

PO00034468

Smokefree Action
c/o Action on Smoking and Health
102 Clifton Street
London
EC2A 4HW

30 SEP 2005

Dear Members of the Smokefree Action Group,

Thank you for your letter of 13 September to Margaret Beckett about smoking in public places. As this is a matter for the Department of Health, your letter has been passed to me for reply.

As you are aware, the White Paper *Choosing Health - Making healthy choices easier*, published in November 2004, sets out the Government's proposals for protecting people from secondhand smoke.

In preparation of the Government proposals, full account was taken of the latest scientific and medical evidence of the risk to health from exposure to secondhand smoke. The report from the Scientific Committee on Tobacco and Health, which was published alongside *Choosing Health*, concludes that secondhand smoke causes lung cancer and heart disease, is linked to asthma attacks and to adverse health effects in children including sudden infant death syndrome. The main dangers from secondhand smoke occur in the home.

The report of the Scientific Committee on Tobacco and Health *Secondhand Smoke: Review of the evidence since 1998* can be viewed at the following website: www.advisorybodies.doh.gov.uk (enter *Review of the evidence since 1998* as a search term and follow the link).


The proposals have been the subject of a very extensive public consultation. The aim of this consultation was to seek views on how the legislation on smoke-free enclosed public places and workplaces can work in practice. We have received thousands of responses to the consultation.

We are now giving careful consideration to all views and comments before finalising the smoke-free elements of the Health Bill, which will be introduced in this Parliamentary session.

The Government is continuing with a number of steps to raise awareness of the health risks associated with secondhand smoke. We have recently funded a substantial campaign to raise public awareness of the health risks from secondhand smoke.

The Government aims to achieve a major step forward for public health. We are clear that Government cannot and should not pretend it can 'make' the population healthy. However, it can and should support people in making better choices for their health and the health of their families. The intention is therefore to shift the balance significantly in favour of smoke-free environments.

I hope this reply is helpful.

yours sincerely
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Caroline Flint', written in a cursive style.

CAROLINE FLINT