

Smoking and Tobacco – Schools PSHE Briefing

School PSHE Briefing

This Briefing is designed to equip school staff and other professionals to deliver key messages to young people about smoking tobacco and vaping.

Where relevant age appropriate messaging and resources are highlighted and additional signposting to resources for SEND.

If you do not wish to receive these briefings please let me know:

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Why is it important to understand the public health risks?

Smoking tobacco remains the UK's **greatest cause of preventable illness and avoidable death** with 100,000 people dying each year from smoking-related diseases.

For young people, smoking can be detrimental to their life long health and wellbeing – the younger they start smoking the more likely they will become life long smokers. **90%** of lifetime smoking is initiated between the ages of 10 and 20 years in the UK. Also, evidence shows that of those young people that are smoking regularly at 16 years of age, **40% will remain lifelong smokers**. In addition, young people are more likely to smoke themselves if they live in a household with other smokers.

Smoking tobacco increases a young person's cancer and asthma risk, reduces their lung function and exercise tolerance, and may impair growth.

Tobacco contains nicotine, which is highly addictive. Tobacco also contains on average 5000 harmful chemicals and these chemicals drive the nicotine dependency formation. Nicotine works just like 'dependency forming substances' and makes the body and mind become reliant on it. "Smokers" end up needing nicotine in order to feel "normal" as the dependency takes hold.

On a local level, a youth survey identified that:

- 2% of Barnet's 15 year olds are occasional smokers (nationally 2.7%)
- 2.6% are regular smokers (nationally 5.5%)
- 21.8% had tried Shisa or other tobacco products

Whilst over 95% of young people are not occasional or regular smokers, it remains crucial that effort is made to support a continued reduction in young people who smoke, to safeguard their health and the health of future generations.

Risks to health:

- ⇒ **Cancer – 16 types**
- ⇒ **Heart disease**
- ⇒ **COPD and other lung conditions**
- ⇒ **Increased risk of asthma**
- ⇒ **Fire risk**
- ⇒ **2nd hand smoke impact**
- ⇒ **Illegal tobacco use and links to crime/gangs**



Vaping

The term 'vaping' is used to describe the practice of inhaling and exhaling vapour containing nicotine and flavouring produced by an electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes)/vape device.

NICE guidance (2021) states that tobacco products should be discussed separately from vaping.

A large majority of 11-17 year olds have never tried or are unaware of e-cigarettes (83.8%).

In 2022, 15.8% of 11-17 year olds had tried vaping, compared to 11.2% in 2021.

Youth uptake of vaping, the so called "gateway effect" which potentially increases the risk of smoking tobacco, has often been cited as a concern. However, data from five large surveys of 11-16 year olds in the UK conducted between 2015 and 2017 found that most young people who experiment with e-cigarettes did not become regular users. To date, there is no strong evidence that e-cigarettes are leading never smokers into cigarette smoking, in the UK. Overall, there is no evidence that e-cigarettes have driven up smoking prevalence in this age group. Vaping is not risk free, but the level of risk from smoking is far greater than vaping.

NICE guidance (2021) recommends a coordinated whole school approach to smoking and vaping and discouraging young people who have never smoked from using e-cigarettes.

For more information:

[Use of e-cigarettes among young people in Great Britain - ASH](#)



Second hand smoke

Second hand smoke is a lethal cocktail of more than 4,000 irritants, toxins and cancer-causing substances. Most of the smoke from a cigarette (or roll-up, pipe or cigar), does not go into the lungs, but escapes into the air around the smoker as "sidestream" smoke or is exhaled by the smoker.

Most second-hand smoke is invisible and odourless and can be breathed in by people in the vicinity. Opening windows and doors or smoking in another room in the house doesn't protect people. Smoke can linger in the air for 2 to 3 hours after a cigarette is finished, even with a window open. Also, even if smoking is limited to one room, the smoke will spread to the rest of the house where people will inhale it. Passive smoking is especially harmful for children as they have less well-developed airways, lungs and immune systems.

- Children who live in a household where at least 1 person smokes are more likely to develop: Asthma; chest infections – like pneumonia and bronchitis; [meningitis](#); [ear infections](#); coughs and colds.
- Children are particularly vulnerable in the family car where second hand smoke can reach hazardous levels even with the windows open. Since 2015. It is against the law to smoke in a private vehicle if there's a young person under 18 present.

Adults / Caregivers as role models: Evidence has shown that early teens whose main caregiver smoked were more than twice as likely to have tried cigarettes (26% versus 11%) and 4 times as likely to be a regular smoker (4.9% versus 1.2%).

