

Tobacco and Vapes Bill Committee Hearing: Does the Evidence Stack Up?

A UK Vaping Industry Association Review

In light of the industry and vapers not being invited to speak as part of the committee stage of the Tobacco and Vapes Bill, the UKVIA has reviewed the evidence that was given by those who were selected to present their views.



Sheila Duffy, Chief Executive of Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) Scotland, said:

“There is a link between regular vaping and moving onto smoking...”

The Evidence Says:

- An ‘Addressing Common Myths About Vaping’ dossier – produced by ASH UK and reviewed by 16 leading scientists and academics - shows vaping is NOT a ‘proven gateway into smoking’.
- The report highlights that, if there was a gateway effect, smoking rates would be ‘expected to show a reduced rate of decline or start to increase’ as vaping prevalence increases – this isn’t reflected by real world data.
- In fact, it is revealed that, as the use of e-cigarettes has grown in England between 2010 and 2021, smoking rates amongst young people ‘continued to fall at least as rapidly as previously’ - ASH UK said this ‘does not support the gateway hypothesis at a population level’.

Professor Steve Turner, President of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, said:

“There are few serious life-threatening complications, but you might have heard of popcorn lung, which is fortunately rare but is very serious.”

The Evidence Says:

- Popcorn lung – otherwise known as bronchiolitis obliterans – is a severe lung disease that results from a build-up of scar tissue.
- It’s believed that the condition is caused by exposure to diacetyl; a banned substance that is not found in legal UK vaping products.
- Cancer Research UK reports ‘there have been no confirmed cases of popcorn lung reported in people who use e-cigarettes’ and that vapes don’t cause the disease.

Laura Young, PhD Researcher from the Centre for Water Law, Policy and Science at the University of Dundee, said:

“The first thing to remember is that vaping is not good for you. It is slightly better than smoking...”

The Evidence Says:

- While vaping is not entirely risk-free, it is SIGNIFICANTLY less harmful than smoking – which claims around 80,000 lives every year in the UK alone.
- The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities maintains that vapes pose a ‘small fraction of the risks of smoking’ and that ‘switching completely from smoking to vaping conveys substantial health benefits over continued smoking’ - put simply, vapes are at least 95% less harmful than cigarettes.
- The Chief Medical Officer for England, Sir Chris Whitty, has acknowledged vaping as ‘much safer’ than smoking, saying that making the switch is a ‘positive health move’. He also makes clear that vapes are not completely harm-free and shouldn’t be used by non-smokers.
- Research conducted by Brunel University London recently found the NHS could save more than half a billion pounds per year if JUST HALF of England’s adult smokers switched to vaping.

Dr Caroline Johnson, Member of the Tobacco and Vapes Bill Committee and MP for Sleaford and North Hykeham, said:

“...could you talk about the effects of vaping on those who have never smoked—particularly things such as e-cigarette or vaping use-associated lung injury...”

The Evidence Says:

- In 2019 there were reports that vaping had caused an outbreak of lung illness in the US. An investigation found the cases were not caused by the use of legal nicotine vaping products, but rather by contaminated, illegal products containing THC.
- Alice Davies, Health Information Officer at Cancer Research UK previously said: “Headlines can be misleading as these cases were due to contaminants in illegal products and not linked to regular nicotine vaping. There was no similar outbreak in the UK and the chemicals of concern are banned in the UK.”
- The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities Nicotine Vaping in England: Evidence Update said there were ‘lessons to be learnt from the mislabeled US EVALI outbreak’ and that ‘communications about EVALI should clearly separate vaping these illicit substances from nicotine vaping’.

Professor Anna Gilmore, Professor of Public Health at the University of Bath, said:

“It is important that we do not lose sight of the role of pharmaceuticals, which are actually more important, but there are some smokers who do quit with vaping products.”

