

*"Most of us know the risks we just
don't care enough about our lives
to do anything about it":*

**The Vaping Habits of Children
and Young People in Trafford**

July 2024

Executive Summary

Concern for the numbers of children and young people who vape has grown nationally in recent years. This project provided an opportunity to explore the topic of children and young people vaping, focussing specifically on its impact within Trafford.

In gathering the views of children and young people and parents/carers, we have explored the prevalence of vaping in Trafford, how the issue is being addressed on both an individual and a contextual level, and we have gained a baseline insight into use of snus¹ in the borough.

We gained a total of almost 6000 responses to our two surveys, and we thank everyone who took the time to share their views. Through these views, we identified that almost one fifth of children and young people have either tried vaping or do so on a regular basis. For those who do vape, a large proportion are either planning to cut down or quit or are already trying to do so. Parents/carers told us they were most likely to address the issue of vaping themselves and our findings suggest this may be due to a lack of awareness on what support services are available. We also found that parents and carers were most likely to have observed negative behavioural/emotional impacts of vaping in their children or young people, whereas children and young people were more likely to report positive impacts. In addition, our findings demonstrate vaping is highly pervasive within the everyday lives of children and young people. Many aspects of our findings substantially relate to the wider context of the issue both regionally and nationally.

Our findings and analysis informed a number of recommendations in relation to a need to improve promotion of support available for children and young people to quit vaping, a need to improve education on regulated and unregulated vapes, more research on this topic to be done with under 11s, on the contents of unregulated vapes, on the use of snus amongst young people and on the long term affects of vaping.

¹ Oral, smokeless nicotine pouches

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About Healthwatch Trafford and Healthwatch 100

Healthwatch Trafford is your local health and social care champion. If you use GPs and hospitals, dentists, pharmacies, care homes or other publicly funded support services in your area, we want to hear about your experiences. As an independent statutory body, we have the power to make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers listen to local feedback and improve standards of care. We can also help you to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.

The Trafford Healthwatch 100 aims to get as many local people as possible to sign up and give their views on topics to do with health and social care via regular surveys. We want to gain as much information as possible so that we can direct our work to the issues that matter. Details for signing up can be found at: healthwatchtrafford.co.uk/the100/.

About this project

The aim of this project was to gain an insight into the vaping habits of children and young people within Trafford and to understand the extent to which those who need it, are able to access support. We wanted to research this topic due to growing anecdotal concern around the numbers of children and young people vaping.

We conducted this project with support from Trafford Council's Public Health Team who had an interest in researching this topic due to a collaboration with NHS England on the National Population Fellowship. We pass on our sincere thanks and appreciation for our partnership with the team. This project highly benefited from knowledge and experience shared in relation to the topic and the connections made with local schools which enabled participation from both students and their parents/carers.

Use of the term 'vaping' within this report refers to the use of electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) which are products promoted for the use of adults to aid smoking cessation. Compared to smoking cigarettes, these are said to be much less likely to cause detrimental health impacts however, there is little long-term research on the effects of vaping². It is illegal to sell e-cigarettes to under 18s and their bodies are more vulnerable to harm from it³.

² NHS (2022) Using e-cigarettes to stop smoking. <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking/using-e-cigarettes-to-stop->

This report begins with an outline of the surveys we designed, when they were launched and how they were distributed. Key findings are outlined before an infographic showing the demographics of individuals who responded to the survey. We then present what we heard from respondents broken down into one section focussing on the children and young people's survey findings and another based on findings from the parents/carers survey. Our overall findings inform the recommendations we make at the end of this report.

What we did

We created and launched two Healthwatch 100 surveys. The first of these was aimed at gathering responses from children and young people and the second gathered parents/carers perspective on this issue and experiences in relation to their own child vaping (where applicable). Survey questions for both surveys can be found in appendices.

We did a soft launch of the children and young people's survey at the end of April (during the pre-election period of sensitivity) which meant that a specific version of the survey could be sent to schools well in advance of the main exam period. Our principle contact in the Public Health Team was able to gain interest from many local secondary schools which resulted in them offering protected time to students to complete the survey. This proved invaluable. A public version of the survey was launched in mid-May 2024 and both surveys closed towards the end of May 2024.

Questions on the public and schools versions of the survey were identical. Guidance taken from the Information Commissioners Office suggests young people aged 13 and over are able to provide their own consent. We opened the schools survey up to children aged 11 and 12 as this meant we were able to inform parents of the project and they could choose for their child to opt-out. The public survey was only open to children and young people aged 13 and over. Results of both surveys were combined and analysed together.

Both the parent/carer survey and children and young people's public survey were sent to our subscriber list and promoted on our website and social media pages. We emailed the

[smoking/#:~:text=An%20e%2Dcigarette%20is%20a,damaging%20elements%20in%20tobacco%20smoke.](#) [Accessed June 2024]

³ Meehan, J., Heffron, M., McAvoy, H., et al. (2024) The adverse effects of vaping in young people: Global Pediatrics. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpeds.2024.100190> [Accessed June 2024]

surveys to a specific mailing list of local partners who work with children and young people for further promotion through their channels.

The Public Health Team shared the survey with Early Help and their social care team to be forwarded on to members of the public. They also shared it with the Children and Young People's forum and posted on the Trafford Council internal intranet.

Key Findings

- 81% children and young people told us they don't vape and have never tried it and 5% of children and young people told us they vape on a regular basis.
- 42% of children and young people who currently vape are planning to either cut down or stop vaping, or are already trying to cut down or stop.
- Parents/carers are more likely to take action themselves to support their child to stop vaping, rather than seek external support. Our research suggests this is due in part to a lack of knowledge on what support they can access.
- Whilst children and young people are more likely to self-report positive emotional and behavioural impacts of vaping, parents and carers are more likely to observe negative impacts on their children.
- The prevalence of vaping in children and young people's everyday lives is evident given their sightings of it are reported to be common both in school and in the places children are likely to visit.

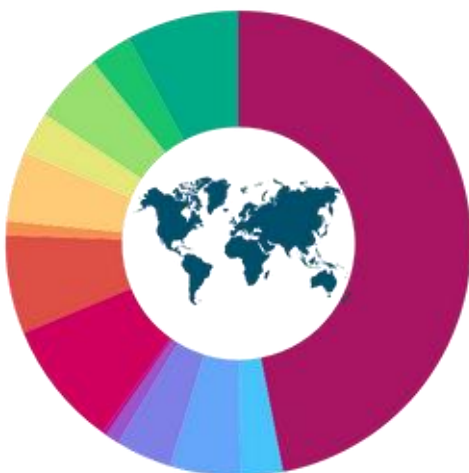
Who responded to our surveys?

The **total response rate** for the two surveys was **5591**. This is made up of 4212 responses from children and young people and 1379 responses from parents and carers. Unless specified otherwise, these numbers refer to children, young people, parents, and carers together.



From our parents and carers' survey:
2% of respondents were 18–34, **27%** 35–44,
68% were 45–65, and **1%** preferred not to say

From our children and young people's survey:
7% of respondents said they were 11, **20%** were 12,
25% were 13, **22%** told us they were 14,
14% were 15, **5%** were 16, and **4%** were 17



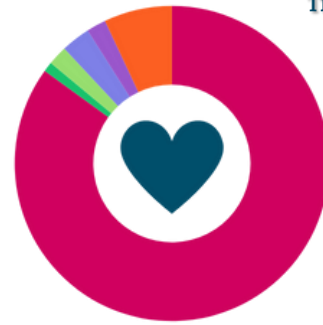
When asked about ethnicity: 56% of all respondents told us they were White British, White Irish, or White other; 5% were Black or Black British – Caribbean or African; 17% Asian or Asian British – Indian, Pakistani, or Bangladeshi; 5% said they were Asian or Asian British – Chinese and 3% Asian or Asian British – Other; and 5% told us they were mixed race. 8% identified as 'other' and gave a range of answers.

When we asked parents and carers about their marital status: 6% were single, 79% were married or in a civil partnership, 8% lived with a partner, 1% were widowed, 5% had divorced, and 2% answered either 'other' or preferred not to say.

Most respondents identified as male (44%).
48% identified as female,
1% as non-binary,
4% as 'other', and the rest preferred not to say



When asked about sexuality: The majority of all respondents (85%) identified as heterosexual or straight. 1% identified as gay, 2% as lesbian, and 2% as bisexual. 3% selected 'other'.



90% of parents and carers who responded told us they were employed. **3%** were unemployed, **2%** said they were not working, and **1%** were students.