Please check out the [Better health film on adult role models](#)

Smoking: Measures of the proportion of young people who smoke regularly (one or more cigarettes per week) in England, Wales and Scotland draws on various data sources:

- [PHE fingertips](#)
- [Barnet Joint Strategic Needs Assessment](#)
- [English data is available from the Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use Survey](#)
- [RCPH State of Child Health](#)
- [Nicotine vaping in England: 2022 evidence update main findings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Use of e-cigarettes among young people in Great Britain - ASH](#)

The Legal Position

The age when smoking is legally permitted is 18 years old. You must be over 18 to buy cigarettes in the UK. If you're under 16 the Police have the right to confiscate your cigarettes.

It's illegal:

- to sell tobacco products, including e-cigarettes and liquids to young people under 18.
- for an adult to buy you cigarettes if you are under 18
- to have, give or sell cannabis to anyone. If you are caught with cannabis you could get a warning, a formal caution, or be arrested.

Does your school have a **no smoking tobacco and vaping policy**? Contact [SHAW](#) (Safety Health and Wellbeing team) for more information.



Health and Lifestyle Consequences

- Cancer – 90% of lung cancer is caused by smoking
- Increased risk of COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) characterised by persistent respiratory symptoms like progressive breathlessness and cough.
- Heart disease
- Asthma – and if you already have it, smoking usually makes it worse
- Other lung diseases
- Not being able to get or sustain an erection (sometimes called impotence)
- Increased stress when you're addicted and you've not had a cigarette
- Collagen depletion – causing accelerated wrinkling
- Your teeth will get stained and smoking can cause them to rot if they're not looked after
- Your breath will smell
- Your skin will be dry and may break out in spots – when you smoke it restricts your blood vessels, so nutrients don't get to your skin
- Smoking can damage fertility (the ability to have children)
- You can start to cough a lot
- You'll become out of breath more easily

The things you'll notice if you smoke:

- Smoking is also expensive. You might find yourself spending all your spare money on cigarettes or tobacco. The average price for 20 cigarettes is £11.90 and a 30g pouch of tobacco is £14.00. If you quit you'll probably find you have a lot more money to spend on other things.
- Your clothes, hair and skin will smell of smoke
- Your fingers may get stained yellow
- Your breath will smell



Source: [Henry 4 School](#):

Teaching resources

Health Education Partnership
HEP have free resources to support education. [Barnet – Health Education Partnership](#)

Barnet PSHE network
Additional information can also be obtained from the Barnet PSHE network. Please contact [Andrew Pembroke](#) for more information.

PSHE association
This is a national body and paid membership association for PSHE leads and teachers who produce resources. [pshe-association.org.uk](#)

Anti-smoking [Smoking stinks | TeachingEnglish | British Council | BBC](#)

Tes.com
A fully-resourced PSHE lesson all about both the dangers of smoking and of second-hand smoking (passive smoking). [Smoking PSHE | Teaching Resources \(tes.com\)](#)

NICE guidance (2021)
[Tobacco: preventing uptake, promoting quitting and treating dependence.](#)

E- cigarettes: PHSE Lesson presentation. [Secondary-School-Stoptober-2016-presentation.pptx \(live.com\)](#)

Scheme of work on tobacco for Key Stage 3 Produced by Healthy Schools Islington. [Layout 1 \(london.gov.uk\)](#)



Safeguarding

Underage smoking and/or vaping should be treated as a concern.

Concerns about pupils' smoking - It is important to know that young people can get help to stop smoking, even if they are underage smokers. They can access support through the Barnet Stop Smoking Service (BSSS) team in the first instance (they are specially trained in supporting 12-18yr olds); they may have a Stop Smoking advisor at their GP surgery, or some pharmacies have NHS-trained Stop Smoking Advisors. For more information, please contact BSSS direct team via email, for smokingcessation@barnet.gov.uk & the Barnet stop smoking webpage www.barnet.gov.uk/stopsmoking

Safeguarding means protecting a child's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect. It involves working together to support children and young people to make decisions about the risks they face in their own lives, which teaching PHSE in schools directly supports and also protecting those who lack the capacity to make these decisions. If you are concerned about the safeguarding of a child contact your normal Safeguarding link within your school.

If pupils are found smoking or vaping the product can be confiscated. Children under 18 should be asked where they got their cigarette or vape from so that complaints can be made locally to trading standards: trading_standards@barnet.gov.uk.

References and further information

[Advice on stop smoking Childline](#)

NHS Livewell has a [guide to quitting smoking](#) for young people

Talk to Frank offers friendly, confidential [advice on drugs](#)

The Mix provides [real life stories](#) and advice about quitting smoking.

ASH (Action on Smoking and Health) [published short guidance](#) and a [list of smoking helplines in the UK](#), including in other languages

[Stop Smoking London](#)– Free support & resource information

[NHS Quit Smoking](#)– Free NHS app

Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (2020) *State of Child Health*. London: RCPCH. [Available at: stateofchildhealth.rcpch.ac.uk]