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action on smoking and health

Reports to Results

Intelligence from the NINB Reporting Portal 2022-2025

Executive Summary

The No Ifs. No Butts. reporting portal has transformed public reporting of illegal tobacco, illegal vapes, and underage sales across Wales. Launched in March 2022, it has generated **1,443 reports across the UK**, with **882 (61%) from Wales**. What began as a Wales-focused initiative is now being used across the UK, with enforcement teams recognising the value of a clear, accessible system that converts community concern into actionable intelligence.

Unlike most reporting routes, the portal captures both structured data and detailed free-text narratives at scale. Reports routinely include pricing cues, concealment methods, storage locations, and repeat offender detail, allowing Trading Standards to understand not just where illegal sales are happening, but how supply operates on the ground. This combination turns public concern into intelligence that can directly inform enforcement planning and prioritisation.

Back in 2016/17, **only 261 reports** of illegal tobacco **reached Trading Standards across Wales**, with most people unsure where or how to report what they saw. Today, sustained high volumes of reports feed directly into Trading Standards investigations, triggering raids, seizures, and shop closures, with enforcement teams confirming that many recent operations would not have happened without this intelligence.

Reporting volumes have almost **tripled since 2022**, rising from **195 reports to 558 in 2025** - representing a clear step change in public engagement. Growth accelerated across 2025, rising in each successive period from 72 reports (Jan-Apr) to 191 (May-Aug) and **295 (Sep-Dec)**.

Targeted marketing has underpinned this growth, delivering **1.3 million campaign impressions** at costs per click well below industry averages, while major awareness campaigns and **policy changes** repeatedly triggered surges in public reporting.

Scale and spread across Wales (totals and per head)

- **Newport** records the highest volume of reports, with **181 submissions (22.7%)**, followed by **Cardiff with 148 (18.6%)**. Together, they account for over 41% of all Welsh reports.
- North Wales forms a clear secondary cluster, with **Wrexham, Flintshire, and Denbighshire** contributing over **22% of submissions**.
- On a per-capita basis, Newport remains the highest-reporting authority at **11.34 reports per 10,000 residents**, with **Denbighshire (5.28)** and **Wrexham (5.0)** also reporting at disproportionately high levels.

Product trends shaping enforcement

- Across Wales, **67% (589)** of reports involve **illegal tobacco**, **56% (495)** involve **illegal vapes**, **16% (143)** name **cannabis** and **15% (131)** raise **underage sales** concerns.
- The June 2025 disposable vape ban and the new streamlined reporting form saw vape-related reports jump from **59 in January to May 2025** to **117 from June to August 2025**, almost doubling across the two periods.
- Underage sales are now a central feature of reporting, with around a **third of Welsh reports (302) raising youth access concerns** across multiple product types.
- When focusing specifically on vaping, reports linking vapes and underage access have increased year on year, **reaching 36.5% of all Welsh reports in 2025**, reinforcing the role of disposable and high-capacity devices in safeguarding concerns.

Public motivations and intelligence quality

- Safeguarding is the single strongest driver of reporting, with **359 reports (25%) mentioning schools, children, or youth access**.
- **167 reports (12%) flag illegal pricing**, often naming the same premises multiple times, creating repeat enforcement leads.
- **221 reports (15%) describe concealment tactics** like false walls, car boots, and basements, giving Trading Standards actionable detail for raids.
- **65 reports (4.5%) mention police or Trading Standards**, often name repeat offenders and enforcement expectations.

Trading Standards confirm that portal intelligence directly drives test purchases, closure notices, and live investigations that would not otherwise exist, aligning with national objectives on smoke-free communities, youth vaping, and illicit trade disruption.

The message from communities is clear: **give people a simple way to report illegal sales**, and they will use it to **protect children, high streets and local communities**.

Alongside delivery in Wales, the portal has also received over 500 reports from England since 2022, with reporting accelerating sharply in 2024 and 2025. This demonstrates that the model functions effectively beyond a single national context and can support enforcement intelligence at scale.

1.Introduction and purpose

The No Ifs. No Butts. reporting portal, launched in March 2022, provides people across Wales with a single, clear route to report illegal tobacco, illegal vapes, and underage sales.

Before 2022, intelligence about illicit products reached Trading Standards through a fragmented mix of routes, including local authority forms, Crimestoppers, and Citizens Advice. Many people were unsure where to report what they saw, or whether reporting would lead to action.

In 2016/17, only 13% of the public said they would report illegal tobacco to Trading Standards, with most defaulting to the police. That year saw just **261 reports across Wales, resulting in 221 enforcement visits, 81 seizures, and 42 prosecutions**, but intelligence from the public remained inconsistent and limited.

The No Ifs. No Butts. portal addressed this gap by making reporting simple, visible, and consistent across Wales. Reports can be submitted online, anonymously if desired, and are reviewed by Trading Standards intelligence officers. Credible reports are converted into formal intelligence records and used by local teams to inform test purchases, closure notices, and wider investigations.

ASH Wales manages the portal in partnership with Welsh Government and Trading Standards Wales. Welsh Government funding supports both the technology and the public awareness activity that drives reporting, while Trading Standards ensures the intelligence leads to enforcement action on the ground. Local authorities remain at the sharp end of delivery, using this intelligence to protect communities from illegal tobacco, illegal vapes, and youth access to nicotine products.

2. Overall reach and growth

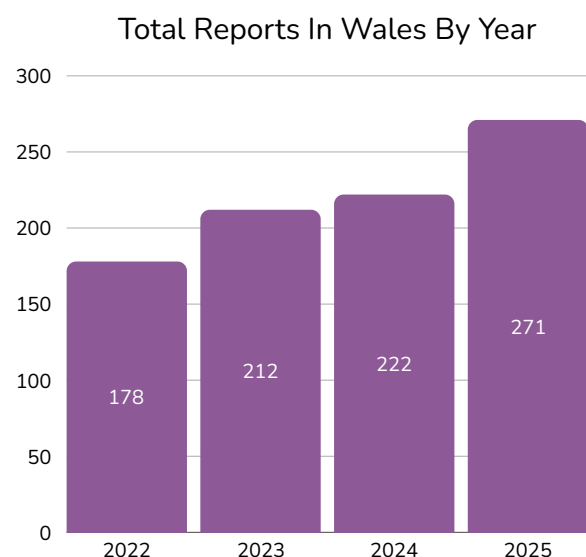
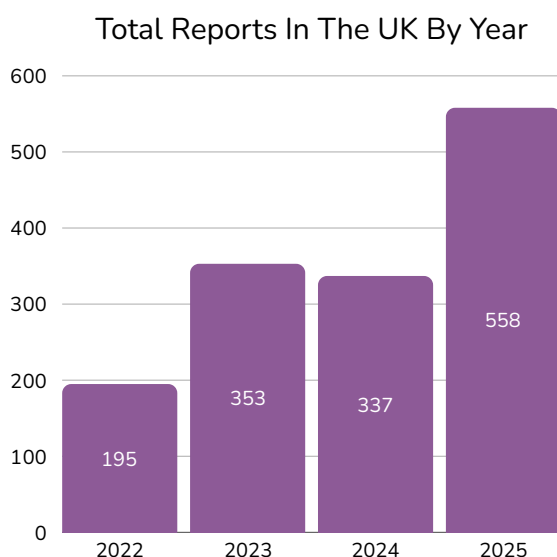
Since its launch in March 2022, the No Ifs. No Butts. reporting portal has become a primary route for the public to report illegal tobacco, illegal vapes, and underage sales in Wales.

By the end of 2025, the portal had logged 1,443 reports across the UK, with 882 submissions from Wales, representing 61% of all reports. While Wales remains the largest contributor, reporting from England and other nations has increased steadily, demonstrating wider uptake of the system beyond its original focus.

Reporting volumes have risen year on year, increasing from **195 reports in 2022** to **353 in 2023**, **337 in 2024**, and **558 in 2025**, the highest annual total since launch. This growth reflects both rising public concern about illegal tobacco and vapes and the increasing visibility and usability of the reporting system.