When asked about disability: 9% of all responses told us that yes, they were disabled; 86% answered no, and 5% preferred not to say. Additionally, 5% of respondents to our children and young people's survey told us they were carers.



We also asked people across both surveys which part of Trafford they came from. They gave the answers above, as well as **14%** who told us they lived **outside Trafford**.

What we heard

Children and Young People

Those who vape

Although the majority of respondents told us they have never tried vaping, almost one fifth of respondents either vape regularly, have tried vaping or used to vape regularly. This is comparable to findings from Ash⁴ and The Children’s Commissioner⁵.

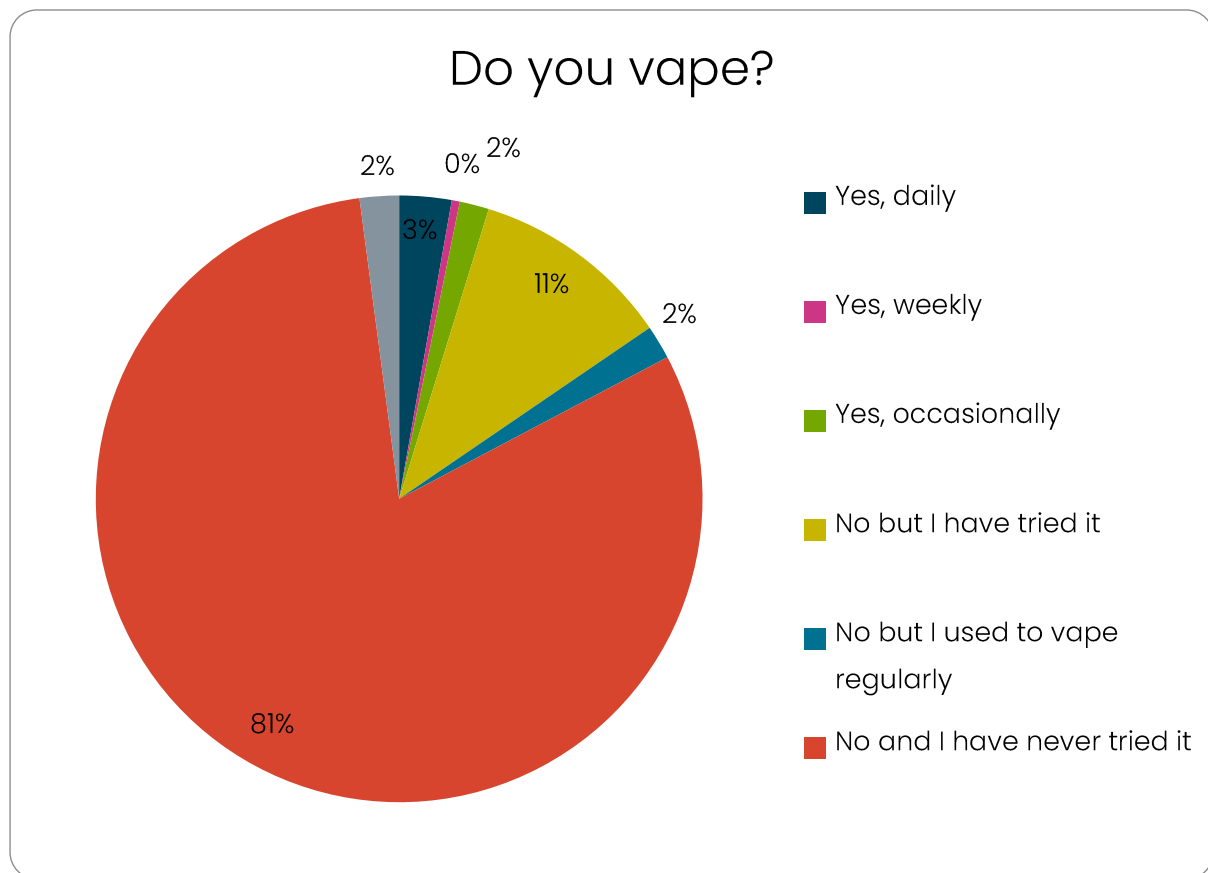


FIGURE 1

⁴ Ash (2023) Use of e-cigarettes (vapes) among young people in Great Britain <https://ash.org.uk/resources/view/use-of-e-cigarettes-among-young-people-in-great-britain> [Accessed June 2024]

⁵ The Children’s Commissioner (2023) The Children’s Commissioner’s response to ‘Youth vaping: call for evidence’ <https://assets.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wpuploads/2023/06/FINAL-0706-Response-to-DHSC-call-for-evidence-on-vaping.pdf> [Accessed June 2024]

Of those who currently or used to vape, they were most likely to have first tried it when they were younger than 11 years old. This is a particularly concerning given that ours and a lot of recent external research⁶ exclusively captures the experiences of children aged 11 and over and therefore there is a gap in knowledge on the reasons why children are first trying vaping at such young ages. It would be beneficial to research the topic with younger age groups and subsequently plan targeted prevention support.

To ascertain the level of addiction (as informed by the Fagerstrom Test⁷) we asked children and young people when they were most likely to have their first vape of the day. Almost a third of children and young people told us they vape as soon as they wake up, before they get out of bed. Based on the Fagerstrom Test, this suggests a high level of addiction.

⁶ NHS Digital (2022) Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use among Young People in England, 2021 <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/smoking-drinking-and-drug-use-among-young-people-in-england/2021> [Accessed June 2024]

⁷ Heatherton TF, Kozlowski LT, Frecker RC, et al. (1991). The Fagerstrom Test for Nicotine Dependence: a revision of the Fagerstrom Tolerance Questionnaire. Br J Addict 86:1119-27.

When do you have your first vape of the day?

