spiking is probably when vapes are exchanged between young people, either because someone has asked for 'something extra' in their vape, or for a laugh. Tell your teenager that there is no way of knowing the contents or the risks of taking a vape from someone else and that, for their own protection, this is very unwise.

## **Isn't vaping a gateway into smoking?**

It's likely that there is a connection between vaping and smoking, but studies show correlation and not causation. Young people who try stuff tend to try other stuff, so we can expect to see a range of substances being experimented with. We are seeing rates of vaping in young people rising, if it were causing young people to start smoking, we'd expect to see rates of young people smoking also increasing, and this has not happened.

## **I've recently become aware of some young people putting nicotine pouches in their mouths; should I be worried about this?**

Nicotine pouches are small wads of cellulose impregnated with nicotine and flavouring. They should not be confused with snus, or other tobacco pouches, which contain pasteurised powdered tobacco, and are illegal in the UK. Nicotine pouches are only covered by general product safety regulation and have no age-related legislation. This means that nicotine pouches currently do not fall under any legal limits for nicotine or other substances, may contain high levels of nicotine, and can legally be sold to young people. Young people may be using pouches experimentally, they may be using them to stop smoking or vaping, or they may have

taken up the habit but now find themselves dependent on the product. Given their potentially high nicotine content and the susceptibility of adolescent brains to the addictive effects of nicotine, young people should not use nicotine pouches. The Tobacco and Vapes Bill will ban the sale of all nicotine products to under 18s as well as bring them into the legislative framework that will apply to vapes.



# Resources:

## For professionals:

### **Published guidance from National Centre for Smoking Cessation and Training**

<https://www.ncsct.co.uk/library/view/pdf/Young-people-and-stopping-vaping.pdf>

Full guidance on vaping cessation in children and young people.

### **Luton Borough Council Vaping**

[https://m.luton.gov.uk/Page/Show/Health\\_and\\_social\\_care/health/publichealth/adultswellbeing/Pages/Vaping-and-E-cigarettes.aspx](https://m.luton.gov.uk/Page/Show/Health_and_social_care/health/publichealth/adultswellbeing/Pages/Vaping-and-E-cigarettes.aspx)

### **Caudwell Youth**

<https://www.caudwellyouth.org/service>

Young people aged 11-24 We support young people with a wide range of needs, primarily in the categories of mental health, care experience, offending behaviour and exploitation. Via professional online referral: [info@caudwellyouth.org](mailto:info@caudwellyouth.org)

### **CAMHS**

<https://www.elft.nhs.uk/services/camhs-south-bedfordshire-and-luton>

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) provides outpatient assessments, support, and treatment for children and young people up to 18 years old with mental health problems, offering help for a range of difficulties including emotional problems, anxieties, behavioural issues, and trauma. CAMHS services can be accessed through referrals and appointments, with services including 1-2-1 sessions, group therapies, medication, and support in schools and GP surgeries

### **Luton SEN Service**

<https://padlet.com/SENStraining/local-support-for-families-on-the-autism-spectrum-in-luton-mtm5uir9ki60onhb>

## **Family Partnership Service**

[https://m.luton.gov.uk/Page/Show/Health\\_and\\_social\\_care/safeguarding/safeguarding\\_children/Pages/default.aspx](https://m.luton.gov.uk/Page/Show/Health_and_social_care/safeguarding/safeguarding_children/Pages/default.aspx)

The Family Partnership Service is dedicated to providing comprehensive support to all families including our care experienced young people and care leavers, ensuring they receive the tailored assistance necessary to thrive within their communities

## **Luton Family Hubs**

<https://familyhubs.luton.gov.uk/youth>

## **MECC Link**

<https://www.mecclink.co.uk/east-of-england/mental-wellbeing/>

## **Information on Vapes:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4o3ilaofguM>

<https://makesmokinghistory.co.uk/resources-on-youth-vaping/>

<https://ash.org.uk/key-topics/youth-vaping>

**FRANK website** – it is important for young people to know the facts about vaping, so they can make an informed choice. A national 24-hour helpline offering information and advice regarding drugs and substance misuse concerns.

