



Telford & Wrekin
Co-operative Council

Protect, care and invest
to create a better borough

Telford and Wrekin Annual Public Health Report *2025*

Towards a smoke free future

Foreword

I am delighted to present my first annual report as Director of Public Health for Telford & Wrekin. There have been decades of public awareness campaigns and regulation, and smoking has reduced in the past 50 years as a result. However, smoking remains one of the most significant public health challenges in our Borough, nationally and worldwide. Tobacco-related harm is not evenly distributed in our communities and smoking is the single largest driver of health inequalities. Smoking among adults in more deprived communities and those in routine and manual occupations, such as construction or factory work is higher than average.

A leading cause of chronic diseases, smoking increase the risks of lung cancer and other cancers, heart disease, stroke, respiratory disease and dementia. Half of the life expectancy gap between the most deprived and most affluent communities – 8.8 years for males and 6.4 year for females in Telford and Wrekin, are due to smoking. Second hand smoke exposure affects babies, children and young people, and vulnerable adults.

The consequences of smoking extend far beyond individual's health and financial impacts, causing significant cost burdens on councils, the NHS and economy and society more broadly. The overall financial burden of smoking in our borough is estimated to be a staggering £171 million per year by ASH (Action on Smoking and Health).

Engagement with people who smoke shows that three quarters would never have started if they had the choice again, and the vast majority, 83% started smoking before the age of 20. There are many barriers people face when quitting smoking, such as nicotine addiction and dependence, mental health challenges, social and environmental influences, emotional triggers and low confidence.

Vaping is much less harmful than smoking and can help to people quit, but the increase in vaping among people who have never smoked and especially children and young people is a major concern. Smoking is a complex social and health issue which needs a multi-layered, comprehensive approach with residents and partner organisations working together in a coordinated way. The Government's smoke free generation ambition, the new Tobacco and Vapes Bill and NHS 10 year plan all provide opportunities now to more effectively work towards a smoke free future. This report explores the local picture and outlines key local action we need to take in Telford and Wrekin to make a smoke free ambition a reality.



Helen Onions

Director of Public Health
Telford & Wrekin Council

"If you smoke, vaping is much safer; if you don't smoke, don't vape; marketing vapes to children is utterly unacceptable."

Chief Medical Officer,
Professor Sir Chris Whitty,
May 2023

Contents

Foreword	2
Contents	3
Acknowledgements	3
Introduction	4
Recommendations	5
Tobacco – a brief history	6
Smoking and vaping – local headlines	7
Impacts of smoking	8
Benefits of quitting	10
Smoking in our community	11
Adults	11
Pregnancy, children and young people	12
Supporting residents to quit	13
Crush the Habit	13
Healthy Lifestyles Service – meet the team	14
Increasing smoking quitters in the community	18
Views of residents who smoke	19
NHS Tobacco Dependency Programmes	20
Children and Young People smoking and vaping (and other nicotine products)	22
Tackling illicit tobacco and illegal vapes	23
Key actions for change	25
References	26
Further information	27

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Thank you to our video stars who shared their experiences and the other residents who appear in our case studies. A big shout out to the Healthy Lifestyles Team and our Stop Smoking Advisors: Katie, Melanie, Cath, Nick, Rachel, Ollie, and Lindsey – who frequently receive strong positive feedback from the clients who they have supported.

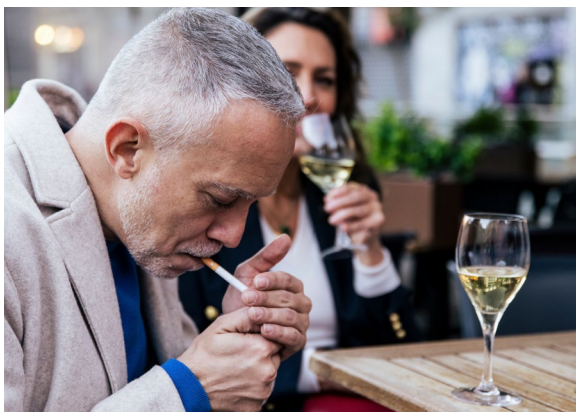
With thanks also to other contributors to this report: Andrew, Trading Standards, Kate, Insight, Stacey, Amy and Alex, Content Creators and Clare from Public Health.

NHS colleagues Lorna Watkins, Shropshire Telford & Wrekin Integrated Care Board, Adam Bance, Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust and Vicky Birch & Aravind Bhaskaran, Shrewsbury & Telford NHS Hospitals Trust.

Introduction

This report includes sections covering the following:

- setting the scene;
- the local picture;
- supporting residents to quit;
- children and young people smoking and vaping;
- tackling illicit tobacco and illegal vapes; and
- key actions for change.



Throughout the report local intelligence, smoking cessation support arrangements, and resident stories are used to describe the picture in Telford and Wrekin. Alongside this local perspective, the national context of changes being introduced in the Tobacco and Vapes Bill¹ and the NHS 10 year plan Fit for

the Future² are highlighted to outline opportunities to reduce the impact smoking of smoking and vaping in our Borough.

The report recommends the development and implementation of a smoke free partnership delivery plan across Telford and Wrekin. Key actions for change are set out towards the end of the report. These proposed actions are based on evidence of good practice and national legislation and policy expectations. This section provides the framework and actions to be included in the smoke free delivery plan, which should aim to reduce the impact of smoking and nicotine harm for our residents.

The UK Tobacco and Vapes Bill aims to create a **smoke-free generation**, reduce health inequalities, and protect children and vulnerable groups from nicotine-related harms. The Bill started its Parliamentary process in November 2024 and is currently progressing through the House of Lords.

Summary of proposals

- 1 **Generational Tobacco Ban** – on tobacco sales to anyone born on or after 1 January 2009, to ensure future generations will never legally be sold tobacco products.
- 2 **Licensing and Retail Regulation** – introduction of powers to establish a licensing regime for the retail sale of tobacco, vapes, and nicotine products.
- 3 **Advertising and Packaging Restrictions** – on branding, promotion, and advertising of vapes and nicotine products, especially those targeting children.
- 4 **Expanded smoking restrictions** – extending the smoking ban in public places to outdoor settings, where children and vulnerable people are present, including playgrounds, schools and hospital grounds, with strengthened enforcement of smoke-free policies in NHS settings.
- 5 **Strengthening Enforcement Measures** – against illicit tobacco and youth vaping, banning disposable vapes, ensuring the environmental costs of vape disposal are met by industry.
- 6 **Support for Smoking Cessation** – through additional funding for local stop smoking services, introduction of Swap to Stop - free vape starter kits, introduction of pack inserts with positive quit messages, NHS opt-out smoking cessation interventions in routine care.