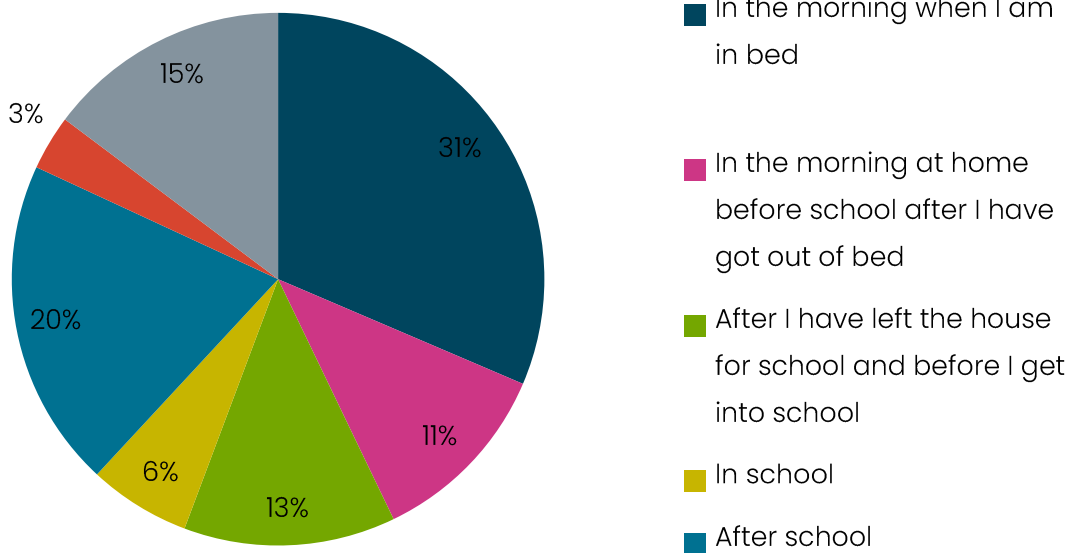


FIGURE 2

Impact on feelings and/or behaviours

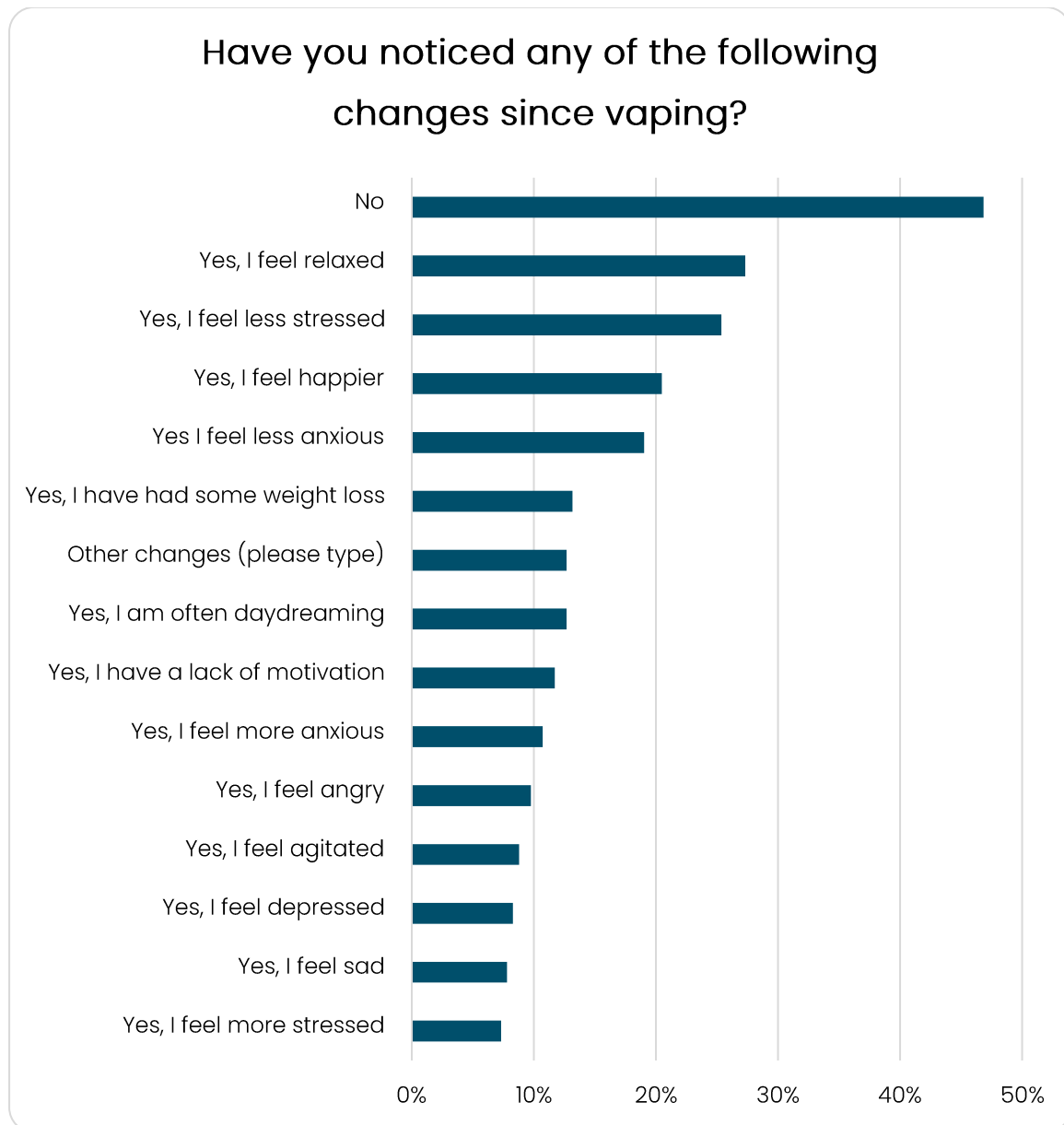


FIGURE 3

For the question above, respondents could choose as many options as they felt applied. Children and young people were more likely to report more positive impacts such as feeling relaxed, less stressed, I feel happier and less anxious. These perceptions may result in children and young people being less likely to be willing to stop and increase the appeal of vaping. Similar findings have been identified in other research where children

and young people have linked vaping to management of their mental health⁸ This is vital to take into consideration in relation to intervention as many may seek a replacement much in the same way as other addictions.

Willingness to quit vaping

A large proportion (42%) of children and young people who vape told us they are either planning to cut down or stop vaping or are already trying to cut down or stop. This demonstrates a clear opportunity to support many children to quit the habit.

Vape flavours

Less than one fifth of respondents who vape regularly, told us they would stop vaping if the range of sweet/candy/berry flavours offered now were no longer available. Over 70% told us they would still vape if sweet/berry/candy flavour vapes didn't exist. Given that the government is set to ban the sale of certain vape flavours in an attempt to deter children and young people from vaping, based on our findings, this is projected to have a small impact. 10% of vapers told us they would consider smoking tobacco; this is potentially concerning given that there is evidence to suggest children and young people who have vaped are much more likely to have tried smoking than those who have never tried vaping³.

Parental Knowledge

Of those who vape, almost half of respondents told us their parent/s or carer/s know they vape. Some openly vape however only a very small proportion say their parents buy their vapes. Most either vape away from view of their parent/carers or told us their parents disapprove.

A large proportion (40%) of children and young people told us their parent/carers don't know that they vape. This could therefore challenge our findings in the section below in relation to the proportion of parents who told us their child doesn't vape. The potential implications of this are discussed in the parent/carers section below.

⁸ Notley, C., Varley, A., Pope, I., et al. (2024) Young people's use of disposable vapes: A qualitative study. *Addiction*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/add.16570> [Accessed June 2024]

Does your parent or carer know you vape?

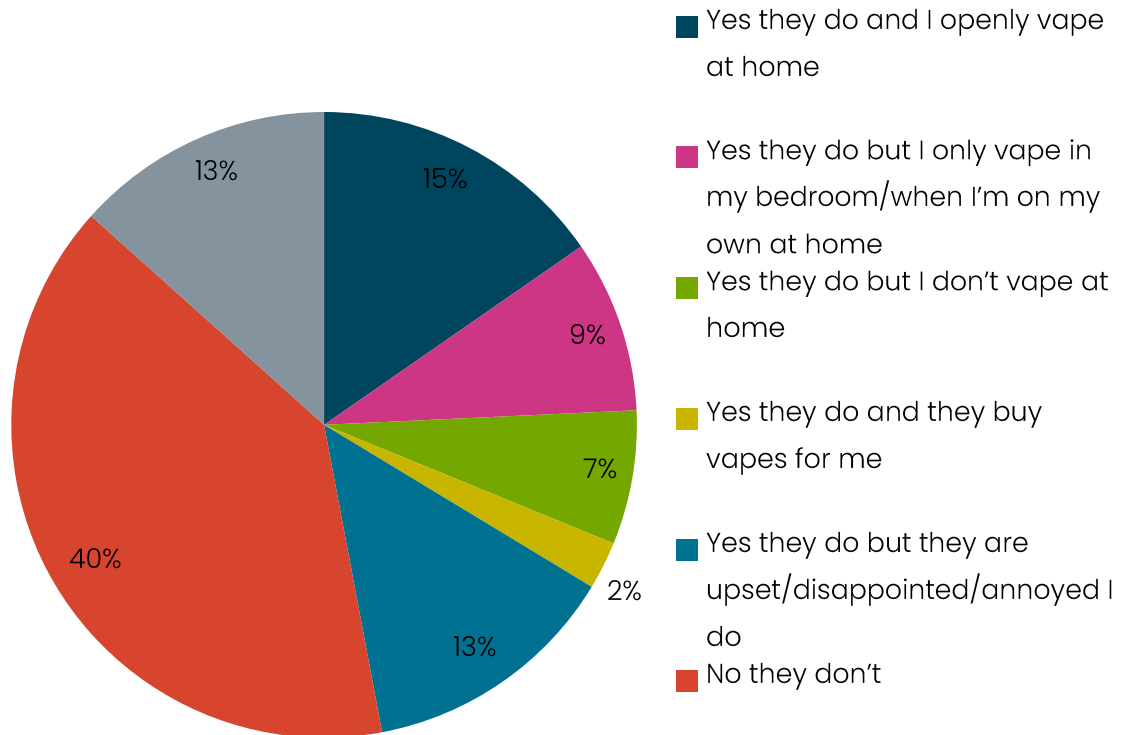


FIGURE 4

Perceptions of all children and young people

Prevalence of vaping

Figure 5 presents the percentages of children and young people who told us their friends and/or family vape. We have provided the data both for the overall population surveyed and for those who told us they vape.

