



Revealed: MPs' new pro-vaping group is funded by... vaping industry

EXCLUSIVE Vaping companies have spent £470k on MPs and Westminster backers over the past six years



MPs including Adam Afriyie, Mary Glindon and Gareth Johnson have joined a new group in Parliament funded by vaping firms

By **Alexa Phillips**

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Vaping firms are funding a new pressure group of MPs attempting to water down **plans to regulate the industry** amid concerns about its impact on children's health, **i** can reveal.

The Independent British Vape Trade Association (IBVTA) has committed £37,500 as the sole backer of a new all-party parliamentary group (APPG) for "responsible vaping", which was registered last week.

APPGs are informal interest groups of MPs that facilitate cross-party work on an issue, and have come under increasing scrutiny over their links to industry lobbying in Westminster.

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A former head of the standards watchdog told **i** he believes the vaping industry's efforts are a "backdoor way of influencing Government", warning of conflicts of interests among MPs.



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...last six years, **i** analysis has found.

Sir Alistair Graham, a former chairman of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, said he believed a vaping trade body funding a group designed to hold the industry to account “clearly” presented conflicts of interest.

He told **i**: “There should be some restriction on receiving funding from outside industry bodies. It is essentially a backdoor way of influencing Government.”

Vaping companies have long pushed for the promotion of e-cigarettes as a tool to stop smoking in the UK, despite concerns from the World Health Organisation.

A major study [linking e-cigarettes to a heightened risk of heart failure](#), published this month, has cast doubt on their benefits, but the Government has said it will continue to promote them to smokers. Another recent study concluded vaping is linked to similar DNA changes seen in smokers who develop cancer.

The APPG for Responsible Vaping and its MPs have criticised plans to restrict vaping flavours, warning that they could lead to an increase in smoking – echoing claims made by the vaping industry.

New powers to [ban disposable vapes](#), restrict vape flavours, introduce plain packaging and change how vapes are displayed in shops so they don't appeal to children will also be part of the [Tobacco and Vapes Bill](#).

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The APPG said it expected the Department of Health and Social Care to produce “further assessments” of the impacts of the vaping measures and a comprehensive consultation ahead of the introduction of any secondary legislation that would spell out how the Government will use its new powers.

The group's chair, Tory MP Gareth Johnson, said it had “serious concerns about the vaping portions of the Bill” and the “unintended consequences that it may inadvertently drive more people towards smoking”.

He added: “The potential adoption of stricter options on flavours risks undermining public health goals, endangering progress towards a smoke-free future.



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listed in updated parliamentary records last week.

There is no suggestion MPs have acted immorally or outside of parliamentary rules by joining APPGs, accepting hospitality or sponsoring events, but experts have warned the donations highlight the need for transparency.

The funding is to pay for a secretariat to administer the group, which includes handling events and the publication of reports. A website for the group states it was founded to “demonstrate the positive benefits” of vaping “in support of smoking cessation”.

Rose Whiffen, senior research officer at Transparency International UK, told **i**: “These close links between parliamentarians and the vaping industry are concerning especially when Government is considering reforming its policies on smoking.”

She said MPs “should not let well-resourced lobby groups disproportionately affect their judgement on policies” and should “always seek to put the public interest first”.

Gareth Johnson, Tory MP for Dartford, is the group's chair and wrote an op-ed for *ConservativeHome* last month in which he urged ministers to “constructively engage with the APPG” to avoid “risking the many benefits that vaping can bring”.

The APPG's vice-chair, North Tyneside Labour MP Mary Glendon, attended a conference hosted by the UK Vaping Industry Association (UKVIA) last year. At the event, she said the industry has previously “had a difficult job” engaging with Labour because of its association with tobacco companies.

The MP told the trade body: “Our job is to make sure that Labour is listening and engaging with the industry to make sure vaping is an alternative for the 6.6 million people in the UK who still smoke.”

Mr Johnson said the Responsible Vaping APPG “has not received any actual money from any organisation” and that the funding from the IBVTA is the estimated staffing costs incurred by the secretariat.

The APPG shared a separate statement on Mr Johnson's behalf, saying it fully abides by parliamentary rules. It said funds from the IBVTA help to pay for the secretariat, like many APPGs.

Mr Johnson said: “The views of the APPG are those of its members. The vast majority of adult vapers are ex-smokers, some will have smoked for many years during which smoking-related damage might have occurred prior to them ever having switched to vaping. Vaping should not be used by adults who never smoked, and never by children.”

Who is on the APPG and what are their links to the vaping industry?

Seventeen MPs and three peers have joined the Responsible Vaping APPG, 13 of whom are Conservative.

Gareth Johnson, MP for Dartford, chairs the group. The vice-chair, Mary Glendon, was nominated for “most supportive parliamentarian” by the UKVIA last year, **i** has discovered.



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MPs have also sponsored 11 events in Parliament on behalf of vaping companies over the last six years, according to parliamentary records.

Sir Alistair Graham, who chaired the standards watchdog from 2003 to 2007, said MPs should not be sponsoring events in Parliament on behalf of vaping firms.

He described the practice as “subsidised benefits”, adding: “It’s a backdoor use of public money. Never mind seeking to influence government – that’s actually using public funds.”

Ms Glendon said: “I proudly plead guilty to being vocal in my support of vaping as a smoking cessation tool. I’m in good company on this. The NHS also says that nicotine vaping is substantially less harmful than smoking.”