Recommendations

A comprehensive plan to deliver Smoke Free Telford & Wrekin ambitions should be developed across Health and Wellbeing Board partners, and implemented through the Telford and Wrekin Place Integrated Partnership. The delivery plan, which should draw on opportunities offered by the Tobacco and Vapes Bill and the new Neighbourhood Health approach, should be based on the following commitments:

- **reduce the number of people who smoke by supporting more people to quit in community and NHS settings;**
- **protect children and young people against smoking, vaping (and other nicotine products);**
- **create more smoke free places, in line with the Tobacco and Vapes Bill, to protect children and vulnerable people from second-hand smoke; and**
- **enhance enforcement and tackling of illicit tobacco and vapes.**

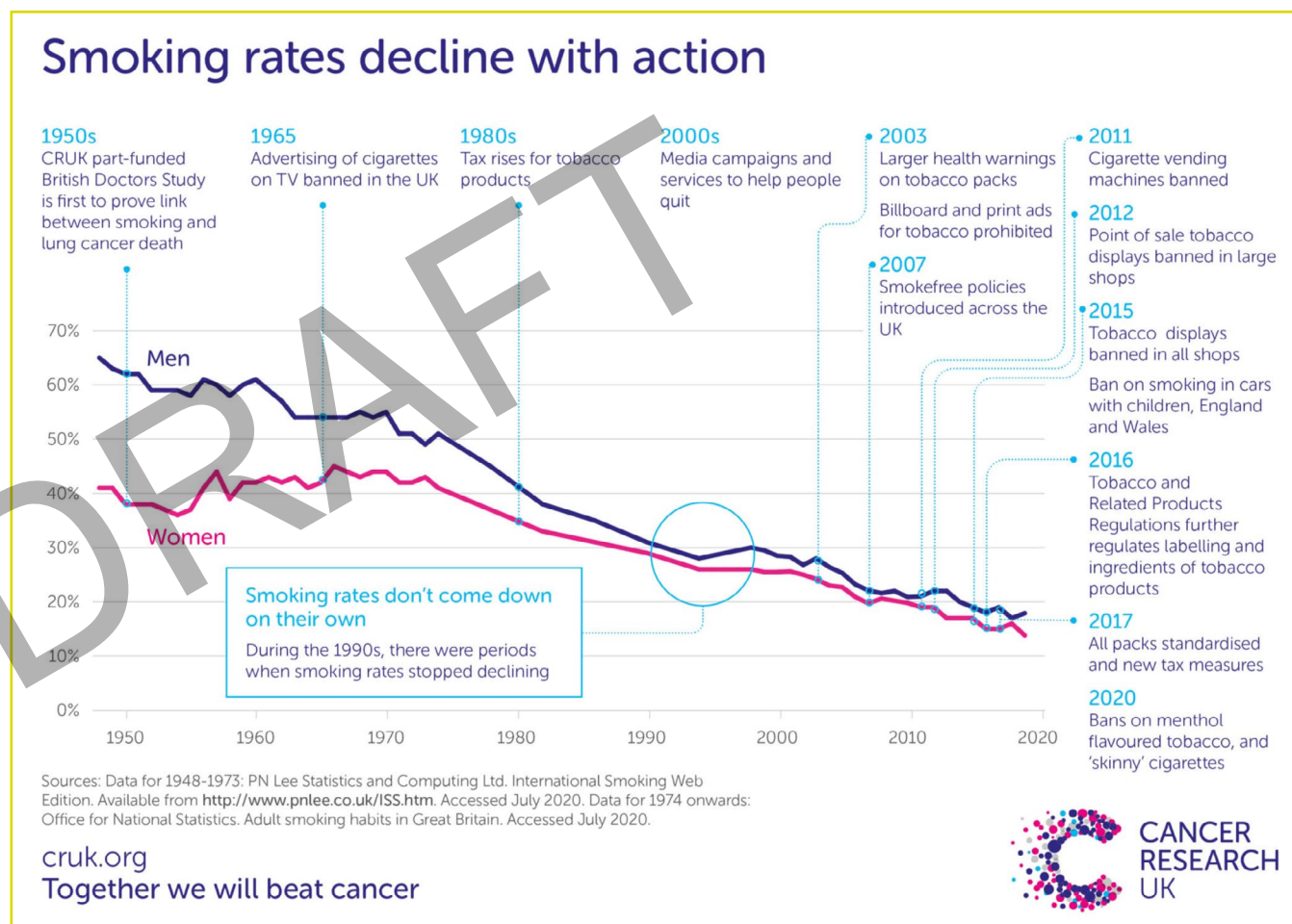
The Health and Wellbeing Board and Telford and Wrekin Place Integrated Partnership are made up of representatives from key organisations including: the Council, NHS, Community and Voluntary Sector and Community Safety partners, such as the police and fire service. The smoke free delivery plan should be owned and delivered within these partnerships, but also link more broadly to schools and education settings, employers and businesses, the housing and homeless agenda and beyond. Further engagement work with our communities, with residents who smoke and those who don't, should underpin and shape our smoke free plan. The key actions for change needed as part of the four high level commitments above are detailed on page 25.



Tobacco – a brief history

Tobacco is a 400-year-old habit, documented from the 16th century. The sale of tobacco grew in the early 20th century with the introduction of mass marketing, by 1948 82% of men in the UK used some form of tobacco.

Targeted advertising from tobacco companies saw smoking amongst women soar throughout the mid 20th century - reaching a peak in the 1960s. Attitudes and knowledge relating to tobacco changed considerably in the 20th century, and in 1954 the harms of tobacco were first brought to light in the British Doctor's Study³, which led to shift in the views of healthcare professionals and the public. This shift marked the start of the on-going battle between the scientific and health communities and tobacco industry. The 21st Century timeline of tobacco control milestones is shown opposite – the 2007 ban in public places is viewed as significant public health intervention.

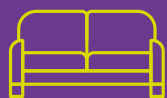


<https://news.cancerresearchuk.org/2023/03/17/the-killer-behind-the-counter/>⁴

Smoking and vaping – local headlines



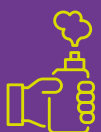
14.5%
of adults (aged 18 years and over) smoke – **circa 21,580 smokers**



About 930
people in Telford and Wrekin are estimated to be **out of work due to smoking**



Every year around **360**
children in Telford and Wrekin **start smoking**



An estimated **600**
of 11-17 year olds in Telford and Wrekin **vape every day**, a rise from less than 100 regular vapers in 2014



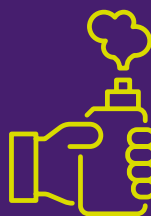
About 8,890
children in Telford and Wrekin **live in smoking households**



The smoking related mortality rate for Telford and Wrekin is **significantly higher than the England average**



8%
of women smoke in pregnancy and there are clear inequalities with 15% smoking in pregnancy in the most deprived communities compared to 4% in the least deprived communities



Over 1,900
young people in Telford and Wrekin aged 11-17 years, are estimated to have experimented with vaping in 2023



14.5% of adults 18+ in Telford and Wrekin smoke, which is about 21.5k people. In the West Midlands overall, the proportion is 12.0%



21.3% of adults aged 18-64 in routine and manual occupations in Telford and Wrekin smoke.



30.3% of adults 18+ with long-term mental health conditions in Telford and Wrekin smoke.



44.4% of adults 18+ with serious mental illness in Telford and Wrekin smoke.



59.6% of adults 18+ admitted to treatment for alcohol or non-opiate misuse in the West Midlands smoke.



62.0% of adults 18+ admitted to treatment for opiate misuse in Telford and Wrekin smoke.