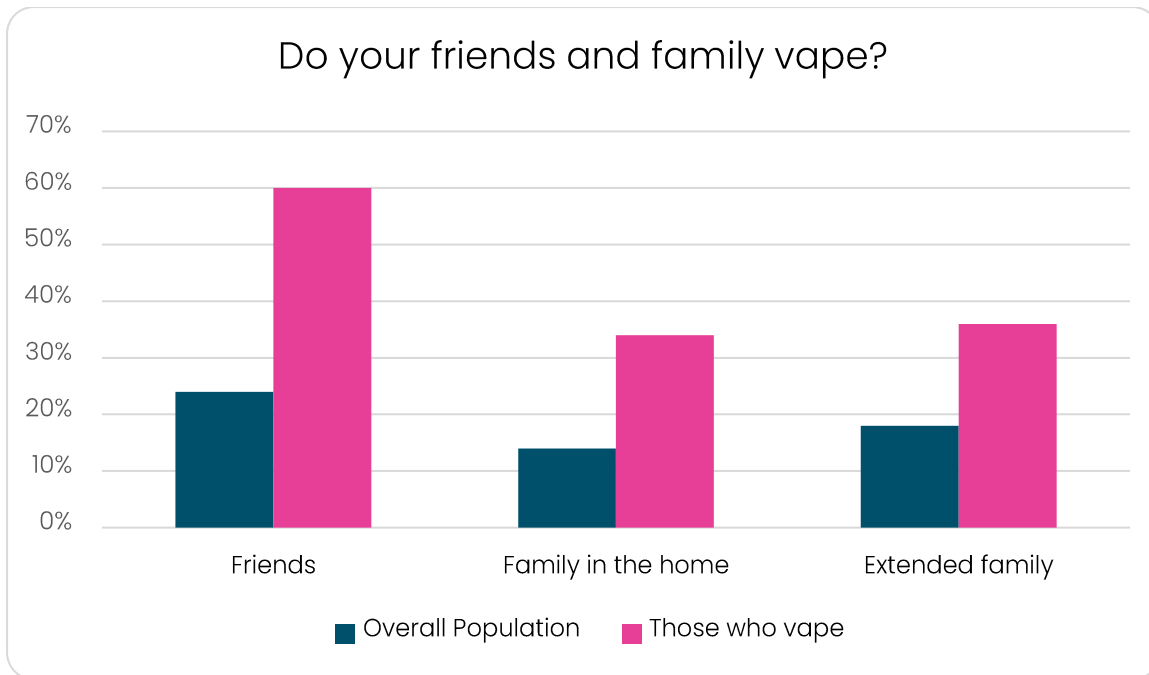


FIGURE 5

This chart indicates that children and young people who are around others who vape, are more likely to take up the habit themselves. This is particularly the case in relation to children and young people who have friends who vape. This is also evident in other research which finds vaping to be a social practice (both in relation to in-person socialising and social media)^{4,7} and demonstrates the influence of friends in relation to children and young people vaping³.

All children and young people were asked about places in school they had seen others vape. Figure 6 below presents findings for this question. Considering 196 children and young people told us they vape on a regular basis; our findings suggest over three quarters have vaped in the school toilets and over two thirds have vaped on the way to school. Almost half told us they have vaped in class and/or on the bus.

In addition to our listed suggestions, many children and young people provided their own examples of places which we were able to group into categories. In school or school-related places mentioned include the changing rooms (7), canteen (6) and anywhere there are no teachers (6).

Many places external to school were also stated which although was not our specific intention, this has highlighted the prevalence of vaping in children and young people's everyday lives. 155 children and young people told us they had seen others vaping on the park, 152 mentioned other transport related places (tram/train/unspecified) and 114 mentioned shops, shopping centres and/or town centre areas.. Other places mentioned

include cafes, restaurants, fast food shops and/or pubs, at football games, at the gym, the leisure centre and ice-skating rink. Many children and young people simply told us they see people vaping 'everywhere' and on social media which included both videos of vaping and vapes being sold.

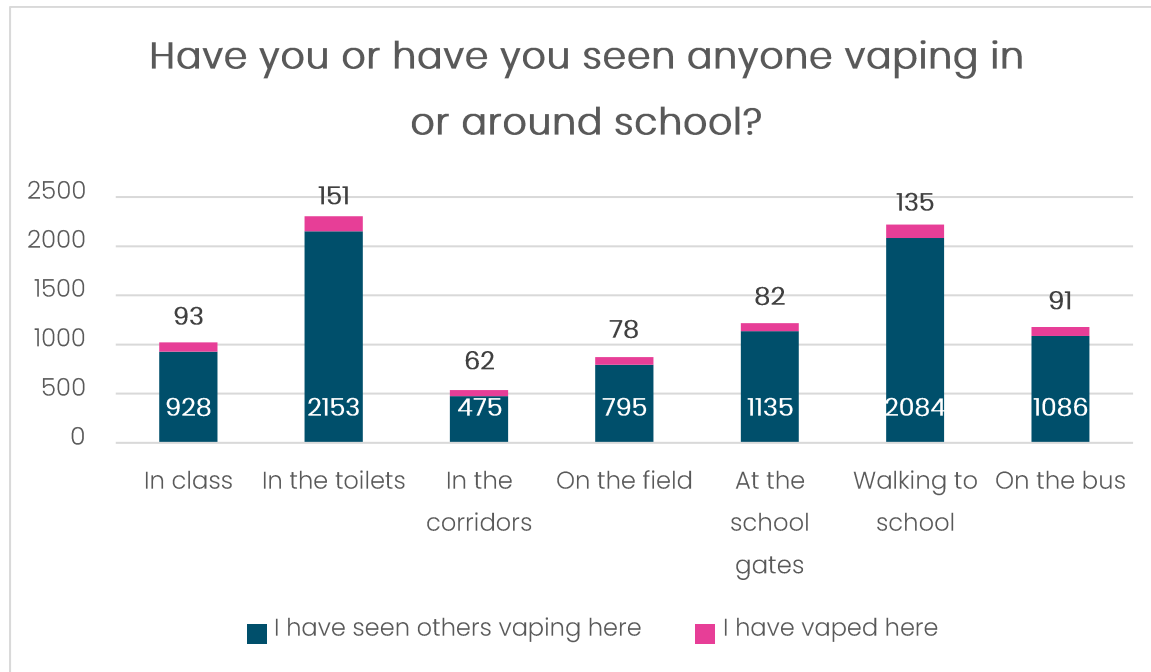


FIGURE 6

Snus

Recently, there has been a rise in concern around the use of snus (nicotine pouches)⁹ however there is little formal research on the topic in relation to the UK, considering both children and young people and the population generally. The product has gained attention with the use of it being seen on social media and reports of its use by Premier League footballers to aid performance¹⁰. Despite nicotine content, it is not illegal to sell snus to under 18s in the UK.

We took the opportunity through this survey to gauge current prevalence of snus among the children and young people of Trafford. Our findings suggest the majority of children and young people have either never heard of snus or have heard of it but never tried it.

⁹ <https://www.who.int/europe/news-room/feature-stories/item/have-you-heard-of-white-snus--a-swedish-tobacco-control-activist-rings-the-alarm>

¹⁰ Read, D., Cope, E., & Taylor, L. (2023) Snus Use in English Professional Football. <https://www.lborolondon.ac.uk/media/media/london/images/news/2024/snus-use-in-english-professional-football.pdf> [Accessed June 2024]

However, a small percentage (2%) told us they use snus on a regular basis and a further 2% have tried it. This is equivalent to 177 children and young people with 50 of these using the product daily.

Of those who either used snus regularly or had tried it, 61 children and young people told us they had used snus in class and 65 said they had used it at break time.

Given the high-profile nature of this product and international research on this suggesting growing prevalence among children and young people¹¹, we suggest more research on this and how to prevent its use among young people is vital.

Educational Resources on Vaping

Figure 7 presents the overall findings from feedback from children and young people who have seen/accessed given educational resources on the subject of vaping.

