

**London Boroughs of Brent & Harrow
Trading Standards Joint Advisory Board
30 June 2026
Report from the Senior Service Manager**

FOR INFORMATION

**TOBACCO AND VAPES ENFORCEMENT GRANT - Apprentice
Programme Funding**

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 This report informs councillors of the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) funding available to support the recruitment of a Tobacco and Vapes Apprentice. It outlines the purpose of the role, funding arrangements, and the associated apprenticeship training programme.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 That Joint Advisory Board Members consider the report and make recommendations or comments where appropriate.

3.0 Details

3.1 Tobacco use remains one of the leading preventable causes of ill health and premature mortality. Additionally, the rise in youth vaping and the evolving regulatory landscape require strengthened local enforcement, education, and prevention activity.

3.2 Smoking is the number one preventable cause of death, disability, and ill health in the UK. It causes around 80,000 deaths per year, one in four of all cancer deaths and kills up to two-thirds of its long-term users. There is good evidence on the potential short to medium term harms of vaping, but more research is needed to understand the longer-term harms, particularly to children. This evidence shows that whilst vaping is less harmful than smoking it is not risk free. Given this, and additional evidence that shows that vapes can be an effective quit aid for adult smokers, the health advice is that if you are an adult smoker, it is better if you vape, but if you are an adult that does not smoke or are a child you should never vape.

3.3 The Tobacco and Vapes Act 2026 is a landmark piece of legislation designed to reduce smoking and tackle youth vaping, with the long-term aim of creating a “smoke-free generation.” It will:

- Create a smoke-free generation, by raising the age of sale each year for all tobacco products, including cigarettes, cigars, shisha and heated tobacco.

- Offer stronger controls on vaping and nicotine products to prevent these products being deliberately branded, promoted, and advertised to children to stop the next generation from becoming hooked on nicotine.
- Provide powers to introduce a licensing scheme for the retail sale of tobacco, vapes and nicotine products in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, and expand the retailer registration scheme in Scotland.
- Create powers to extend smoke-free restrictions to certain outdoor public places (e.g. near schools, playgrounds, hospitals).

3.4 Local Authority Trading Standards (LA TS) enforce compliance with product standards and sale requirements at a local level for tobacco and vaping products. This includes, for example, age of sale restrictions, display requirements and checking the types of products on sale. To boost Trading Standards capacity to enable more underage sales test purchases, to remove illicit products from the market, and to identify non-compliant products and bring them into compliance where possible, the Department of Health and Social Care provided £10 million in 2025/26.

3.5 This funding was specifically intended to:

- Recruit approximately 80 apprentice enforcement officers across England,
- Increase local inspection and compliance activity,
- Support seizure of illicit tobacco and vape products,
- Strengthen action against underage sales and organised criminal supply chains.

3.6 This sits alongside broader national investment, including £100 million HM Revenue and Customs and Border Force's illicit tobacco strategy to tackle illegal activity and opportunities that criminals might seek to exploit.

3.7 This programme represents a direct allocation of central government resources into local authority enforcement capacity, with apprentices acting as a key mechanism for delivering sustained, long-term workforce capability. The aims are to provide LA TS in England with additional resources to increase their current enforcement activity on illegal and underage sales of tobacco and vapes.

3.8 London Trading Standards received further additional funding for more apprentices to be recruited. As Brent and Harrow Trading Standards were unsuccessful in receiving an apprentice in the previous cohort, we applied again and were successful in our bid.

Role of the Tobacco and Vapes Apprentice

3.9 The apprentice will be embedded within Trading Standards functions, supporting delivery of local tobacco control and vaping enforcement priorities. This role will contribute to reducing health inequalities and protecting vulnerable populations, particularly young people. Their key responsibilities will be to;

- Assist with test purchasing operations

- Support inspections of retailers for compliance with tobacco and vaping legislation
- Help identify and respond to illicit tobacco and non-compliant vape products
- Gather and analyse intelligence relating to illegal sales
- Support regional and national data sharing initiatives
- Collaborate with Public Health, HMRC, police, and other partners
- Support coordinated enforcement initiatives
- Participate in awareness campaigns targeting youth vaping and smoking cessation
- Work with schools, community groups, and partners to deliver educational sessions
- Maintain case records and documentation
- Assist in preparing evidence for enforcement actions.

3.10 The apprenticeship is the Level 6 Tobacco and Vapes course, funded by DHSC and delivered by the Credit Services Association (CSA) and is a 29 month course. At the time of writing, this recruitment is currently ongoing, and it is expected that the apprentice will start the course in September.

3.11 This creates a very welcome opportunity, to provide a debt free way for the successful candidate, to study for a professional qualification leading on to becoming a qualified Trading Standards Officer. In the longer term, this also helps to alleviate the national shortage of qualified officers and some of the difficulties recruiting experienced and/or qualified staff, into the Trading Standards profession.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 The funding is initially provided by the DHSC to London Trading Standards, who will disseminate it to the local authorities that have been awarded an apprentice under this scheme. The funding will cover the salary, on costs as well as IT equipment, personal protective equipment while the apprentice is employed as an apprentice. Funding is expected to cease after 2028/29.

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 There is no legal implications arising from this report.

6.0 Equality Implications

6.1 The proposals in this report have been screened to assess their relevance to equality and were found to have no equality implications.

7.0 Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders

7.1 There is no requirement to specifically consult Ward Members about this report as it affects all wards across both Boroughs.

8.0 Human Resources Implications

8.0 There are no significant staffing implications arising from this report.

Contact Officer

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