# Dudley Council shuts down 19 illegal tobacco and vape shops in record enforcement year



Between May 2024 and March 2025, Dudley Council's trading standards team undertook extensive enforcement action against illegal retail operations, resulting in the closure of at least 19 stores suspected of selling illegal tobacco, cigarettes, disposable vapes, and other prohibited substances. This figure represents the highest number of closures carried out by any single trading standards department in the UK within a single financial year.

The targeted stores were located across several areas including Stourbridge, Quarry Bank, Brierley Hill, Netherton, and Coseley. Initial closures began in the spring and summer of 2024 following undercover sting operations. Dudley Magistrates Court issued closure orders for High Street Mini Market in Brierley Hill and Halesowen Mini Market on Peckingham Street, which remain shut. After September 2024, an additional 17 shops have been closed due to ongoing investigations into their activities.

Beyond the sale of illicit tobacco products, the shops implicated were also linked to wider criminal concerns, including modern slavery and people trafficking, highlighting the serious nature of the offences involved. Landlords have played an active role in the enforcement process by evicting tenants found to be conducting criminal activities, with guidance and support from the council's trading standards team.

Councillor James Clinton, cabinet member for public health, emphasised the challenge posed by organised crime groups exploiting vacant commercial properties. Speaking to Talking Retail, he said: “Unfortunately, there are organised crime groups who wish to sell illegal goods and age restricted products to children, but we are determined to protect the public and safeguard our borough’s legitimate businesses. The trend of illegal pop-up shops has sadly become a national issue, but Dudley’s trading standards has streamlined enforcement action and we’re helping landlords to understand the checks they can make to secure law abiding tenants in the future. Organised crime groups are beginning to run out of vacant premises to move to in our borough, with some only staying in business for a couple of weeks before we shut them down.”

The council’s coordinated approach aims to disrupt these illicit networks and prevent the exploitation of vulnerable groups, while supporting responsible landlords and legitimate businesses within the borough.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://councilnews.dudley.gov.uk/news/council-closes-19-illegal-shops-in-less-than-a-year> - Corroborates the closure of 19 illegal shops between May 2024 and March 2025 and identifies Dudley's trading standards team as achieving the highest number of closures nationally.
2. <https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/illegal_vape_seizures_104> - Supports the enforcement focus on illegal vapes through FOI evidence of Dudley Council's involvement in such seizures.
3. <https://www.shropshirestar.com/news/2025/01/13/thousands-of-illegal-vapes-seized-in-shropshire-as-shrewsbury-shop-owner-is-fined-more-than-30000/> - Validates the cross-regional enforcement efforts including Dudley, with specific reference to seizures of illegal vapes and court sanctions against retailers.
4. <https://councilnews.dudley.gov.uk/news/rogue-mini-market-shut-for-3-months> - Documents the specific three-month closure of Halesowen Mini Market in July 2024 for selling illegal vapes and cigarettes, directly supporting the named closure examples.
5. <https://www.shropshirestar.com/news/2025/01/13/thousands-of-illegal-vapes-seized-in-shropshire-as-shrewsbury-shop-owner-is-fined-more-than-30000/> - Mentions prosecutions of Dudley retailers like Karamjot Singh, confirming court actions against businesses selling illegal vapes.
6. <https://councilnews.dudley.gov.uk/news/rogue-mini-market-shut-for-3-months> - Reiterates Dudley Council's repeated enforcement actions and closure orders against non-compliant retailers, aligning with the article's emphasis on coordinated enforcement.
7. <https://www.talkingretail.com/news/industry-news/council-closes-19-shops-selling-illegal-products-in-less-than-a-year-28-04-2025/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data