



Engaging with Young People - Vaping

November 2025

About Healthwatch Warwickshire

Our aims are:

Listening to people and making sure their voices are heard.

Including everyone in the conversation especially those who are frequently ignored.

Analysing different people's experiences to learn how to improve care.

Acting on feedback and driving change.

Partnering with care providers, Government, and the voluntary sector.



Supporting individuals



Information
and
Signposting

Healthwatch
Warwickshire

Intelligence
and
Evidence

Engagement
and
Outreach



Influencing services,
providers, and
commissioners



Engaging with
communities

Summary and Next Steps

During visits to Warwickshire colleges, we invited young people to share their thoughts and experiences of vaping. Nationally smoking rates have declined, and vaping has become more common. We heard how vaping was used by young people to support their mental health, or as a preferred alternative to other addictions. Some young people considered vaping a habit which was easy to stop, whilst others told us about the challenge of addiction.

Key Findings

- Low Motivation to Quit:** Many young people told us they view vaping as a habit and not addictive. Vaping feels normal for many young people due to the influence of family and friends, reducing their motivation to quit. Programs aimed at young people, with messages that address their needs, explain the risks, and offer harm-reduction advice for those not ready to quit, may help.
- Vaping as a coping mechanism:** Young people told us that they use vaping to manage their mental health, to cope with challenging situations, or as a preference to other addictions. This could prevent young people considering stop-smoking services because of the worry that quitting will make them feel worse. Providing mental health support and focusing on wellbeing could make quitting services more attractive.
- Supporting those who would like to quit:** Some young people told us they considered themselves addicted to vaping, but few knew where to get help. Ensuring support is easy to find in familiar places, like schools or colleges, or by working with education partners, can make sure young people know about these services.

Introduction: Listening to Young People

Following our engagement with young people earlier this year, we published our report on young people's experience of GP and mental health services.

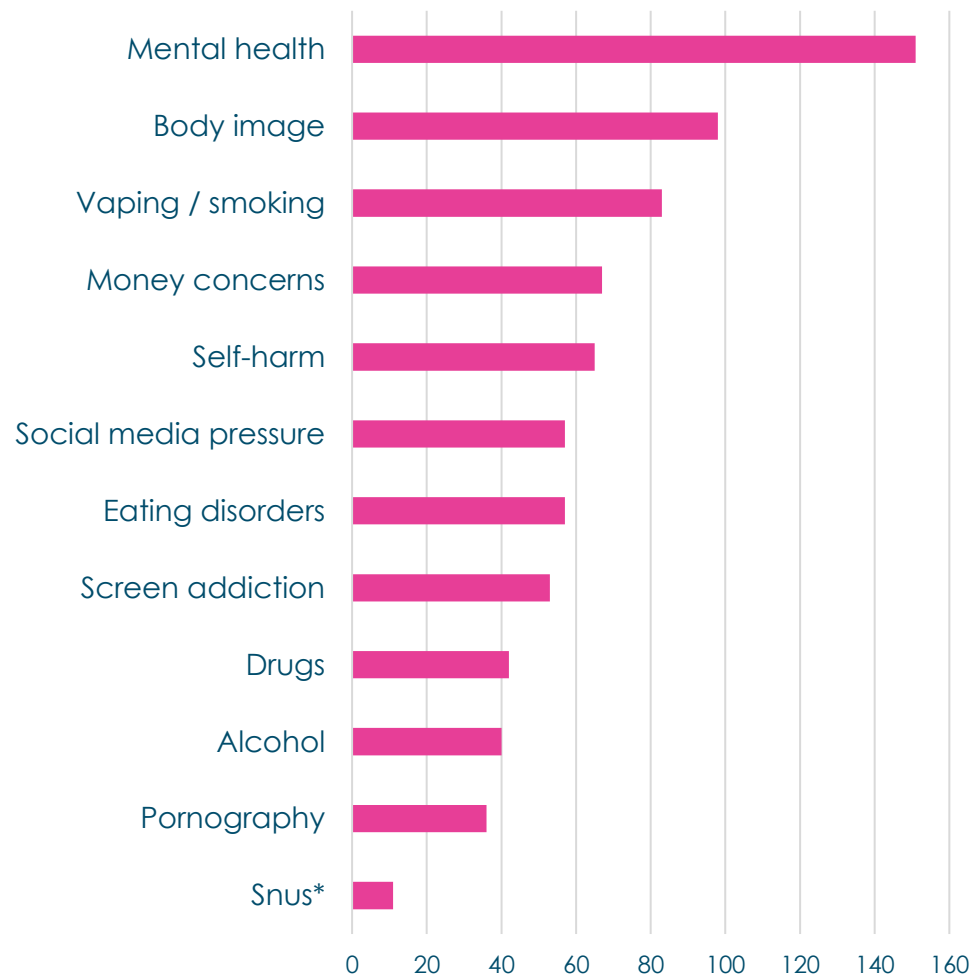
What are young people saying about health services? | Healthwatch Warwickshire

