

## **Questions from Councillors to Cabinet – 25 July 2023**

### **Question from Cllr G Taylor**

#### **Preamble**

In March/April 2023 the proportion of children experimenting with vaping had grown by 50% year on year, from one in thirteen to one in nine. Children's awareness of promotion of vapes has also grown, particularly in shops where more than half of all children report seeing e-cigarettes being promoted, and online where nearly a third report e-cigarette promotion. Only one in five children now say they never see vapes promoted, down from 31% last year. It is an offence to sell e-cigarettes to children under 18 in the United Kingdom and children means those aged 11-17 years old, unless otherwise specified. (Action on Smoking and Health (ASH). Use of e-cigarettes (vapes) among young people in Great Britain. 2023.)

#### **Question 1**

Nationally 48% of young people aged under 18 years who vape say they purchase vapes from shops. It is illegal to sell vapes to young people under the age of 18. Therefore how much enforcement work has Dorset Council undertaken in the last year on the illegal sale of vapes from shops in Dorset to under 18 year olds?

#### **Question 2**

The report also gives a figure nationally of 46% of young people being given vapes. Would Dorset Council and their partners, Public Health Dorset, consider an awareness campaign on the dangers of vaping?

NB. There are no local statistics publicly available for vaping in children under 18 in Dorset. Government data is based on reports by ASH and the International Tobacco Control Policy Evaluation Project (ITC) Youth Tobacco and Vaping survey. There is however anecdotal evidence of the use of vapes by children in our schools.

#### **Response to Question 1**

Dorset Council Trading Standards service has carried out test purchasing with underage volunteers for a number of years, targeting alcohol and tobacco sales. In response to the rise in concern about the sale of disposable vapes to children a test purchase exercise was conducted in February 2022. Eleven premises were tested, four of which sold to the 15-year old volunteer. One of the sales was a 0% nicotine vape, which was not an offence, the other three were dealt with by way of advice and simple cautions.

From January 2022 to date, officers have visited 32 retailers selling vapes. Advice on preventing sales to children was given, and a guidance note detailing the law relating to vapes and the prevention of underage sales of vapes left. Eight seizures of legally non-compliant vapes were made during these visits.

Since January 2022, Trading Standards has seized 3470 legally non-compliant vapes from 9 premises, removing them from the supply chain.

Trading Standards is currently working with Dorset schools, the Youth Service and Police to drive down the sales of vapes to children and legally non-complaint vapes.

## **Response to Question 2**

Public Health Dorset does not currently have plans for an awareness campaign on the dangers of vaping. This is partly because we do not yet know enough about the dangers, and any campaign would have to be carefully designed with a clear call to action. Simply asking children not to vape is unlikely to be effective without knowing more about the behaviours and underlying reasons behind vape use.

However, we do work with local schools at their request and have delivered some behaviour change workshops around vaping in schools. These aimed to provide information on vaping (from the [latest ASH survey and ASH resources](#)), but mostly focused on helping schools to understand the issue they are experiencing – vaping during school hours and the selling on of vapes in schools - and helping them break down their problem to think about what they could do to address these issues.

Members may also be aware that the Government has recently announced plans to clamp down on use of vapes by children as it renews focus on how to address the rise of vaping among young people. As part of this plan, the Government has endorsed the inclusion of education on vaping to be included in PSHE lessons. The national survey of drinking and drug use in school aged children is about to be launched and is seeking participation from schools. The survey will ask about vaping this year. Schools participating in the survey will receive two supporting lesson plans and can use the anonymous data on vaping specifically to tackle the rise in vaping amongst their own pupils. Public Health Dorset and Dorset Council children's services are raising awareness of the survey and asking schools to take part, so we get a better understanding of the data on use.

The Chief Medical Officer for England Professor Sir Chris Whitty sets out a clear position on vaping, which Public Health Dorset supports: "The key points about vaping (e-cigarettes) can be easily summarised. If you smoke, vaping is much safer; if you don't smoke, don't vape; marketing vapes to children is utterly unacceptable."