

Council – 22 November 2023

Liberal Democrats Group Amendment to motion 9d – Vaping

Over the last few years, vaping among our young people has risen sharply, both nationally and locally.

In Trafford our Public Health team undertook a Young People's Trading Standards Survey 2022 which told us:

- 10% of young people who completed the survey claimed to vape occasionally or regularly compared to the GM average of 22%;
- 77% answered that they had never tried a vape, which is higher than the GM average of 59%.

However, our Voice of the Child Champions group told us in February 2023 that they felt the prevalence estimated in this survey are inaccurate, and the number of young people vaping was higher and that most people who vaped had not smoked before.

Also, some data we have accessed from Action on Smoking Health (ASH) shows that 8.6% of 11- to 18-year-olds in England vaped in 2022, compared with 4% in 2021.

Further data from ASH shows that single-use vapes are the chosen product for the vast majority of young people who have started using e-cigarettes (69% in 2023).

Some health groups are calling for single-use vapes to be banned completely. Unscrupulous retailers who sell vapes to children, often stock illegal products, containing high levels of toxic elements like chromium and lead.

Single-use vapes are detrimental to the environment, with over a million single-use plastic vapes and associated batteries going to landfill or littering the streets each week.

Recent Chartered Trading Standards Institute research found that 60% of local trading standards services report high street shops selling vapes or vaping products to children. Trading standards teams reported a significant rise in underage vape sales last year, with more than a fifth of youngsters buying vaping products from newsagents while 16.3% buying them from a supermarket. Schools in Trafford are mirroring this trend with secondary schools now having to confiscate vaping products on school premises.

The effects of e-cigarettes and vaping are still not yet fully understood - which is especially important in the context of young people, as their lungs are still developing. There is growing evidence that e-cigarettes can help people manage their nicotine cravings – but this isn't without risk. While research has shown vaping poses a small fraction of the risks of smoking, it is deeply worrying that more and more children – who have never smoked – are starting vaping.

The LGA has called on its members to step up enforcement to deal with growing numbers of shops selling vapes to children despite the 18-age limit, with many “especially concerned” by child-friendly marketing, including colourful packages and different flavours. We are aware of the anti-social aspects of vaping and the environmental problems that are also associated; however, this motion is concentrating on our young people’s health and what we do to prevent ill health for them in the future.

This Council asks the following:

- that the Leader writes to the Secretary of state for tighter regulations on the marketing of vape products, including a ban on brightly colour packaging and a review of the flavours vape companies use which are likely to appeal to children.
- that all parties across the chamber lobby the government and their local MPs for extra funding for councils for education and support to deliver to our young people the real health issues that vaping causes in the long term and the short term around popcorn lung and more.
- Call for harsher punishments for companies which flout advertising rules to promote their products on social media, and for more licensing powers to allow local authorities to ban the sale of e-cigarettes in shops near schools.
- **that all parties across the chamber lobby the government and their local MPs to support a ban on single-use vapes.**

Also resolves that the Councils Trading standards team continue working with Public Health to:

- Carry out regular test purchases and seize products and issued fixed penalty notices when a business has been found to be in breach of the law.
- Implement mandatory age-of-sale signage on vaping products.
- Implement sanctions for breaching these rules should also be the same as penalties handed out under tobacco display regulations.