

Banning the sale of high-caffeine energy drinks to children

Yorkshire Cancer Research response, October 2025

Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to ban the sale of high-caffeine energy drinks based on age?

Yorkshire Cancer Research agrees with the proposal to ban the sale of high-caffeine energy drinks based on age.

Up to a third of children in the UK drink energy drinks weekly, and consumption is even higher in children from the North of England, and those from more socio-economically disadvantaged children.¹ This is concerning due to the high sugar content of many high-caffeine energy drinks.² A diet characterised by a high amount of sugar, fat or meat is a cause of weight gain and obesity.³ The consumption of sugar sweetened drinks is also a cause of obesity, especially if they are consumed on a frequent basis. Reducing the availability of high-caffeine drinks could therefore play a part in reducing the number of young people with excess body weight.

Reducing rates of excess body weight is critical to reducing rates of cancer. Excess body weight is linked to at least 13 different types of cancer.⁴ Yorkshire Cancer Research estimates that 2,004 new cancer cases every year are due to excess body weight in Yorkshire. However, in Yorkshire, 23.5% of children aged 10 to 11 are living with obesity compared to 22.1% in England.⁵ Yorkshire also has higher levels of deprivation compared to England on average, meaning children in Yorkshire may be more likely to consume high-caffeine energy drinks.¹

Do you agree or disagree that the minimum age of sale for high-caffeine energy drinks should be 16 years?

Yorkshire Cancer Research supports the proposed minimum age of sale for high-caffeine energy drinks. Despite many supermarkets voluntarily restricting the sale of high-caffeine energy drinks to children under the age of 16, and high-caffeine drinks having warning labels surrounding the safety of their consumption for children, the sale of these drinks is still legal for children under the age of 16.

Restricting the sale of high-caffeine energy drinks in children is not only crucial for their immediate health, but also for protecting their long-term wellbeing. Studies show that behaviours surrounding diet and physical activity in adulthood are heavily influenced by behaviours and habits formed in childhood, and that children and adolescents with obesity are approximately five times more likely to have obesity in adulthood than children who do not.⁶

Restricting the sale of high-caffeine energy drinks for children under the age of 16 will reduce the availability of higher sugar content products. In turn this can help reduce rates of excess body weight in this group. Additionally, it can help children and adolescents to make healthier food choices and develop healthier dietary habits, which will then be carried on into adulthood, helping to reduce their risk of obesity, and therefore cancer, throughout their lifetime.

References

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