

Written evidence submitted by Northern Ireland Chest Heart and Stroke (TVB73)

Tobacco and Vaping Bill Call for evidence

1.0 This submission is from Northern Ireland Chest Heart and Stroke (NICHS).

2.0 Executive Summary

1. **NICHS' experience regarding vaping and young people leads us to support the Tobacco and Vaping Bill.**
2. **NICHS supports the measures in the Bill**
3. **NICHS believes the Bill should go further in two areas:**
 - **The level of spot fines proposed should be increased**
 - **The age of sale for sales should be increased to 21**

3.0 Northern Ireland Chest Heart and Stroke

NICHS have been leading the fight against chest, heart and stroke illnesses in Northern Ireland for over 75 years since 1946. We are one of Northern Ireland's leading charities, employing approximately 100 people.

- We provide expert care and support to anyone living with chest, heart and stroke conditions.
- We work to prevent these illnesses, by helping detect early signs of chest, heart and stroke illness and empowering individuals to make healthy choices.
- We fund research to advance how we treat, care for and prevent chest, heart and stroke conditions.
- We campaign for better care, treatments and awareness of chest, heart and stroke conditions.

4.0 NICHS engagement with young people

Learning early on how to enjoy healthy, active lives is key to giving children the best start in life. It helps them grow into adults who are less at risk of serious illnesses like chest, heart and stroke conditions, as well as obesity.

At NICHS we support families, schools and young people by educating people about these topics and providing practical tips and advice on how to eat well, stay active and understand the risk factors to serious illness.

Our Schools workshops have been designed to link in with the curriculum.

- **Key Stage 1 & 2** - Personal Development and Mutual Understanding topics, The World Around Us and more.
- **Key Stage 3 & 4** - Learning for Life and Work, Science and Technology, and Physical Education.

Topics covered include:

- Healthy eating
- Physical activity
- Stress
- Alcohol
- The Dangers of smoking

5.0 Our School Programmes include:

Primary Schools

Heartley's Heroes is a 40-minute interactive primary school talk which focuses about how to keep your heart healthy.

Post Primary Schools

our Well Talks/Webinars last for 30 minutes and are suitable for post-primary schools and for both pupils and teachers/staff.

Well Checks for School Staff

Confidential health checks to detect cardiovascular risk factors, including tests for atrial fibrillation, high blood pressure, cholesterol and more.

6.0 NICHS views formed through engagement

NICHS' views, and concerns with regard to vaping and young people are informed by our engagement with young people through our Schools Programmes.

Vaping and Young People in Northern Ireland

Vaping amongst Young People in Northern Ireland is on the increase, with 44% of Year 12's reporting that they had used e-cigarettes in 2022 compared to 10% in 2016. The Young persons behaviour and attitude study 2022 also reported that 21% of 11-16 year olds had used an e-cigarette at least once. The proportion classed as regular e-cigarette users increased from 6% to 17% in the same time period (1). Young people report that they drawn to vaping because of the flavours, they view them as less addictive and there is less taboo around them than cigarettes (2,3).

NICHS have seen a significant increase in the number of schools contacting us to help with the vaping issue that they are battling with in their schools – in both primary and post primary settings

Primary School Chester's Challenge P7 Know your risk: vaping/smoking

	Nos. primary schools	Nos. of P7 pupils reached
2023-24	36	1642
2024-25 Q1-3	24	1047

An anecdotal story the school's team has heard over the last year was of a P4 caught vaping before the start of school and this was not a one-off occurrence.

Post Primary School Vaping Talks

	Nos. post primary schools	Nos. of pupils reached
2023-24	38	13769
2024-25 Q1-3	50	12119

The school's staff team are hearing of schools battling to tackle the issue of vaping in school toilets with vapes being found sellotaped to roof tiles to name one of many places.

Other vaping related activity

Gaelic Athletic Association coaches have said that they can notice when a young player starts to vape as their aerobic capacity drops and some of these players go on to drop out of the sport completely.

We have had to turn youth organisation work down this year due to demand for the service from post primary schools.

	Nos attending teachers & parents education	Youth Organisations people reached
2023-24	397	85
2024-25 Q1-3	0	55

NICHHS have a teacher's and parents vaping update and the launch our new initiative with Stanford University on the 28th January 2025.

7.0 NICHHS recommendations

NICHHS, having seen the huge increase in the number of young people vaping, the impact this is having in terms of school management and the increasing concerns about cardiovascular and respiratory health relating to vaping NICHHS very much welcome the proposals in the current Bill.

There are two areas in which we believe the Bill does not adequately address.

1. The age of sale should be 21. Given the increasing concerns about health – notably cardiovascular and respiratory health - and the fact that most people become addicted to nicotine as young people, NICHHS believes the age of sale for vapes should be increased to 21. We believe this would also assist enforcement as essentially no one in school uniform would have any legitimate reason to purchase vape or be in a retail premises that solely sells vaping devices.
2. The proposed level of spot fines is too low. The current proposal for £200 is too low. Experience of local councils in Northern Ireland of spot fines of £250 has shown that rogue traders are content to continue operating even when they are repeatedly fined at this level. We believe that the level of spot fines should be increased to £500 across the UK.

In conclusion, NICHS very much welcomes the measures in the Tobacco and Vaping Bill and is delighted to have the opportunity to contribute to this Call for Evidence.

January 2025

1. <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/young-persons-behaviour-and-attitude-survey-2022>
2. Rapid Growth in disposable e-cig vaping among young adults in GB from 2021-22: A repeat cross sectional study. H. Tatton-Birch et al. 2022, UCL
3. Adolescent E-Cig use & tobacco smoking in the Millenium Cohort Study, J. Staff et al 2021, Addiction