

## Briefing for the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee on petition PE2155: Improve Support for People Trying to Give Up E-Cigarettes and Vaping, lodged by Daneil Taggart

### Brief overview of issues raised by the petition

[PE2155](#) calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to improve the support available for individuals trying to quit e-cigarettes and vapes by expanding access to nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) and smoking cessation medications for e-cigarette and vape users. It highlights that while the NHS currently provides various forms of NRT free of charge to those attempting to stop smoking, not all of these options are available to individuals trying to quit e-cigarette use and vaping.

### Background

[Quitting vaping and e-cigarette use is similar to quitting smoking](#), as both involve nicotine addiction and can result in withdrawal symptoms. These symptoms may include cravings, irritability, difficulty concentrating, and disrupted sleep. While e-cigarettes and vapes are currently considered lower-risk than traditional tobacco products, [they still pose health concerns, particularly in terms of nicotine addiction and exposure to harmful substances for non-smokers who might otherwise not have been exposed](#). Further research is required to study their long-term health impacts. According to the latest data from the [Scottish Health Survey](#), 12% of adults in Scotland reported using e-cigarettes or vapes in 2023, an increase from 10% in 2022.

In 2023, Public Health Scotland completed a [review of the available smoking cessation services](#). It states that available options include pharmacy and specialist non-pharmacy services, both of which are free of charge. Service users can visit their local pharmacy where a pharmacist will explain the medications available to help them to quit smoking such as patches, nasal sprays or inhalators. Specialist services sit within general practices, community, and acute care. They are more structured and include group sessions facilitated by a trained advisor or one-to-one sessions directly with a trained advisor.

There are currently various products that can be used to help people quit smoking, including:

- Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT)- a medication that provides a low level of nicotine, without the tar, carbon monoxide and other poisonous chemicals present in tobacco smoke. This is administered via skin patches, chewing gum, inhalators, tablets, oral strips, and lozenges and nasal and mouth sprays. These can be used individually or in combination.
- Varenicline- a prescription medication which reduces cravings for and decreases the pleasurable effects of cigarettes and other tobacco products.
- Bupropion- a prescription medication which reduces interest in smoking and reduces nicotine cravings and withdrawal symptoms.

There are several specialist interventions that can be used to support attempts to quit smoking. These include structured multiple sessions that can take the form of one-to-one support, couple/family group-based support, telephone support, or closed or open group support.

[NHS Guidance on Public Health Service](#) for pharmacists and their staff advises that patients who are e-cigarette users should be encouraged to quit tobacco, nicotine, and e-cigarette use entirely and should be able to access licenced smoking cessation products (currently NRT, bupropion or varenicline). However, this guidance cautions that many e-cigarette products contain nicotine which creates issues for determining the correct dosage when switching to NRT, particularly if the patient has struggled to quite e-cigarette use. Additionally, for patients currently using a non-nicotine e-cigarette product, reintroducing nicotine through NRT would be inappropriate. For these patients, the guidance recommends referral to non-pharmacy specialist smoking cessation services.

## Scottish Government actions

- In 2018, the Scottish Government announced its [commitment to create a 'Smoke Free Generation'](#) by reducing smoking prevalence in Scotland to 5% by 2034. Aligned with this goal, that year the Scottish Government launched the [Quit Your Way](#) service for smoking cessation.
- In 2023, the Scottish Government commissioned Public Health Scotland to conduct a [review of the available smoking cessation services](#) and make recommendations for the future delivery of these services. A key recommendation stated that a roundtable of key stakeholders in tobacco control, including Scottish Government, third sector organisations, and academics, should be held to consider the current situation in Scotland with regards to e-cigarette/vape use and establish the best way to protect children, young people, and non-smokers. A multidisciplinary group with national and local public health stakeholders was convened to implement the recommendations of the review.
- In 2023, the Scottish Government published the [Tobacco and Vaping Framework: Roadmap to 2034](#). This set out interventions and policies to help reduce the use of and associated harms from tobacco and vaping products in Scotland. The Scottish Government subsequently launched its [Take Hold Campaign](#) which provides information for parents, carers, and young people on vaping addiction and links to support through the Quit Your Way service.

- The Scottish Government recently introduced [a ban on the sale and supply of single-use vapes in Scotland](#). This will come into effect from the 1<sup>st</sup> June 2025.

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The purpose of this briefing is to provide a brief overview of issues raised by the petition. SPICe research specialists are not able to discuss the content of petition briefings with petitioners or other members of the public. However, if you have any comments on any petition briefing you can email us at

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