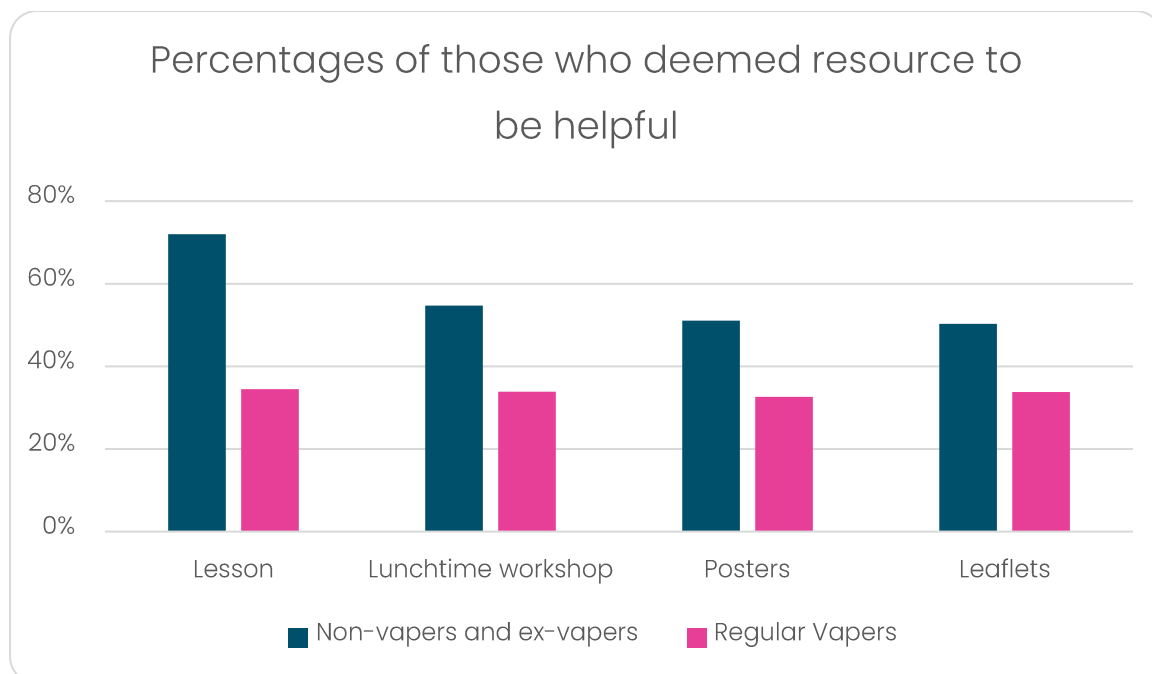


FIGURE 7

As part of this question, children and young people told us other ways they had accessed resources. Grouping these comments enabled us to identify that many had attended assemblies on the topic, seen other provision such as school nurses going into school to give information, attended 'Crucial Crew', received information from family and/or had

¹¹ Lund, L., Bast, LS., Rubæk, M. et al (2022) Exploring factors associated with smokeless tobacco use among young people: A systematic scoping review. Drug and Alcohol Dependence. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2022.109627> [Accessed June 2024]

seen information online or on social media. Given that these were provided as comments, the helpfulness of these is unclear.

Within these comments, a number of children and young people expressed insightful comments about the overall topic of vaping which included some feelings of helplessness. This included insightful comments such as:

"Anyone who vapes won't care about this. you have to go to the root of the problem. Vapes!!, they're too easily Accessible for teens. They are also marketed at teen using bright colour and ""cool"" flavours. Just ban vapes, or implement laws to forbid those marketing strategies"

"I think it's just being aware of the side effects of vaping. Even though we are educated about vaping, many people go and vape, I don't know why but this is how it is. No matter how many lessons are conducted, it is just very obvious to students that yes, it is bad. For me at least, I know what is bad for my health and the people I know who vape, know it as well but they still vape. They might have been encouraged by someone or it might be peer pressure."

"In my opinion many people vape because it is addictive and some people vape because they feel the need to rebel in some way because they have strict parents for example. Come on now let's be realistic does putting up a poster really make a person stop and say you know what I am going to quit. No. It doesn't. You need to spread the message in a more direct and efficient way."

"Literally nothing. It is diabolical the lack of attention the school seem to give."

"...most of us know the risks we just don't care enough about our lives to do anything about it. if the world around us is visibly screwed and we might not last long, why try? why care?"

"people find more thrill in doing things that are illegal"

"...have you really not opened your eyes and realized that no kid who vaped is EVER going to look at a poster and change their mind about vaping. In my opinion most kids who vape feel the need to rebel because of (for example) strict parents or rude and strict teachers telling them what to do. Be fully honest with yourself and look at the situation at hand, there are SO many students vaping literally in the school toilets. they think its 'cool'. so a lunch time workshop isn't going to do anything, I'm sorry but its true. You are doing a good deed and are on the right path but something needs to happen, asap. vaping is just going to become more

and more popular and there needs to be a solution. I don't know any right now but it needs to be something that happens. I'm not trying to be rude I am just telling the truth as the survey says."

"saying stop won't stop people"

"The posters, lessons, powerpoint ect. are not helpful because they give the audience impression you get in a lot of trouble if you do say you do"

"would just make me feel guilty but i was only doing it bcs i was stressed"

Parents and Carers

Within our findings, 83% of parents and carers are either *very* or *somewhat* concerned about the numbers of children vaping in Trafford. Furthermore, 91% of parents/carers of children and young people who vape told us they are either *very* or *somewhat* concerned about impacts on their child's physical and/or mental development.

Parental knowledge of their children and young people vaping

The parents and carers survey was shared both via locals schools communications as well as on our social media pages and mailing lists. Therefore, although many of the children and young people survey are likely to have parents and carers who completed this survey, given that responses were anonymous, this cannot be verified.

In comparison to the proportions of children and young people who told us they vape, a larger proportion of parents told us their children don't. Paired with the findings we have from the children and young people's survey for which 41% told us their parents don't know they vape, this indicates that may be many parents are unaware that their child vapes. This is concerning as it prevents parents from being able to monitor potential detrimental health impacts of vaping.

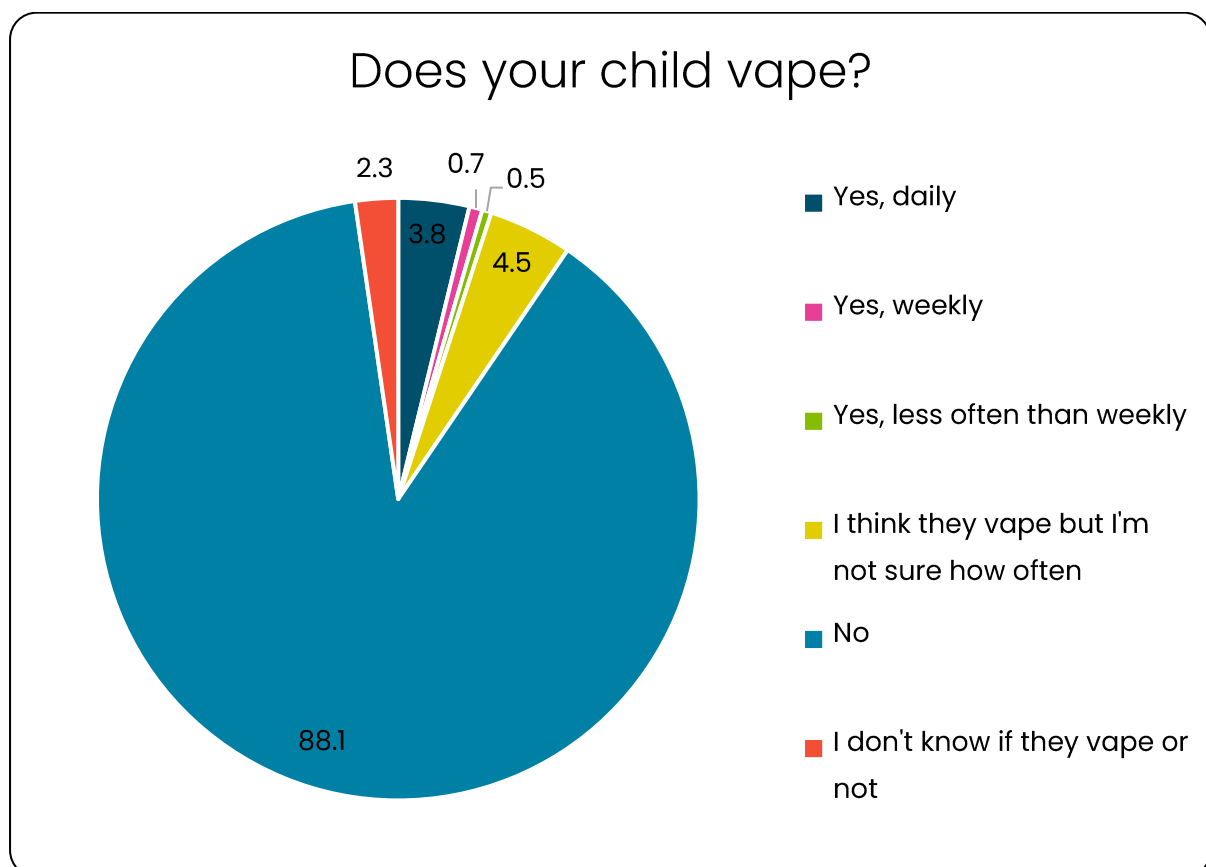


FIGURE 8

Impact on feelings and/or behaviours

From responses to the children and young people's survey we found that respondents were much more likely to report positive impacts on their feelings and/or behaviours (figure 3). However, figure 8 shows impacts on feelings and /or behaviours of children and young people as observed by parents/carers and this shows the direct opposite of this is the case. In particular, the top three feelings and/or behaviours reported by children and young people (relaxed, less stressed and happier) appear in the bottom three for the parents/carers survey. This could contribute to children and young people's motivations to start or continue vaping which include perceptions of the habit as "'cool', 'fashionable' and enticing"¹². Other research suggests amongst other vital considerations, motivations to vape should be taken into account within cessation interventions.¹³