Between September and October 2025, we visited Warwickshire colleges once again, to hear from young people, find out about the challenges they face and provide signposting for support.

We invited young people to indicate **the top two or three issues faced by themselves and their peers.**

Vaping was highlighted by 83 young people and was one of the top three issues identified. We heard further feedback on vaping from 132 young people.

Main issues identified by young people



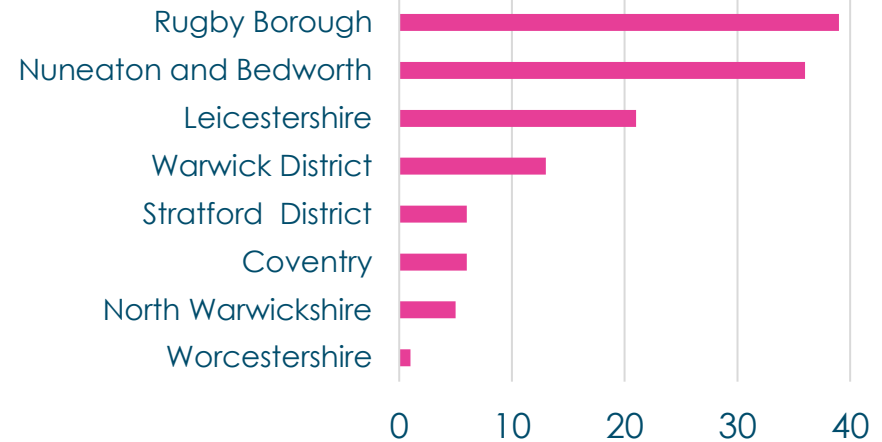
*Snus is loose or powdered tobacco, placed in the mouth in a pouch

Who did we hear from?

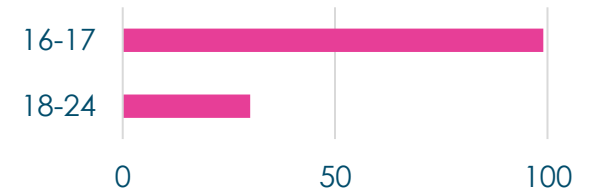
We invited the young people who answered questions about vaping to share their demographic information with us.

- We heard from 76 females, 51 males and 4 non-binary individuals.
- 4 people told us that their gender was different to that assigned at birth.
- 16 people told us they were neurodiverse.
- 14 people told us they have a disability, 9 have a long-term condition, and 1 identified themselves as a carer.