The Evidence Says:

- According to the latest data from Action on Smoking and health UK, almost 4.5 million adults in Great Britain have used vaping to cut down on or completely stop smoking.
- The NHS maintains that vaping is ‘one of the most effective tools for quitting smoking’ and the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities reports that vaping products ‘remain the most common aid used by people to help them quit’.
- James Tucker, Head of Health Analysis for ONS, previously said vaping has played a ‘major role’ in reducing smoking rates across the UK...which are now at a record low.
- A comprehensive Cochrane analysis, which looked at data from over 300 clinical trials involving more than 150,000 people, revealed e-cigarettes are amongst the most effective aids available to help adult smokers quit.

Dr Rob Branston, Senior Lecturer at the University of Bath, said:

“...we can be reasonably confident that there will not be a big wave of illicit products in the future.”

The Evidence Says:

- Consumer polling, commissioned by the Association of Convenience Stores, revealed that almost one quarter (24%) of vapers say they will continue to use disposables, even after they are banned – this means they would be forced to turn to illicit sellers and would result in a £645m boost for the black market.
- Australia, which operates some of the most restrictive vaping policy, is facing a significant black-market challenge. It is estimated that 92% of the country’s vapers purchase their products through illegal channels and as many as 100 million illicit vapes are imported into Australia each year.

Professor Steve Turner, President of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, said:

“To me, smoking and nicotine are two sides of the same coin. Nicotine addiction is smoking.”

The Evidence Says:

- Cancer Research UK says that, while nicotine ‘is the chemical that makes cigarettes addictive’, it is **NOT RESPONSIBLE** for the harmful effects of smoking. It also says nicotine ‘does not cause cancer’.
- This is echoed by the NHS, which says ‘most of the harm from smoking comes from the thousands of other chemicals in tobacco smoke’. It also highlights that nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) has been ‘widely used for many years’ to help people stop smoking and ‘is a safe treatment’.
- In 2021, Yorkshire Cancer Society said: “Nicotine is not a carcinogen; there is no evidence that sustained use of nicotine alone increases the risk of cancer.”

Dr Caroline Johnson, Member of the Tobacco and Vapes Bill Committee and MP for Sleaford and North Hykeham, said:

“I met representatives of the vaping industry, who told me that the reason they have flavours is essentially to maintain an addiction.”

The Evidence Says:

- In its response to the government’s call to evidence on youth vaping, the Royal College of Physicians said the use of flavours by adults trying to quit smoking is ‘an integral part of the effectiveness of vaping as a quit aid’. It said the wholesale limiting of flavours accessible to adults ‘is not recommended’.
- The latest data from Action on Smoking and Health shows flavours are hugely important to adult vapers, with 47% of users favouring fruit options, 17% choosing mint/menthol and 12% opting for tobacco – just 1.4% of adult vapers report using no flavour at all.
- A survey conducted by leading vape retailer Evapo found almost two thirds of vapers believe they are ‘likely’ or ‘somewhat likely’ to return to, or increase, smoking if their preferred vape flavours are banned or restricted.
- A One Poll survey, commissioned by the UKVIA, found 83% of vapers claimed that flavoured vapes helped them ‘pack in’ smoking.

Rachael Maskell, Member of the Tobacco and Vapes Bill Committee and MP for York Central, said:

“...vapes contain not just nicotine, but cannabis, Spice and other illicit substances...”

The Evidence Says:

- Legal vaping products DO NOT contain cannabis, Spice and other illicit substances – Rachael Maskell is presumably referring to illegal, non-compliant vaping products which should not be available for purchase.
- The legitimate industry has been calling on the government to crack down on illicit sellers, either through fines or through a fit for purpose licensing scheme which would generate funds for enforcement and empower Trading Standards.
- The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities has made clear that ‘cases or outbreaks of poisonings or injuries’ should be clear about the ‘implicated substances’ - in other words, we must differentiate between legal and illegal products.
- Research from Action on Smoking and Health UK revealed that four in ten smokers wrongly, and worryingly, believe vaping to be as or more harmful than smoking.



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