

Call for excise tax on disposable vapes to deter children

Health campaigners are calling for an excise tax on disposable vapes to stop children from being able to buy them for less than £5.

Action on [Smoking](#) and Health (ASH) said adding £4 to each single-use vape, which currently cost around £4.99, would make them significantly less affordable for children while still less expensive than tobacco.

Disposable vapes are the cheapest e-cigarettes on the market and are now the most used product among young people who currently vape, up more than seven-fold from 7% in 2020 and 8% in 2021 to 52% in 2022, according to the charity's research.

It argued such a tax would also have an environmental benefit, with discarded single-use vapes equating to 10 tonnes of lithium being thrown away a year.

Making them less affordable by adding a specific tax for single-use disposable vapes in the March Budget would be a simple first step

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ASH chief executive Deborah Arnott said: “Smoking is much more harmful than vaping and smoking remains the biggest threat to our children’s health. But vaping is not risk-free, and in the light of the recent increase in children vaping, government action is urgently needed to tighten regulation and increase enforcement.

“Children who vape mainly use cheap disposables, which can be bought for under a fiver. Making them less affordable by adding a specific tax for single-use disposable vapes in the March Budget would be a simple first step, reducing both child vaping and the vast quantities of single-use vapes being thrown into landfill.”

The tax call comes as the [Local Government Association](#) (LGA) warned strict new measures were needed to regulate the display and marketing of vaping products in the same way as tobacco to crack down on stores selling them to children.

While it is illegal to sell vapes to under-18s, social media carries posts from teenagers showing the new vapes and discussing flavours such as pink lemonade, strawberry banana and mango.

The LGA said many local areas had seen a spate of incidents in recent weeks where shops had been caught selling vapes to youngsters, with councils having to step up enforcement activity to deal with the increasingly widespread issue.

Councils were especially concerned by the marketing of vapes with designs and flavours that could appeal to children, in particular those with fruity and bubble gum flavours, and within colourful, child-friendly packaging.

This has become a major concern for councils, who are seeing a

sharp rise in cases of shops and other outlets selling vaping products to people under 18

In contrast, the sale of tobacco is strictly regulated, with plain packaging and large warnings with a requirement for products to be behind the counter.

The LGA is calling for vapes to be in plain packaging and kept out of sight behind the counter, with mandatory age-of-sale signage on products.

David Fothergill, chairman of the LGA's community wellbeing board, said: "It is not right that stores are able to prominently display vaping paraphernalia for all to see, such as in a shop window, often in bright, colourful packaging that can appeal to children.

"Vapes should only be used as an aid to quit smoking. While research has shown vaping poses a small fraction of the risks of smoking, it is deeply worrying that more and more children – who have never smoked – are starting vaping.

"This has become a major concern for councils, who are seeing a sharp rise in cases of shops and other outlets selling vaping products to people under 18.

"This is why we are calling for tougher and stricter regulation of vaping products to tackle the growing cases of children getting hold of them."