

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee

Date: 24th September 2024

Report for: Information/Decision

Report of: Director of Public Health

Report Title

Trafford's Population Health Fellowship Research: An investigation into the prevalence and perception of vaping and nicotine use in children.

Purpose

To provide information to the Health & Wellbeing Board Members on the Population Health fellowship and the research conducted with children and young people (CYP) in Trafford on vaping.

Recommendations

Our recommendations to Children and Young People's Scrutiny members are:

- To review the content of this paper and make recommendations for further developments.
- To share the content of this paper with their wider networks to help improve vaping cessation resources for those addicted and parent/carer education.
- To have a greater understanding of what vaping looks like for the CYP in Trafford.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

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Trafford's Population Health Fellowship Research: An investigation into the prevalence and perception of vaping and nicotine use in children.

1. Background & Context

Trafford's Public Health team identified a gap in the evidence base around children and young people's (CYP) use of e-cigarettes or 'vapes'. As a result, they were successful in their application for an NHS England National Population Health Fellowship to design and undertake research to improve our understanding of vaping among young people in Trafford over a 12 month period (the national Population Health Fellowship is aimed at recruiting NHS healthcare staff to develop a workforce of professionals who will incorporate population health skills into their practice).

What is an e-cigarette or 'vape'?

They are systems that heat a liquid to create aerosols that are inhaled by the user. They typically contain nicotine, additives, flavours and chemicals that can be harmful to people's health and are often marketed at CYP. They are illegal for under 18's to purchase.

What is the difference between regulated and unregulated e-cigarettes?

According to the Tobacco and Related Products Regulations 2016 (TRPR)ⁱ, the requirements for a regulated (also described as legal) e-cigarette are as follows;

- A tank capacity of no more than 2ml
- Maximum volume of nicotine-containing e-liquid for sale in one refill container to 10ml
- A nicotine strength of no more than 20mg/ml
- For nicotine-containing products or their packaging to be child-resistant and tamper evident
- A ban on certain ingredients including colourings, caffeine and taurine
- Must include labelling requirements and warnings
- All e-cigarettes and e-liquids be notified and published by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) before they can be sold.

An unregulated e-cigarette does not comply with one or more of the requirements mentioned above.

2. Aims & Objectives

The aims of the research were to gain a better understanding into the prevalence and perceptions of vaping and nicotine use in CYP. The research had the following objectives:

- To understand the prevalence of vaping in CYP aged 11-18 years in Trafford.
- To identify CYP's vaping habits and if CYP have nicotine addiction.
- Trafford CYP's understanding and education around vaping and vapes.
- If Trafford CYP used vapes, how many of them want to change their habits, reduce, or stop, and how services can be commissioned to best facilitate this.
- What is the Trafford parent's perception of CYP vaping.

3. The National Picture

Evidence conducted by Action on Smoking & Health (ASHⁱⁱ) found that nationally, in 2022, 15.8% of 11-17 year olds had tried vaping, compared to 11.2% in 2021 and 13.9% in 2020. Figures from the 2023 North West Trading Standards survey indicate that 14% of 14 to 17 year olds are vaping more than once a week ⁱⁱⁱ.

On Oct 4th 2023, the ex Prime Minister Rishi Sunak announced his ambition to implement 'stopping the start: the government's ambitions to create a smokefree generation'^{iv}. In relation to CYP vaping, this includes plans to pass the Tobacco and Vapes Bill which aims to:

- create the first smokefree generation by making it an offence for anyone born on or after 1 January 2009 to be sold tobacco products.
- crack down on youth vaping by providing powers to introduce regulations to restrict vape flavours, packaging and point of sale displays in retail outlets.
- clamp down on underage sales by bringing forward £100 fixed penalty notices in England and Wales, empowering trading standards officers to act 'on the spot' to tackle underage tobacco and vape sales.

4. Methods

The research was co-designed with Healthwatch ^v to complete 2x Healthwatch 100 surveys that were open for 4 weeks between 25th April and 24th May 2024.

Survey 1: for Trafford CYP 11-18 years to respond to (Appendix 1).

Survey 2: for parents/carers of Trafford CYP to respond to (Appendix 2).

The online survey was offered to every secondary school, alternative provision, and college in Trafford. Those not in employment, education, or training (NEET) were accessed by working with virtual school and other teams in Trafford plus external organisations such as TDAS and Gorse Hill Studios. I engaged those mentioned above through teams' meetings, social media, face to face visits, emails, forums, and telephone calls.

To improve reliability, repeatability and maximise participation we included the following.

- Schools to offer protected time within the school day to complete the survey.

- A Step-by-step guide for teachers to follow.
- A parent/carer information letter sent to all and explained how to withdraw their child.
- A Tik Tok style video was created for CYP to watch before participation to explain the survey and their right to withdraw.

A pilot study was conducted before the launch to engage the CYP voice on the questions, readability, and methodology of the proposed surveys.

5. Findings

In total, 26 schools and colleges participated including alternative provisions, home educated CYP and those out of education.



7 schools offered protected time for pupils. Other schools sent out as an email or set as homework task.

