# Police seize £12,000 of illegal vapes and tobacco from waste bins in Darlington



Recent surveillance operations by police and trading standards in Darlington have uncovered a significant cache of illegal vapes and tobacco products, stored in unsanitary conditions within waste bins. The operation was prompted by intelligence indicating that these bins were being used as off-site storage for illicit goods. When officers observed a staff member from a nearby shop retrieving cigarettes from one of the bins, they acted swiftly. Following this, both police and the local council's trading standards team seized a total of 685 packs of cigarettes, 24 packs of hand-rolling tobacco, and 83 illegal vapes, cumulatively valued at over £12,000.

Shaun Trevor, Darlington's trading standards manager, described the unsettling conditions in which the seized products were found. “On opening the bin, there was a strong smell of rotting waste and a large quantity of bags with illegal vapes and cigarettes,” he noted, emphasising the unsatisfactory nature of their storage. He further highlighted that beneath the illegal items lay ordinary household waste, a juxtaposition that could alarm customers who expect safe and regulated products.

The crackdown represents a continuation of efforts by local authorities to combat the sale of illegal tobacco and vaping products, an issue that has gained increasing scrutiny over the past year. In December 2024, a coordinated raid had already resulted in the seizure of 19,580 cigarettes and nearly 500 illegal vapes from shops in Darlington, a direct response to persistent complaints about the unsafe products being peddled in the area. Many of these products violated regulations, with some vapes containing oversized tanks equivalent to the nicotine of 280 cigarettes.

Illicit vaping devices and tobacco are not merely a regulatory nuisance but a public health concern. Councillor Jim Garner underscored the collaborative efforts of trading standards and police in targeting those responsible for selling such harmful goods. He urged residents to report suspected illegal activities, assuring them that each complaint would be taken seriously.

In recent months, Darlington has witnessed a spate of issues related to improper disposal of vapes—a concerning trend that extends beyond merely illegal sales. In September 2024, 57 vapes were flushed down toilets, leading to extensive blockages in sewage systems, a problem that water utility officials have been keen to mitigate. This incident exemplifies the broader consequences of irresponsible disposal practices, prompting local authorities to educate residents about proper ways to discard damaged or unused vaping devices.

Moreover, August 2024 saw three Darlington stores temporarily shut down following similar allegations of selling illegal vaping products. These establishments, including Darlo Vapes and DIMA Mini Market, were found to conceal quantities of illicit goods, sparking further outrage within the community.

On a larger scale, the ramifications of illegal tobacco and vaping products extend into the criminal underbelly, where proceeds from such sales can fuel more severe criminal activities. As neighbourhood inspector David Littlefair articulated, the shadowy nature of these markets poses not just health risks but also public safety concerns.

Moving forward, the combination of vigilant policing, community engagement, and public education appears crucial in addressing these intertwined issues of illegal product sales and disposal practices. The ongoing collaboration between local authorities and community members is vital in ensuring that Darlington maintains its commitment to public health and safety while systematically dismantling these networks of illicit activity.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraph 1
2. Paragraph 3
3. Paragraph 6
4. Paragraph 8
5. Paragraph 9
6. Paragraph 11

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.talkingretail.com/news/industry-news/illegal-vapes-and-tobacco-stored-in-waste-bins-outside-darlington-shop-09-05-2025/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cwyw04ww1edo> - In September 2024, Northumbrian Water discovered 57 vapes flushed down a toilet, causing a significant blockage in a Darlington sewage pipe. The vapes were removed without environmental impact, but officials warned that such items can be dangerous and urged proper disposal to prevent future issues.
3. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-tyne-64025739> - Between November 30 and December 5, 2024, Durham Police and Darlington Trading Standards conducted raids on nine shops in Darlington. They seized 489 illegal vapes, 19,580 cigarettes, and 7.65 kg of hand-rolling tobacco. Some vapes had oversized tanks, equivalent to 280 cigarettes, violating regulations.
4. <https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/24552363.darlington-shops-closed-selling-illegal-vapes/> - In August 2024, three Darlington stores—Darlo Vapes, DIMA Mini Market, and UK Mini Market—were closed for three months after selling illegal vapes, cigarettes, and tobacco. The closures followed investigations revealing large quantities of illegal products concealed within these premises.
5. <https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/24558964.disposable-vapes-found-blocking-darlington-sewage-pipe/> - In August 2024, 57 disposable vapes were found blocking a sewage pipe in Darlington. Northumbrian Water removed the vapes without environmental impact and reminded residents to dispose of vapes and batteries properly to prevent such blockages and potential hazards.
6. <https://www.chroniclelive.co.uk/news/north-east-news/darlington-illegal-vapes-cigarettes-seized-26050969> - In January 2025, a joint operation between Durham Constabulary and Darlington Borough Council seized over £37,000 worth of illegal vapes and cigarettes in Darlington. The operation targeted shops selling to children as young as 12 and those supplying over-strength vapes.
7. <https://www.durham.gov.uk/article/32046/News-Latest-fires-in-bin-lorries-prompts-vape-and-battery-disposal-plea> - In October 2024, Durham County Council urged residents to dispose of vapes and batteries correctly after multiple fires in bin lorries. Improper disposal can lead to overheating and fires due to the presence of lithium batteries in these items.