Campaign activity has consistently driven reporting spikes. For example, targeted campaigns in North Wales during autumn 2023 were associated with a **600% increase in reports during the campaign period**, reinforcing the link between awareness activity and enforcement intelligence.

Alongside campaign-driven reporting, search behaviour shows sustained public demand for a trusted place to report illegal sales, with repeated spikes in queries such as 'report shop selling vapes to kids' and 'report illegal tobacco', often preceding increases in submissions.



Adding illegal vapes (March 2022)

Following their inclusion in the reporting system, illegal vapes rapidly became one of the most frequently reported products. Welsh vape-related reports increased from **53 in 2022** to **119 in 2023** and **146 in 2024**, rising further to **177 reports in 2025**. Across the UK, vapes now feature in a similar proportion of reports to illegal tobacco, reflecting shifting public concern and enforcement priorities.

Adding underage sales (December 2024)

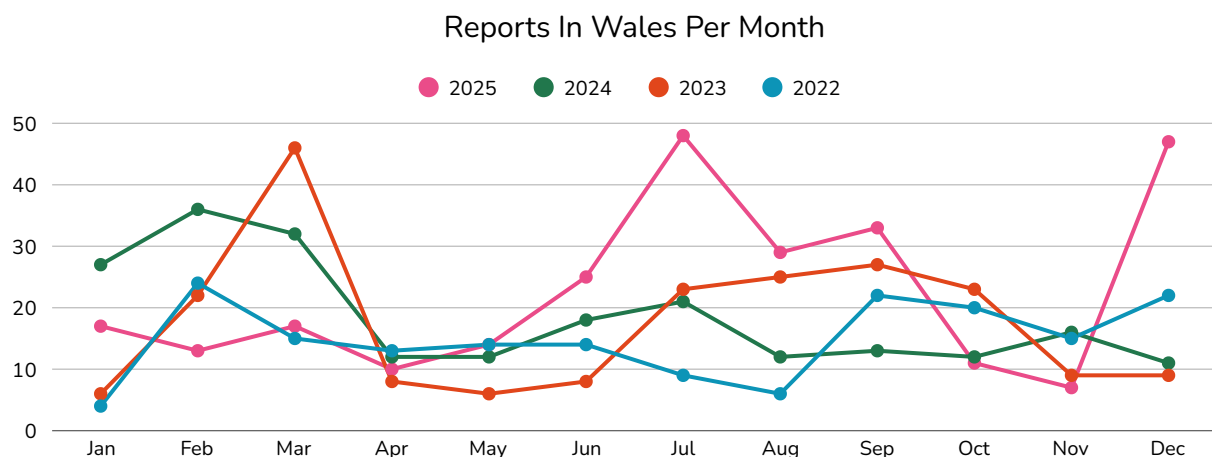
Prior to Dec 24, concerns about underage sales could only be recorded in free-text comments. The introduction of a dedicated underage sales option improved visibility and data quality. **By the end of 2025, 302 Welsh reports** raised youth access concerns when structured and free-text indicators are combined, showing that underage sales are now a consistent feature of reporting rather than a campaign-specific issue.

Disposable vape ban and streamlined form (June 2025)

The introduction of the UK-wide disposable vape ban, alongside a shorter and simpler reporting form, marked a further shift in reporting behaviour. Vape-related reports increased from **59 (Jan-May 25)** to **117 (Jun-Aug 25)** and remained elevated for the rest of the year rather than returning to pre-ban levels. Monthly reporting reached record highs following these changes, indicating a sustained behavioural response rather than a short-term spike.

In Sep 25, a dedicated Disposable Vapes option was added to the reporting form, alongside Cannabis/THC, enabling more precise identification of post-ban activity. Between Sep–Dec 25, 115 reports UK-wide selected the disposable vape option, improving the accuracy and comparability of intelligence during a period of rapid market change.

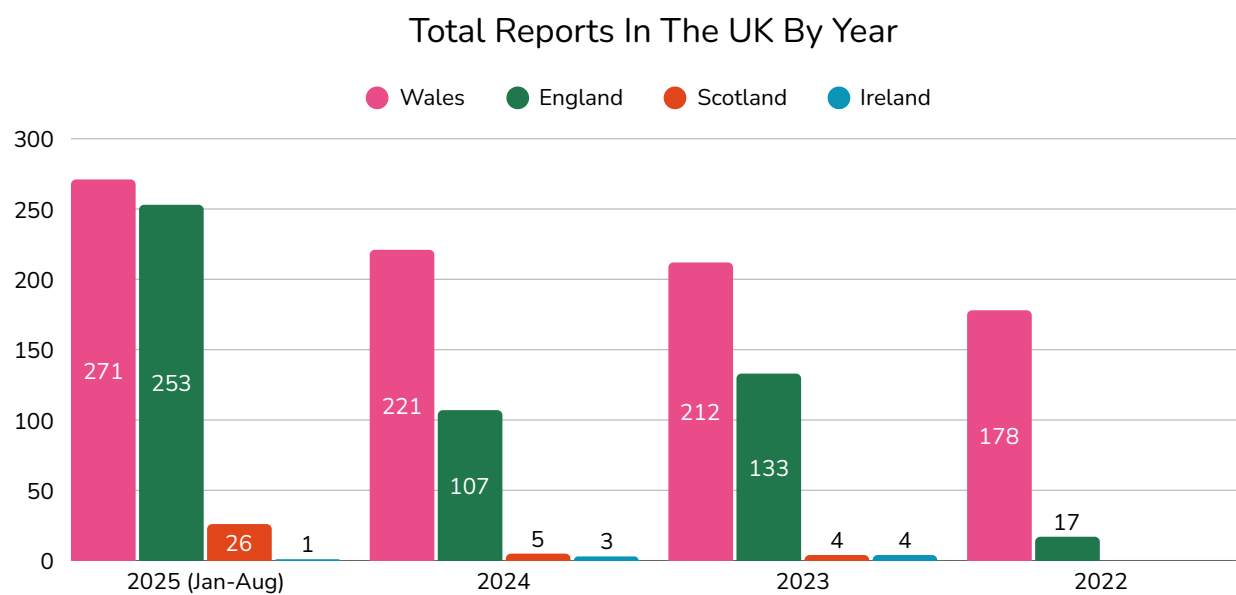
Together, these developments expanded the scope of the portal, strengthened the quality of intelligence submitted, and increased reporting volumes. What began as a tobacco-focused system now captures a broader and more responsive picture of illegal nicotine products, youth access, and emerging market behaviour.



UK Comparison

The charts below illustrate how reporting behaviour has evolved across the UK. Wales remains the largest contributor to the dataset, accounting for 61% of all submissions, reflecting the campaign’s strong roots and sustained engagement.

At the same time, reporting from England has increased steadily year on year, while Scotland and Ireland continue to contribute smaller but consistent volumes. This pattern indicates that the portal is increasingly being used beyond Wales, even in areas without dedicated promotion, strengthening its potential value as a wider UK reporting tool.