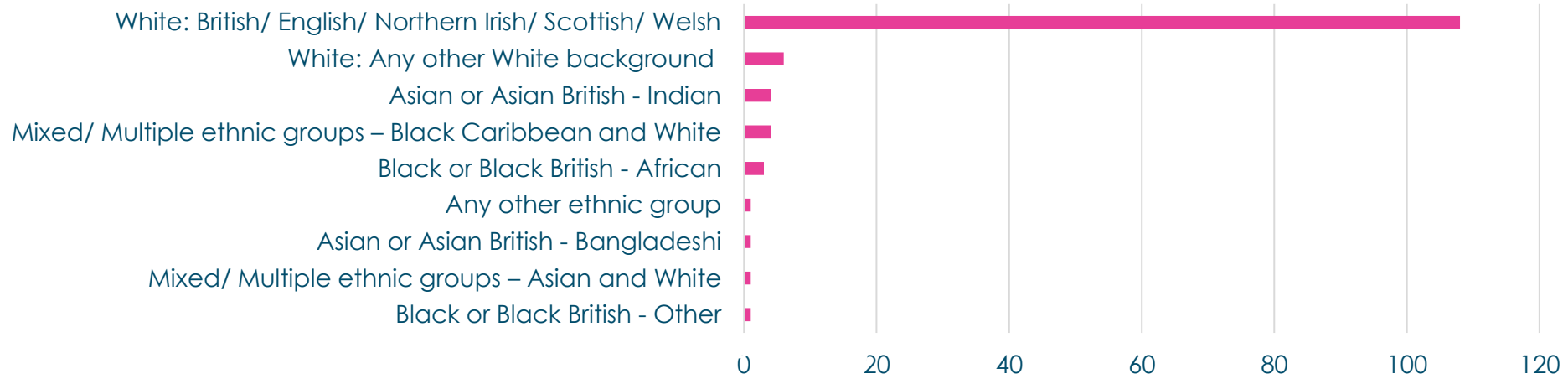
Place of residence



Age



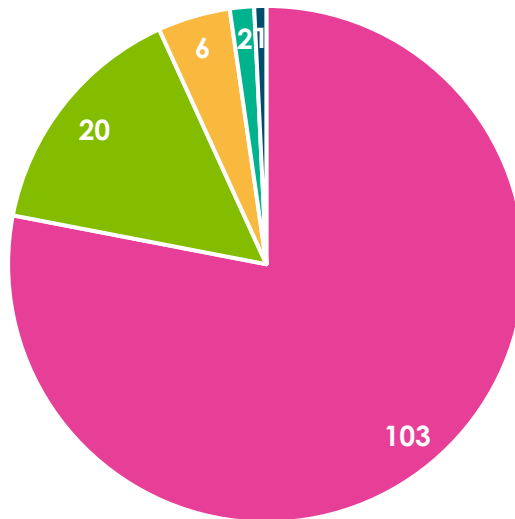
Ethnicity



Feedback on vaping

132 young people spoke to us in greater detail about their experience of vaping. We asked who used the vapes and whether they considered them to be addictive.

Do you or a family member use vapes?



■ I use vapes

■ I do not use vapes, but I have a family member who uses vapes

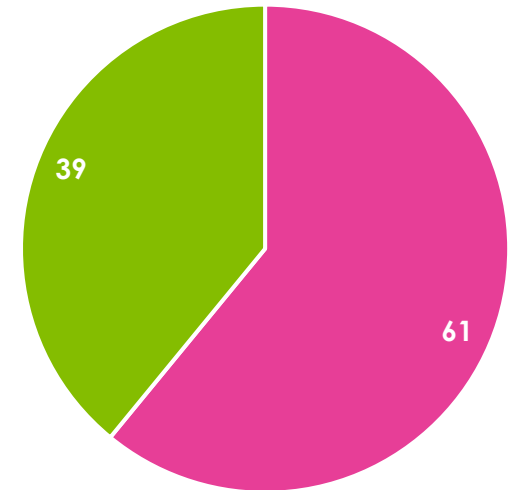
■ I previously used vapes

■ Neither myself nor a member of my family vapes

■ A family member previously used vapes

21 young people told us they use vapes themselves and have a family member who uses vapes.

Do you consider vaping to be an addiction?