Impacts of smoking

Smoking harms nearly every organ of the body, causing lung cancer, respiratory disease and cardiovascular disease, as well as other cancers. It is also closely associated with poor mental health. Most people know about the main causes, but they may not realise just how far-reaching its damage can be.



Hearing and vision loss

Studies show that smoking increases the risk of [hearing loss](#) and [eye problems](#) like cataracts, glaucoma, dry eyes, and vision damage as you age.



Digestive issues

Studies show that smoking can harm your digestive system, causing issues like [heartburn](#), [ulcers](#), liver problems, and a higher risk of Crohn's disease, pancreatitis, and gallstones.



Dementia

The UK Alzheimer's Society says smoking [increases the risk of dementia](#). It damages blood vessels, which is linked to Alzheimer's disease and vascular dementia. Chemicals in smoke also harm cells and cause inflammation, making the risk even higher.



High blood pressure

Blood Pressure UK warns that [smoking damages blood vessels](#), narrows arteries, and puts extra strain on your heart by raising your blood pressure.

High blood pressure often has no symptoms, so getting checked is the only way to know.

If you are 40 or over in England, you can get a free blood pressure check at your pharmacy today.

[Find a pharmacy that offers free blood pressure checks.](#)



Damage to your joints

Smoking increases inflammation in the body, which can worsen joint pain and damage. It also [increases the risk of rheumatoid arthritis](#), back pain, shoulder tears and osteoporosis.

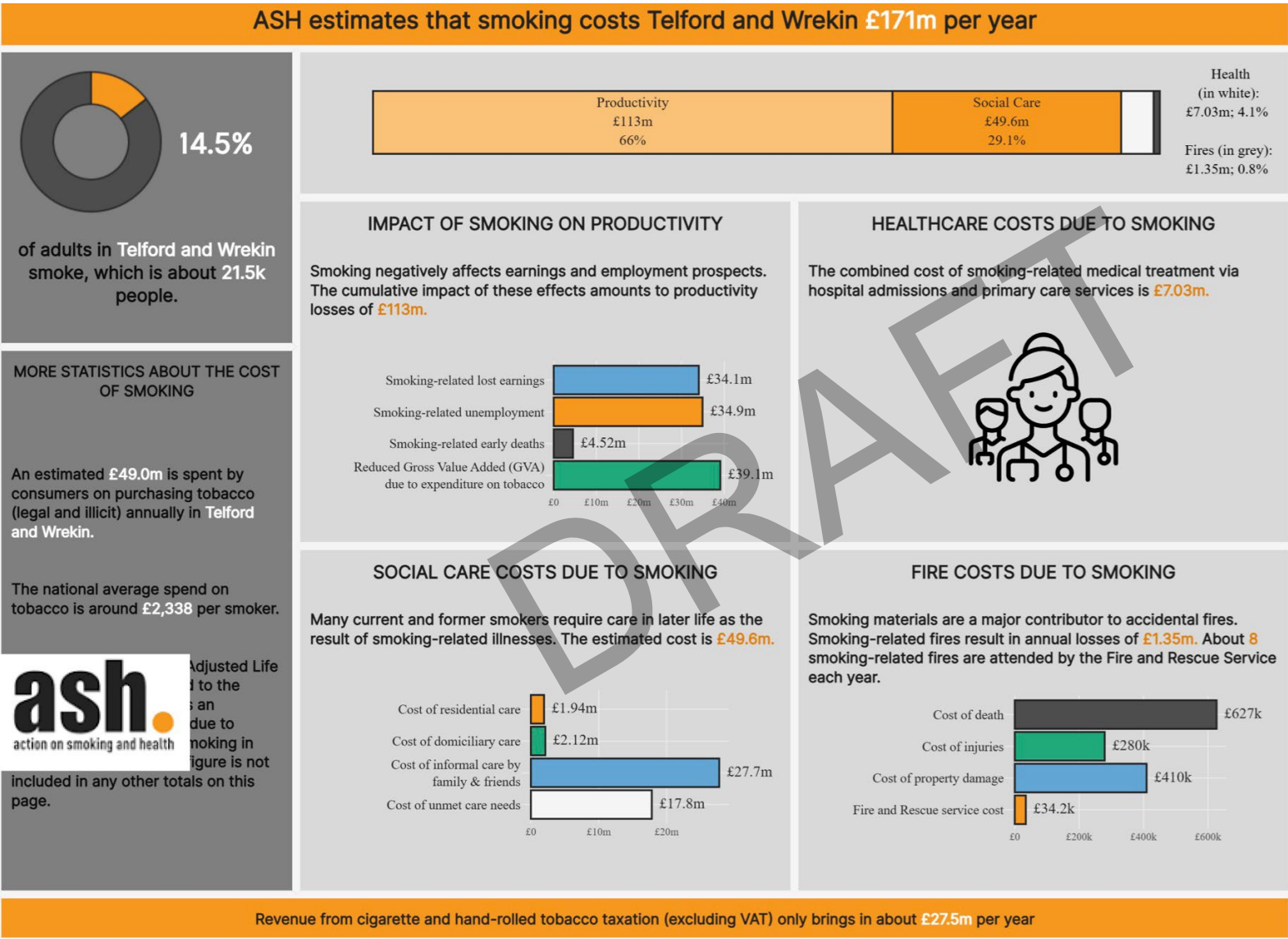
Did you know the monthly cost of smoking half a packet of cigarettes per day is £213?


HealthyLifestyles

Crush the habit

<https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking/why-quit-smoking/understanding-the-true-impact-of-smoking/>⁶

The impacts of smoking in Telford and Wrekin reach far beyond individual and family health and finances, with significant costs estimated across our community.



https://ashresources.shinyapps.io/ready_reckoner/

Benefits of quitting

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) report that people who stop smoking:

- at age 60 can add 3 extra years to their life and stopping at 30 can add 10 extra years;
- before the age of 50 years cut their risk of dying of smoking-related disease in half.

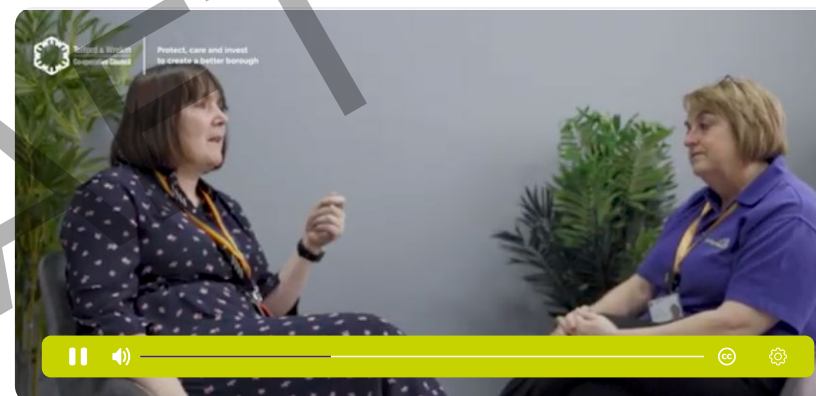
Other positive changes:

- return of sense of taste with food tasting better;
- improved fitness;
- skin and teeth start to look better; and
- fertility levels will improve, for those wanting to start a family.

Kelly's experiences from when she first quit to now:

The sooner you quit, the sooner you'll notice changes to your body and health. Look at what happens when you quit for good.

