

NCD Alliance Scotland Briefing: Tobacco and Vapes Bill (UK Parliament legislation) Health, Social Care and Sport Committee consideration.

Tobacco Harm in Scotland

- Up to 15% of adults smoke cigarettes in Scotland, around 670,000 adults.
- Tobacco is a uniquely lethal product which kills up to 2 in 3 long term users when used as intended. In 2021, smoking accounted for an estimated 8,260 NCD deaths in Scotland of those aged 35 and over ([ScotPHO](#)).
- It also places a significant burden on our health and social care systems, as well as the wider economy. Previous inflation-adjusted estimates suggest that smoking costs the Scottish economy £1.67bn annually ([ASH Scotland](#)).
- Smoking is also a significant driver of health inequalities. The Scottish Health Survey found that 25% of adults in the most deprived quintile smoke, compared to just 7% in the least deprived areas.

Raising the age of sale of tobacco

NCD Alliance Scotland strongly supports the legislation to raise the age of sale for tobacco products, cigarette papers and herbal smoking products so that anyone born on or after 1 January 2009 will never legally be sold tobacco products, as outlined in the legislation tabled in the UK Parliament.

We also welcome that the legislation will remove the existing offence for a person under 18 to purchase tobacco products. This means, as is the case in the other nations of the UK, the legal onus is on the sale of the products, or those proxy purchasing tobacco products.

Smoking is an addiction of childhood. Around 77% of adult smokers report starting before the age of 18 ([ASH Scotland, 2023](#)). There is good evidence that raising the legal age of sale of tobacco products reduces population levels of smoking. For example, this effect was observed following the 2007 increase in age of sale from 16 to 18 in England ([Arnott et al., 2022](#)).

Surveys also show that around 63% of the public across the UK support the Bill, along with more than half of all retailers.

The tobacco industry continues to try and impact the legislation's reach, including by offering alternative measures such as raising the age of sale to 21, or allowing certain smoking products to remain available, such as cigars. Let's call this out for what it really is – the tobacco industry trying to weaken the Bill to save their skin. Allowing them to do so would miss a critical opportunity to save tens of thousands of lives.

However, implementation of the proposed measure must form part of a comprehensive strategy that includes national campaigns to ensure public understanding, mandatory age verification for tobacco sales to aid enforcement, and sustained funding for stop smoking services.

Restrictions on vaping products

NCD Alliance Scotland supports the introduction of mechanisms to restrict the marketing and promotion of vaping products. NCD Alliance Scotland particularly supports consideration of all measures to reduce the appeal of e-cigarettes to children, noting that smoking amongst 15-year-olds in Scotland is at 5%, whilst vaping is at 25% ([University of Glasgow, 2023](#)).

We support measures proposed by the four nations consultation to restrict the display, flavouring and packaging of vaping products where they can be seen to increase the appeal of e-cigarettes to children.

Ban on the sale of disposable e-cigarettes

NCD Alliance Scotland support the action being taken across the UK to ban disposable vapes. We understand that disposable vapes are particularly popular with young people, with almost one in five adolescents in Scotland reporting having used an e-cigarette once in their lifetime ([University of Glasgow, 2023](#)).

Disposable vapes carry a significant cost. Estimates suggest that disposable vapes create 800 to 1,000 tonnes of waste in Scotland and that this is set to increase to 1,900 to 2,500 tonnes by 2027 ([Zero Waste Scotland, 2023](#)). Though disposable vapes could be partly recycled, the vast majority are not, and it is estimated 5 million disposable vapes are thrown away every week in the UK ([Material Focus, 2023](#)).

About NCD Alliance Scotland

NCD Alliance Scotland is a coalition of 24 health organisations in Scotland, including leading health charities and royal colleges, campaigning for action on the commercial determinants of health to prevent NCDs and improve Scotland's health.