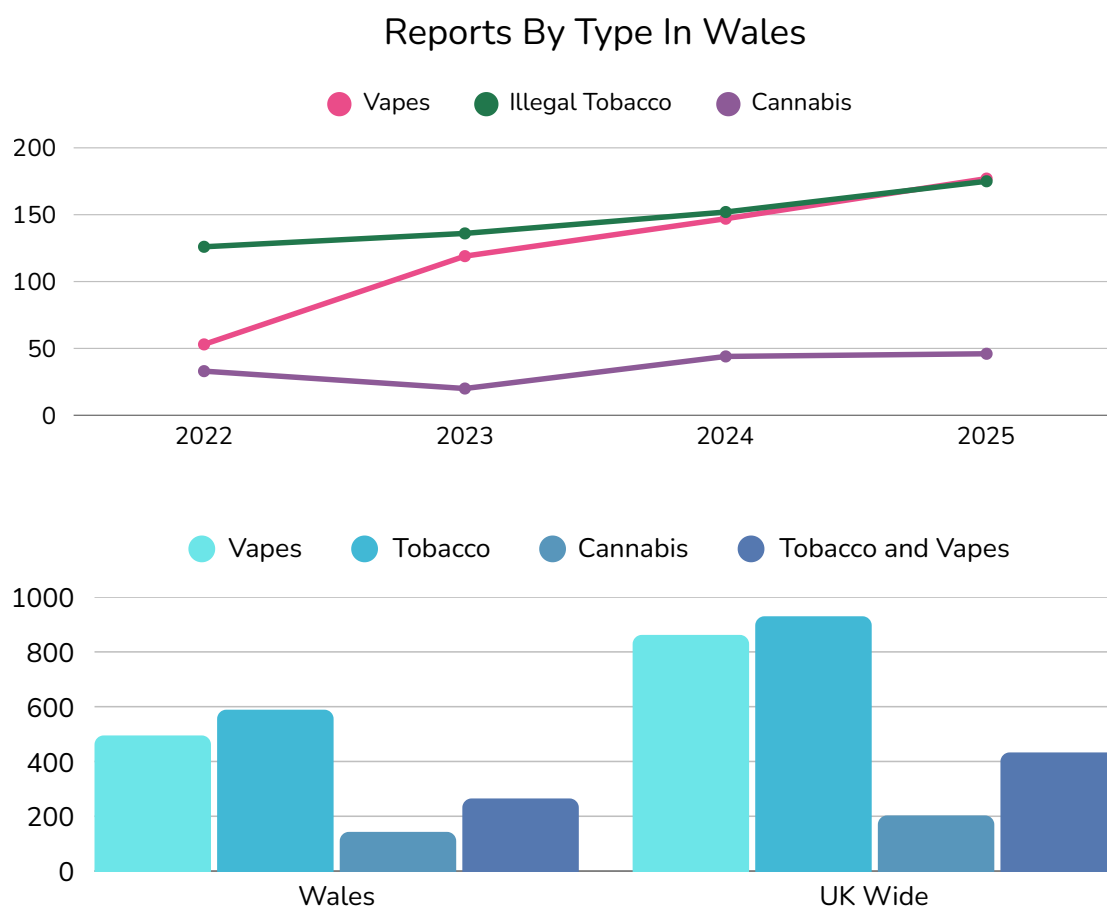


3. Product trends and patterns

The reporting portal now captures a broader and more operational picture of illicit trade than at launch in 2022. While illegal tobacco remains central, illegal vapes, disposables, underage sales and cannabis are now embedded within the dataset, reflecting how the illicit nicotine market has diversified and how public concern has shifted.

Across the UK dataset, **illegal tobacco** remains the most common product signal at **930 reports (64.05%)**, closely followed by **illegal vapes at 862 (59.37%)**. In Wales, **589 reports (66.78%) involve illegal tobacco** and **495 (56.12%) involve illegal vapes**. This convergence matters for enforcement, showing that public reporting now routinely captures the wider illicit nicotine market rather than tobacco alone.

For enforcement teams, this means intelligence is no longer siloed by product type. Single premises are increasingly flagged for multiple illicit products, allowing patterns of mixed supply to be identified earlier.



Illegal vapes: rising share, driven by disposables

Illegal vapes moved from a secondary issue to a core reporting category well before 2025, with UK reports rising from 63 in 2022 to 216 in 2023 and 228 in 2024. What distinguishes 2025 is the pace and persistence of reporting following the UK-wide disposable vape ban.

UK illegal vape reports increased from 59 (Jan–May 25) to 117 (Jun–Aug 25) and then rose further to 175 (Sep–Dec 25). Reporting did not return to pre-ban levels, indicating sustained public engagement and an ongoing supply issue rather than a short-term legislative response.

Disposable-specific data reinforces this pattern. In the UK 2025 breakdown, disposables recorded in the dataset rose across each period, and from Sept–Dec 25, 115 UK-wide reports explicitly identified disposable vapes following the introduction of a dedicated tick-box. This improved precision confirms that disposables remained widely available post-ban and continued to attract public reporting.

Underage sales: central to vape intelligence

Underage sales are now a consistent and prominent feature of reporting. In Wales, 132 reports (14.97%) explicitly cite underage sales via the tick-box. When free-text indicators are included, 302 Welsh reports (34.24%) raise youth access concerns.

The UK dataset shows the same pattern, with 248 reports (17.08%) using the underage tick-box and 508 reports (34.99%) raising underage concerns when combined. In 2025, underage tick-box reports increased from 39 (Jan–May 25) to 67 (Jun–Aug 25) and 126 (Sep–Dec 25), closely tracking the escalation in vape and disposable reporting. This reinforces the link between high-capacity disposable products and safeguarding concerns in public reporting. When vaping reports are isolated, youth access concerns account for 34.6% of all UK reports in 2025, including 33.2% in England and 36.5% in Wales, based on combined structured and free-text indicators.

Brand substitution and market adaptation

Brand information shows reporting concentrates on a small number of manufacturers, with rapid substitution following regulatory change. Elux, Lost Mary and Elf Bar appear most frequently across the dataset, reflecting their established presence in the illegal vape market.

Brand	Mentions
SKE	30
Elux	17
Crystal	12
Lost Mary	7
Hayati	5
Elf Bar	3

After Jun 25, reports increasingly reference SKE and Crystal variants, suggesting retailers shifted towards alternative high-puff devices following the disposable vape ban. This pattern indicates enforcement pressure alters product choice rather than removing supply, with brand switching used to maintain availability.

Cannabis and crossover activity

Cannabis appears regularly as a crossover issue within premises already flagged for illegal tobacco or vapes, rather than as a standalone concern. In Wales, cannabis is cited in 143 reports (16.21%), with 203 UK-wide reports (13.98%) mentioning cannabis. In most cases, these reports reference cannabis alongside illegal nicotine products, suggesting shared retail settings and overlapping supply routes.

From Sept 25, a dedicated Cannabis THC option was added to the reporting form to capture concerns about vapes suspected of containing cannabis or synthetic cannabinoids. Between Sept-Dec 25, **37 UK reports (7%) selected Cannabis THC** as an option. This confirms that cannabis-related vaping products are a distinct and emerging feature of public concern, rather than being limited to free-text comments or inferred reporting. The addition of this option improves visibility of crossover products and strengthens intelligence on retailers selling multiple illicit substances from the same premises.

Importantly, these reports most often relate to premises already known for illegal tobacco or vapes, reinforcing intelligence about multi-product retailers rather than isolated cannabis-only activity.

Intelligence quality: pricing and concealment

Many reports include details that support enforcement action. In Wales, **101 reports (11.45%) include price information** and **122 (13.83%) describe concealment methods** such as hidden compartments, vehicles or off-site storage.

UK-wide, **168 reports (11.57%) include pricing indicators** and **222 (15.29%) describe concealment**. These details strengthen the value of reports for test purchases, searches and repeat targeting.

4. Geography: Where Reports Come From

The No Ifs. No Butts. portal provides a clear, consistent picture of where illegal tobacco, illegal vapes, underage sales, and crossover products are being reported across Wales. Reports are concentrated in major towns and cities, but extend well beyond urban centres into Valleys, rural, and coastal communities, giving Trading Standards both volume intelligence and early warning signals from areas where illegal activity is often harder to detect.