 After 20 minutes Check your pulse rate, it will already be starting to return to normal.	 After 8 hours Your oxygen levels are recovering, and the harmful carbon monoxide level in your blood will have reduced by half.
 After 48 hours All carbon monoxide is flushed out. Your lungs are clearing out mucus and your senses of taste and smell are improving.	 After 72 hours If you notice that breathing feels easier, it's because your bronchial tubes have started to relax. Also your energy will be increasing.
 After 2 to 12 weeks Blood will be pumping through to your heart and muscles much better because your circulation will have improved.	 After 3 to 9 months Any coughs, wheezing or breathing problems will be improving as your lung function increases by up to 10%.
 After 1 year Great news! Your risk of heart attack will have halved compared with a smoker's.	 After 10 years More great news! Your risk of death from lung cancer will have halved compared with a smoker's.



1. Watch here



2. Watch here

<https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking/why-quit-smoking/understanding-the-true-impact-of-smoking/>⁸

Smoking in our community

Smoking in adults

- Adult smoking prevalence has been declining since the 2010s locally and nationally. 14.5% of adults (aged 18 years and over) in Telford and Wrekin were estimated to be smokers in 2023*, compared to 24.7% in 2011.
- This means an estimated 21,580 adults are smokers in Telford and Wrekin.
- Slightly more women are estimated to smoke than men – 15.4% compared to 13.5%.
- National figures show that the highest rates of smoking are in 25-34 year olds.

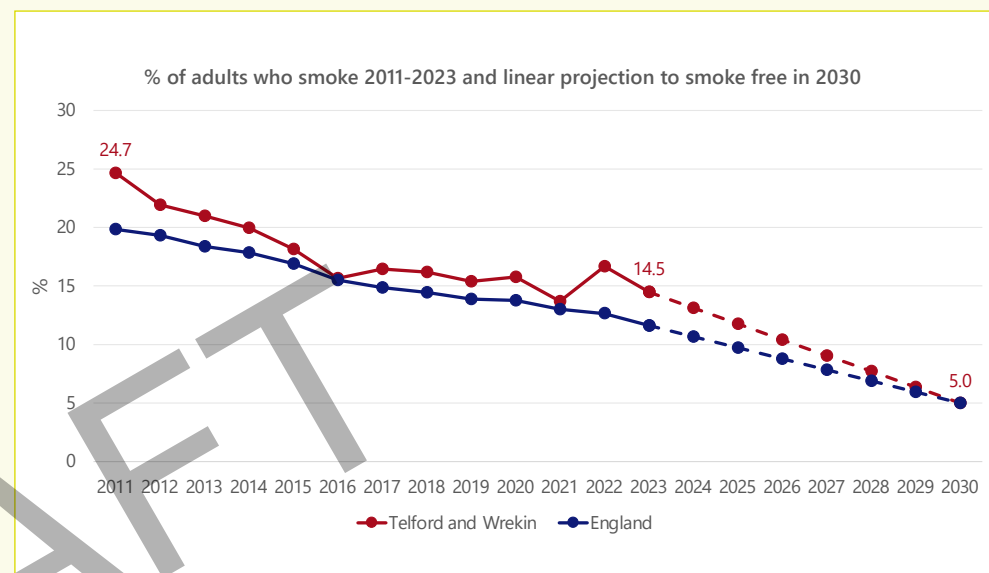
Smoking – deprivation and occupation

Smoking rates are three times higher in those living in the most deprived areas, compared to those living in the least deprived areas. The most deprived 20% of communities is termed at the “core 20” by the NHS and is a focus group for health inequalities.

The relationship between occupation and smoking is strong. In 2023 in Telford and Wrekin, the smoking prevalence among adults in routine and manual occupations was 21.3%, this includes jobs such as construction or factory work. However, this is significant reduction compared to in 2011 when 38.5% of people in routine and manual occupation smoked. This is in part due to the successful targeting of Telford & Wrekin Council’s Health Lifestyle Services stop smoking support.

<https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/tobacco-control>⁹

*Latest national data available



Source: Public Health Outcomes Framework - Annual Population Survey¹⁰

<https://www.telford.gov.uk/about-my-council/telford-and-wrekin-insight/living-well/>¹¹

Smoking and mental health

- People with mental illness, especially those with severe conditions such as schizophrenia or psychotic illness have particularly high smoking rates, which known to contribute to reduced life expectancy.
- In Telford and Wrekin in 2022/23 the prevalence of smoking in adults with a long-term mental illness was 30%, compared to 14.5% in the overall population.

See further information at the end of the report which details other groups who have higher smoking prevalence.

Smoking – pregnancy, children and young people

Smoking and pregnancy

Smoking is associated with multiple and poor pregnancy complications and for babies, maternal smoking and exposure to second-hand smoke can have devastating consequences, such as sudden infant death syndrome. Smoking at the time of delivery in Telford and Wrekin in 2024/25 was 8% and there are clear inequalities gaps with:

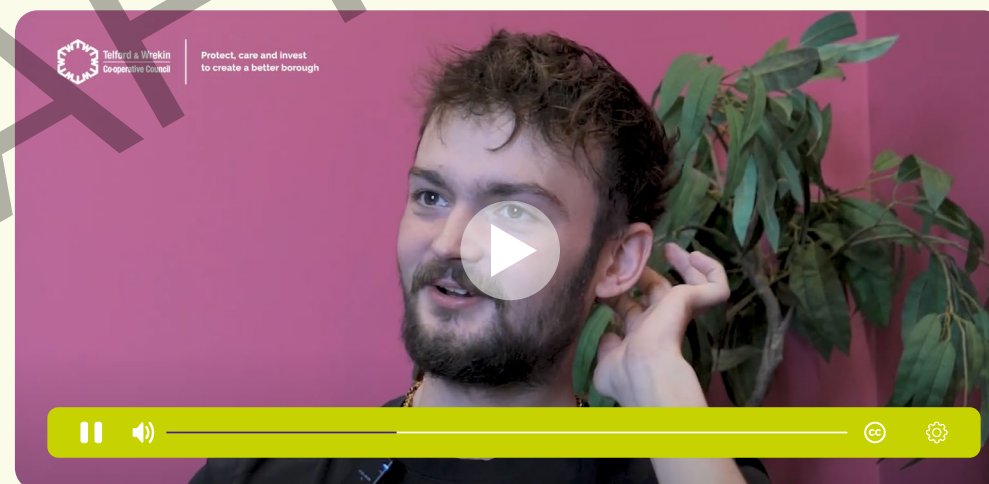
- 15% smoking in pregnancy in the most deprived fifth of communities (referred to as the core 20 by the NHS) compared to 4% in the least deprived communities; and
- 10% of white women smoking in pregnancy, compared to 1% in those from black and minority ethnic group backgrounds.

Twenty years ago smoking in pregnancy was much higher than today – 21% in 2004/2005 in Telford and Wrekin. A dedicated healthy pregnancy service delivered from Shrewsbury and Telford Hospitals maternity services has supported many pregnant women to quit, but there is still more to do to reduce smoking in pregnancy inequalities. Hear more about the NHS Tobacco Dependency Programmes on pages 20-21.