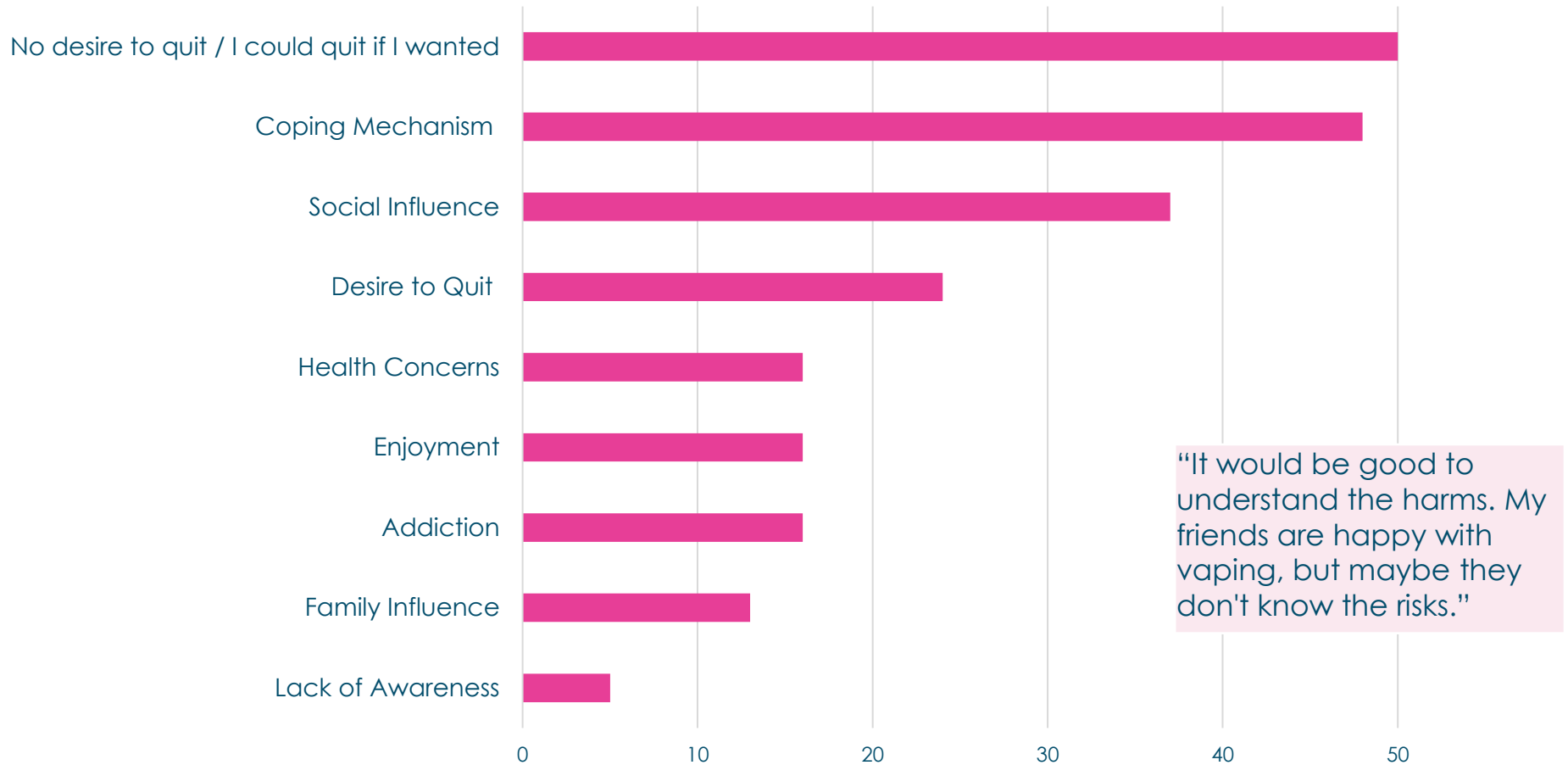


■ Yes ■ No

Emerging themes on vaping

124 young people shared general comments about their experience of vapes.

Common themes from general comments



Emerging themes on vaping

Feedback from young people on each theme, some comments included more than one theme.

•No desire to quit / I could quit if I wanted

50 young people, told us they were not looking to quit vaping now. Some considered vaping “a habit” which they felt they could stop if they wanted to.

“I started a year ago as a social thing. I don't feel that I have an addiction, I can quit if I want to.”

“I feel like I will quit one day, but not now.”

“I started vaping as a high school experience, to help me fit in, for self-confidence. I started at the start of year 11. I can't stop, it's become a habit, but I don't want help yet to stop because it helps me get through college.”

•Coping Mechanism

48 young people described vaping as being used to manage stress, anxiety, or emotional challenges. We heard that vaping was a better option than smoking, drug use and self-harming. A few young people described vaping as helpful in managing traumatic events or bereavements that they had experienced.

“Been doing it for 8 years. I love it. It helps to calm me down and with my ADHD. It helps me cope with stress.”

“I had a drug addiction, this has overtaken it, and vaping helps a lot more. I think my family, and myself, would rather I was vaping than using drugs.”

“Used to smoke, switched to vaping. Stopped and started since I was 12. I use it when I am stressed or having panic attacks.”

“Stops me from doing drugs, habit. I'm not concerned about the effects on my health, I'm not really that bothered. You only live once.”

“Switched from smoking 50 cigarettes a day. I have an addiction. Helped me cope with mental health after being raped and sexually abused. I don't want to quit. It gives me something to do to take my mind off my mental health.”

Emerging themes on vaping

•Social Influence

37 young people told us how friendship groups, peer pressure or college culture encouraged vaping.

