GIG CYMRU NHS WALES

HELPA FI I STOPIO - HELP ME QUIT

FEPIO DOETH VAPE WISE

PROFESSIONAL USER GUIDE

This document is available in Welsh.

Cymraeg

VAPE WISE
PROFESSIONAL USER GUIDE

VAPE WISE is a practical tool designed to help professionals deliver a one-on-one, single-session brief intervention for young people who regularly use nicotine-containing vaping products.

The tool supports professionals to:

- Provide accurate, age-appropriate information about vaping and its effects
- Screen for nicotine dependence or assess the risk of developing it
- Explore motivations for vaping and discuss personal reasons to consider quitting
- Support behaviour change by helping young people develop a plan to cut back or quit, if they're ready
- Offer harm reduction strategies for those not yet ready to quit
- Signpost to further support and resources as needed

NEED TO KNOW

In the UK, it is illegal to sell vaping products to anyone under the age of 18, or for adults to purchase them on behalf of minors. Support for young people should focus primarily on helping them avoid vaping altogether, with harm reduction strategies considered only when a young person is unwilling or unable to stop.

WHO IS VAPE WISE FOR?

Vape Wise is designed for use with young people who vape regularly. It is not intended for individuals who:

- Have never vaped
- Have only tried vaping once or twice
- Are using vaping as a method to quit smoking or manage nicotine dependence

NOTE:

While the tool is tailored for young people, it can also be adapted for use with adults. In such cases, professionals should adjust the language and content to ensure it remains age-appropriate and relevant.

ENGAGEMENT, CONSENT, AND CONFIDENTIALITY

- Before using Vape Wise, it's important to have established trust and rapport with the young person. As the tool is designed to support a collaborative conversation, the young person must give informed consent to participate.
- Professionals should also consider how confidentiality will be managed within their specific setting, in line with organisational policies and safeguarding procedures.

IMPORTANT CAUTION
Vape Wise is not a substitute for a full clinical assessment.

It does not assess:

- Suicidal ideation
- Self-harm
- Broader psychosocial factors contributing to substance use

Where these concerns are present or suspected, a comprehensive psychosocial assessment should be conducted, and the young person should be immediately signposted to appropriate support services such as a GP, mental health professional, or substance misuse service.

LANGUAGE CONSIDERATIONS

The language used in Vape Wise has been carefully chosen to be accessible and relatable to young people. For example, the term "addicted" is used instead of the clinical term "dependence", which may be unfamiliar. In clinical settings, however, "dependence" remains the more appropriate term.

DELIVERING THE BRIEF INTERVENTION

Brief interventions are most effective when delivered in a supportive, personalised, and non-judgmental way.

- Professionals should review the tool in advance to ensure a smooth, conversational delivery.
- Vape Wise is not intended to be used as a standalone worksheet for young people to complete independently.
- The session typically takes around 10–15 minutes to complete.

ACCESSING VAPE WISE

The tool is available at: **https://helpmequit.wales**

NOTE:
This guide includes hyperlinks to additional resources. If you are using a printed version, full URLs are listed on the final page.

USING VAPE WISE

Vape Wise is structured into six sections. While it's generally recommended to follow the tool in sequence, professionals can adapt the approach – skipping sections that aren't relevant or adding information to suit the young person's individual needs and circumstances.

Throughout the tool, you'll see speech bubble icons, which highlight opportunities to start a conversation or provide education. Not every point needs to be covered, focus on what's most relevant.

SECTION 1

FREQUENCY OF TOBACCO AND VAPE USE

This section supports professionals in exploring how frequently a young person vapes (and/or smokes tobacco), and whether their habits have changed over time.

Although the tool primarily focuses on vaping, any tobacco use should prompt a broader discussion about the young person's nicotine use – including their motivations and the contexts in which both behaviours occur.

