

Agreed Report – Closed Discussion (Item under Section 9.6)

15th April, 2026

Members discussed the increasing prevalence of vaping and drug use among students. Particular issues were highlighted in relation to activity within school bathrooms and recent incidents where students became unwell after consuming illegal substances.

Members expressed significant concern about:

- The ease of access to vaping products among young people
- A perceived lack of awareness among parents
- The need for earlier preventative education, particularly at primary school level

It was agreed that education initiatives should be strengthened and broadened to target both students and parents, with improved engagement strategies required.

Concerns were also raised regarding the operation of vape retail outlets, including allegations of sales to underage individuals. Members emphasised the need for:

- Increased enforcement measures
- Greater Garda visibility within communities and around schools
- Stronger legislative and regulatory controls

It was noted that the HSE currently does not provide dedicated cessation supports for vaping; however, this issue has been escalated at a national level. Members were advised that the Children and Young People's Services Committee (CYPSC) plan includes a focus on substance misuse and may present potential funding opportunities for targeted interventions.

From the perspective of An Garda Síochána, the importance of a coordinated, multi-agency response encompassing both enforcement and education was necessary and it was confirmed that:

- An Garda Síochána is actively investigating relevant cases, with a number currently before the Director of Public Prosecutions
- Enforcement responsibilities primarily lie with the Revenue Commissioners and the Department of Health
- Legal processes in such cases can be protracted

The Superintendent emphasised that education should be central to the response and referenced existing Garda school-based programmes. He encouraged further collaboration with CYPSC to develop appropriate and effective educational resources.

Members agreed on the need for a three-strand approach, incorporating:

1. Policing and enforcement
2. Legislative and regulatory measures
3. Education and public health awareness

It was further agreed that relevant agencies will provide updates to the Partnership as developments progress.