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Curriculum Toolkit for Teachers and Learners in Wales

Health harming behaviours

Substances and addiction:

Vaping



Introduction

This toolkit has been co-constructed with teachers for use with learners aged nine and above. It should be used flexibly to meet the identified needs of your learners within the context of your school. The information in this toolkit is based on regulations and evidence available as of **June 2025**.

This toolkit focuses on vaping as a key theme within the Health and Well-being Area of Learning and Experience. Teaching and learning about health harming behaviours, substance misuse and addiction can address key concepts within the Health and Well-being AoLE and should link to all statements of what matters within this AoLE, where possible. In particular, **Developing physical health and well-being has lifelong benefits** and **Our decision-making impacts on the quality of our lives and the lives of others**.

Learning about vaping will support learners to develop a common set of critical appraisal, decision-making and risk assessment skills enabling learners to respond effectively to a range of substance misuse issues, including new or emerging substances learners (and teachers) may not have encountered yet.

You should consider...

- Whether the content of these resources are developmentally appropriate for your learners
- The appropriateness of the content of the resources and its relevance to *your* learners in *your* context
- How this resource may support prior learning in vaping and other related areas

How this Toolkit is organised

Teacher guidance is designed to support classroom teachers plan and prepare lessons on the topic of vaping.

It includes:

- Curriculum for Wales links
- Why this learning is needed
- Important key messages
- Overviews of the knowledge banks and classroom activities
- Sources of further information to support teaching and learning.

Teachers should make themselves familiar with this guidance prior to planning for delivery.

Teacher Knowledge Banks are a professional learning tool which provide teachers with the key background knowledge and understanding about the topic of vaping linking with the big questions to inform their curriculum design. They include why this topic is important for learners' health and well-being.

Classroom activities are suggestions to support teaching and learning in relation to the health topic. They provide a hook to engage learners in critical thinking, discussion and deepening understanding. They should be used flexibly and can be adapted to meet the identified needs of learners.

Why this learning is needed

Most children and young people don't vape. However, studies including the School Health Research Network (SHRN) [Student Health and Well-being Survey in Wales](#) have shown that the use of vaping devices among children and young people in the UK has risen in recent years.

Some long-term studies have found that young people who have never smoked tobacco but who do use vaping devices are more likely to both start smoking and become regular smokers compared to young people who have not used vapes. There is also emerging evidence that young people who vape may be at increased risk of addiction to other substances in the future.

[Information and Guidance on Vaping for Secondary Aged Learners in Wales](#) makes recommendations for including education about vaping within your school curriculum. Vaping education should complement and not replace smoking prevention education. Vaping education should avoid describing vaping and smoking behaviours as equally harmful.

The [2023 Annual Report](#) of the Chief Medical Officer for Wales highlighted concerns about vaping: 'We face a real danger in the UK of creating a new generation of nicotine-addicted young people unless we take urgent action....[We] now have an environment where vape shops are common on our high streets. Whilst there may be a place for vapes as a tool to tackle tobacco smoking, the bright colours and fun flavours are a real draw to younger age groups. In as much as tobacco is hidden behind screens and plain packaging in supermarkets, the opposite is true for vape products, with often front of counter promotions and products placed throughout stores.'

Resources are organised in Teacher knowledge banks linked to each 'Big Question'. These questions can, and should, be posed to learners as a vehicle for curriculum delivery.

| Big questions | Knowledge bank | Links to statements of what matters |
|--|--|--|
| <p>What are the personal impacts of vaping? - addiction, nicotine, unknown risks, hygiene, exposure to other substances</p> | <p>What are Vaping Devices? Health Concerns What is Dependency and Addiction?</p> | <p>Health and Well-being Developing physical health and well-being has lifelong benefits – health promoting and health harming behaviours Our decision-making impacts on the quality of our lives and the lives of others – decision-making and assessing risk How we engage with social influences shapes who we are and affects our health and well-being - Recognise how different groups can influence</p> |
| <p>Why do people vape? - social context, smoker's rationale, perceived coping mechanism, the law and regulations, industry, marketing and advertising</p> | <p>Why Do People Vape? Industry, Marketing and Advertising The Law and Regulations</p> | <p>Humanities Human societies are complex and diverse, and shaped by human actions and beliefs – governance (rules), cause and effect Informed, self-aware citizens engage with the challenges and opportunities that face humanity, and are able to take considered and ethical action - inequality, choices and decision-making</p> |
| <p>What are the wider impacts of vaping for communities, Wales and our environment? - societal impact, environmental impact</p> | <p>Societal Impact Environmental Impact</p> | <p>Science and Technology The world around us is full of living things which depend on each other for survival -an understanding of the factors which affect our health allows us to make informed decisions about our physical health</p> |