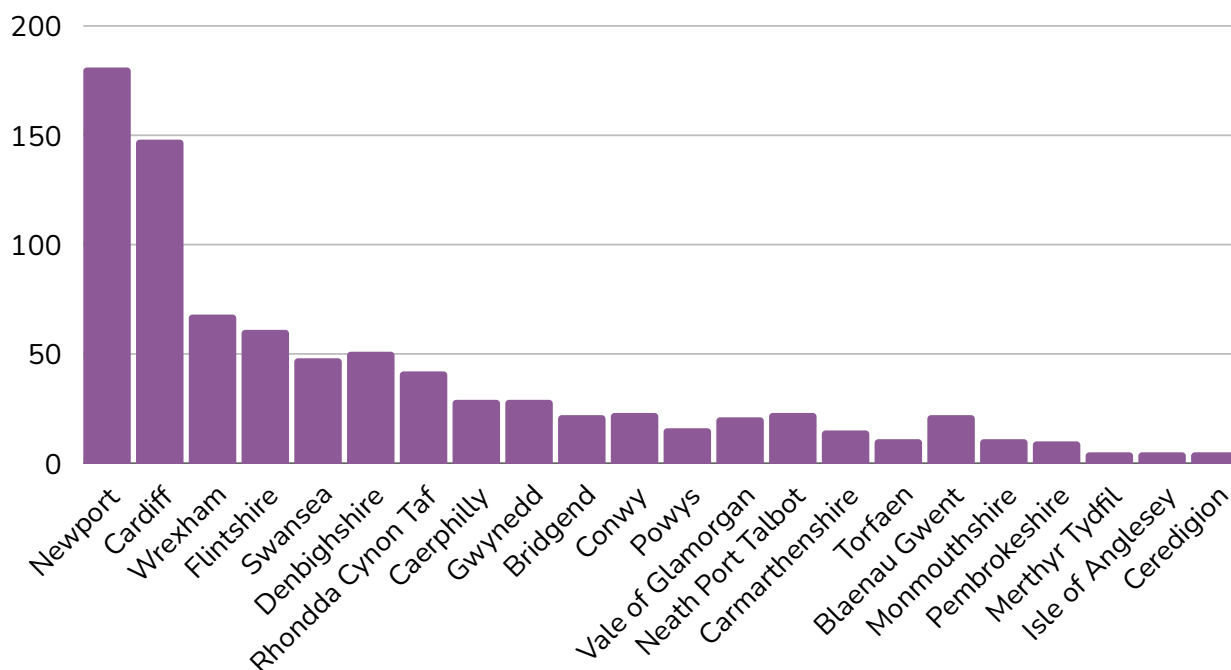
Wales Totals by Local Authority

Reporting is led by Newport, which accounts for **181 reports (22.7%)**, making it the single largest hotspot in Wales both by volume and per head of population. Cardiff follows with **148 reports (18.6%)**. Together, these two authorities account for just over 41% of all Welsh submissions, reflecting their size, retail density, and visibility of illicit trade.

North Wales forms a clear secondary cluster. **Wrexham (68 reports), Flintshire (61), and Denbighshire (51) together contribute 180 reports, representing 22.6% of all Welsh reporting.** This concentration shows sustained reporting across multiple neighbouring authorities rather than isolated pockets of activity.

The **South Wales Valleys** represent a substantial and often under-recognised share of reporting. Rhondda Cynon Taf, Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen, Merthyr Tydfil, Neath Port Talbot, and Bridgend **together account for 154 reports, or 19.3% of all Welsh submissions.** This demonstrates that illegal sales are not confined to city centres and that Valleys communities are actively using the portal to flag concerns.

Total Reports By Local Authorities in Wales



Reports Per Head: Revealing Hidden Hotspots

Looking at reports per 10,000 residents reveals a different picture from raw volume alone. Newport remains the highest-reporting authority at 11.34 reports per 10,000 people, more than double any other area. Denbighshire (5.28) and Wrexham (5.0) also report at disproportionately high rates, suggesting concentrated local visibility of illegal vape and tobacco supply.

Several smaller authorities, including Blaenau Gwent (3.29) and Flintshire (3.92), show elevated per-capita reporting relative to their size. This indicates persistent local issues rather than one-off incidents and highlights areas where intelligence-led enforcement can have a high impact.

Local Authority	Reports	Population	Reports per 10k
Newport	181	159,600	11.34
Denbighshire	51	96,500	5.28
Wrexham	68	136,100	5
Cardiff	148	362,400	4.08
Flintshire	61	155,600	3.92
Blaenau Gwent	22	66,900	3.29
Gwynedd	29	125,000	2.32
Swansea	48	246,600	1.95
Conwy	23	118,200	1.95
Rhondda Cynon Taf	42	237,800	1.77

Product hotspots by local authority

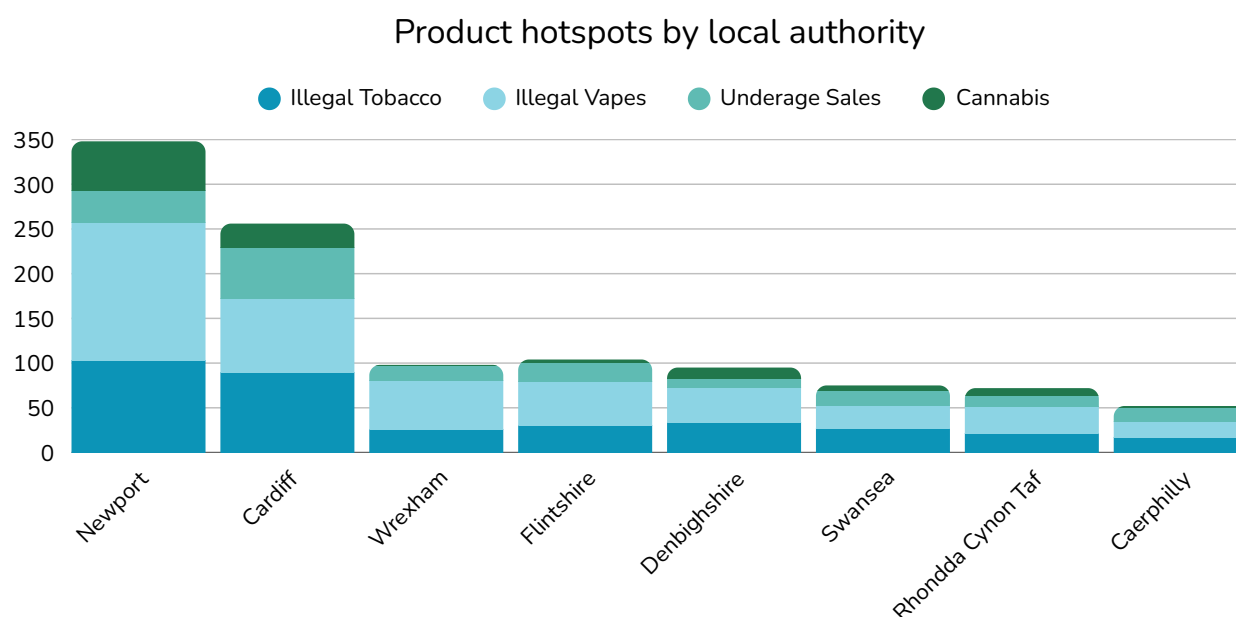
Breaking reports down by product type reveals clear geographic patterns that are not visible from totals alone. Illegal vape reports are most concentrated in Newport (154) and Cardiff (83), with a strong North Wales cluster across Wrexham (54), Flintshire (49), and Denbighshire (39). This reflects both population centres and emerging post-ban vape markets in border and coastal areas.

Illegal tobacco follows a similar but slightly broader pattern. Newport (103) and Cardiff (89) again lead, while Denbighshire (34), Flintshire (30), and Swansea (27) indicate continued activity beyond the main urban hubs, consistent with established supply routes feeding multiple communities.

Underage sales signals show a different distribution. Cardiff records the highest number of youth access concerns (57), followed by Newport (36). Valleys authorities including

Caerphilly, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Blaenau Gwent, and Neath Port Talbot all show repeated underage mentions, confirming that youth access is a widespread issue rather than one limited to city centres.

