

Involving young people in local tobacco and vaping policy: perspectives from a participatory action research study in a London Borough

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Background

- **National tobacco and vaping legislation** is changing...
 - Ban on disposable vapes
 - Tobacco and Vapes Bill – including ‘smoke free generation policy’
- ... and local authorities are starting to develop **local policy responses**.
- Young people are directly impacted by tobacco and vaping legislation. However, they are **rarely meaningfully involved** in public health policymaking processes.
- Youth involvement can make policies **more effective and relevant**, and be **empowering** for young people (Macauley et al., 2022).

The STAR study

We are taking a participatory action research approach to understand:

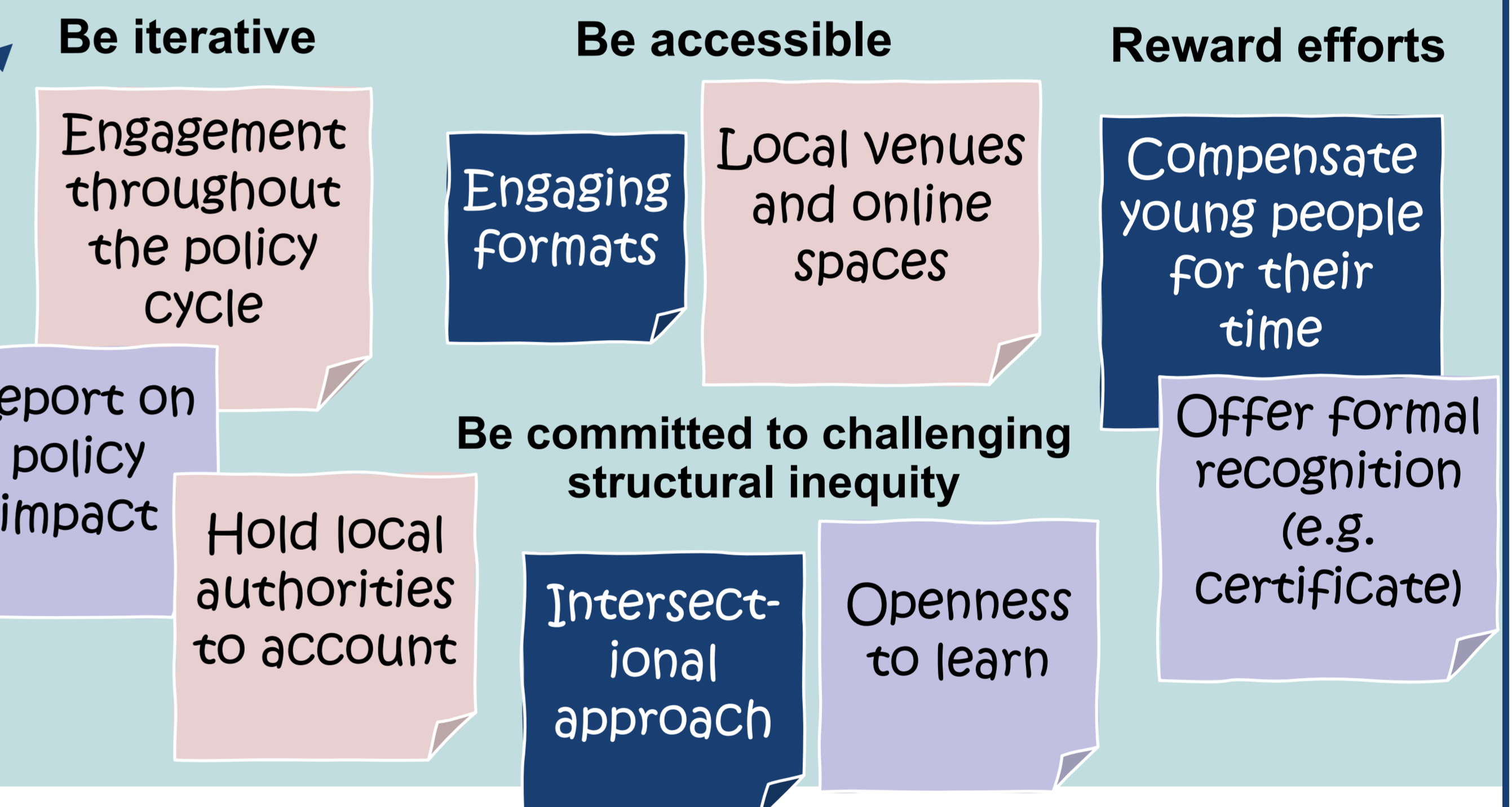
- 1) **How are local authorities responding to new national tobacco and vaping legislation?**
- 2) **How can young people’s voices be included in local policy processes?**

The study is being conducted across **three local authorities** in East London, South Yorkshire and North East England. This poster focuses on findings from our study site in East London.