¹² Smith MJ, Mackintosh AM, Ford A, et al. (2023) Youth's engagement and perceptions of disposable e-cigarettes: a UK focus group study. *BMJ*. 10.1136/bmjopen-2022-068466 [Accessed June 2024]

¹³ Hongying Dai (2021) Prevalence and Factors Associated With Youth Vaping Cessation Intention and Quit Attempts. *Pediatrics*. e2021050164. 10.1542/peds.2021-050164 [Accessed June 2024]

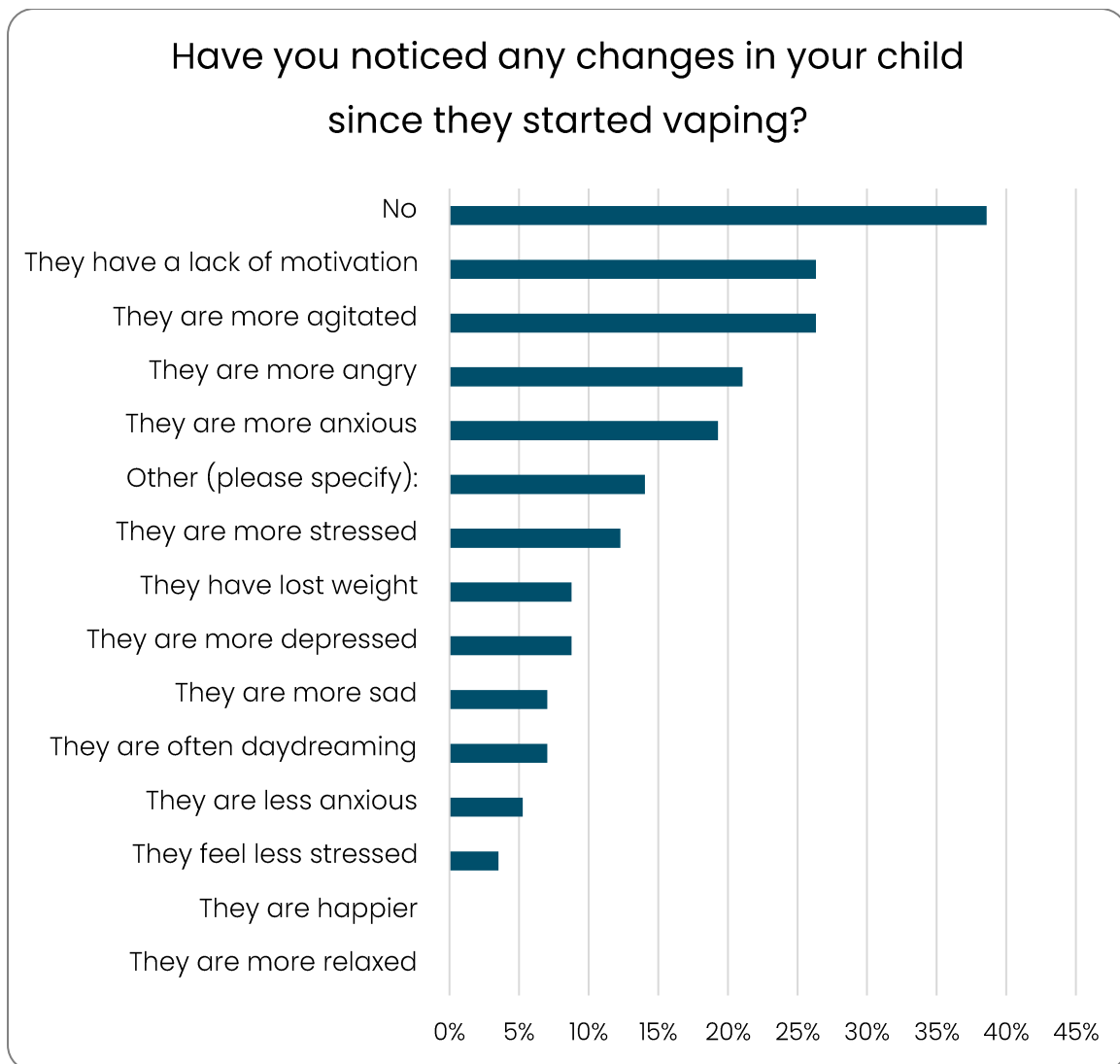


FIGURE 9

Parental response to children and young people vaping

Our findings suggest, the vast majority (80%) of all parents/carers feel the same about vaping as they do smoking. A small proportion (9%) consider vaping more favourably and a smaller proportion (5%) consider smoking more favourably. We asked all parents two distinct questions on what they would do if they found out their child was vaping and what they would do if they found out their child was smoking. This question required a free text response and echoing the findings stated above, 78% of parents gave the same response to both questions. Themes identified for the two questions combined are displayed in figure 9 below:

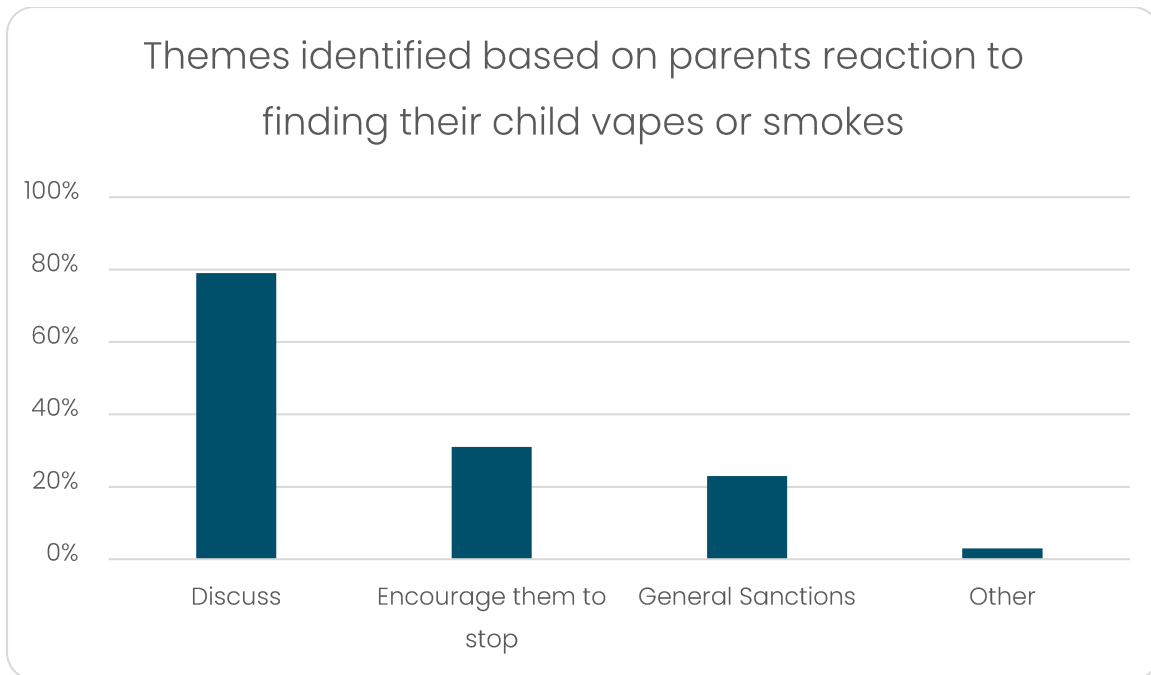


FIGURE 10

These findings show the majority of parents told us they would talk about the issue with their child/young person. Within this theme we included discussion mentioned without a specified focus as well as those who told us they would discuss health concerns, financial impacts and/or what motivated the child to vape. For those who mentioned health concerns, in relation to vaping specifically, some made reference to worries about risks such as “popcorn lung” but many mentioned that they would warn children of the lack of knowledge around the long-term effects of vaping. Healthwatch Blackpool found this to be a concern for many parents and also identified that almost two thirds of parents felt they would benefit from further education relating to vaping¹⁴. Comments in our survey included:

“Discuss with them the reasons why it is an ill-advised, unsafe choice to make, for their health, financially and other reasons, as well as lack of long-term data on detrimental effects and worrying presence of unregulated vapes containing various harmful chemicals.”

“Try and talk to them and convince them of the dangers of vaping and how relatively little is known about long-term harms”

¹⁴ Healthwatch Blackpool (2023) Children & Young People’s Vaping Report. <https://healthwatchblackpool.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Healthwatch-Children-and-Young-Peoples-Vaping-Report.pdf> [Accessed June 2024]

"I would talk to them about the dangers to their health and the unknown long term side effects."

