

NEW FROM BIG TOBACCO

Menu *Of Addiction*

SECONDARY SCHOOL ASSEMBLY PLAN



NO SMOKING DAY
11TH MARCH 2026

ASSEMBLY PLAN

Audience: Y7-11. Optional extension slides for Y12-Y13

Duration: 10 minutes (15 minutes with the Y12/13 extension)

Objective: To help pupils understand how nicotine products have changed over time, how the tobacco industry adapted when smoking was restricted, and why nicotine continues to appear in new forms that target young people today

Slide 1: Today is No Smoking Day, and we're going to look at something that's changed massively in the last few decades. Nicotine isn't just cigarettes anymore. It's a whole menu of products, and most of them look very different to what people used even twenty years ago.

Slide 2: This story goes back over 400 years. Before phones. Before cars. Before modern medicine. Tobacco was introduced, spread across the world, and quickly became part of everyday life.

Slide 3: By the 1940s, smoking was everywhere. Tobacco companies wanted it to feel safe, so they used trusted faces. Doctors. Dentists. Nurses. Back then, people thought if a doctor was recommending it, it must be fine.

Slide 4: Some adverts even showed mothers with babies. Smoking was treated like it belonged in family life. Hands up if this shocks you. Today, we know smoking during pregnancy can harm both the parent and the baby. It increases the risk of miscarriage, early birth, and serious health problems. But at the time, people didn't know that. People weren't being careless. They were being misled.

Slide 5: In the 1950s, a major study linked smoking to lung cancer. Tobacco bosses panicked. They met in New York to protect their business. They needed a strategy to deny, distract, and keep selling.

Slide 6: Out of that moment came what we now call the tobacco playbook: Make it look normal. Hook people young. Reinvent the product when laws tighten. Keep customers coming back. Internal documents later showed the industry even described young people as "replacement smokers". That meant new customers were needed to replace the older ones quitting or dying. If someone starts young, they don't just become a customer. They become the longest customer.

Slide 7: Over the years, governments stepped in. Adverts were banned. Sports sponsorship disappeared. Smoking was removed from public spaces. Plain packaging was introduced. The industry lost more and more ground. So the question is... what happens when cigarettes become harder to sell?

Slide 8: The industry shifted focus. Instead of selling smoking, it started selling the addictive ingredient underneath: nicotine. That's why nicotine keeps showing up in new forms today.

Slide 9: New products. New packaging. Same addictive ingredient underneath. The menu has expanded. I'm sure you can name all these.

Slide 10: When it comes to advertising, look at the pattern. Formula One used to be covered in cigarette branding. Fast. Flashy. Exciting. Now nicotine pouch adverts use the same style. Same message. Different product.

Slide 11: Old cigarette adverts promised freshness. Now vaping adverts promise the same thing, just with flavours instead of smoke.

Slide 12: Glamorous woman smoking then. Glamorous woman vaping now. Same pose. Same mood.

Slide 13: Marlboro jackets were iconic in the 80s. Now they're trending again on TikTok. Some influencers even build an aesthetic around smoking and vaping. Even with ad bans, branding still finds new ways back in.

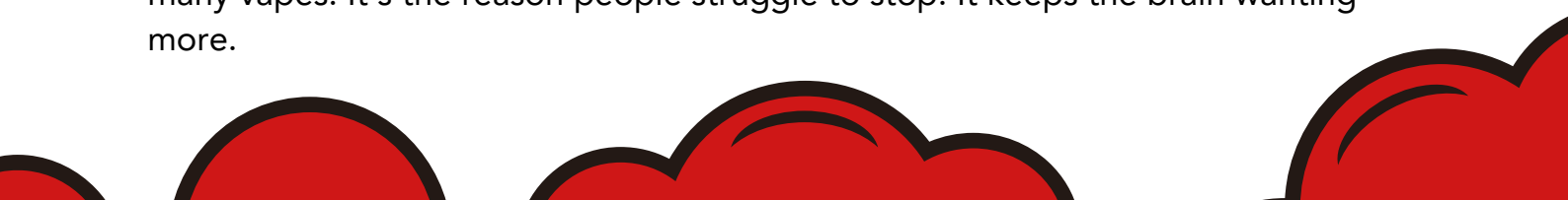
Slide 14: Cigarettes, vapes, pouches... They're often presented like fashion accessories. Nicotine dressed up as luxury.

Slide 15: When smoking first became popular, it was mostly men who smoked. It was linked with work, the military, and pubs, so men were already the customers. To grow sales, tobacco companies needed more girls and women to start. Smoking was sold as stylish and glamorous. And it worked. By the 1990s, girls were smoking more than boys. In Wales, 29% of 15 year old girls smoked more than once a week, a much higher % than boys. Smoking has fallen a lot since then. But the pattern is repeating. Now 17% of Year 13 girls vape, compared with 10% of boys. The product changed. The strategy didn't.

Slide 16: But it's not only girls who are targeted. The industry has always needed new young customers. Bright colours. Sweet flavours. Fun designs. Look at this image. How many do you think are sweets, and how many are nicotine products?

