

Laws, Regulation and Industry Influence

The policy context and how commercial interests shape behaviour.



In this slide set, we'll explore:

- UK laws that control sale, marketing and use of tobacco and vaping products to reduce harm.
- Age restrictions aimed at protecting young people and delaying uptake and nicotine addiction.
- Marketing tactics targeting young people, making education and regulation essential.
- Public health campaigns and ethical oversight that help balance commercial interests with community well-being.

The Laws, Regulation and Industry Influence

Tobacco and nicotine use is not just a personal choice - it is strongly influenced by **laws, public policy and marketing**.

In the UK, regulations exist to limit harm, reduce uptake and protect young people.

Understanding these rules helps learners see how government action, industry practices and ethical questions interact to shape behaviour and health outcomes.



Welsh and UK Laws on Sale, Advertising and Use of Tobacco and Other Nicotine Products

Wales and the wider UK have some of the strictest controls of tobacco and other nicotine products in the world.

- **Sale restrictions:** Tobacco and vaping products cannot be sold to anyone under 18 and retailers must check ID. Shops breaking the law can face fines or prosecution.
- **Advertising bans:** Tobacco advertising, sponsorships and promotions are banned on TV, radio, print and online, and product placement in media is prohibited.
- **Packaging laws:** Plain packaging with large health warnings reduces product appeal, especially to young people.
- **Use restrictions:** Smoking is banned in enclosed public spaces, workplaces and certain outdoor areas in Wales, including school grounds, playgrounds and hospital sites.
- **Vaping regulations:** In the UK, vaping products are regulated under the Tobacco and Related Products Regulations and the EU Tobacco Products Directive, which set limits on nicotine strength, require safety warnings and prevent marketing aimed at children. (See Vaping toolkit)

These laws aim to protect non-smokers, prevent early uptake among young people and support public health goals across Wales and the UK.

Age Restrictions and Why They Exist

In the UK, it is illegal to sell tobacco or vaping products to anyone under 18. It is also illegal for an adult to buy tobacco or vaping products on behalf of someone who is under 18.

- Age restrictions aim to prevent early exposure to nicotine, which is highly addictive and can alter brain development in adolescents.
- Shops must check ID and can face fines or prosecution for breaking the law.
- Research shows that delaying first use significantly lowers the risk of long-term addiction, which is why enforcement and awareness campaigns are so important.

In Wales, these restrictions are reinforced through **school education programmes and public health campaigns**, highlighting both legal and health consequences.



UK Tobacco and Vapes Act (2026)

'Stopping the Start'

New landmark legislation (UK-wide) to create a 'Smoke-free Generation':

- Makes it illegal for anyone born after 01 January 2009 to be sold tobacco products (implementation from 01 January 2027).
- This raises the legal age of sale year on year, gradually phasing out the sale of tobacco products.

Welsh Government-specific policy:

- Extend the range of smokefree public places with possibility to expand to include vape-free public places.
- Create retail licensing regime for tobacco and nicotine products – retailer licenses and product licenses.

Also introduces restrictions on vape products (e.g. flavours), packaging and marketing.

The Tobacco Industry – What You Should Know

Tobacco companies have a long history of misleading the public about the dangers of smoking to protect their profits.

- They continue to use marketing, lobbying and lawsuits to delay or weaken health laws around the world.
- Young people and disadvantaged communities are often deliberately targeted, as the industry needs new customers to replace those who quit or become ill from smoking.
- Tobacco products - including newer items like pouches or heated tobacco - are designed to be addictive, keeping people buying them.
- The industry also causes significant environmental harm, from deforestation and pollution during production to billions of cigarette butts polluting land and water.

Understanding these tactics helps us see that tobacco harm is not just about individual choices - it's also shaped by powerful industry influence.



Government, Public Health and Ethics

Governments, health organisations and schools play a key role in reducing harm and protecting communities.

- Campaigns such as **Stoptober** and **No Smoking Day**, marketing for the **NHS Help Me Quit service** and advocacy by **ASH Wales** all support quitting and raise awareness of the risks of tobacco and nicotine.
- Ethical concerns arise because the tobacco industry profits from products that cause serious harm, while public funds are spent treating preventable, smoking-related diseases.
- Strong regulation, education and community support are therefore essential to prioritise public health over profit and ensure young people and vulnerable groups are protected.

Summary

Tobacco and vaping use in Wales and the UK is shaped by laws, regulation and commercial interests. Strict rules control sale, advertising, packaging, and where products can be used, while age restrictions protect young people from early nicotine exposure.

The new Tobacco and Vapes legislation will create the first 'Smoke-free Generation' by gradually increasing the age of sale and phasing out the sale of tobacco products over time.

Marketing by the tobacco industry continues to target youth, making education, awareness and public health campaigns essential.

Government action and ethical oversight aim to prioritise public health over profit, reduce harm and support a healthier, smoke-free future for all.



References

The information provided in this slide set took references from the following:

[The Well-being of Future Generations | GOV.WALES](#)

[Tobacco and vapes: evidence to support legislation - GOV.UK](#)

[Tobacco Advertising and Promotion in the UK – ASH](#)

[Tobacco and Vapes Bill 2024: creating a smoke-free generation and tackling youth vaping | GOV.WALES](#)

[A Review of the Tobacco Control Action Plan and Delivery Plans for Wales](#)

[Tobacco Industry Targeting Young People - Tobacco Tactics](#)