"I would be disappointed, there is little research to know the long term effects of such an activity."

Conversely, some parents mentioned more confidently that they would discuss long-term health effects of smoking. For example:

"I will educate my child in the long term health risk."

"Try and talk to them and convince them of the dangers of smoking and how much is already known about long-term harms"

The general sanctions theme includes parents who told us they would ground their child, withdraw pocket money (and/or restrict access to money to buy vapes/cigarettes), take away access to technology, confiscate the vape or cigarettes and/or search their bedroom/bag.

Within the 'other' theme we included:

- comments in relation to parents/carers showing images to their children and young people of the effects of vaping and/or smoking
- drawing on personal and/or family experiences of the effects of vaping and/or smoking
- Many comments (29) expressing negative emotional responses such as:

"Go mad"

"I would be very sad..."

"I would be extremely upset..."

"...I wasn't happy that they had tried it but I wasn't surprised. It seems to be a growing trend amongst young teens."

The strong emotional responses mentioned above demonstrate a high level of concern amongst parents/carers. Equipping parents/carers with knowledge on the topic of vaping in general as well as information on where to get support, is likely to improve such negative feelings. Although only a small number of parents (mentioned above) told us their child had accessed specialist support at Early Break, experiences were positive.

A small number of parents (15) told us they would report the places from which their child had bought the vapes (assuming the child had obtained the vape in this way). In addition to individualised support targeting children and young people to deter them from vaping, encouraging parents to report illegal sales could contribute to the restriction of the sale of

the products (both unregulated vapes and the illegal sale of regulated vapes to those underage). This could have a positive impact on the wider context in which children and young people vape. Tackling the sale of illicit vapes, and the underage sale of vapes is a current priority for both National Trading Standards¹⁵ and Chartered Trading Standards Institute¹⁶. There is also a clear focus on this issue regionally with Local Authority Trading Standards reporting seizure of 113,462 illegal vapes across the North-West of England between July and September 2023. This was the largest volume seized nationally within the given period.¹⁷

The theme of ‘encourage them to stop’ included a large proportion (45%), who told us they would put their own support in place, many didn’t specify how they would go about stopping their child vaping or smoking. Other parents within this group, told us they would seek external support. A breakdown of this is provided below.

¹⁵ <https://www.nationaltradingstandards.uk/our-priorities/>

¹⁶ <https://www.tradingstandards.uk/news-policy-campaigns/vaping-resource-hub/>

¹⁷ <https://www.local.gov.uk/disposable-vapes-faqs>

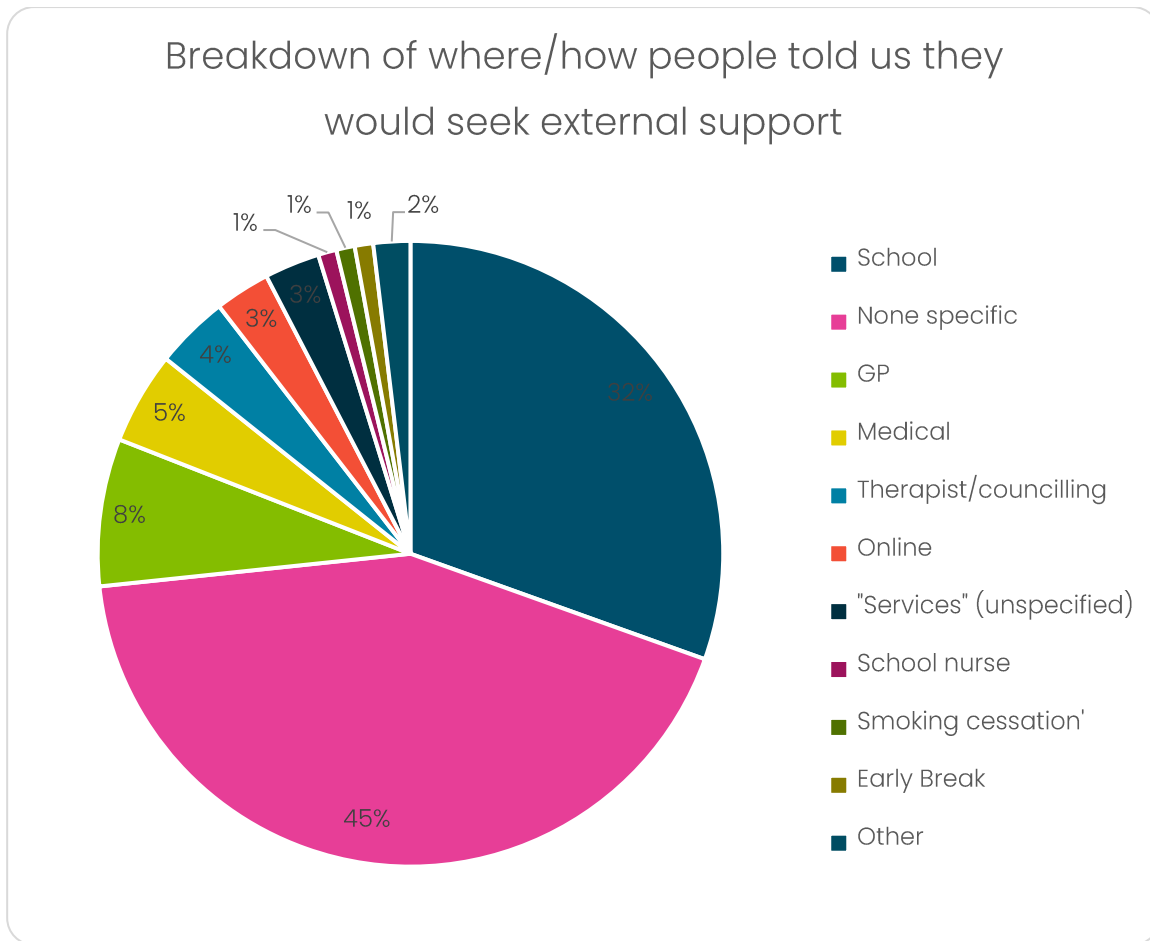


FIGURE 11

These findings suggest that a lot of parents would not immediately know where to look for support and around one third would speak to school about this issue. This could be placing additional pressure on schools which nationally, are already heavily impacted by this issue¹⁸. Moreover, given that there are specific support services available to help children and young people to come off vapes, this may be a more knowledge and access of these may be a more effective way to stop children and young people vaping, given that there is an individual approach. As figure 10 shows these services which include school nurses and Early Break are seldom mentioned.

In addition to the findings above, almost two thirds of parents/carers who are aware their child vapes, told us they hadn't sought external support to help their child quit vaping. Those who did were most likely to go the GP however experiences of this were negative

¹⁸ <https://www.nasuwt.org.uk/article-listing/rise-in-vaping-in-schools-government-failure.html>

with comments including: *“No impact on my child”, “It didn’t help” and “GP only really gave leaflets no real advice or guidance”* and

“They informed me that at present they cannot offer assistance with this. The smoking cessation nurse cannot provide nicotine patches to help give vapes up.”

However, some parents told us they accessed formal support via Early Break and experiences of this were positive with comments including: *“Very helpful”, “Very good resource and support”* and *“They are supporting him”*.

Regulated and unregulated vapes

As can be seen below, knowledge on regulated and unregulated vapes is mixed. Although around one third of parents/carers told us they know the difference, the majority either haven’t considered this, or wouldn’t confidently know the difference.