Slide 17: 10! Did you spot them all? It's tricky isn't it? Both products are made to target the same audience!

Slide 18: So what is nicotine? Nicotine is the addictive chemical in tobacco and many vapes. It's the reason people struggle to stop. It keeps the brain wanting more.



Slide 19: When the body expects nicotine, stopping can feel rough: Irritability, restlessness, trouble focusing, sleep problems That's how addiction works.

Slide 20: When nicotine drops, the brain reacts. Withdrawal is one of the clearest signs that addiction has started doing its job.

Slide 21: The menu looks fun at first. But the cost arrives later. Cravings. Money. Stress. Addiction all impact over time. That is how nicotine works. The bill always comes after.

Slide 22: Not everything on the nicotine menu is legal. Illegal tobacco and vapes are often cheaper, sold without ID checks, and no one really knows what's inside them. And every illegal cigarette or vape that's bought puts money into crime, like smuggling networks making profit from unsafe products. They don't care about health. They care about money.

Slide 23: Most young people are usually getting these products through someone older, someone online, or someone selling them under the counter. If it's very cheap, or the packaging looks bright, sweet, or cartoon like, that's a red flag. Single cigarettes are illegal. If something is being sold from a van, a car boot, or under the counter, it's a sign it isn't safe. Disposable vapes are illegal too. These signs aren't just about rules, they're about risk.

Slide 24: The big message today is that nicotine keeps changing shape. New products. New packaging. Same addictive ingredient underneath. Understanding that helps you spot what's really being offered. If you ever see underage sales, illegal vapes, or illegal cigarettes, you can report it anonymously at: [NoFls NoButts.co.uk](https://www.noflsm.co.uk) And if you ever feel like you or someone you know is finding it difficult not to vape or smoke there is always help please talk to [School Name]

Y7/11 Close: Over decades, laws removed advertising, sponsorship, and branding. So the industry kept changing the product instead. Nicotine keeps being reshaped to look modern, safer, or more acceptable. If you understand the pattern, you're much harder to sell to.



Y12/13 Additional Slides:

Slide 25: This is where things get more serious. Some illegal vapes and cartridges that aren't checked or tested have been found to contain substances that aren't listed on the packaging at all. Some vapes that have been sold as "cannabis vapes" have been found to include synthetic cannabinoids often called Spice, rather than natural THC. The key issue here isn't just nicotine. It's uncertainty. If a product isn't properly checked, there's no reliable way to know what you're inhaling, how strong it is, or how it might affect you.

Slide 26: THC is the main psychoactive chemical in cannabis. It affects mood, memory, focus, and anxiety. In oils or vapes, THC can be much more concentrated than in cannabis flower. That means stronger effects, quicker effects, and less control. When products are illegal or untested, people don't get to choose the strength. The product chooses it for them.

Slide 27: Heated tobacco is a new product on the menu, a clear example of how the industry adapts. Instead of burning tobacco, these devices heat it. That sounds different, but the core product hasn't changed. It's still tobacco. It still contains nicotine. And it still produces harmful chemicals. This isn't a new ingredient. It's the same one, presented differently.

Slide 28: Big changes are on the way. Under the Tobacco and Vapes Bill, cigarettes will stop being sold completely to anyone born in or after 2009. Vapes are also set for tougher rules: plain packaging, limits on flavours and displays, and tighter controls on nicotine pouches. The aim is simple - make it harder for the next generation to get hooked in the first place.

Y12/13 Close:

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LETTER HOME TEMPLATE

Dear Parents and Carers,

Today, we celebrated No Smoking Day at school, reinforcing our commitment to being a healthy school and encouraging positive choices for our students.

Through interactive activities, discussions, and engaging lessons, we discussed how smoking and vaping affect health, time, and well-being.

As children and young people grow, they may have questions about smoking and vaping, especially as these topics come up in their daily lives. Here are some ways you can continue the conversation at home:

- For younger children: Keep discussions simple. Explain that smoking and vaping are unhealthy habits and can make it harder to breathe, run, and play. Focus on positive health choices like fresh air, exercise, and looking after our bodies.
- For older children and teenagers: They may already be aware of smoking and vaping in their environment or among peers. Be open and approachable—discuss the risks honestly, including how these habits impact lung health, money, and energy. Encourage them to think about their future health and the benefits of making smoke-free choices.

For parents, carers, or young people looking for support to quit smoking or vaping, Help Me Quit offers free, friendly advice tailored to individuals aged 12 and over.

Help Me Quit Contact Details:

- Call: 0800 085 2219
- Text: HMQ to 80818
- Visit: www.helpmequit.wales

For further information on smoking, vaping, and quitting support, visit: ASH Wales – ash.wales.

Thank you for supporting our healthy school and helping us spread the No Smoking Day message beyond the school gates. Together, we can help every young person make positive choices for their health.

[School Signature]





Help to Quit Smoking (Age 12+)

Freephone: 0800 085 2219

Visit: helpmequit.wales