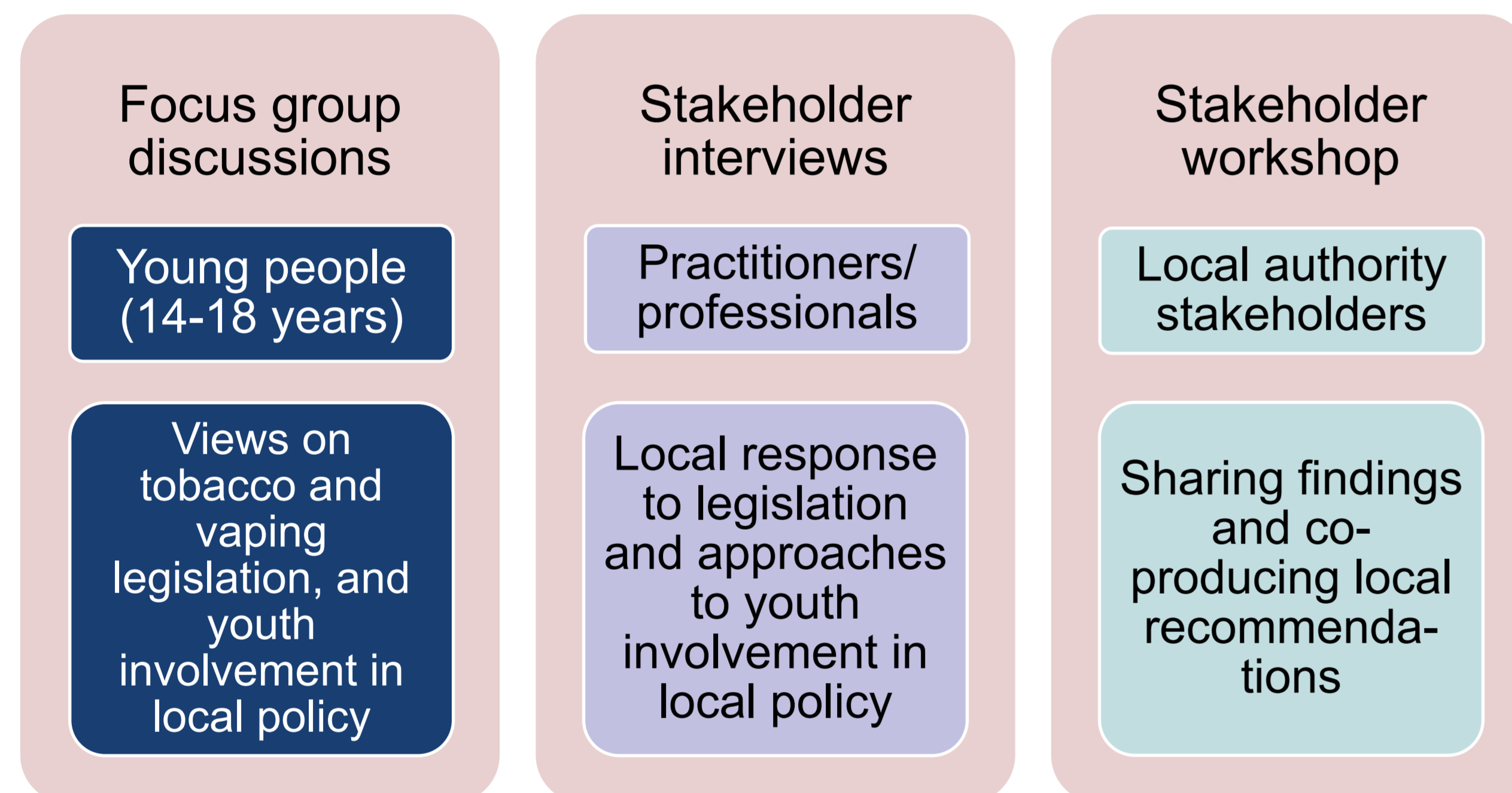
3. Need for unified approach to youth involvement that meets young people’s needs

- The local authority has started involving young people in the development of local tobacco and vaping policy.
- Future work should focus on:
- Developing a unified participation framework and **channels to share learning** across the council.
 - Engaging young people **facing greater inequity**.

4. To engage a diversity of young people, youth involvement practice needs to...



Participatory action research approach



Policy engagement and public involvement

- **Practice collaborators:** Our research is being co-developed with practice partners within the council and the local voluntary and community sector. We have regular meetings to shape the direction of the research.
- **Youth advisory group:** We have met with our youth advisory group (n=5) three times to introduce the study and receive feedback on research materials and activities. Future engagement will focus on interpretation of findings and dissemination.

Co-produced **recommendations** for meaningful youth involvement in local public health policy

Learning so far

Our findings are **preliminary** and will undergo further analysis and sense-checking with our policy collaborators and youth advisory group.

1. Youth vaping is seen as a local public health priority

- Young people talked about how common vaping was amongst peers, and often referred to vaping in relation to **stress management, peer pressure and mental health**.
- **Understanding why young people vape** was seen as key to developing local services and communication approaches that resonate with young people and meet their needs.

2. National legislation is complex and challenging to enforce

- Young people and local practitioners welcomed the Government’s commitment to reducing smoking and vaping.
- However**, both groups...
- Identified **enforcement challenges** for local authorities, particularly for the ban on disposable vapes.
 - Pointed towards a need for better local support services and resources **tailored to young people**.

Partnership working and a clear and consistent **communications approach** were seen as key priorities for the local policy response.

What’s next?

- Continued engagement with policy collaborators and young advisors.
- Local stakeholder workshops in three study sites.
- Co-creation of recommendations across case study sites.
- Dissemination of findings at local and national level, including through a national webinar.

Read more about the STAR study here:



With thanks to

Our research participants, youth advisory panel, practice collaborators and Barnardo’s.

References

Macauley, T., Rolker, H. B., Scherer, M., Brock, J., Savona, N., Helleve, A., & Knai, C. (2022). Youth participation in policy-making processes in the United Kingdom: a scoping review of the literature. *Journal of Community Practice*, 30(2), 203-224.