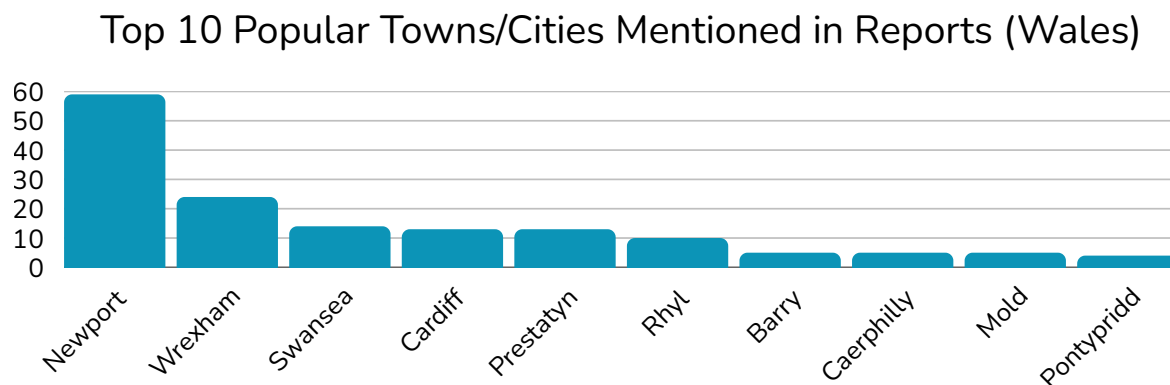
Cannabis most often appears alongside tobacco or vapes, with Newport (55) and Cardiff (27) again dominant. Smaller but persistent signals in authorities such as Denbighshire and Swansea suggest crossover retail activity rather than isolated incidents.



Towns and Cities

Town and city data, based on free-text entries rather than fixed authority fields, provides an unfiltered view of public concern. Newport dominates across all product types, with nearly three times as many mentions as any other location. In North Wales, Wrexham and Rhyl stand out, with Prestatyn also appearing frequently despite its smaller population, suggesting strong local awareness of youth vaping and illegal sales.

Smaller towns such as Barry, Mold, and Pontypridd appear repeatedly across reports. Their prominence reflects ongoing local concerns rather than isolated events and reinforces the value of community-led intelligence alongside formal enforcement activity.



Emerging picture beyond Wales: England

Alongside Wales, the reporting portal is generating a growing volume of intelligence from England, providing an additional comparative view of how illegal tobacco, vapes, and underage sales are being reported in different regulatory and enforcement contexts.

To date, 511 reports have been submitted from England. Unlike Wales, where reporting is concentrated in a small number of clear hotspots, the England dataset shows a broad geographic spread, with reports distributed across more than 50 local authorities.

Highest-reporting areas in England

The highest reporting areas are largely major population centres and surrounding regions:

- Greater Manchester (54 reports)
- West Midlands (39)
- West Yorkshire (37)
- South Yorkshire (26)
- Cheshire (24)
- Northamptonshire (22)

No single authority dominates the England dataset. Even the highest-reporting area accounts for just over 10% of English submissions, compared with over 22% for Newport in Wales. This contrast highlights a key difference in reporting patterns between the two nations.

Distributed reporting rather than single hotspots

Beyond the highest-volume areas, consistent reporting appears across the North East, North West, Midlands, South East, and South West. Local authorities including Lancashire, County Durham, Merseyside Hampshire, Kent, Essex and Suffolk all feature in the data.

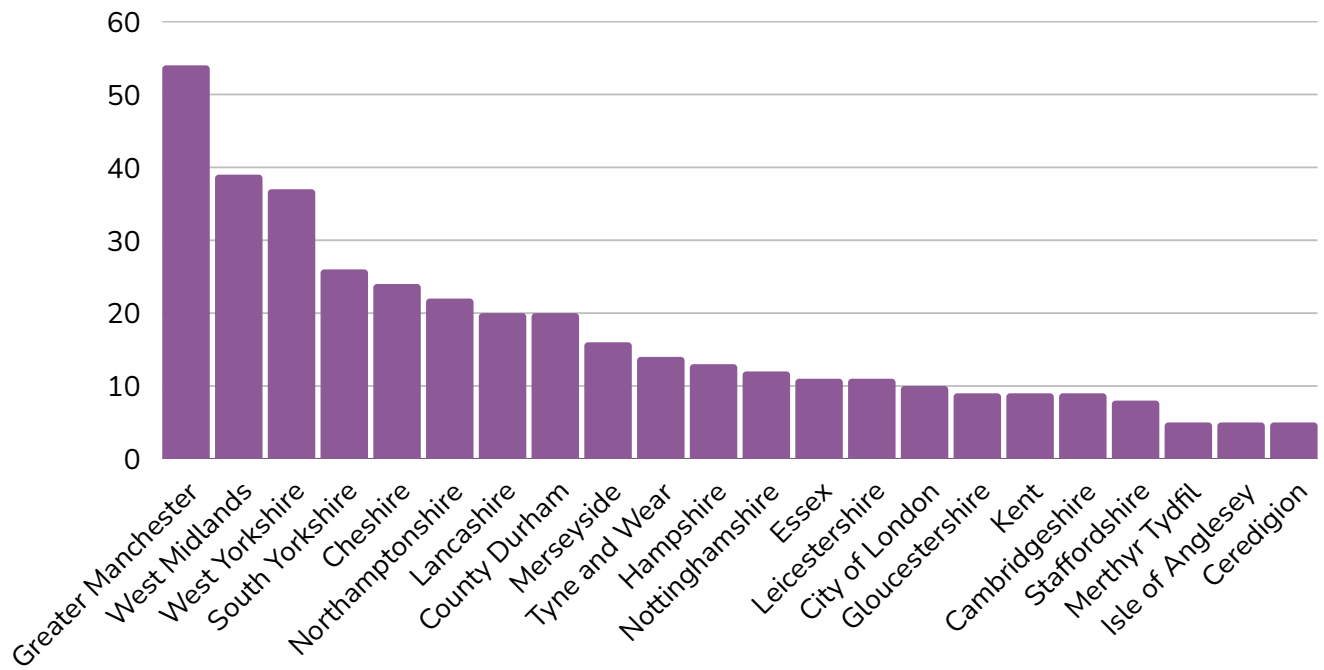
This long-tail distribution suggests that reports in England are not driven by one or two dominant hotspots, but instead reflect widespread, lower-volume reporting across many areas. From an intelligence perspective, this provides breadth rather than depth, surfacing emerging concerns that may not yet be visible through enforcement-led activity alone.

Value for enforcement analysis

The contrast between Wales and England is analytically useful. Wales demonstrates how reporting concentrates when awareness activity and enforcement alignment are in place. England shows how intelligence emerges across a wide geography when a single reporting route is available, but without coordinated promotion or regional targeting. Together, these patterns strengthen understanding of how public reporting behaves under different conditions and highlight the portal's potential to support intelligence gathering across varied enforcement landscapes.

Taken together, Wales shows how reporting concentrates when awareness activity and enforcement alignment are in place, while England demonstrates how intelligence surfaces widely when a single, trusted reporting route exists, even without coordinated promotion.

Total Reports By Local Authorities in England



5. Settings and Locations of Illegal Activity

Portal data shows not only what products are being sold illegally, but where this activity is taking place. Across Wales and the wider UK, a consistent picture emerges: formal retail premises remain the primary setting for illegal sales, but a persistent secondary layer of activity operates through homes, online platforms, and informal spaces. These smaller settings are critical for understanding how the market adapts when enforcement pressure increases.

Shops remain the dominant setting

Retail premises account for the majority of reports across all nations. UK-wide, 74.1% of reports (1,076) identify shops as the primary location of illegal activity. In Wales, the proportion is slightly lower but still dominant at 73.0% (646 reports). England shows an even higher reliance on retail outlets, with 76.0% (393 reports) linked to shops.

This consistency confirms that illegal tobacco and vapes continue to be sold openly through formal retail environments rather than shifting wholesale into hidden or purely informal networks.

