

SECTION 8. CONCLUSION

8.1 How have people most likely to be affected by the proposal been involved in developing it?

A UK wide consultation on the proposals to restrict the sale and supply of disposable, single use vapes was published on 12 October 2023. Almost 28,000 responses were received. The four nations' [consultation response](#), published on 29 January, showed clear support for restrictions on the sale and supply of single-use vapes. Of the responses received in Wales, 60.4% agreed the restrictions on single use vapes should take the form of prohibiting their sale and supply. Common themes for those who agreed with this approach included concerns over the increase in plastic waste, harmful chemicals leaching into the environment and the fire risk resulting from the incorrect disposal of single-use vapes.

Impacts on older users, people with dexterity issues, those in in-patient mental health settings, prisons and the homeless in relation to smoking cessation were also raised as well as the impact on children and young people who may already be nicotine dependent.

In 2024, the Welsh Government produced an online survey to capture children and young people's views which was shared with [Eco Schools](#) via social media. The policy background and questionnaire were also shared with 14–18-year-old children and young people at the 'Our Earth, Our Future' conference in July.

8.2 What are the most significant impacts, positive and negative?

In 2024, additional targeted stakeholder engagement took place with groups where possible impacts had been identified in the consultation. This engagement, focused on impacts across different population groups, including children and young people, the potential positive, negative or unintended consequences and mitigating actions.

Short term negative impacts

There are likely to be additional costs to individuals in Wales who vape and use single-use vapes, which will affect a higher proportion of those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. In the short-term, this could contribute to an increasing cost of living which individuals from these backgrounds report as having a negative impact on [mental health, physical health and family relationships](#).

Importantly, these are groups where higher rates of smoking are typically observed (e.g. people on lower incomes, people with mental health conditions etc.), these

represent priority groups within the Welsh population for targeting inequalities caused by tobacco smoking as set out in '[A smoke-free Wales; Our long-term tobacco control strategy](#)' (Welsh Government, 2022).

Although there was no direct evidence identified, we were made aware of potential barriers (e.g. cost, complexity etc.) to switching to alternative reusable devices for people with mental health conditions, physical, sensory and/or learning impairments. This could, in some cases, potentially have a negative impact on smoking cessation.

However, there are currently several versions of reusable vapes available, with some possibly easier for individuals who may find other products more difficult to access and navigate (e.g. people with dexterity problems, visual difficulties, physical or mental health conditions etc.).

Single-use vapes are not currently provided by the NHS Wales smoking cessation service ('Help me Quit') and so there will be minimal direct impact on provisions offered by these services. They will continue to support smokers to quit via other cessation aids and nicotine replacement therapy.

In the longer-term, reusable devices are found to be more cost-effective and can allow for a more gradual reduction in nicotine strength when compared to single-use vapes. This could support those who experience socio-economic disadvantages in seeking to reducing the amount they vape or cease altogether.

Longer term positive and short term impacts

The ban on single-use vapes will have both positive and negative impacts on children's rights which are defined by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The Children's Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) has identified that the ban on single-use vapes meets the requirement in [The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), specifically Articles 3, 6, 12, 13, 17, 24, 29, 31, 33 and 36.

The policy is expected to have positive impacts on the rights and well-being of children and young people in Wales by protecting their environment, their health, best interests as well as protection from exploitation. It will also provide them with information, guidance and support on vaping and smoking cessation. The policy is expected to have some negative impacts on the rights and well-being of children and young people in Wales, by limiting their freedom of expression, access to information and leisure, play and culture activities. There is also the potential for children and young people driven towards the black market or to other tobacco products. However, these impacts are likely to be outweighed by the benefits of the policy and can be mitigated by other measures. These include ensuring the policy is clear, consistent, and evidence-based and it is accompanied by education, engagement and enforcement strategies.

Following the concerns raised by children and young people on the impacts of the bans, the Welsh Government commissioned [Youth Friendly](#) to produce 'youth friendly' versions of our policy proposals and questionnaires. This will better support our continued engagement with children and young people through 2024/25.

