

23 May 2024

Middlesbrough Council
PO Box 505
Fountain Court
119 Grange Road
Middlesbrough
TS1 2DT

Dear Parent / Carer

Imminent threat to life – help keep our young people safe.

Vapes containing nicotine are an effective way to help adults quit smoking tobacco, and the legal age for use and purchase is 18. Young people who do not smoke are advised not to start vaping. However, we are aware that some young people do use vapes and our concern is for their safety. If your young person does use vapes, please make sure that these are regulated/licensed vapes bought from a reputable retailer, discuss the following dangers with your young person and encourage them to engage with our stop vaping service.

1. **Illicit/illegal vapes** are unregulated, they usually hold over 600 puffs or more than 2ml of refillable liquid, and in addition to them including random other substances like nickel, lead, and chromium that aren't found in regulated vapes there is a possibility that they could contain SPICE or NITAZENES.
2. **SPICE** – a collection of synthetic cannabinoid Class B drugs that we wrote to you about in October.
3. **NITAZENES** – a collection of synthetic opioid Class A drugs that are between 50 and 500 times stronger than heroin and have led to the death of adults both locally and nationally.
4. Although the majority of young people would not actively seek out these substances, the risk is that illicit vapes can be **cross-contaminated with SPICE or NITAZENES** due to how they are made and sold and regardless of the young person's intention the outcome will be the same.
5. There's also the risk that younger siblings could try an older sibling's illicit vape if they happen to find it.
6. Illicit vapes fund organised crime and with that comes the risk of exploitation of your young person.

This is a national concern with serious incidents occurring across the UK. Public Health South Tees are working collaboratively with Education, Cleveland Police, the NHS Trust, Trading Standards, and Teesside University to address the issues associated with illicit vapes. In addition to writing to you as parents / carers, regular Head Teacher meetings are being held, front line staff have been trained to administer nasal Naloxone (a harmless quick acting substance able to reverse the effects of an opiate overdose), the harm minimisation team are working closely with schools, trading standards are successfully serving closure orders on premises selling illicit vapes, and our stop smoking/vaping and substance use services are successfully helping more local people to overcome their addictions than ever before.

So, if your young person uses a refillable vape or you are concerned they are at risk, please:

- 1) familiarise yourself with this useful information on the Drug Wise website [SPICE](#) and [NITAZENE](#)
- 2) have a chat with your young person following helpful suggestions in this [GUIDE](#)
- 3) encourage your young person to access the relevant local support services (see next page)

Your Sincerely,



Mark Adams
Joint Director of Public Health
Public Health South Tees



Rob Brown
Director of Education & Partnerships
Middlesbrough Council

Local support services for young people in Middlesbrough

South Tees Stop Smoking and
Stop Vaping Service

Tel: 01642 727579



Select 'Smoking Cessation' referral pathway

Recovery Solutions for
alcohol and substance support

Tel: 01642 726800



Middlesbrough
0-19 Health Service

Tel: 0300 303 1603



Sexual Health Services
HRCG

Tel: 0300 330 1122



C-Card Contraception
Brook

Tel: 0750 080 0830