Supporting learners toward realisation of the four purposes

| Ambitious, capable learners who: | Enterprising, creative contributors who: | Ethical, informed citizens who: | Healthy, confident individuals who: |
|--|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are building up a body of knowledge and have the skills to connect and apply that knowledge in different contexts • can explain the ideas and concepts they are learning about • understand how to interpret data and apply mathematical concepts • undertake research and evaluate critically what they find <p>and are ready to learn throughout their lives</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • connect and apply their knowledge and skills to create ideas and products • think creatively to reframe and solve problems • Express ideas and emotions through different media <p>and are ready to play a full part in life and work</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • find, evaluate and use evidence in forming views • engage with contemporary issues based upon their knowledge and values • understand and consider the impact of their actions when making choices and acting • show their commitment to the sustainability of the planet <p>and are ready to be citizens of Wales and the world</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are building their mental and emotional well-being by developing confidence, resilience and empathy • know how to find the information and support to keep safe and well • take measured decisions about life-style and manage risk <p>and are ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.</p> |

Key vaping Messages

Vaping devices should not be used by children and young people.

It is illegal to sell nicotine-containing vaping devices to anyone under 18 or for adults to buy them on behalf of under-18s.

Vape devices may be offered in flavours and colours with packaging and designs that can be particularly attractive to young people.

Vaping can lead to dependence on nicotine. Dependence on nicotine can negatively affect mental health and well-being and can be disruptive to life and learning.

Vaping devices contain metals and plastics which are difficult to recycle and can pollute the environment. Disposable vapes have been banned due to concerns about their appeal and affordability to children and young people as well as environmental concerns.

It is a misconception that vaping reduces stress and anxiety. Nicotine creates an immediate sense of relaxation, but this feeling is temporary and quickly replaced by increased anxiety, tension, cravings and withdrawal symptoms.

Adult smokers can reduce the risk of harm from smoking by switching completely to vaping. However, vaping is not recommended for non-smokers (and should not be used by children and young people) as it is not harm free.

Vaping is safer than smoking, but it is not harmless. The evidence on the long-term health effects of vaping is limited as it has not been around long enough to know the risk of long-term use.

There are growing numbers of illegal or non-compliant vaping devices on sale that don't meet quality and safety standards within the UK. These devices can be particularly dangerous as some have been found to contain very high levels of nicotine (increasing the risk of dependency) and dangerous metals like lead as well as other ingredients that are banned in the UK.

Knowledge Banks

| Knowledge Bank | Title |
|----------------|---|
| 1 | Why do people vape? Perceptions about vaping and vaping to quit smoking |
| 2 | What are vaping devices? Facts about vapes, types and timeline |
| 3 | Vaping health concerns Vaping devices containing nicotine, vaping and other substances |
| 4 | The law and regulations The law relating to vapes and tobacco products, illegal tobacco and vapes |
| 5 | Societal impact The effects of health inequalities, vaping and inequality |
| 6 | Industry, marketing and advertising The marketing and promotion of vapes |
| 7 | Environmental impact Disposable vapes and Government action |
| 8 | What is dependency and addiction? Nicotine addiction and why vaping is addictive |

Classroom activities

| Classroom activity | Title |
|--------------------|---|
| 1 | Agony Aunt dilemmas Scenarios on vaping to promote discussion focused on decision making and seeking support |
| 2 | Diamond 9 ranking Vaping facts to promote discussion and debate |
| 3 | How are we influenced? Explores the factors that influence our decision making |
| 4 | News reports and articles Links to reports and articles about vaping with questions for discussion and debate |
| 5 | Risk taking behaviour Explores informed and considered decision making related to the topic of vaping |
| 6 | See, think, wonder Vaping images to provoke critical thinking and questioning |
| 7 | True or false Vaping statements to promote discussion and debate |
| 8 | WhatsApp discussion starters Vaping scenarios for discussion to promote critical thinking |
| 9 | Data and statistics How many children and young people use vapes |
| 10 | Smoking to vaping timeline A chronology of tobacco use and prevalence |

Sources of further information to support teaching and learning

[PHW Vaping Information](#) about vaping

[NO IFS. NO BUTTS. - Report Illegal Tobacco \(noifs-nobutts.co.uk\)](#)

[Addiction: what is it? - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

[SHRN Children's Health & Wellbeing Dashboard](#)

[WHO: Nicotine and tobacco-free schools: policy development and implementation toolkit](#)

[Detection and prevention of illicit trade in drugs, alcohol and tobacco in Wales - Public Health Network Cymru](#)

[Article exploring Tobacco companies' commercial interests in e-cigarettes](#)

[Smoking and mental health | Mental Health Foundation](#)

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