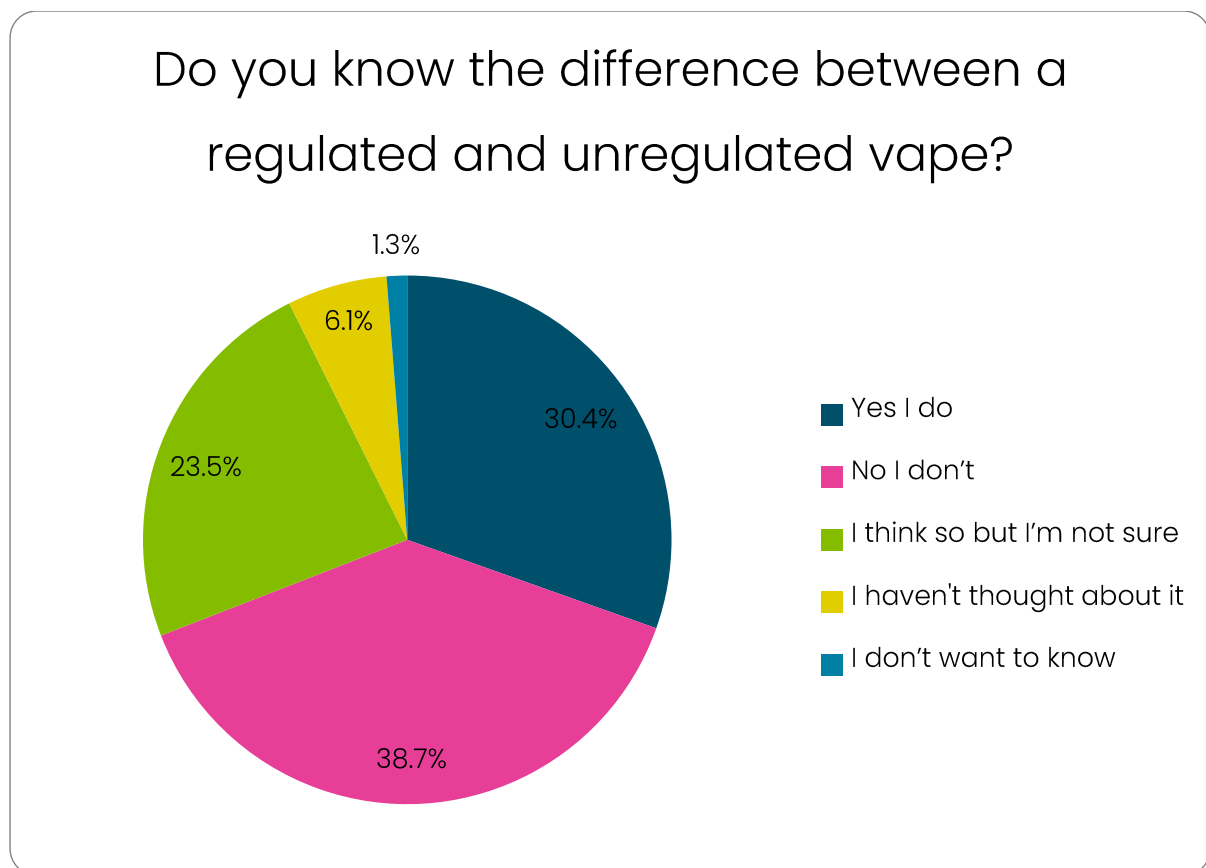


FIGURE 12

Regulated vapes, on sale in the UK to those 18 and over, are subject to specific guidelines. This includes the requirement to:

- *“restrict e-cigarette tanks to a capacity of no more than 2ml*
- *restrict the maximum volume of nicotine-containing e-liquid for sale in one refill container to 10ml*

- *restrict e-liquids to a nicotine strength of no more than 20mg/ml*
- *require nicotine-containing products or their packaging to be child-resistant and tamper evident*
- *ban certain ingredients including colourings, caffeine and taurine*
- *include new labelling requirements and warnings*
- *require all e-cigarettes and e-liquids be notified and published by the MHRA before they can be sold*¹⁹

Unregulated vapes are sold illegally and the level of risk they pose cannot be verified based on the guidelines above. The BBC²⁰ did their own investigation into a small number (18) vapes confiscated from college students, of which they said most were illegal. Laboratory testing found the vapes contained potentially harmful levels of chemicals and metals present within the e-liquids. This is in addition to the ingredients known to exist within regulated vapes. Given this was based on a small sample of products and the investigation did not consider other regulated aspects of the products (i.e. messaging on the products, nicotine strength etc.), we suggest more research on unregulated vapes is needed.

¹⁹ Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (2016) E-cigarettes: regulations for consumer products. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/e-cigarettes-regulations-for-consumer-products#:~:text=restrict%20e%2Dliquids%20to%20a,new%20labelling%20requirements%20and%20warnings> [Accessed June 2024]

²⁰ BBC News (2023) Vaping: High lead and nickel found in illegal vapes. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-65614078> [Accessed June 2024]

Recommendations

Improve promotion of support available

Our findings suggest that as well as there being many children who are looking to stop vaping, many parents and carers are unaware of support available. Greater knowledge of services helping children and young people to quit could lead to a reduction in the numbers of young people continuing to vape.

More research to be done with under 11s

Our research suggests that children are starting to vape at younger ages, therefore it may be beneficial to research the topic with younger age groups to prevent children and young people from trying, and ultimately becoming addicted to, vaping.

Improve education on regulated and unregulated vapes

Educating more people on the differences between regulated and unregulated vapes could ensure parents can mitigate the potential risks of unregulated vapes, given the known risks of using even regulated vaping products. Additionally, given that some support services (listed in the section below) focus on support around certain types of vapes, more knowledge could also ease the process of accessing support.

More research required on the contents of unregulated vapes

Following on from the recommendation above, more research on the contents of unregulated vapes is required to justify the urgency for the need to prevent their use.

More research on the use of snus amongst young people

Although we have found low-level use of Snus, research suggests there has been rapid growth in use internationally and there is preliminary research to suggest high profile sportspeople use the product to enhance performance. Our findings on this, as well as the growth in use internationally, highlight the need to explore this further on a regional and/or national scale to prevent an increase in prevalence.

More research required on the long-term effects of vaping

Many parents/carers told us that they would want to warn their children about the unknown, long-term health risks of vaping. More knowledge in this area could help make those warnings clearer, possibly preventing children starting to vape as well as helping encourage them to stop. Vaping has grown in popularity since 2012²¹, and both adult use of e-cigarettes and cautions regarding potential health risks have been well-documented since around then^{22,23}. This provides a substantial basis for more research on the long-term effects of vape use.

²¹ Ash (2023) Use of e-cigarettes (vapes) among adults in Great Britain <https://ash.org.uk/uploads/Use-of-e-cigarettes-among-adults-in-Great-Britain-2023.pdf> [Accessed July 2024]

²² McQueen, A., Tower, S., Sumner, W. (2011) Interviews With “Vapers”: Implications for Future Research With Electronic Cigarettes, *Nicotine & Tobacco Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ntr/ntr088>

²³ Pearson, J, L., Richardson, A., Niaura, R, S. et al. (2012) e-Cigarette Awareness, Use, and Harm Perceptions in US Adults. *American Journal of Public Health*. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2011.300526>

Signposting to Support

If you are concerned about the vaping habits of children in your care, below are a list of options for support:

<p>Early Break Support for those using unregulated vapes</p>	<p>0161 723 3880 info@earlybreak.co.uk https://earlybreak.co.uk/</p>
<p>School Nurses Support for children and young people using regulated vapes</p>	<p>0161 549 6290 0161 912 2340 TraffordSchoolNurseTeam@mft.nhs.uk</p>
<p>FRANK General information</p>	<p>0300 123 6600 frank@talktofrank.com https://www.talktofrank.com/drug/vapes</p>

Reporting vendors

Reports to Trading Standards are made via Citizens Advice. Please follow the link below for further information:

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/get-more-help/report-to-trading-standards/>

Appendices

Appendix 1: Children and young people's survey questions

Please note: many of the questions may only have been asked to respondents based on previous responses they provided

1. Consent to take part
2. Which school or college do you go to?
3. Do you vape?
4. What age did you first try a vape?
5. When do you have your first vape of the day?
6. Have you noticed any of the following changes since vaping? (Tick all the apply)
7. If sweet/berry/candy flavour vapes didn't exist, would you still vape?
8. Do you want to cut down or stop vaping?
9. Does your parent or carer know you vape?
10. Do you use Snus?
11. Have you used Snus in school? (select all that apply)
12. Do your friends and family vape or smoke cigarettes (excluding cannabis)? (Please tick all that apply)
13. Have you or have you seen anyone vaping in or around school? (Tick all that apply)
14. What education and resources have you seen or been involved in at school on the topic of vaping and was it helpful?

Appendix 2: Parent/carers survey questions

Please note: many of the questions may only have been asked to respondents based on previous responses they provided

1. Consent to take part

2. Does your child vape?

3. Have you noticed any changes in your child since they started vaping? (Tick all that apply)

4. To what extent are you concerned that vaping/nicotine may impact your child's physical and/or mental development?

5. Have you ever sought support to help your child stop vaping?

6. Seeking support

Where did you go?

Please tell us about your experience

7. Do you know where you would go if you felt your child needed some support to stop vaping?

8. To what extent are you concerned about the numbers of children vaping in Trafford?

9. Would you vape with your child?

10. Please tell us which of these you would/wouldn't do:

11. Do you know the difference between a regulated and unregulated vape?

12. Do you feel the same way about your child vaping as you would if they were smoking tobacco?

13. What would you do if you discovered your child was vaping?

14. What would you do if you discovered your child was smoking tobacco?

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