Climate change poses an ongoing national and global threat to our health, economy, infrastructure and natural environment. In recognition of this, in April 2019, the Welsh Government declared a climate emergency in Wales. There are environmental impacts through the production and manufacturing of single-use vapes. Most notably, these are greenhouse gas emissions, which contribute to climate change, and water consumption, as set out in [Zero Waste Scotland's technical report](#).

Information in the [National Library of Medicine](#) details how climate change can negatively affect species' ability to hunt, avoid predators and reproduce. This impact on biodiversity can result in deficiencies in a habitat's ability to host a variety of individual species and provide nesting sites. These impacts will influence the services the ecosystem can provide for human populations such as food production and carbon sequestration.

The introduction of a ban on the availability of unnecessary problematic single-use vapes forms part of a package of wider measures to reduce the negative impact of littering, plastic pollution and climate change on our environment.

This aligns with the [Programme for Government 2021-2026](#) commitment to protect our future generations by ensuring we "embed our response to the climate and nature emergency in everything we do". Under this encompassing pledge, there is a specific commitment to "Legislate to abolish the use of more commonly littered, single use plastics".

8.2 In light of the impacts identified, how will the proposal:

a) maximise contribution to our well-being objectives and the seven well-being goals

Our proposal contributes to the [Well-being of Future Generations](#) goals and its sustainable development principle i.e. by seeking to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Tackling plastic pollution helps to maintain and enhance our diverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change (a resilient Wales)

Littered plastic single-use products often break down into microplastics, which can enter the animal and human food chain. Reducing the amount of plastic in our environment, therefore, contributes to a **healthier Wales** (a society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood). Wales is already a world leader on recycling and our proposed regulations are an additional step in shifting away from the manufacturing and disposal of unnecessary single-use products. This will contribute to our wider aims of tackling the global challenges of the climate and nature emergencies (**a globally responsible Wales**). Protecting natural ecosystems and biodiversity enhances the cultural capital of Wales and supports outdoor activities. As we develop our proposals, we will ensure equal standards in both Welsh and English communications (**a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language**).

As Wales moves away from single-use products, opportunities arise for Welsh businesses to innovate and develop sustainable alternatives to the single-use products we use today (**a prosperous Wales**).

Our proposals will reduce the negative impact littering, plastic pollution and climate change have on our environment and our health and well-being. Climate change has been identified as one of the biggest threats facing our future generations; implementing these proposals will have a direct positive impact on protecting our environment, health and well-being in the short term and for future generations.

b) avoid, reduce or mitigate any negative impacts

Re-usable vapes and smoking cessation aids, including nicotine replacement therapy will remain available.

8.3 How will the impact of the proposal be monitored and evaluated as it progresses and when it concludes?

The policy objectives of the proposals are to:

- Rapidly reduce environmental harm caused by the consumption of critical raw materials and incorrect disposal of single-use vapes in residual waste streams and being littered.
- Encourage wider and more sustainable behaviour change around the consumption of single-use products to tackle the throw-away culture.
- Encourage a shift towards reusable alternatives.

This policy is also part of the wider government agenda in tackling youth vaping.

The Welsh Government will conduct a post implementation review of the legislation as soon as reasonably practicable three years after it has come into force. It is envisaged the review will assess the effectiveness of the policy in achieving its objectives.

An initial theory of change has been set out in the Defra IA which will be considered in guiding measurable outcomes in Wales. We will also consider any outcomes for monitoring raised through the various IAs (e.g. relevant impacts on specific groups etc.).

Whilst details of the review are to be determined, we anticipate this would include:

- Identifying and evaluating the impact the legislation has had on the use of single-use vapes and the associated behaviour of consumers in Wales.
- Identifying and evaluating what impacts the legislation has had on businesses in Wales.
- Identifying and evaluating the extent to which the legislation has succeeded in encouraging a shift to reusable products.
- Identifying, where possible, and evaluating, the extent the legislation has had on reducing littering of single-use vapes following its implementation.