Creating a smokefree generation and tackling youth vaping

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# About us

We’re RCOT, the Royal College of Occupational Therapists. We’ve championed the profession and the people behind it for over 80 years; and today, we are thriving with over 35,000 members. Then and now, we’re here to help achieve life-changing breakthroughs for our members, for the people they support and for society as a whole.

Occupational therapy helps you live your best life at home, at work – and everywhere else. It’s about being able to do the things you want and have to do. That could mean helping you overcome challenges learning at school, going to work, playing sport or simply doing the dishes. Everything is focused on increasing independence and wellbeing.

It’s a science-based, health and social care profession that’s regulated by the Health and Care Professions Council.

An occupational therapist helps people of all ages overcome challenges completing everyday tasks or activities – what we call ‘occupations’. Occupational therapists see beyond diagnoses and limitations to hopes and aspirations. They look at relationships between the activities you do every day – your occupations – alongside the challenges you face and your environment.

Then, they create a plan of goals and adjustments targeted at achieving a specific set of activities. The plan is practical, realistic and personal to you as an individual, to help you achieve the breakthroughs you need to elevate your everyday life.

This support can give people a renewed sense of purpose. It can also open up new opportunities and change the way people feel about the future.

# Our response

**Q1 Do you agree or disagree that the age of sale for tobacco products should be changed so that anyone born on or after 1 January 2009 will never be legally sold (and also in Scotland, never legally purchase) tobacco products?**

RCOT recognises the compelling evidence linking smoking to adverse health outcomes, including lung, throat, and oral cancers. In light of this, we agree that addressing the age of sale for tobacco products is a crucial public health measure.

**Key Considerations:**

**Smoking as a chosen occupation:**

While acknowledging smoking as a personal choice, it's essential to weigh this against the substantial health risks associated with smoking. Smoking can impact individuals' occupational performance and daily functioning. As occupational therapists, we advocate for informed choices that promote overall well-being.

**Primary care involvement:**

We acknowledge the role of smoking cessation in primary care and recognises the ongoing efforts, including the implementation of Quality and Outcomes Frameworks (QOFS) for GPs. While ARRS funded posts were not initially intended for QOF delivery, the broader Making Every Contact Count initiative is integral to the role of nursing and AHP primary care staff.

**Prevention and health promotion:**

Occupational therapy places a strong emphasis on preventive measures and health promotion. Restricting the sale of tobacco to a specific age group contributes to preventing tobacco-related health issues and promoting healthier lifestyles.

**Health inequalities:**

We recognise the correlation between smoking rates and socio-economic factors, contributing to health inequalities. We emphasise the importance of addressing these disparities to promote better health outcomes for all. Restricting access to tobacco for younger generations may contribute to addressing these health disparities.

**Q2 Do you agree or disagree that the UK Government and devolved administrations should restrict vape flavours?**

RCOT agrees with the proposed restriction on vape flavours, aiming to address public health concerns, particularly the appeal of flavoured options to younger individuals. We recognise the societal impact of health-related behaviours and the need for policies that safeguard public health. However, it is important to recognise that adults may choose vaping, as part of harm reduction when attempting to quit smoking.

**Q3 Which option do you think would be the most effective way for the UK Government and devolved administrations to restrict vape flavours to children and young people?**

Restrictions on vape flavours, particularly limiting them to tobacco, align with our commitment to preventive healthcare. This approach seeks to mitigate potential health risks associated with enticing flavours, especially for those who may be susceptible to the appeal of such products.

**Q4 Do you agree or disagree that restrictions on disposable vapes should take the form of prohibiting their sale and supply?**

We agree that restrictions on disposable vapes should take the form of prohibiting their sale and supply. This is particularly due to the environmental impact of disposable vapes. Occupational therapists recognise the interconnectedness of health and the environment, and disposable vapes pose a range of environmental hazards. Prohibiting their sale and supply is an environmentally conscious step, aligning with the principles of sustainability that underpin occupational therapy practice.

## Contact

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