Smoking in children and young people

- Among adult smokers in England, 66% report starting smoking before age 18.
- Nationally in 2023 11% of 11–15-year-olds reported trying smoking, 3% report currently being smokers, with 1% smoking regularly (at least 1 cigarette per week)¹².
- This means an estimated 400 11-15 year olds are regular smokers in Telford and Wrekin.

[Find out about Liam's smoking journey here](#)



Supporting residents to quit

Crush the Habit is Telford and Wrekin's community-centred localised smoking cessation campaign, built around our well-known Council Healthy Lifestyles brand. More than a call to action, this campaign reaches out to support our residents to quit smoking for a reason special to them – be it for their health, future, or for someone they love.

Crush the Habit acknowledges that breaking free from a habit as strong as smoking is no small feat, so there's the offer of Healthy Lifestyles Stop Smoking services support for every step of the way.

Now in its tenth month, the **Crush the Habit** campaign continues to resonate with our community, encouraging many to seek information and support to quit smoking. Significant peaks in engagement are noticed around national events such as Stop Smoking Day, Christmas, and New Year, illustrating how these moments can inspire a shift in attitudes towards smoking.

Statistically, the campaign's reach and impact are impressive. With over 1.75 million impressions, more than 55,000 interactions, and 10,000 click-throughs leading individuals to commit to change, the numbers echo the campaign's success in engaging and motivating our community.



Crush the Habit links to the wider “Healthy Telford” pledge, a 12-week email campaign, providing valuable health and advice information. This initiative empowers residents to make small, achievable changes that greatly enhance their overall wellbeing while also joining a group of likeminded individuals who can help them on their journey to better health.

At Healthy Lifestyles, we believe that with the right support and resources, anyone can quit smoking. Take the first step towards a smoke-free life by signing up for our FREE stop smoking appointments. Ready to commit? Sign up now: orlo.uk/ILnfX @healthytelford



There are a range of free national online resources and apps to support smokers to quit.

Some areas, like Norfolk, have digital programmes which offer: interactive videos, virtual coaching and progress tracking.

Telford & Wrekin Healthy Lifestyles Stop Smoking Service

Telford & Wrekin Healthy Lifestyles Stop Smoking Service offers a free 12-week individually tailored programme through face-to-face appointments, video or simple phone calls. Support is available through in-person appointments, telephone calls, or video consultations, with translation services offered if needed.

Initial pre-quit appointment

- Review of smoking history, current habits, and routines.
- Assessment of the financial cost of smoking.
- Personalised advice on the most suitable nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) options (e.g. patches, gum, spray, lozenges).
- Signposting to additional health and wellbeing services where appropriate.

Ongoing support

- Up to 12 follow-up sessions providing motivation and behavioural support.
- Focus on achieving 4-week and 12-week smoke-free milestones.

Behavioural support

- Strategies to manage cravings.
- Techniques for changing daily routines.
- Ongoing encouragement and motivation.

Find out more about Healthy Lifestyle support [here](#)



How the Healthy Lifestyles Team are making a difference

"The service provided is extremely helpful and of great assistance. No pressure was ever felt or put onto myself. Both the advice and support really helped in achieving my goal of quitting."

Swap-to-Stop is a national initiative designed to help smokers transition from cigarettes to vaping.

The scheme works alongside behavioural support from local stop smoking services, involving regular check-ups and progress reviews. There is flexibility in implementing the scheme, through either direct distribution of vape kits or providing voucher codes. The scheme also allows local authorities to prioritise certain target populations and areas with high smoking prevalence.

"When I first started this journey, I was anxious, nervous, and very doubtful that I'd succeed. But Catherine was incredibly welcoming, and we set a quit date for two weeks later. I honestly thought it was impossible — but I trusted her."

"I'm so glad I made the decision to go on this journey, and having the Healthy Lifestyles team as an anchor point made a huge difference."

"Great service! As a smoker, of some 43 years, I honestly didn't believe I've ever be able to stop!! Well, Ollie has been incredible, believing I could become "smoke free" even though I doubted myself."

"I have surprised myself that I have managed to do it and your support has been an extra prop to spur me on. Thanks again."

"Hi Cath thank you again for all your support, I don't think I could of done this without your support. I made the initial call as I was struggling with the craving of smoking and Cath explained what was happening very clearly and together we put a plan together to help me with the craving. The service honestly amazing and it was great I could do this over the phone and didn't need an appointment at the doctors surgery. I have since passed the information on to a friend who is wanting to give up smoking and shared my experience with her and I would recommended this service to other friends and family too. Truly an amazing service."

**Meet
Ollie**



**Meet
Nick**



**Meet
Cath**



**Meet
Rachael**



"Dear Cath and team, Healthy lifestyles stop smoking team has been incredible in helping me achieve my goals. I feel wonderful in myself and have more energy in every aspect of my living. Addiction to nicotine can be very hard to shake off as it becomes a part of your life and seemingly a crutch to depend upon. Your team has always given the right advice and support, which has led to an extremely positive outcome.

I have not touched a cigarette in the past 12 weeks, and I do not have the urge to do so. This means that your team has managed to address all aspects of my needs (psycho-social, emotional and physical) to be able to quit smoking. I feel wonderful in myself and have more energy in every aspect of my living. The social impact of your services is immense to people, as it impacts on overall improvement in health and social wellbeing. Many thanks once again."



"Hi Nick, first of all a huge thank you to you Nick. To be honest I was dreading contacting the Healthy Lifestyle Team but, I'm so glad I did. My assumption that I'd be met with ongoing judgmental comments was absolutely misplaced. I was supported with the utmost respect that had a lasting impact on me.

I'd been a committed smoker for over 40yrs and becoming an expert at giving up smoking but, this time felt very different to me & with your support I truly believe I'm truly a non-smoker. However, I've always trusted the advice of Nick and will continue to use his the advice he passed onto me. My advice to anyone wanting to give up smoking. Don't do it alone the support works. Thanks again Nick."

How the Healthy Lifestyles Team are making a difference

CASE STUDY

An 84-year-old woman with a diagnosis of dementia was referred by her Adult Social Care Practitioner. The referral was supported in-person within her local community, with assistance from her granddaughter to help her access the service.

She also lives with several long-term health conditions, including hypertension, heart disease, and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD).

The client has been smoking since the age of 15. She previously quit during pregnancy and remained smoke-free for 11 years at that time.