It may not always be appropriate to encourage a young person to quit vaping immediately – particularly if there's a risk they may return to tobacco use. However, it remains important to explore any challenges they may be facing, such as difficulties avoiding vaping in prohibited settings (e.g. at school). These conversations can help identify strategies to support their wellbeing and engagement in school or other environments.

>> See HELP ME QUIT section on page 5.

IMPORTANT NOTES ON VAPING AND HARM REDUCTION

- In the UK, it is illegal for young people to purchase vapes. Support should prioritise abstinence, with harm reduction approaches considered only if the young person is unwilling to stop.
- Vaping is not risk-free, but evidence shows it is less harmful than smoking tobacco.
- Some young people who smoke may benefit from switching completely to vaping as a step away from tobacco.
- However, vaping is not recommended as a smoking cessation aid for children and young people in Wales.
- The overarching aim should be to support young people in quitting nicotine use altogether.

IMPORTANT – WHEN NOT TO USE VAPE WISE

If a young person has never vaped, or has only experimented once or twice, the Vape Wise tool is not appropriate. In these cases, a general conversation about vaping and how nicotine affects the body is more suitable.

SECTION 2

ASSESSING SYMPTOMS OF NICOTINE DEPENDENCE

This section helps identify whether a young person may be dependent on nicotine.

The more boxes ticked, the more likely they are to be experiencing dependence. While not a validated tool, it serves as a useful guide.

Some questions focus on withdrawal symptoms, while others highlight a loss of control over vaping. This section should be approached in a supportive, conversational way, helping the young person recognise signs of dependence and reflect on their own behaviours.

SECTION 3

MOTIVATIONS TO VAPE AND NOT VAPE

This section begins by exploring how much money the young person spends on vaping – and what that adds up to over a year. A calculator may be helpful here. Understanding the financial cost and considering alternative uses for that money can be a powerful motivator for change. If the young person doesn't purchase their own vaping products, this part can be skipped.

Next is a decisional balance activity. **Asking, "What do you like about vaping?"** helps uncover the perceived benefits or functions of vaping. For example, if a young person says it helps them relax when stressed, this opens the door to deeper conversations:

"CAN YOU TELL ME MORE ABOUT WHAT'S MAKING YOU FEEL STRESSED?"

Then, **ask "What are the not-so-good things about vaping?"** to explore potential reasons for change. Spending time on this discussion can be especially valuable:

"WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF YOU GET SUSPENDED FROM SCHOOL AGAIN?"

"IF YOU CONTINUE TO VAPE, WHAT ELSE MIGHT BE ON THIS LIST IN TWELVE MONTHS' TIME?"

Exploring these concerns in a non-judgemental way can help strengthen the young person's motivation to change.

SECTION 4
READINESS TO CHANGE

This section begins by asking how worried the young person is about their vaping, followed by how concerned they think their family or friends might be. These questions encourage reflection and help the young person consider whether they want to make a change.

They are then offered three options:

1. Quit vaping
2. Cut back on vaping
3. Continue vaping

It's important to respect their choice. If they're not ready to make changes, skip to Section 6, which focuses on harm reduction strategies.

For those who want to cut down or quit, ask how confident they feel about making that change:

IDENTIFYING LOW CONFIDENCE CAN HELP ENSURE THEY RECEIVE ADDITIONAL SUPPORT.

BE AWARE THAT SOME MAY OVERESTIMATE THEIR ABILITY TO QUIT OR CUT DOWN – SO EVEN CONFIDENT INDIVIDUALS MAY STILL BENEFIT FROM SUPPORT.

HELP ME QUIT

If a young person vapes, smokes or regularly uses other nicotine-containing products and would like support to stop, refer them to Help Me Quit (HMQ) via the professional referral form:

helpmequit.wales/professional-referral-form

In Wales, young people aged 12 and over who are nicotine dependent are eligible for free expert support through HMQ.

The service offers:

- Expert behavioural support
- Guidance on the most suitable type and strength of NRT
- Tailored, ongoing support to increase the chances of a successful quit attempt.