Key findings of the survey:

- 17.2% CYP told us they vape, used to vape, or have tried.
- 2.85% of CYP reported to vape daily.
- 55.3% of Trafford's Vaping CYP told us their first vape is before 9am with 31.6% of these vaping in bed when they first wake up (based on the Fagerstrom Test, this could suggest a high level of nicotine addiction.)
- 54.8% of CYP reported vaping or seeing vaping in toilets at school. 25.4% of CYP reported vaping or seeing vaping in the classroom. And 13.7% of CYP reported vaping or seeing vaping in the corridors.
- 70.8% who vape told us they would still vape if sweet/berry/candy flavour vapes didn't exist anymore.
- 10.4% told us they would look to changing to tobacco cigarettes if these flavours did not exist anymore.
- 42% of CYP told us they want to stop or cut down or are already actively trying.

- 29.4% of CYP told us their friends vape and/or smoke – with vaping being 4 times more popular than smoking amongst their friends. And 27.4% CYP told us they live with a relative who vapes and/or smokes.
- Under 11 was the most selected age for first trying a vape.
- Over 40% told us their parents do not know they vape. This is concerning as it prevents parents from being able to monitor potential detrimental health impacts of vaping. A further 15% CYP told us they openly vape at home.
- 4.2% of CYP have tried or use SNUS regular with 1.2% using SNUS daily. (The word snus is used by CYP to describe nicotine pouches. Nicotine pouches are a smoke and vape free alternative. When placed in the mouth, a nicotine pouch will release flavour and nicotine into the gums. Nicotine pouches come in a variety of different strengths, including 3mg, 6mg and 11mg. Because the nicotine in these pouches is not inhaled, they are regulated under the same rules as cigarettes and vapes.^{vi})
- Of those CYP who have used SNUS, 63.4% have used it in class and 70% have used it at breaktime in school.
- CYP are more likely to self-report positive emotional and behavioural impacts of vaping such as feeling more relaxed, less anxious, happier, and less stressed. In contrast, parents were more likely to report negative impacts of vaping from Trafford children.
- 91% of parents/carers of children and young people who vape told us they are either 'very' or 'somewhat' concerned about impacts on their child's physical and/or mental development.
- 68.3% of parents/carers either haven't considered the difference between regulated and unregulated vapes, do not know the difference or are not confident with the difference.

The full report is accessible online at [Healthwatch 100: The Vaping Habits of Children and Young People in Trafford | Healthwatch Trafford](#).



6. Strengths & Limitations

Strengths	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protected time in the school day to complete the survey which increased uptake. • Being able to build good connections and relationships with Trafford schools. • Schools on board to inform parent/carers of the survey. • Schools are able to request personalised data for their school. • Only 2 schools in Trafford had 0 participation. • Approx 25% of 11-18 year olds participated. • Biggest response to a survey by Trafford Healthwatch and the Public Health Team. • The survey was circulated by multiple teams, organisations and forums in Trafford to increase NEET uptake. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not completely representative sample as: • Engaging schools equally across the neighbourhoods was a challenge. • Low uptake from some schools • Some pupils didn't complete the whole survey. • Inappropriate free text answers. • Some schools could not offer protected time in school day • Some schools did not have the IT facilities and do not allow pupils to have phones n school. • GCSE/A levels/mocks were going on in schools so unable to always get true representation from these age groups.

7. Conclusion & Recommendations

Recommendation 1: The research suggests that children are starting or trying vaping as young as 11 and below, therefore education at primary school age that is offered to all primary schools in Trafford is recommended. Public Health to continue to commission Crucial Crew input for Year 6 as those pupils who previously attended this told us in the survey that they remembered what they learnt about vaping there. Access for children in schools not signed up to crucial crew should be considered.

Recommendation 2: 42% of CYP who currently vape want to quit or cut down, more research needs to be conducted to explore this further and gather the CYP voice to understand what they want this to look like. CYP said the lunchtime workshops and sessions in school were helpful so these should continue along with the vaping cessation early break offer.

Recommendation 3: 54.8% of pupils surveyed have seen CYP vaping in the toilets at school and 25.4% said they have seen CYP vaping in the classroom – school staff should link in with Trading Standards to help monitor and tackle especially if the CYP vaping in school are addicted to nicotine. As teenagers learn and take influence from

their peers it is possible CYP vaping numbers will increase but the power of peer-to-peer messaging and influence should be harnessed by schools.

Recommendation 4: Snus was identified in the research as an emerging trend. Public health, substance misuse services, and schools should monitor this and offer support and education to CYP where applicable.

8. Children and Young People's Scrutiny Members Recommendations

Thank you for taking the time to review this report. Our recommendations to health and wellbeing board members are:

- To review the content of this paper and make recommendations for further developments.
- To share the content of this paper with their wider networks to help improve vaping cessation resources for those addicted and parent/carer education.

ⁱ [E-cigarettes: regulations for consumer products - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk) accessed 27/08/2024.

ⁱⁱ Action on Smoking and Health (2023) [Use of e-cigarettes among young people in Great Britain - ASH](https://www.ash.org.uk), accessed 29/07/2024.

ⁱⁱⁱ North West Trading Standards Survey (2023) tradingstandards.uk/news-policy-campaigns/news-room/2023/number-of-young-people-smoking-in-north-west-falls-to-record-low/ , accessed 29/07/2024

^{iv} [Stopping the start: our new plan to create a smokefree generation - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

^v Health Watch Trafford (2024) [Home | Healthwatch Trafford](https://www.healthwatchtrafford.org.uk), accessed 29/07/2024.

^{vi} Action on Smoking and Health (2022) [Awareness-and-use-of-nicotine-pouches.pdf \(ash.org.uk\)](https://www.ash.org.uk), accessed 04/09/2024.