Initial Carbon Monoxide (CO) reading: 17ppm

Week 3 CO reading: reduced to 2ppm – a level typical of a non-smoker

Her granddaughter reports noticeable improvements:

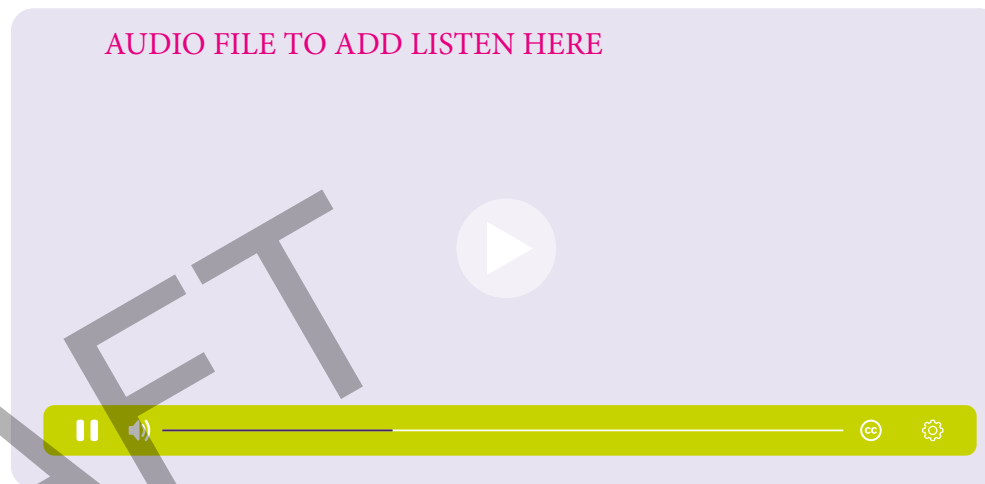
- no chest infections since quitting;
- increased energy levels; and
- enjoyment in walking and spending time gardening.

The client was expected to reach 12 weeks smoke-free by the end of June 2025.

She lives alone and experiences social isolation. Her granddaughter believes she often smokes out of boredom.

To support her, the Stop Smoking Advisor introduced her to new people and activities at the community centre where her appointments were held.

AUDIO FILE TO ADD LISTEN HERE



<https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking/ready-to-quit-smoking/vaping-to-quit-smoking/>¹⁴

The [NHS Lung Cancer Screening Programme](#)¹⁷ aims to detect lung cancer sooner, often before symptoms develop and when treatment is more likely to be successful. The programme will offer lung health checks to people aged between 55 and 74 years who have ever smoked. Roll out of this national programme is phased and initially is targeting health inequalities by inviting people from the most deprived communities for lung checks first. The Shrewsbury & Telford Hospital NHS Trust is working with local GPs to start the programme in South East Telford in October 2025.

Telford & Wrekin Healthy Lifestyles Service will be offering stop smoking support alongside 12 weeks free Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) to people following their lung health checks to encourage them to quit.

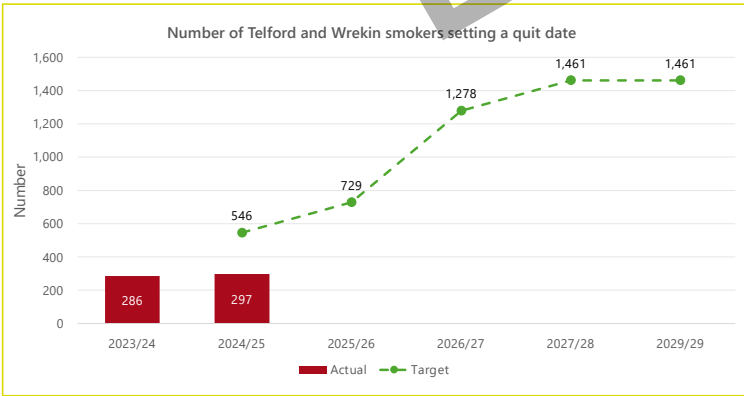


Increasing smoking quitters in the community

Vaping become widely popular in the 2010s and e-cigarettes have radically, but positively changed the landscape of quitting and the support people look for to help them stop smoking. The numbers of people smoking overall has fallen over the past 10 years too. As a result, the demand for local stop smoking services has declined over the past decade. In 2014/15 just over 1,800 people set a quit date with Telford and Wrekin stop smoking services, and in 2024/25 that number had fallen to under 300.

In 2024/25 the number of smokers setting a quit date (per 100,000 smokers) in Telford and Wrekin was below the England average. Over half of people setting a quit self referred into our service, and a third were referred from General Practices – either by GPs, social prescribers or other general practice staff. Self referral and GP referral rates are higher in Telford and Wrekin compared to the England average, but referral rates need to increase from across the NHS.

Funding to support local authority-led stop smoking services expansion has been agreed as part of the Government’s Smoke Free Generation commitment. The targeted funding is based on local smoking prevalence, ensuring areas with higher smoking rates receive more support. During 2025/26 Telford & Wrekin Council will use this grant funding to recruit further stop smoking advisors to expand the team and increase the number of smokers setting a quit date, in line with our targets (shown on the graph).



Neighbourhood Health opportunities

Neighbourhood Health is part of the Government’s mission to shift healthcare into the community. This transformative approach is designed to reshape how health and care services are delivered in communities across England. Preventative, community-based interventions, which tackle health inequalities are a crucial part of neighbourhood health.

Integrated neighbourhood teams (INTs) will work in neighbourhoods and are expected to provide proactive preventative care in communities. The INTs will include the staff from the following:

- Primary care teams – GPs, nursing staff, social prescribers;
- Community health services – therapies and nursing teams, pharmacists etc;
- Healthy lifestyle services;
- Mental health services;
- Adult social care; and
- Voluntary and community sector organisations.

Telford & Wrekin Place Partnership (TWIPP) oversees the neighbourhood health agenda in the borough, and the development of INTs aligned to the four Primary Care Groups offer a significant opportunities to engage more people who smoke in quitting support.

Views of residents who smoke

Engaging Communities Solutions, the current provider of Healthwatch Telford & Wrekin undertook engagement with around 100 residents who currently smoke during Summer 2025.

The themes of this engagement are summarised below.

Smoking behaviours

- Long-term smoking often begins due to family norms, peer pressure, or bereavement.
- Vaping is common and often used alongside smoking.
- Smoking is viewed as a coping mechanism for stress.
- Many smokers, especially younger ones, are not motivated to quit.

Service engagement

- Low awareness and uptake of stop smoking services, especially among young people and men.
- Willpower is the most common method to quit, but often unsuccessful.
- Group and 1:1 support are valued, especially when led by people with lived experience.

Communication preferences

- Social media is preferred by younger people, but often ignored unless actively seeking help.
- Leaflets, posters, and direct mail are important for older or socially housed individuals.
- Real-life stories and face-to-face conversations are more impactful than generic health warnings.

Barriers to quitting

- Emotional attachment and low perceived urgency reduce motivation.
- Stress, social triggers, and lack of follow-up support contribute to relapse.
- Existing messaging often fails to resonate, especially with younger audiences.

'I can vape in the pub but then go outside for a cigarette.'

(Female, 18-34)

'The vape is the first thing I do in the morning and the last thing I do at night.'

(Male, 18-34 years)

'Currently don't have any bills to pay, so I can buy what I want, so it is not important to me at the moment.'

(Male, 18-34 years)

'In years to come when I have to consider a roof over my head, or food I would stop.' 'If I had a family, I would think about the cost, especially with the cost of living at the moment.'

(Female, 18-34 years)

NHS Tobacco Dependency Programmes

Smoking greatly increases the risk of complications during and after surgery. Smokers have a 1 in 3 risk of having breathing problems after an operation, which can reduce to 1 in 10 if the patient stops smoking eight weeks before their operation.