"I only socially vape; I don't buy them just borrow from a friend"

"Started vaping 5 years ago. I thought it was cool. I can quit if I want to. Everyone at college was vaping. Worst influence."

•Desire to Quit

24 young people mentioned wanting to stop vaping, though some felt unable to.

"Started 4 years ago. I wish I'd never done it. Helps to distract me when I am struggling with my mental health. I can't quit. I am worried about the effects it has on my health."

"I tried to quit and it didn't work. I don't think I can."

"I tried it with my mate, had one, thought it was cool. Been doing it for 4 years. I'm planning on quitting; my new year's resolution is to stop vaping. It doesn't help that my parents also smoke."

•Addiction

16 young people described vaping as an addiction, or a habit which is difficult to stop.

"I started smoking first then switched to vaping. I thought it was cool, and mum was also doing it. My mates started vaping, so I did it too, it tastes nicer than cigarettes. It's now become a routine, habit of picking it up and using it. I'm concerned about the effects on my health, but I can't stop."

"Started 3 year ago. I don't know why I did it. I am worried about the effect on my health. I can't stop."

"I think it is an addiction for my friend, but they wouldn't want to do anything about it. They don't think it is an addiction, but I do."

Emerging themes on vaping

•Enjoyment:

16 young people described the enjoyment of vaping, especially the taste or sensation.

"It makes me look 'hard'. I used to smoke then switched to vaping. I like the idea of it and the feeling of it being in my mouth."

"Not addicted to the vape, but more the motion. I recommend the blueberry sour."

"Started 5 years ago, switched from smoking. The flavours taste nice. I can stop if I want to."

•Health Concerns:

16 young people told us they were worried about the health effects of vaping.

"I don't think people know what is in a vape to know how bad it is. I worry for my friends who do it."

"My Mum use to smoke and then moved onto vapes. She has COPD and some respiratory issues caused by vaping. She is on the waiting list to see a consultant, but we have to wait a year, and, in the meantime, I have to help care for her. Watching how much she is suffering has stopped my vaping. Her condition is affecting both of us."

•Family Influence:

13 Young people told us about the influence of family members who vape or smoke.

"I was brought up around it. I wanted to know what the hype was. I enjoy it, it helps with stress. Been vaping for 3 years. I could quit if I wanted to. I can go months without it. I use it as a coping mechanism to help with my mental health."

"Picked up from my mum. Vape more than cigarettes, trying to quit."

"Started vaping 4 years ago, sister started and let me try it. In school everyone would be in one toilet cubicle and that was good. I worry about the effects on my health. My grandma died of womb cancer and my dad is an aggressive smoker. I have talked to my mum about quitting."

Emerging themes on vaping

•Lack of Awareness:

5 young people admitted not knowing the risks or contents of vapes and wanted to know more.

"I don't think people know what is in a vape to know how bad it is. I worry for my friends who do it."

"It would be good to understand the harms. My friends are happy with vaping, but they maybe don't know the risks."

"I'm not sure where to go to find out about stopping vaping."

- Thank you to everyone who shared feedback with us.
- These findings have been shared with Public Health Warwickshire and the Warwickshire County Council's Smoke Free Generation team.



Response from Warwickshire County Council's Smoke Free Generation team

Warwickshire County Council's Smoke Free Generation team would like to thank Healthwatch Warwickshire for this important and timely report on vaping among children and young people. The insights this report provides help deepen our understanding of the wider impacts of vaping on children and young people's wellbeing, with the findings linking vaping to coping with mental health and substance use being particularly powerful.

This report aligns closely with our own recent behavioural insight work into youth vaping, which is due to be completed later this year. Together, these findings will contribute to a robust evidence base that is currently being developed into a local action plan to address this issue. We welcome the opportunity to continue working closely with Healthwatch Warwickshire to ensure our collective efforts are informed, coordinated, and impactful in supporting health needs across Warwickshire.

Warwickshire County Council's Smoke Free Generation team

For more information:

For information about this report contact: Caroline@healthwatchwarwickshire.co.uk

Healthwatch Warwickshire
4-6 Clemens Street, Leamington Spa
CV31 2DL

website: www.healthwatchwarwickshire.co.uk

telephone: 01926 422 823

email: info@healthwatchwarwickshire.co.uk

write: FREEPOST Healthwatch Warwickshire

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