Home-based storage and sales remain a significant secondary route

Private homes represent the most substantial non-retail setting. Across the UK, 10.8% of reports (157) reference homes as storage or sales locations. In Wales, this figure is higher at 11.6% (103 reports), while England records 9.9% (51 reports).

These reports often describe stock being held off-site and supplied to retail premises or sold directly through informal networks. The persistence of home-based activity suggests that enforcement pressure on shops displaces stock rather than removing supply.

Online, hospitality, and workplace settings

Online platforms account for a smaller but consistent share of reports. UK-wide, 4.8% (69 reports) reference online sales. In Wales, online activity represents 4.1% (36 reports), compared with 6.4% (33 reports) in England, indicating greater visibility of online supply routes outside Wales.

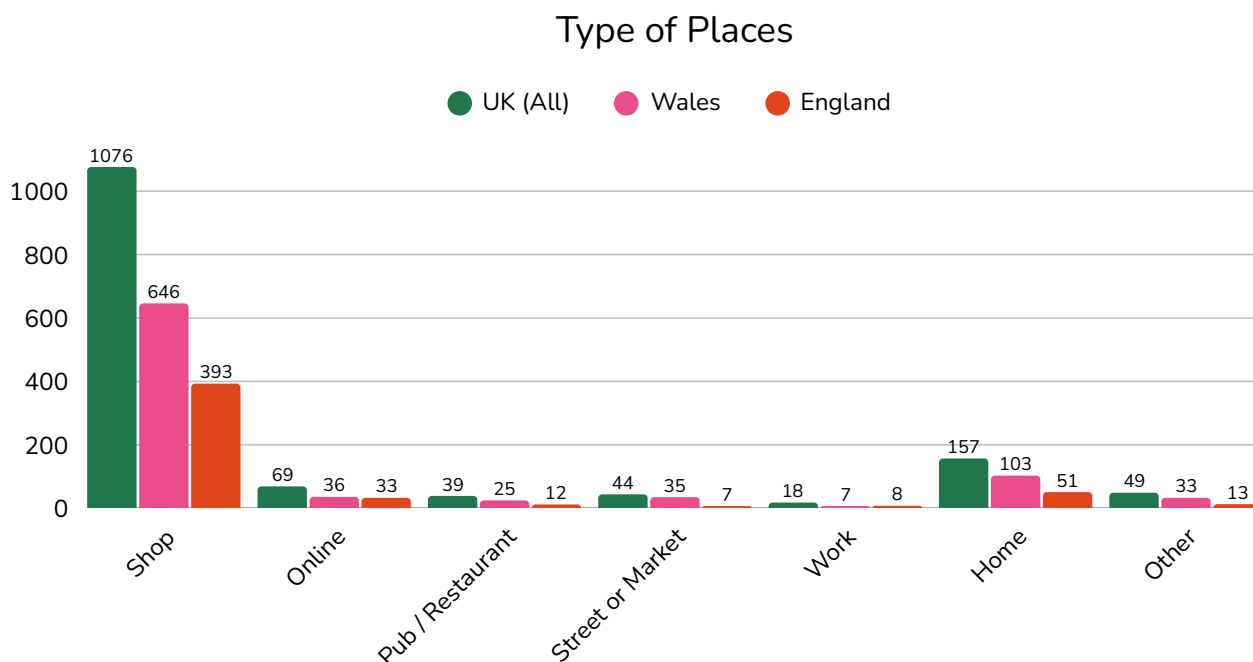
Hospitality venues, including pubs, cafés, restaurants, and clubs, appear in 2.7% of UK reports (39) and 2.8% of Welsh reports (25). While comparatively small, these reports often overlap with youth access concerns and social supply rather than large-scale commercial activity.

Workplace-based sales remain rare but persistent, accounting for 1.2% of UK reports (18) and 0.8% in Wales (7), typically involving informal distribution rather than retail-scale operations.

Street trading and markets

Street-level sales and market trading remain limited but stable. Across the UK, 3.0% of reports (44) involve street sellers or market settings. Wales shows a slightly higher proportion at 4.0% (35 reports), compared with 1.4% in England (7 reports).

These reports suggest opportunistic selling rather than organised retail supply, but they remain relevant for local enforcement teams monitoring visible public activity.



Case Study: Gwynedd Enforcement Action

A report submitted via the No Ifs. No Butts. portal on 17 January 2024 directly led to enforcement action against a retail premises in Gwynedd. Following the report, the Operation CeCe Wales Trading Standards team carried out an unannounced inspection, uncovering approx £30,000 in hidden cash, including concealment within a vehicle and shop equipment.

The business had a history of non-compliance and was found to be a repeat offender, with the Director fined prior to this latest seizure. Enforcement teams confirmed that without the portal's intelligence, these raids would have required significant surveillance resources to justify.

“The No Ifs. No Butts. portal is essential for targeting illegal tobacco enforcement by the Operation CeCe Wales Trading Standards Team. Reports save officer hours, pinpoint stash locations, and underpin joint Trading Standards, Police, and Immigration operations, leading to shop closures and live investigations.”

Martin Tavener Regional Trading Standards Investigation Team - Operation CeCe

6. Public Motivations and Narrative Detail

The reporting portal captures more than locations and products. It captures why people choose to report and what they notice when they do. Across the UK dataset, reports consistently combine safeguarding concerns, price signals, concealment detail, and references to enforcement activity. Many reports include more than one of these elements, producing layered intelligence rather than single-issue complaints. This shows the public is not just reporting suspicion, but recognising patterns of illegal trade.

The consistency and specificity of these narratives mean many reports function as early-stage intelligence, reducing the need for exploratory surveillance and helping enforcement teams act more quickly.

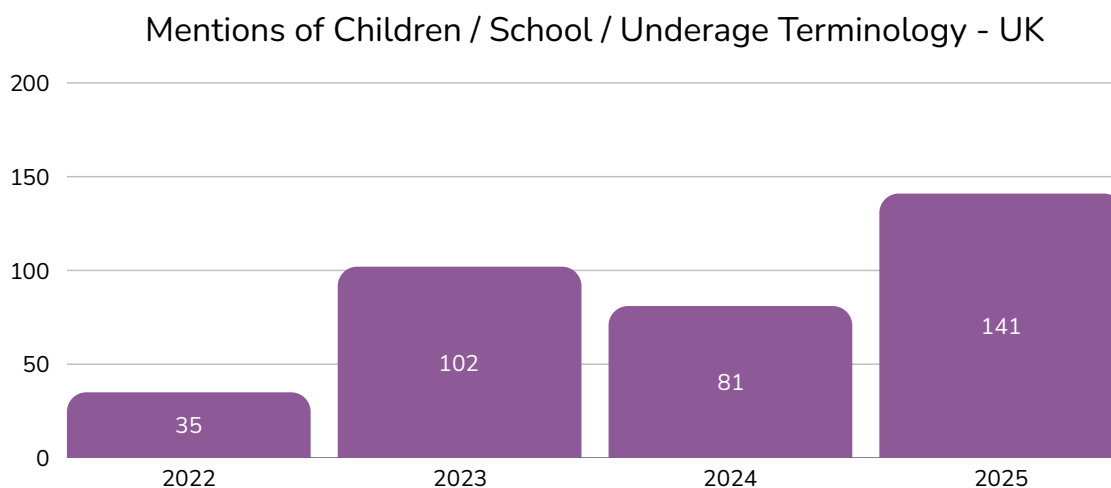
Safeguarding and youth access

Concern about children and young people is the strongest and most consistent driver of reporting.

Across the UK, 361 reports (24.9%) include references to children, schools, pupils, or colleges within free-text comments. In Wales alone, 216 reports (24.5%) include similar safeguarding language. These references appear steadily across years, indicating an ongoing concern rather than a short-term campaign effect.