SECTION 5
MAKING A PLAN (FOR THOSE READY TO CHANGE)

This section is for young people who are ready to quit or reduce their vaping. While they may need guidance, they should be encouraged to lead the conversation and come up with their own ideas.

1. MY GOAL IS TO...

Encourage them to set specific, achievable, and realistic goals.

2. I'M MAKING A CHANGE BECAUSE...

Help them identify their motivations, whether internal (e.g. better health) or external (e.g. family pressure).

3. PEOPLE WHO COULD SUPPORT ME...

Where appropriate, suggest they share their plan with trusted friends or family who can offer encouragement.

4. THINGS THAT MIGHT MAKE IT DIFFICULT TO REACH MY GOAL...

Help them identify barriers, such as:

- Peer pressure
- Cravings or withdrawal
- Stress or anxiety (especially if vaping is used as a coping mechanism)

Refer back to insights from Section 3 to explore these challenges more deeply.

5. SOME STEPS TO HELP ME REACH MY GOAL ARE...

Support them in identifying practical steps, such as:

- Disposing of their vape
- Creating a reduction schedule
- Finding alternative coping strategies

Examples are provided in the tool.

A NOTE ON CRAVING MANAGEMENT

Start with behavioural strategies, such as:

- Leaving the vape at home
- Using the "3Ds" technique: Delay, Distract, Deep Breaths

If cravings persist, consider discussing Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT):

- NRT can help manage withdrawal, even if the young person isn't ready to quit completely.
- A conversation prompt is included at the bottom of Section 5.

NOTE:
Many people benefit from combining a fast-acting product (like mouth spray, lozenge or gum) with a long-acting one (like a patch). Encourage a young person to speak to a pharmacist or a HMQ expert for guidance.

SECTION 6
HARM REDUCTION STRATEGIES

All young people who vape can benefit from harm reduction discussions – especially those not ready to quit. Harm reduction acknowledges that some young people will continue vaping despite best efforts.

These strategies are based on:

- Evidence
- Harm reduction principles
- Sector consultation
- Lived experiences of people who vape

Refer back to insights from Section 3 to explore these challenges more deeply.

Start with a respectful prompt:

> **"THE SAFEST OPTION IS NOT TO VAPE. HOWEVER, IF YOU CHOOSE TO CONTINUE, THERE ARE WAYS TO REDUCE THE RISKS. IS IT OKAY IF WE TALK ABOUT THIS NOW?"**

You might also ask if they already take steps to reduce harm.

STRATEGY 1. BUY SMART

Explain that regulated products must meet safety standards, including:

- Clear nicotine labelling
- No banned ingredients
- Safe packaging

Illicit vapes may:

- Contain harmful substances
- Have inconsistent nicotine levels
- Pose contamination risks

There are also safety and exploitation risks when acquiring illicit vapes.

LEGAL NOTE: It is illegal to sell vapes to under-18s in the UK.

STRATEGY 2. QUIT TOBACCO SMOKING

Smoking is the leading cause of preventable illness. If a young person smokes and vapes, but isn't ready to quit nicotine, encourage switching to vaping only as a harm reduction step with a plan to quit vaping later.

STRATEGY 3. IF IT TASTES BAD – STOP USING IT

A strange taste may signal a problem:

- Disposable vapes (banned in Wales since 1 June 2025) should be discarded.
- Reusable vapes should be checked for:
  – Worn coils/wicks
  – Dirty tanks
  – Expired or poor-quality e-liquid

STRATEGY 4. MONITOR YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

Some young people report mood changes linked to vaping.

> **"HAVE YOU NOTICED ANY CHANGES IN YOUR MOOD SINCE YOU STARTED VAPING?"**

This can prompt reflection and support-seeking.

STRATEGY 5. SET LIMITS ON YOUR VAPING

Encourage mindful use:

- Keep the vape out of reach
- Avoid vaping in bed
- Limit use to social settings

CAUTION: Avoid compensatory behaviours (e.g. deeper puffs), which may increase harm.