The Tobacco Dependency Programme at Princess Royal and Royal Shrewsbury Hospitals, led by Aravind Bhaskaran was initiated in 2019 and is specifically aimed at inpatients identified as smokers. Upon admission, patients are asked about their smoking status. Those who smoke are then contacted by the dedicated SaTH Tobacco Dependency Team. Our team reaches out to smoking patients within 24 hours of their admission to provide personalized 1-2-1 behavioural support and Nicotine Replacement Therapy, which may include patches or medication. Continuous support is provided to patients throughout their hospital stay, and for those wishing to continue their quitting journey post-discharge, they are seamlessly referred to the three Local Authority Stop Smoking Services.



The [National smoke-free pregnancy incentive scheme¹⁵](#) (NSPIS) launched in November 2024, aiming to reduce smoking rates among pregnant women and improve health outcomes for both mothers and babies.

Incentive: Participants receive up to £400 in vouchers:

- weekly vouchers during the first four weeks of their quit attempt;
- monthly vouchers until birth; and
- two additional vouchers at one and three months postpartum.

Implementation: through participating NHS trusts and maternity services, integrated with existing tobacco dependency treatment pathways.

Uptake: As of mid-2025, 78 out of 120 maternity trusts in England are currently delivering the scheme.

The NHS Tobacco Dependency Programme¹⁶ was launched in 2019, NHS trusts were expected by March 2024 to provide the following:

Universal Offer in Hospitals – NHS-funded tobacco dependency treatment offered to all inpatients who smoke, including a brief advice, nicotine replacement therapy (NRT), and behavioural support.

Specialist Pathways:

- tailored support through a smoke-free pregnancy pathway for pregnant women and their partners; and
- universal cessation offer for long-term users of specialist mental health, and in learning disability services.

Hear more from local midwife Vicky Birch [link to go here](#)

NHS Tobacco Dependency Programmes

Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

Adam Bance, the Clinical Lead for Tobacco Dependency at Midlands Partnership University Foundation NHS Trust (MPFT), started working on Mental Health Wards in 1997, when smoking was a “deeply embedded part of the culture. Most inpatients smoked heavily, and many staff would join them in the smoke-rooms on the wards”. Slowly but surely the culture has changed, as the NHS has needed to adapt in line with smoke free legislation. The Trust adopted a “Totally Smoke Free” commitment in 2015 and this has taken nearly a decade to become a reality. A key resource used in the Trust for all Inpatient Mental Health Clinicians is an NHS Standard Treatment Programme for Tobacco Dependency.



This provides essential facts, background and evidence for the need for a Smokefree NHS, along with “Care Bundles” to standardise a quality offer for our patients. It can be found here <https://www.ncsct.co.uk/publications/STP-inpatient-mental-health>. The MPFT service led by Adam, offers Tobacco Dependency Support on an opt-out basis to all patients admitted as smokers to the Redwoods Centre in Shrewsbury. This may mean days of weeks of abstinence, or the beginning of a full, smoke free future. We work closely with our colleagues in Telford & Wrekin Council Healthy Lifestyles Service, who are on hand to continue people’s support and quitting journey on discharge.

Fit for the Future² 10 Year Health Plan for England sets out clear expectations for the existing NHS Tobacco Dependency Programmes and their expansion, including the following elements:

Universal Access

All hospital inpatients, pregnant women, and people in mental health settings who smoke are offered support to quit and this should be expanded to outpatient and community settings.

Personalised Support

Patients receive brief advice, behavioural support, and access to quit aids (e.g. nicotine replacement therapy or vaping products), which is tailored to individual needs and circumstances.

Equity Focus

Targeting of health inequalities, especially in deprived areas where data shows smoking rates are highest, to reduce gaps and improve outcomes across different population groups.

Hospital-Based Interventions

Being in hospital is seen as a key opportunity to support quitting, and by the end of 2023/24, all overnight hospital admissions should have access to tobacco dependence treatment.

Training for NHS Staff

New eLearning modules help clinical staff deliver effective stop smoking support. Training includes how to provide brief interventions and recommend appropriate treatments.

Children and young people smoking and vaping

About 8,890 children in Telford and Wrekin live in smoking households and every year around 360 children start smoking.⁵

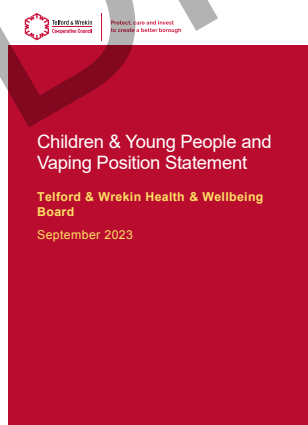
The risks of smoking to children and young people are wide and varied. As well as the pregnancy and infant impacts, children can develop asthma from second-hand smoke. Children learn by seeing, or 'modelling behaviour' and seeing parents, carers and siblings smoking is a risk factor for them starting smoking themselves. This increases the risk if smoking products are available at home. The younger people start smoking, the greater the harm is likely due to higher dependency, heavier smoking and lower chances of quitting.

While vaping has become an essential tool in helping adults quit smoking, worryingly there is a large rise in vaping among young people, particularly those who do not smoke. Over 1,900 young people in Telford and Wrekin aged 11-17 years, are estimated to have experimented with vaping in 2023.

In terms of regular vapers, the estimate is 600 of 11-17 year olds in Telford and Wrekin vape every day, a rise from less than 100 regular vapers in 2014.

Telford & Wrekin Health & Wellbeing Board published a [position statement on Youth Vaping](#)¹⁸ in September 2023.

This is series of key messages and advice on vaping for young people, parents, carers, schools and other education settings.



Crucial Crew the annual summer roadshow for 10-11 year olds leaving primary school held at Telford College, is an immersive, hands-on experience to offering information on essential life skills to help children stay safe and confident as they move to secondary school. As part of our plans to tackle youth vaping in Telford and Wrekin, school nurses attended crucial crew event this July 2025 to deliver a session on vaping.



Hear our school nurses talk about vaping at Crucial Crew [here](#)



The Tobacco and Vapes Bill¹ proposes the following to protect children and young people: Ban on Vape Sales to Under 18s / Advertising and Promotion Restrictions / Packaging and Flavour Controls / Shop Display Regulations

Tackling illicit tobacco and illegal vapes

What is Illicit Tobacco?

Smuggled Tobacco: Genuine products brought into the UK without paying the required taxes or duties.

Counterfeit Tobacco: Fake products made to look like legitimate brands but often contain unregulated and harmful substances.

Cheap Whites: Brands manufactured legally in one country but intended specifically for illegal sale in another, like the UK.

Unregulated Hand-Rolled Tobacco: Often sold in unmarked bags or packaging, with no health warnings or duty paid.

What is the impact?

Health Risks: Illicit tobacco is often made in unregulated environments and may contain higher levels of toxins, heavy metals, and contaminants.

Undermines Public Health Goals: It makes tobacco more accessible and affordable, especially to young people and low-income groups.

Loss of Revenue: The UK government loses billions in unpaid taxes – estimated at £2.8 billion in 2021–2022 alone.

Funds Organised Crime: Profits from illicit tobacco are often linked to wider criminal activities, including drug and human trafficking

The overall size of the illicit market in the UK is estimated to be 13.8% of tobacco smoked and leads to a loss in taxes of £1.4bn annually in excise tax plus an additional £400m in VAT. However, progress made over the last 20 years has been significant, with the illicit market declining from an estimated 21.7% of all tobacco smoked in 2006/7¹⁹.