The introduction of a dedicated underage sales tickbox in December 2024 changed how these concerns are recorded. By the end of 2025, 248 UK reports (17.1%) and 132 Welsh reports (15.0%) explicitly flagged underage sales using the tickbox. When free-text references are included, youth access concerns appear in 508 UK reports (35%) and 302 Welsh reports (34%).

This shift has improved intelligence quality. Reporters can now flag safeguarding concerns quickly, allowing the comments field to focus on operational detail such as locations, storage methods, and repeat offending.



These figures reflect all youth-related concerns across products; when isolating vaping alone, the proportion of reports involving underage access rises sharply in 2025.

Pricing as a trigger for reporting

Unusually low pricing is a clear red flag for communities. Across the UK, 168 reports (11.6%) reference price signals such as multi-buy vape offers or cigarette packs sold far below duty-paid levels. In Wales, 101 reports (11.5%) include similar pricing detail. These signals often appear alongside underage sales or concealment, helping enforcement teams identify premises where multiple risks converge.

Concealment and actionable detail

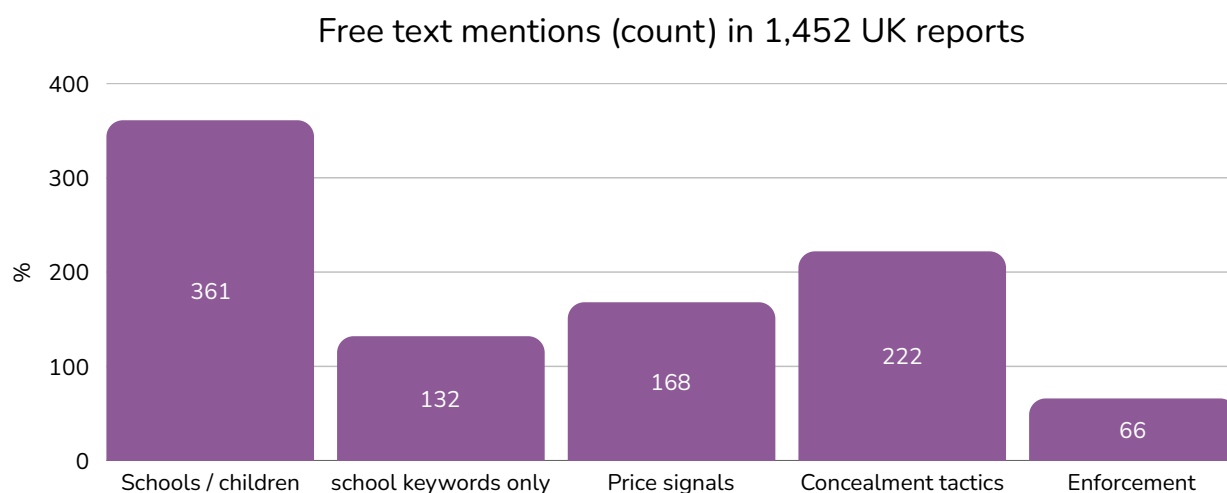
Concealment is one of the strongest indicators of organised illegal supply. Across the UK, 222 reports (15.3%) describe tactics such as under-counter storage, hidden rooms, false walls, basements, or stock kept in nearby vehicles. In Wales, 122 reports (13.8%) include this level of detail.

Many reports specify exact locations, access methods, or delivery patterns. This transforms public reporting from general concern into intelligence that can directly inform inspections, warrants, and test purchases.

Enforcement visibility and confidence

References to Trading Standards, police activity, or previous seizures appear in 66 UK reports (4.6%). These references are most common in areas with visible enforcement activity, suggesting a feedback loop: enforcement action builds confidence, and confidence drives further reporting.

Repeat reporting following raids or seizures shows that communities recognise when intelligence leads to action, reinforcing trust in the system.



7. Marketing and Public Engagement

Driving Awareness and Reporting

Since 2022, the No Ifs. No Butts. campaign has turned public concern into enforcement intelligence through clear, consistent messaging and cost-efficient digital and offline marketing. **Over 57,000 unique visitors have now visited the portal**, with sharp spikes in reporting every time major awareness campaigns or policy changes went live.

The disposable vape ban proved the clearest example: in just three months, **Welsh vape-related reports surged 58%** (from 48 in January–May to 76 in June–August), showing how campaigns directly drive reporting behaviour and enforcement leads.

In North Wales, three major campaigns funded by Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board across 2023 and Winter 2024 combined outdoor ads, radio, community events, and media coverage. Each burst triggered clear spikes in reports, with Betsi funding allowing us to test and refine messaging so only the most effective tactics were scaled.

Cost-Efficient Reach

Since launch, campaign investment has delivered exceptional value for money, outperforming UK public health benchmarks on both cost-effectiveness and reach:

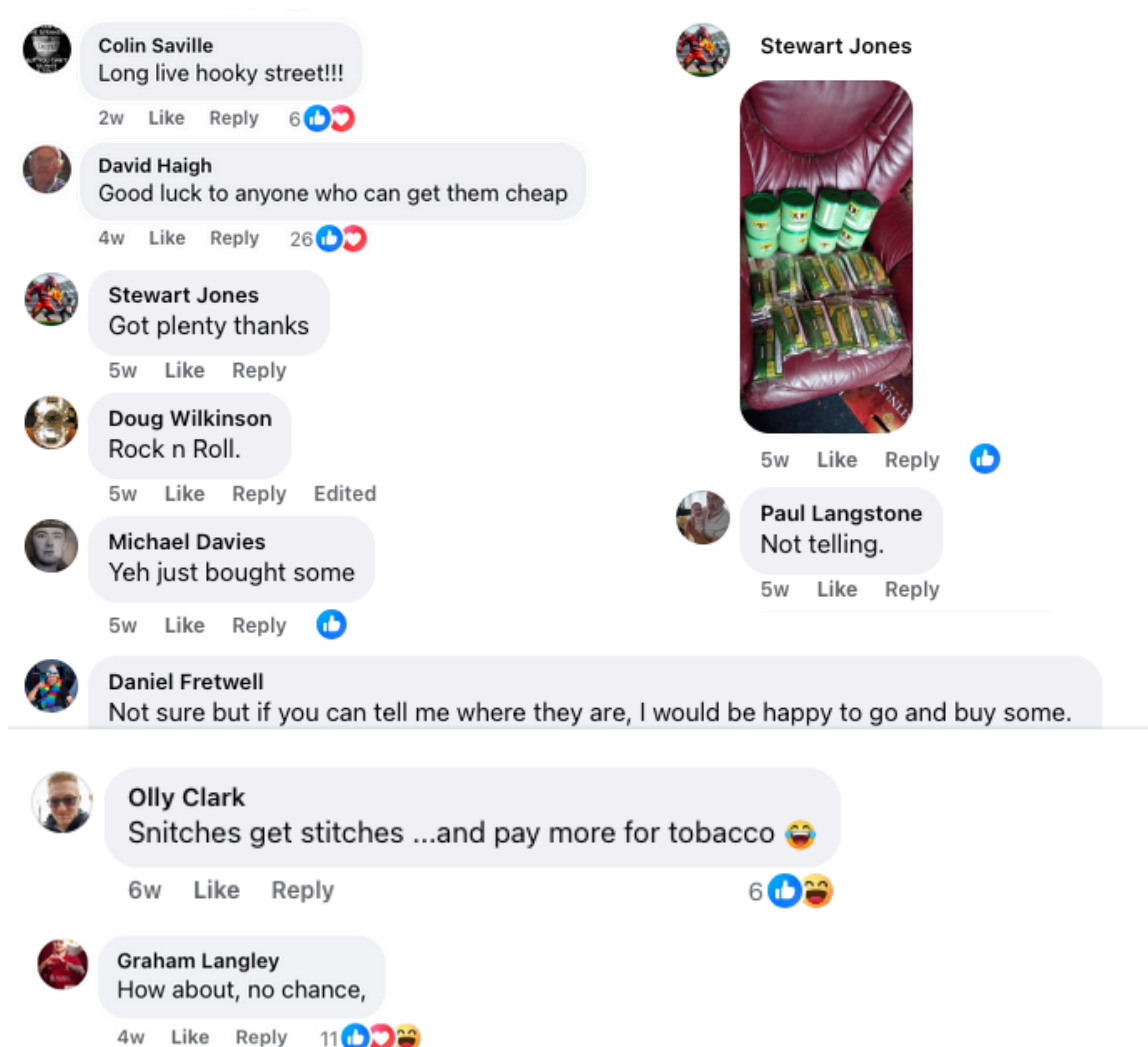
- **1.3 million impressions, reached over 850,000 people, generating 50,000+ clicks** to the portal.
- Average cost per click fell from **£0.68 in 2023** to just **£0.13 by summer 2025** - over **80% cheaper than the UK health campaign average** (£0.50–£1.50).
- **Snapchat ads delivered 32,961 clicks at £0.03 each**, reaching younger audiences at minimal cost.
- **Radio and digital audio campaigns achieved 343,000+ impressions** with 95–99.5% listen-through rates, building campaign visibility beyond digital channels.