She said she derived “no personal benefit from any funding for APPGs and don’t seek any benefit apart from helping people to quit smoking”, adding: “I do also agree that any report highlighting the health risks of vaping should be given due concern.”

Mark Pawsey, Conservative MP for Rugby, was also nominated for UKVIA’s award of most supportive parliamentarian.

Mr Pawsey was previously the chair of a second APPG for Vaping, which was disbanded last year and received £12,001 from the UKVIA. Ms Glendon was its vice chair.

Since 2018 Mr Pawsey has sponsored three events in Parliament on behalf of the UKVIA – the most recent was last year – and a fourth for Japan Tobacco International.

Last May he urged the Government to use its attendance at the World Health Organisation’s global tobacco control conference to “champion” vaping.

“The WHO and the FCTC [Framework Convention on Tobacco Control] have stubbornly continued to ignore the evidence about the benefits that regulated nicotine products that don’t burn tobacco can bring to public health,” he claimed.

The new APPG also includes Adam Afriyie, Tory MP for Windsor, who has some of the clearest ties to the industry in Westminster.

Mr Afriyie [delivered the keynote speech at the same UKVIA conference](#) last year, where he won the “most supportive parliamentarian” award, [i](#) previously revealed.

He has accepted two all-expenses-paid trips to industry events in the US and South Korea from the Global Tobacco and Nicotine Forum worth £18,720 since 2022, new analysis shows. He also hosted an event in Parliament in March 2023 on behalf of the UKVIA.

Mr Afriyie is the chair of the advisory board of Elite Growth, a firm that sells disposable vapes, in an unpaid role he initially failed to declare in his financial interests.

He was accused of breaching lobbying rules last year after [i](#) revealed that he [failed to declare his wife’s shares in Elite Growth](#). The MP declined to respond to the claims, with a spokeswoman saying he “does not comment on his family”.



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declared represents the costs of attending the events.

Mr Afriyie said: "As vice chair of the former APPG on Vaping I was always pleased to accept speaking invitations and to share our success story." He added: "My crusade is to ensure that legislation is evidence-based and led by the science. Vaping saves lives as one of the most effective ways to quit smoking."

He said his award from the UKVIA was a surprise and he was "thankful to members of the UKVIA who voted for me" and wants to thank them for "saving lives".

Up in smoke



Vaping firms' lobbying spending

£400,000	Received by the Conservative Party from Supreme 8 Limited
£37,501	Funding provided by the Independent British Vape Trade Association to APPG for Responsible Vaping
£18,722	Adam Afriyie, Tory MP for Windsor, accepted two all-expenses-paid trips to US and Korea from the Global Tobacco and Nicotine Forum
£12,001	Donated by UK Vaping Industry Association to the now-disbanded APPG for Vaping
£720	Tory MPs David Morris and Craig Mackinlay each received Queen concert tickets worth £360 from Japan Tobacco International
£600	Graham Brady, Tory MP and chair of the Conservatives' 1922 committee, accepted a £600 dinner at the British Museum paid for by Japan Tobacco International
£500	Tory MP Nigel Adams accepted two concert tickets at the O2 Arena worth £500 from Japan Tobacco International
£396	Tory MP Michael Tomlinson accepted tickets to a Royal Academy of Arts event paid for by Japan Tobacco International

Source: Contributions registered since 2018, data sourced from Register of Members' Financial Interests, Electoral Commission, Parallel Parliament, TheyWorkForYou

Vaping industry has donated more than £400,000 to MPs

The Conservative Party has received £400,000 from **Supreme 8 Limited**, a company owned by Sandeep Singh Chadha, since 2018.

Mr Singh also owns Supreme PLC, which sells vaping products with flavours like Watermelon Bubblegum and Cotton Candy Ice.

Supreme 8 Limited, recently renamed SC8 Limited, also lists Supreme PLC as a "related party" which has borrowed money from it in its filings on Companies House, **i** has found.

Other MPs who sponsored events in Parliament for vaping trade bodies and companies included health minister Maria Caulfield, Conservative MPs Mark Menzies and Giles Watling, and DUP MP Ian Paisley.

Mr Paisley said the Global Tobacco and Nicotine Forum asked him in 2018 to "host a tour of Parliament and a drinks reception for twenty people from trade bodies, research organisations, the press, a medic and a representative from a pro and one from an anti-smoking foundation to conclude a field trip they had in the UK".



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David Morris and Craig Mackinlay each received Queen concert tickets worth £360 in 2022, while Michael Tomlinson – currently a minister – accepted £396 tickets to a Royal Academy of Arts event in 2019.

Sir Graham Brady, one of the most powerful backbenchers in the Conservative Party in his role as chair of the 1922 Committee, accepted a £600 dinner at the British Museum for him and his wife paid for by Japan Tobacco International in 2019.

Last December he led a roundtable to discuss vaping at the Centre for Policy Studies think tank, which was sponsored by British American Tobacco, owner of e-cigarettes brand Vuse, i understands.

A Conservative Party spokesman said donations to the party are properly and transparently declared to the Electoral Commission, openly published by them, and comply fully with the law.

Craig Mackinlay's office declined to comment. Supreme PLC and the other MPs in the story did not respond to requests for comment. i

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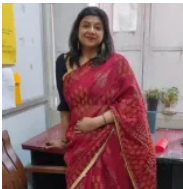
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