Telford and Wrekin Trading Standards Team

In collaboration with Telford police, the Council's Trading Standards conduct multiple operations targeting the sale of illicit tobacco across Telford and Wrekin. During 2024/25, the following items were seized:

54,080 cigarettes – a **66% increase** compared to 2023/24

41.4 kg of hand-rolling tobacco – a **210% increase**

1,690 illegal vapes – a **37.3% increase**

78 pouches and **14 tubs of shisha tobacco**

A total of **11 separate seizures** were made, with the largest incident receiving media coverage (BBC report).

Underage Vape Sales Enforcement

In response to intelligence-led complaints – primarily concerning vape sales – we carried out **underage sales test exercises** during 2024/25:

18 retail premises were visited

7 shops sold vapes to underage individuals

1 business was prosecuted and had its **alcohol licence revoked** by the Council

Investigations and enforcement actions are **ongoing** for several other premises.



Key actions for change

Reduce the number of people who smoke by supporting more people to quit in community and NHS settings

- Understand the local inequalities picture to inform effective targeting, through equity profiling of tobacco dependency and stop smoking service clients - by age, gender, ethnicity etc.
- Develop confidence and expertise of frontline health and care professionals and appropriate volunteers (health champions etc.) through Making Every Contact Count (MECC) training on smoking and vaping.
- Improve and expand advice and signposting to support available for people to quit through promotion of Healthy Conversations campaign, underpinned by national campaign material (e.g. Stoptober).
- Develop and promote online resources and apps to engage those wanting to quit through a digital offer.
- Review, streamline and enhance the current stop smoking pathways across community settings in the NHS Tobacco Dependency Programmes and linked services such as Lung Cancer Screening.
- Expand the Healthy Lifestyles Service Stop Smoking Team and increase in

community stop smoking clinic venues in neighbourhoods.

- Introduce Swap to Stop free vapes offer (LA and NHS) and expand the number of clients supported with free NRT.
- Engage with residents who smoke to understand barriers, especially those in groups where smoking prevalence is highest (see further info for more detail).

Protect children and young people against smoking, vaping and other nicotine products

- Refresh the Telford & Wrekin Children and Young People's Vaping Position Statement.
- Engage with young people, through our Child Friendly approach, to co-produce prevention activities which raise awareness of the harms of smoking and vaping.
- Develop an online toolkit of resources and communications for children, young people, parents, carers, schools and education settings to stop the start of smoking and vaping.

Create more smoke free places to protect children and vulnerable people from second-hand smoke

- Make more local outdoor spaces smoke free, through expanded restrictions set out in the Tobacco and Vapes Bill, e.g. outside schools, children's playgrounds and hospitals.
- Encourage premises to adopt voluntary outdoor smoke free places.
- Work with businesses and employers to develop smoke free policies.

Enhance enforcement and tackling of illicit tobacco and vapes

- Explore adoption of retail licensing scheme for tobacco and vapes products, linked to new Tobacco and Vapes Bill powers.
- Consider use of fixed penalty notices for offences such as underage sale of tobacco and vaping products.
- Continue to enforce compliance with regulations relating to all tobacco and vapes regulation, including point of sale, age restrictions on sales and illegal sales.

Resources and links/references:

1) <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3879>

2) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/10-year-health-plan-for-england-fit-for-the-future/fit-for-the-future-10-year-health-plan-for-england-executive-summary>

3) a. <https://www.bmj.com/content/328/7455/1519>

b. <https://le.ac.uk/research/stories/human-health/tobacco-history>

c. <https://ash.org.uk/resources/view/smoking-statistics>

4) <https://news.cancerresearchuk.org/2023/03/17/the-killer-behind-the-counter/>

5) https://ashresources.shinyapps.io/inequalities_dashboard/

6) <https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking/why-quit-smoking/understanding-the-true-impact-of-smoking/>

7) https://ashresources.shinyapps.io/ready_reckoner/

8) <https://www.telford.gov.uk/healthy-telford/help-to-stop-smoking/>

9) <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/tobacco-control>

10) Source: Public Health Outcomes Framework - Annual Population Survey

11) <https://www.telford.gov.uk/about-my-council/telford-and-wrekin-insight/living-well/>

12) <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/tobacco-control>

13) <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/smoking-drinking-and-drug-use-among-young-people-in-england/2023>

14) <https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking/ready-to-quit-smoking/vaping-to-quit-smoking/>

15) <https://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/prevention/tobacco-dependency-programme/national-smoke-free-pregnancy-incentive-scheme/>

16) <https://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/prevention/tobacco-dependency-programme/>

17) <https://www.nhs.uk/tests-and-treatments/lung-cancer-screening/>

18) <https://www.telford.gov.uk/healthy-telford/tackling-young-people-vaping/>

19) <https://ash.org.uk/media-centre/news/press-releases/new-official-estimate-of-the-illicit-tobacco-market-ash-response>

20) <https://ash.org.uk/resources/view/health-inequalities-and-smoking>

Further information

Vaping

Vaping through electronic devices referred to as 'vapes' or 'e-cigarettes' usually contain nicotine - the addictive chemical found in cigarettes, allowing the user to inhale nicotine in a vapour rather than smoke. Vapes are useful for reducing harm to adult smokers, by encouraging smokers to use vapes as an alternative to tobacco and to aid in quitting smoking altogether. Vaping is not completely risk free, particularly for people who have never smoked and should not be presented as an appealing activity to the wider non-smoking population. Around 5.1 million adults aged 16 years and over (9.8%) currently use an e-cigarette daily or occasionally in Great Britain in 2023, based on the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN). E-cigarette use was highest among people aged 16 to 24 years in Great Britain, with 15.8% using e-cigarettes either daily or occasionally.

Smoking and health inequalities

The burden of ill health and mortality attributed to tobacco related harm is unevenly distributed in society. Smoking is the single largest driver of health inequalities in England. Data from the Annual Population Survey, found that smoking prevalence was more than three times higher in those living in the most deprived areas compared to those living in the least deprived areas.

Smoking rates are known to be higher than the national average in the following groups:

- people with a mental health condition;
- people with lower incomes;
- people who are unemployed;
- people who are experiencing homelessness;
- people in contact with the criminal justice system;
- people who live in social housing;
- people without qualifications;
- lone parents; and
- LGBTQ+ people.

The level of socio-economic disadvantage varies hugely across the borough. Parts of the borough are among the most deprived in England whilst other areas are among the least deprived. 15.7% of the local population live in areas that are ranked in the 10% most deprived in England for overall deprivation and 19.5% of the population live in areas that are ranked in the 20% most deprived nationally.

[ASH-Briefing_Health-Inequalities.pdf](#)

[Telford_and_Wrekin_JSNA_Population_Headlines_January_2024\(2\).pdf](#)

Further information

Core20PLUS5

Core20PLUS5 is a national NHS England approach designed to reduce healthcare inequalities across England.

Smoking cessation is highlighted as important to all five clinical areas which are prioritised in the Core20PLUS framework.

NHS England »
Core20PLUS5 (adults)
– an approach to
reducing healthcare
inequalities

