ASH Scotland submission of 3 November 2023

PE2033/E: Introduce a full ban on disposable vapes

ASH Scotland (Action on Smoking and Health Scotland) is pleased to provide the charity's views on actions called for in the petition PE2033: Introduce a full ban on disposable vapes.

In 2023, ASH Scotland, Laura Young, Keep Scotland Beautiful and Marine Conservation Society published the 'Tackling the environmental and health impacts of e-cigarettes' briefing calling on the Scottish Government to ban disposable e-cigarettes to help Scotland move towards a circular economy and protect children and young people's health[1]. Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health and Royal College of Physicians Edinburgh joined calls to ban disposable e-cigarettes to tackle the upsurge of youth vaping and restrict environmental damage[2]. Leading Scottish respiratory paediatricians urged action to halt 'what is a fast becoming a vaping epidemic in the adolescent population' and avoid 'sacrificing the lung health of the next generation'[3].

Upsurge in young people using disposable e-cigarettes

Britain-wide survey results published by ASH (England) in 2023 reported a 50% increase in the proportion of 11 to 17-year-olds[4] trying vaping in the last year. Disposable e-cigarettes are the vaping product of choice for children currently vaping. According to previous surveys, 6.8% of 11 to 17-year-olds who used e-cigarettes in 2020 used disposable vaping products, rising to 7.7% in 2021, 52% in 2022 and 69% in 2023. Data from the Smoking Toolkit Survey reported similar increases.[5]

In Scotland, regular e-cigarette use by 15-year-olds has tripled and more than doubled for 13-year-olds over five years. The Scottish Government's Health and Wellbeing Census 2021-22 found 10.1% of S4 students and 4.3% of S2 students reporting using e-cigarettes regularly (once a week or more), whilst figures from the Scottish Schools Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey (SALSUS) in 2018 showed regular vaping by 13-year-olds and 15-year-olds at 2% and 3%.[6]

The Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) survey data showed that 'current e-cigarette use' (i.e. used in last 30 days) among

15-year-olds in Scotland increased from 7% in 2018 to 25% in 2022. 3% of 11-year-olds and 10% of 13-year-olds reported being ‘current users’ in 2022. The prevalence of ‘ever use’ (i.e. used at least once) for 11-year-olds was 4%, 16% for 13-year-olds and 36% for 15-year-olds.

2022 University of Glasgow research involving 11 to 16-year-olds suggested youth vaping increases are driven by the popularity of cheap (as little as £1.99), sweet flavoured, brightly coloured disposable e-cigarettes.[7]

Health harms

Long-term harms associated with disposable e-cigarettes are not known due to the products being available for only three years.

Most disposable e-cigarettes contain nicotine, which is highly addictive and many include toxic chemicals not safety tested for inhalation and likely to damage health over time. Scottish respiratory paediatricians have expressed concerns regarding impacts of e-cigarettes on developing lungs (acute lung disease) and brains (increased addiction and adverse behavioural outcomes).

According to WHO, young people who experiment with e-cigarettes are three times more likely to initiate cigarette smoking than those who don’t,[8] and Australia National University’s systematic review of global evidence, published in 2023, found conclusive evidence that e-cigarettes can cause lung injury, burns, poisoning or lead to seizures.[9]

Smoking cessation support

The existence of rechargeable and refillable devices questions the need for disposable products to be available for smoking cessation attempts. The global systematic evidence review published by Australian National University revealed between two-thirds and three-quarters of people who quit smoking do so unaided, and for those needing support, evidence-based therapies like nicotine replacement patches, gums or lozenges are available.

No e-cigarettes are approved by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency for NHS prescriptions in the UK. If vaping products are licensed in the future, ASH Scotland contends they should be available only on prescription to adults who have spoken with qualified health professionals and tried smoking cessation methods known to be

safe and effective.

Environmental impacts

A single-use e-cigarette contains, on average, 0.15g of lithium which means more than 16 tonnes ends in landfill or incinerators across the UK each year.[10] In 2022, 700 bin lorry and waste/recycling plant fires in the UK were caused by electrical batteries including lithium-ion batteries used in disposable e-cigarettes.[11]

A Zurich Municipal report this year estimated two million single-use e-cigarettes every week are binned incorrectly in the UK, i.e. an estimated 78% of e-cigarettes sold.[12] More recent research published by Material Focus suggests 5 million disposable e-cigarettes are discarded weekly in the UK and 73% of vapers say they throw away single-use e-cigarettes[13].

There is little evidence that e-cigarette manufacturers, distributors or retailers have attempted to meet responsibilities under 'The Waste Battery and Accumulator Regulations 2009' and 'Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) regulations 2013' which include retailers selling e-cigarettes providing a free in-store take-back service, establishing an alternative free take-back service or joining a Distributor Takeback Scheme (DTS).

The Scottish Government commissioned Zero Waste Scotland to publish its review about *managing the environmental impact of single use e-cigarettes*[14] which stated:[15]

- In 2022, 10.8% of adults were regular e-cigarette users and, of these, 27% were estimated to use disposables.
- An estimated 21 to 26 million disposable e-cigarettes were consumed in Scotland in 12 months to April 2023.
- 3,375 to 4,292 tonnes of CO2e emissions were associated with single-use e-cigarettes in 2022.
- The weight of single-use e-cigarette packaging and materials discarded in Scotland is between 800 and 1,000 tonnes per year.

ASH Scotland supports banning disposable e-cigarettes

ASH Scotland welcomes the Scottish Government's commitment to hold a consultation on proposals including a ban on disposable e-cigarettes, and also the UK Government and devolved administrations' 'Creating a smokefree generation and tackling youth vaping' consultation which

seeks views on restricting the supply and sale of single-use vapes.

ASH Scotland wants government to protect Scotland's ambition for a generation free from tobacco by prohibiting the supply and sale of disposable e-cigarettes in 2024.

About ASH Scotland

ASH Scotland is the leading charity working in and for Scotland to reduce harms caused by tobacco and related products. For further information, visit www.ashscotland.org.uk

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