



Smokefree ACTION

IT'S ABOUT HEALTH AND IT'S ABOUT TIME

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New Tobacco Strategy aims to make smoking history

Smokefree Action Coalition Press Release

The Government's new tobacco control strategy heralds the start of the next phase in tobacco control that will help make smoking history as fewer and fewer children take up the habit, said members of the Smokefree Action Coalition [1] in response to the new plan released today. [2] The new strategy includes ambitious, yet realisable, goals to dramatically reduce smoking rates among adults and children.

The Government has already achieved a great deal in recent years by making public places smokefree, establishing the stop smoking services, and more recently passing legislation that will end the display of tobacco at the point of sale and prohibit the sale of tobacco from vending machines. Over the past decade, smoking rates among adults have fallen by a fifth whilst smoking among 11-15 year olds has halved. [3] There are now 2.1 million fewer smokers than ten years ago and this has reduced the cost to the NHS of smoking by nearly £380 million pounds a year. [4]

However there is much more that needs to be done to protect children from being lured into a lifetime's addiction to nicotine and to help existing smokers quit.

Members of the Smokefree Action Coalition believe that the measures contained in the new tobacco control strategy will have broad appeal and should be implemented which ever political party wins the next General Election.

Key measures contained in the strategy include:

- Reducing exposure to children from secondhand smoke through targeted campaigns highlighting the benefits of smokefree homes and cars;
- Further strengthening the NHS Stop Smoking Services, and providing new routes to quitting for smokers unable to stop abruptly in collaboration with the MHRA;
- Increased investment to further drive down tobacco smuggling;
- Sustaining high levels of spending on marketing campaigns to encourage smokers to quit;
- Implementation of the retail display ban and ban on sale of tobacco from vending machines in the Health Act 2009;

- A commitment to review the smokefree legislation in 2010; and

The primary goals are to:

- Reduce smoking among 11-15 year olds from 6% now to under 1% by 2020; and to
- Reduce adult smoking from 21% now to under 10% by 2020.

Deborah Arnott, Chief Executive of ASH commented:

“The strategy demonstrates a continued commitment to tackling what is still the single, largest cause of preventable death and disease in this country. Building on the tremendous achievements of the past decade it will put us firmly on the path towards a smoke-free future for our children.”

Professor Terence Stephenson, President of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) said:

“We are pleased to see that children are a priority in this new strategy. We are particularly concerned about the health outcomes and effects when adults smoke in the presence of their children. Second-hand smoke has been found to be strongly linked to chest infections in children, asthma, ear problems and cot death.”

Ron Gainsford, Chief Executive of the Trading Standards Institute said:

"The TSI fully supports the new strategy and is particularly pleased to see the commitment to protect children from tobacco and to tackle the supply of illicit tobacco products. Trading Standards Officers will be pleased to play their part by enforcing the tobacco control measures at the local level."

ENDS

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Notes and links:

[1] The Smokefree Action Coalition is a group of 91 organisations committed to promoting public health by reducing smoking prevalence. For more information about the Coalition and a full list of all members see: www.smokefreeaction.org.uk

[2] A 'Smokefree' Future.. A comprehensive tobacco control strategy for England. Department of Health, 2010

[3] Smoking and drinking among adults, 2008. General Household Survey, ONS, 2010. Smoking, drinking and drug use among young people in England in 2008. The Health and Social Care Information Centre, 2009.

[4] Callum C. The cost of smoking to the NHS. Action on Smoking and Health, 2008.