STRATEGY 6. ONLY USE VAPES AS INTENDED

Modifying disposable vapes (e.g. recharging or refilling) is dangerous:

- Worn parts may release toxins
- Battery tampering can cause fires or explosions

STRATEGY 7. MAINTAIN REUSABLE DEVICES

Encourage good maintenance:

- Replace coils/wicks
- Clean tanks
- Avoid mixing e-liquids
- Use correct chargers to prevent battery fires

STRATEGY 8. AVOID USING YOUR DEVICE DRY

Dry puffs (burnt taste) can release toxic chemicals:

- Refill tanks before empty
- Soak new coils before use

STRATEGY 9. AVOID VAPING IN PLACES WHERE IT'S NOT ALLOWED

Young people with nicotine dependence may struggle in restricted areas (e.g. school). Discuss strategies for managing cravings in these settings.

ADDITIONAL NOTES ON NRT

- **Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT)** products can be purchased over the counter, but it's recommended that young people seek professional advice – for example, from Help Me Quit or a pharmacist – to ensure correct and effective use.
- **Help Me Quit** may be able to provide free NRT to young people who are nicotine dependent and wish to quit with our tailored behaviour support services.

FINAL SECTION

NEXT STEPS

This section helps young people identify what they want to do next. Possible actions include:

- Putting their plan into action
- Talking to family or carers about vaping
- Booking a follow-up appointment

Follow-up is strongly recommended for those who are quitting or reducing their use. It provides an opportunity to:

- Review what worked and what didn't
- Adjust the plan if needed
- Encourage continued progress and motivation

Young people may also benefit from speaking with:

- A GP
- A health professional
- Help Me Quit – a national cessation support service for quitting vaping

PROVIDING A COPY OF THE COMPLETED VAPE WISE TOOL ALLOWS YOUNG PEOPLE TO REVISIT THE INFORMATION AT THEIR OWN PACE. PROFESSIONALS MAY ALSO KEEP A COPY FOR THEIR RECORDS, WHERE APPROPRIATE.

A FINAL WORD

Vape Wise is a brief intervention tool and may not cover every topic that arises during a conversation about vaping. Additional resources may be needed to provide more detailed information or support.

We recommend using reliable, UK-based sources that offer factual and balanced information. Avoid materials that rely on fear-based messaging or exaggeration, as these approaches are often ineffective and can damage trust.

For more information and resources, visit the Public Health Wales (PHW) website.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Help Me Quit: https://www.helpmequit.wales/
Hapus: https://hapus.wales/
Mind: https://www.mind.org.uk/for-young-people/

Public Health Wales Resources

Information and Guidance on Vaping for Secondary-aged learners in Wales: https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/vaping/information-and-guidance-on-vaping-for-secondary-aged-learners-in-wales/

Young People and Vaping – Information for parents and carers: https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/vaping/young-people-and-vaping-information-for-parents-and-carers/

Supporting the Health and Well-being Area of Learning and Experience in Schools - Health and Well-being Toolkits and Resources: https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/supporting-the-health-and-wellbeing-area-of-learning-and-experience-in-schools/

Tobacco Nicotine and Vapes in Wales Webinar Series: https://phw.nhs.wales/services-and-teams/welsh-network-of-healthy-school-schemes/

National Centre for Smoking Cessation

Young people and stopping vaping: https://www.ncsct.co.uk/publications/young-people-stopping-vaping

Very Brief Advice on Smoking: https://www.ncsct.co.uk/publications/VBA_2021

VAPE WISE FEEDBACK

Vape Wise was originally developed as Vape Check in collaboration with professionals from Queensland's youth alcohol and drug sector and later refined based on feedback from over 100 professionals across relevant fields.

In 2026, the resource was adapted – with permission from Dovetail – for use in Wales, aligning with both UK and Welsh Government policy and regulation.

We welcome your feedback. If you have suggestions or insights to improve this tool, please get in touch: helpmequit@wales.nhs.uk

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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