

## In a nutshell

The government is planning to introduce a new law to:

- Reduce smoking.
- Reduce vaping among young people.
- The Tobacco and Vapes Bill plans to ban the sale of cigarettes to anyone born after 2009. This will gradually help phase out young people taking up smoking.
- The law will also change the way that vapes are sold. It aims to make vapes less appealing and accessible to young people.
- This law is expected to improve the health of the population and reduce pressure on the health service in Northern Ireland.

## Why is this new law needed?

Smoking kills and harms too many people in Northern Ireland. Smoking rates are still too high. In Northern Ireland, 14% of the population smoke. Around 2,200 people die every year in Northern Ireland from diseases caused by tobacco. Smoking harms the lives of babies and children, socially disadvantaged communities, and people with mental ill health.

More children in Northern Ireland are using vapes than ever before. Vapes harm children and are addictive. Regular use of vapes is increasing among children in Northern Ireland. 6% of 11- to 16-year-olds now use vapes at least once a week – this rate has doubled between 2016 and 2022<sup>1</sup>. A fifth of 11- to 16-year-olds have ever used a vape at least once (21%). Those in the older year groups were more likely to report ever having used vapes, with findings ranging from 6% of those in Year 8 to 44% of those in Year 12<sup>1</sup>.

## How will this law change smoking in Northern Ireland?

The law will ban the sale of cigarettes to anyone born after 2009. This will help phase out the use of cigarettes by young people. For people who already smoke, they will still be able to buy cigarettes as before. The government will always make sure that people who smoke are offered free support to stop smoking.

In the future, fewer and fewer people will have started smoking. This will reduce the overall level of smoking in the population and mean there are fewer people who die prematurely or develop life threatening illness or disease as a result of smoking.

## How will the law change vaping in Northern Ireland?

The law will give the government in Northern Ireland the scope to make new rules on how vapes are sold. These rules will seek to make vapes less appealing to children. The exact rules have not been finalised yet. They could include changes to:

- How vapes are displayed in shops – called 'point of sale' display.
- The packaging of vapes.
- The way flavours are used to promote vapes – this might include restrictions on the way flavours are described or limit flavours that are available.

There is already a law in place in Northern Ireland which makes it illegal to sell vapes to anyone under 18.

Although vapes will be packaged and displayed differently, they will remain available to people who want to use them in their efforts to stop smoking. We have lots of evidence that smoking cigarettes is very bad for your health. Some people can find it helpful to use vapes to stop smoking. However, we do not really know yet how vapes affect health in the long-term. We do know that vapes are highly addictive, which is why the government will always make sure that people who smoke, people who vape, and people who use both cigarettes and vapes, are offered free advice and support to stop smoking or vaping.

## What are the Health Minister and Chief Medical Officer saying about this new law?

"If there are measures available that will reduce preventable deaths, help people live longer healthier lives, then as Health Minister I must advocate for them."

NI Minister of Health, Robin Swann  
*Photo source: Northern Ireland Assembly*



"Smoking is a life-limiting addiction. No other consumer product kills up to two thirds of its users... We owe it to future generations to protect them from the devastation that we know tobacco causes."

Chief Medical Officer, Dr Michael McBride  
*Photo source: Department of Health*



For advice and support on stopping smoking or to help a loved one stop smoking, please visit [StopSmokingNI](https://www.stop-smoking-ni.gov.uk/).

If you are worried about your child vaping, Northern Ireland's Public Health Agency has produced some [resources](#) to help parents discuss vaping with young people.

These [factsheets](#) give more detail about the new law.