

Written Evidence Submitted by the British Paediatric Respiratory Society (BPRS)

Executive Summary

1. The British Paediatric Respiratory Society (BPRS) supports the overarching aims of the Tobacco and Vapes Bill (“the Bill”) to protect children and young people from the harms of smoking and vaping.
2. We welcome the Bill’s proposals to strengthen restrictions on sales, marketing, and accessibility of vapes, given mounting evidence of detrimental health impacts among children and young people.
3. In particular, the BPRS highlights:
 - The urgent need to reinforce enforcement mechanisms so that prohibitions on underage sales of vaping products are meaningful in practice.
 - Coordinating regulators, local authorities, and healthcare professionals is important to ensure consistent oversight and effective penalties.
 - A pressing requirement for further research into both short- and long-term impacts of vaping on paediatric health, including better data on acute toxicity, environmental harms, and the mental health implications of nicotine addiction in the young.
 - The continuation of strong legislative measures—such as the prohibition of flavoured products and disposable devices—to curtail youth appeal and deter youth initiation.

Below, we set out in detail the BPRS perspective, guided by our mission to promote the best respiratory health for children and young people and aligned with evidence that calls for vigorous measures to limit any risk to developing lungs.

1. Introduction

1.1 The British Paediatric Respiratory Society (BPRS) is a professional body of paediatric consultants, trainees, and allied health professionals working to improve respiratory health outcomes in children and young people. We have a membership of over 400 individuals. Our members see first-hand the consequences of exposure to harmful inhalants, including tobacco smoke and e-cigarette aerosols.

1.2 We submit this evidence statement to the Tobacco and Vapes Public Bill Committee to inform and further strengthen measures within the Bill. Our comments reflect both peer-reviewed literature and our clinical experience of the emerging trends in vaping-related health presentations among the paediatric population.

2. Enforcement and Regulation

2.1 Strengthening Compliance

- Current legislation prohibits the sale of vaping products to individuals under 18. However, the rapid increase in youth experimentation suggests that the existing ban is not uniformly enforced. We see disturbing accounts of children freely accessing products, including high-nicotine or non-compliant devices.
- The Bill rightly emphasises fines and penalties for breaches of age-of-sale laws. However, without a comprehensive enforcement strategy, and without the appropriate resources allocated to local authorities, it is unlikely to reduce widespread underage access. We encourage the Committee to consider ring-fenced funding for Trading Standards and relevant authorities, and a statutory requirement to coordinate intelligence-sharing across regions.

2.2 Coordinated Approach

- Effective measures to keep vapes out of children’s hands require local and national bodies to act in unison: licensing authorities, trading standards officers, healthcare professionals, parents, and schools. In our experience, unclear routes to report violations or suspect retailers hamper swift investigation and consistent prosecution.
 - BPRS recommends that the Bill formalise cooperative pathways—such as mandated data-sharing and clearer reporting lines—so that breaches can be swiftly identified and penalised. A proactive system to notify authorities of illegal sales, complemented by well-publicised penalties, will be a significant deterrent.
-

3. Research into Vaping Impacts on Child Health

3.1 Gap in Evidence on Long-term Harms

- The BPRS has identified a paucity of robust, long-term data on the health effects of e-cigarette use among adolescents. While acute concerns (e.g. respiratory irritations, nicotine toxicity) are partially documented, the potential chronic consequences—particularly the impact on lung development—remain poorly understood.
- To address this gap, the Bill could establish a statutory duty on relevant agencies to commission longitudinal research into the health impacts of vaping on young people. An agreed data framework could collect information from schools, healthcare providers, and local authorities.

3.2 Nicotine’s Developmental Effects

- We are equally concerned about how sustained exposure to nicotine, even in apparently “less harmful” forms than traditional cigarettes, may affect cognitive and emotional well-being in young people. Further epidemiological studies are

needed, particularly regarding any associations with mental health conditions, addiction patterns, and progression to smoking.

- We support a structured requirement to label nicotine-based products with stronger warnings about addiction and potential harmful effects on adolescent brain development.
-

4. Specific Legislative Measures

4.1 Ban on Flavourings Attractive to Children

- BPRS endorses robust measures to eliminate flavourings that clearly target the youth market. The use of flavours, such as those associated with sweets and desserts, in e-liquids dangerously normalises a high-risk behaviour, increasing the likelihood of nicotine addiction in susceptible children.

4.2 Ban on Disposable Vapes

- In line with environmental and health concerns, we support the Bill's move to ban disposable products. Evidence shows these devices are particularly accessible to young people due to cheaper price points, bright packaging, and convenience. Moreover, the single-use nature of these items raises substantial ecological concerns.
- We encourage the Committee to close any loopholes related to 'big puff' variants or rebranded disposable formats that might circumvent the legislation.

4.3 Parity with Tobacco Legislation

- The Bill's intention to treat vaping similarly to tobacco—in terms of packaging, promotion, and sales venues—has our support. Until proven safe, the precautionary principle should apply: products that deliver nicotine and produce harmful by-products or chemicals must be restricted in the same robust way as traditional cigarettes.
-

5. Environmental and Social Implications

5.1 Environmental Damage

- We wish to highlight the environmental costs tied to discarded vapes. Single-use devices and plastic e-cigarette products pose a hazard if they leach chemicals into soil or waterways. A ban on disposables, as proposed, not only protects child health but also reduces environmental harms.

5.2 Social Media and Advertising Controls

- The BPRS notes the persistent role of online platforms in normalising vaping practices. We advocate for strengthened prohibitions on advertising and promotional campaigns aimed at young audiences, including product placement or sponsored content that glamorises vaping behaviour. The Bill should clarify the obligations and liabilities of social media companies to remove content promoting underage e-cigarette use.
-

6. Recommendations

Enhanced Enforcement and Coordination

1. Mandate a well-resourced and consistent enforcement strategy led by local authorities and Trading Standards, including clearer powers to prosecute outlets contravening age-of-sale laws
2. Develop cross-agency coordination channels so that schools, healthcare professionals, and local communities can alert enforcement bodies of illicit sales or youth vaping hotspots.

Robust Research Provisions

3. Integrate into the Bill a provision for comprehensive longitudinal studies investigating the health consequences of vaping in children, encompassing respiratory, cardiovascular, neurological, and psychological effects.
4. Require the regular publication of data, ensuring transparency in vaping trends and health implications among under-18s.

Harmonisation with Tobacco Control Measures

5. Expand existing tobacco-related prohibitions—such as plain packaging, product display restrictions, and marketing bans—to include all vaping products.
6. Retain strong bans on flavoured e-liquids appealing to children and uphold proposals to phase out disposable devices.

Persistent Monitoring of Emerging Products

7. Create an agile oversight mechanism that can respond swiftly to new vape modifications or emerging nicotine-based items, ensuring no easy workaround for youth access.

7. Conclusion

7.1 The BPRS welcomes the Committee's initiative to address underage vaping in a systematic and comprehensive Bill. By reinforcing enforcement measures, advancing critical research into health harms, and keeping pace with product innovations, Parliament can protect children from both immediate and future harms associated with vaping.

7.2 We stand ready to collaborate with policymakers, enforcement bodies, and other stakeholders to ensure the Bill delivers measurable improvements in the respiratory health of the youngest members of our society.

7.3 We trust that our submission, informed by frontline clinical experience and ongoing review of emerging evidence, will assist the Committee in finalising legislation that makes a decisive impact on the wellbeing of the next generation.

January 2025

For further information

Please contact the British Paediatric Respiratory Society (BPRS) at: president@bprs.co.uk