Continuous testing of headlines, creative assets, and calls to action then reduced costs further, allowing No Ifs. No Butts. to outperform much larger national campaigns on both cost-per-click and conversion efficiency.

Conversion Rate Breakthrough

The launch of the streamlined reporting form in June 2025 marked a turning point for engagement. **Before** the redesign, **only 0.9% of visitors submitted a report**. After the changes, **conversion soared to 30%, with 24 reports** filed in the **first 15 days** alone.

Parent-focused campaigns were especially effective. Following early 2025 ads targeting youth access concerns, **Google searches for “report shop selling vapes to kids” spiked** dramatically, with reporting volumes rising the following month.



Campaign Credibility

The No Ifs. No Butts. campaign was launched in 2022 with support from the Welsh Government, backed by a £50,000 media spend. The project was led by Nicola Roberts, Director at Freshwater.

"As one of Wales's leading marketing and communications agencies, we are proud to see that No Ifs. No Butts. is one of the nation's most effective community-focused campaigns. Its success proves the value of brand growth and the importance of continued investment to sustain impact." - **Project lead Nicola Roberts, Director at Freshwater.**

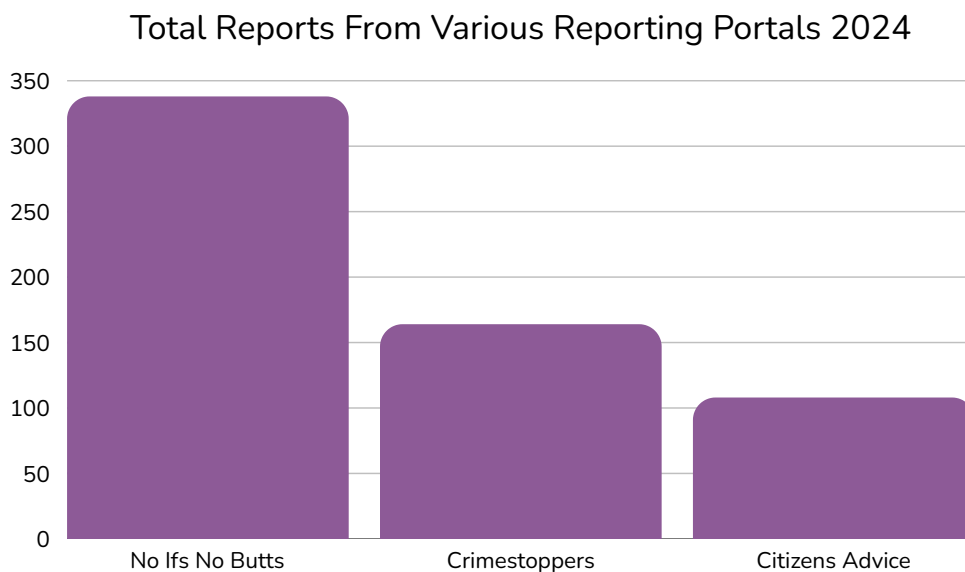
The campaign now underpins enforcement intelligence across Wales, demonstrating how targeted communications, backed by strong branding and consistent public engagement, can deliver sustained reporting volumes at low cost while shaping the enforcement response to illegal tobacco, illegal vapes, and underage sales.

8. How Our Portal Compares

In 2024, the No Ifs. No Butts. portal generated 338 reports. By comparison:

- Reports via Crimestoppers (Sep 2023-Aug 2024) included 113 tobacco and 51 vape cases.
- Reports to the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline (Oct 2023-Sep 2024) included 28 tobacco and 80 vape cases (though not all confirmed as illegal).
- Keep It Out contributes “low tens” of reports per month, but full figures are not centrally collated.

Trading Standards Wales confirm the workflow: every report is assessed; credible ones are converted into intelligence and tasked to local authorities to drive test purchases, closure notices, and broader profiles. Investigators have live cases underway that would likely not exist without portal reports - closely mirroring the value of Crimestoppers, but with a Wales-specific focus.



The effectiveness of the No Ifs. No Butts. reporting portal is demonstrated not only in the volume of intelligence received, but in the tangible enforcement actions that have followed.

9. Future Direction and Funding

The No Ifs. No Butts. portal has proven its value as a central reporting system for illegal tobacco, illegal vapes, and underage sales. With 1,443 reports since 2022 and over one-third in recent years highlighting youth access, the portal is now a cornerstone of enforcement intelligence across Wales. The rising proportion of reports linking vaping and underage access highlights the need for real-time intelligence as new products and substitution behaviours continue to emerge.

Future success is not simply about increasing report volume. It is about sustaining a trusted reporting route, adapting the form as markets change, analysing patterns in ways that support enforcement priorities, and ensuring intelligence flows to where it can be acted on. To do this properly and responsibly at scale requires continued investment in the platform, data analysis capacity, and close working with enforcement partners.

As Wales prepares for the Tobacco and Vapes Bill, the portal is uniquely placed to provide real-time reporting channels for breaches, ensuring rapid enforcement responses and consistent intelligence flow to Trading Standards.

With 325,000 smokers in Wales and illegal tobacco estimated at 10% of the market, around 142 million illegal cigarettes are smoked each year - nearly 400,000 every single day. Portal intelligence has already underpinned multiple joint operations between Trading Standards, Police, and Immigration teams, leading to shop closures, seizures under the Proceeds of Crime Act, and the disruption of delivery networks across Wales.

Enforcement Perspective: Operation CeCe Wales

A direct statement from Trading Standards on the value of the No Ifs. No Butts. portal for enforcement work across Wales.

“The No Ifs. No Butts. portal provides constant, reliable intelligence for the Operation CeCe Wales Trading Standards Team. Reports highlight repeat offending, underage sales, and concealment methods, enabling unannounced raids and coordinated enforcement with Police and Immigration. This intelligence has led to multiple shop closures, seizures under the Proceeds of Crime Act, and disruption of delivery networks that would otherwise require significant surveillance resources.” - **Martin Tavener, Investigator, Operation CeCe Wales**



Future Direction

With stable funding, the portal could evolve into permanent national infrastructure that



Provide vital support to enforcement and compliance with the Tobacco and Vapes Bill, ensuring rapid public reporting of breaches and actionable intelligence for Trading Standards.



Enhance intelligence-sharing across agencies, enabling faster responses and stronger coordination.



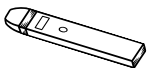
Support targeted activity in hotspot communities, where illegal sales and youth access are most prevalent.



Strengthen Wales' ability to respond rapidly to emerging illicit products and changing tactics in the market.



Track emerging products (including nicotine pouches, currently legal for under-18s) in real time through new reporting fields.



Lock in momentum post-2025 disposable vape ban, sustaining the surge in public engagement and reports.

With sustained investment, the portal could evolve into a permanent national resource for enforcement and prevention, protecting communities through intelligence-led action while reducing youth access through education and awareness.