Call: **0300 123 6600** website: [talktofrank.com/drug/vapes](http://talktofrank.com/drug/vapes)

## **For parents:**

### **Luton Borough Council Vaping**

[https://m.luton.gov.uk/Page/Show/Health\\_and\\_social\\_care/health/publichealth/adultswellbeing/Pages/Vaping-and-E-cigarettes.aspx](https://m.luton.gov.uk/Page/Show/Health_and_social_care/health/publichealth/adultswellbeing/Pages/Vaping-and-E-cigarettes.aspx)

### **ResoLUTiONs**

<https://www.changegrowlive.org/resolutions-drug-alcohol-service-luton/yp>

ResoLUTiONs have a specialist team (The YP Hub) delivering psychosocial interventions including both 1:1 and group interventions in house and

through outreach. Our interventions and care planning is based on a person centred holistic support model, using evidence based interventions including motivational interviewing, solution-focused brief intervention, trauma informed care and harm reduction All 7- to 25-year-olds

Email: [Resolutions.Info@cgl.org.uk](mailto:Resolutions.Info@cgl.org.uk)

Telephone: **0800 054 6603**

Online referral: <https://www.changegrowlive.org/resolutions-drug-alcohol-service-luton/referrals>

### **Discovery College**

[https://mindrecoverynet.org.uk/providers\\_profile/bedford-and-luton-discovery-college/](https://mindrecoverynet.org.uk/providers_profile/bedford-and-luton-discovery-college/)

The Discovery College is an educational project, focused on improving young people aged 13 to 18 years wellbeing. Free workshops are held online and face-to-face.

### **The Local Offer Luton Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Information Resource**

<https://directory.luton.gov.uk/kb5/luton/directory/advice.page?id=PqsBGYw6CMg&localofferchannel=0>

If your child is struggling with their emotional and/or mental health, there are a number of local and national services offering information, advice and support for children and young people aged 0-25 years. This collection of resources reflects a multiagency approach to supporting the emotional wellbeing of children and young people in Luton.

### **Cumbria Youth Substance Misuse Vaping Factsheet for parents/carers**

[www.cumbria.gov.uk/elibrary/Content/Internet/537/38232/38404/4511715140.pdf](http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/elibrary/Content/Internet/537/38232/38404/4511715140.pdf)

### **NSPCC for Parents**

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/support-for-parents/>

For all those with a parenting role. Offers online advice and resources for a range of things

## For Children & Young People:

### Childline

<https://www.childline.org.uk/>

Children and Young People – range of support and advice

### Papyrus

<https://www.papyrus-uk.org/>

Advice and guidance for young people through 'Hopeline' who are overwhelmed, not coping with life and thinking of suicide

### Anna Freud Crisis Messenger

<https://www.annafreud.org/afc-crisis-messenger/>

The Anna Freud Crisis Messenger text service is a free, confidential, 24/7 text message support service for anyone who is feeling overwhelmed or is struggling to cope. The service is staffed by trained volunteers who will work with you to take your next steps towards feeling better

### Tokko

<http://tokko.co.uk/our/projects/support-projects/counselling/>

Brief interventions programme offering 6 weeks of counselling. For young people with mild to moderate emotional/mental health needs. Talking therapies take place in a safe setting. Professional & self-referrals welcome (must be registered with a Luton GP) Young people aged 11-18 years old.

### Youthscape

<https://www.youthscape.co.uk/ys-luton>

Emotional Well Being Support – Mentoring. Emotional Wellbeing work in schools with two streams: One-to-One Mentoring and Group Work. Support for young people dealing with a wide range of issues including anger, anxiety and low self-esteem.

## **Cambridge Community Services NHS Trust**

[ccs.bedsandlutonchildrenshealthhub@nhs.net](mailto:ccs.bedsandlutonchildrenshealthhub@nhs.net)

Contact number: 0300 555 0606. Also, via direct contact with  
School Nurse

School Nurses can support on a one to one basis virtually or in school where there is a need for talking therapy and guidance with issues of exam pressure, relationships and other health issues or conditions.

# Thank you for reading

To find out more  
[luton.gov.uk/vapes](https://luton.gov.uk/vapes)



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