

**Research Briefing**

By Bukky Balogun

16 October 2023

# The smokefree 2030 ambition for England



## Summary

- 1 Statistics on smoking and vaping in England
- 2 The smokefree 2030 ambition for England
- 3 The Khan Review
- 4 Creating a 'smokefree generation'; government proposals and consultations on smoking and youth vaping
- 5 Background to the government's smokefree 2030 policies

### **Contributing Authors**

Rachael Harker, statistics, section one

### **Image Credits**

[Cigarettes - no copyright required](#) / image cropped

### **Disclaimer**

The Commons Library does not intend the information in our research publications and briefings to address the specific circumstances of any particular individual. We have published it to support the work of MPs. You should not rely upon it as legal or professional advice, or as a substitute for it. We do not accept any liability whatsoever for any errors, omissions or misstatements contained herein. You should consult a suitably qualified professional if you require specific advice or information. Read our briefing [‘Legal help: where to go and how to pay’](#) for further information about sources of legal advice and help. This information is provided subject to the conditions of the Open Parliament Licence.

### **Sources and subscriptions for MPs and staff**

We try to use sources in our research that everyone can access, but sometimes only information that exists behind a paywall or via a subscription is available. We provide access to many online subscriptions to MPs and parliamentary staff, please contact [hoclibraryonline@parliament.uk](mailto:hoclibraryonline@parliament.uk) or visit [commonslibrary.parliament.uk/resources](https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/resources) for more information.

### **Feedback**

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in these publicly available briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that briefings are not necessarily updated to reflect subsequent changes.

If you have any comments on our briefings please email [papers@parliament.uk](mailto:papers@parliament.uk). Please note that authors are not always able to engage in discussions with members of the public who express opinions about the content of our research, although we will carefully consider and correct any factual errors.

You can read our feedback and complaints policy and our editorial policy at [commonslibrary.parliament.uk](https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk). If you have general questions about the work of the House of Commons email [hcenquiries@parliament.uk](mailto:hcenquiries@parliament.uk).

# Contents

<b>Summary</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1 Statistics on smoking and vaping in England</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2 The smokefree 2030 ambition for England</b>	<b>10</b>
2.1 Smoke free policies in the Devolved Administrations	11
<b>3 The Khan Review</b>	<b>12</b>
3.1 Terms of Reference	13
3.2 Recommendations and conclusions	13
3.3 Stakeholder response	15
3.4 The government’s initial response to the Khan Review	17
<b>4 Creating a ‘smokefree generation’; government proposals and consultations on smoking and youth vaping</b>	<b>18</b>
4.1 Overview	18
4.2 Raising the age of sale of tobacco	21
4.3 Reducing youth vaping	22
4.4 Supporting smoking cessation	23
4.5 Enforcement on illicit tobacco and vaping sales	24
<b>5 Background to the government’s smokefree 2030 policies</b>	<b>26</b>
5.1 The 2017-2022 Tobacco Control Plan for England	26
5.2 The health disparities white paper	28
5.3 The Major Conditions Strategy	28
5.4 Will the government still publish a new Tobacco Control Plan?	29

## Summary

### The smokefree 2030 ambition for England

In 2019, the government published its green paper on preventative health; [Advancing our health: prevention in the 2020s](#). Here, it announced an ambition for England to become ‘smokefree’ by 2030 – achieved when adult smoking prevalence falls to 5% or less.

### The Khan Review

The government commissioned Javed Khan, former CEO of children’s charity Barnardo’s to carry out a review into the government’s ambition to make England smokefree by 2030. Mr Khan published his independent review, the [Khan Review: making smoking obsolete](#), in June 2022. The review found that “without further action, England will miss the smokefree 2030 target by at least 7 years, and the poorest areas in society will not meet it until 2044”.

The review set out a package of 15 recommendations aimed at supporting the 2030 ambition. This included four “critical must dos” for the Government, centred on increasing investment in smokefree 2030 policies, increasing the age of sale of tobacco by one year every year, promoting vaping as a smoking cessation tool, and improving the prevention of ill health by offering smokers advice and support to quit at every interaction within the NHS.

### Raising the age of sale of tobacco for those born on or after 1 January 2009

In October 2023, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak set out plans to [introduce legislation to prohibit children born on or after 1 January 2009 from legally buying cigarettes in England](#). This would effectively raise the smoking age by one year, every year, until it applies to the whole population.

The government would also prohibit people above the age of sale from purchasing tobacco products for people below the age of sale (‘proxy purchases’).

The proposal formed part of the government’s ambition to create the first ‘smokefree generation’, discussed below.

## Creating the first ‘smokefree generation’

In October 2023, the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) published its policy paper, [Stopping the start: our new plan to create a smokefree generation](#), where the government set out an intention to create the first ‘smokefree generation’.

The government introduced several proposals to reduce youth vaping, including restricting vape flavours, regulating vape packaging and point of sale displays, and restricting the sale of disposable vapes.

The government also committed to funding several initiatives to improve smoking cessation support, including an additional £70 million annually to support local authority led stop smoking services, and £45 million over two years to roll out the national ‘Swap to Stop’ scheme, supporting people to stop smoking with the free provision of a vape kit and behavioural support.

## Consulting on the new proposals

The Department of Health and Social Care [launched a consultation on the proposals set out in the policy paper](#) on 12 October 2023, and is inviting responses until 6 December 2023.

Specifically, DHSC is seeking views on introducing new legislation to raise the age of sale for tobacco, further regulating vaping to reduce its appeal to children, and introducing new powers for local authorities to issue fixed penalty notices to enforce age of sale legislation for tobacco products and vapes.

## A New Major Conditions Strategy

In January 2023, Health Secretary [Steve Barclay set out government’s intention](#) to develop and publish a Major Conditions Strategy. [Neil O’Brien, Minister for Primary Care and Public Health](#), has said “tobacco and tobacco control will be threaded through the major conditions strategy”.

In August 2023, the DHSC published its policy paper, [Major conditions strategy: a case for change and our strategic framework](#). The paper sets out areas of the government’s focus for the final and forthcoming strategy.

Chapter 2 of this paper focussed on primary and secondary prevention. It identified smoking as the biggest single cause of preventable illness and

death and highlighted the government's proposals to support people to stop smoking and consult on further tobacco controls.

The government has said [the strategy will be published in early 2024](#).

# 1 Statistics on smoking and vaping in England

For more detailed information please see our briefing paper [Statistics on Smoking - House of Commons Library \(parliament.uk\)](#)

## Smoking among adults

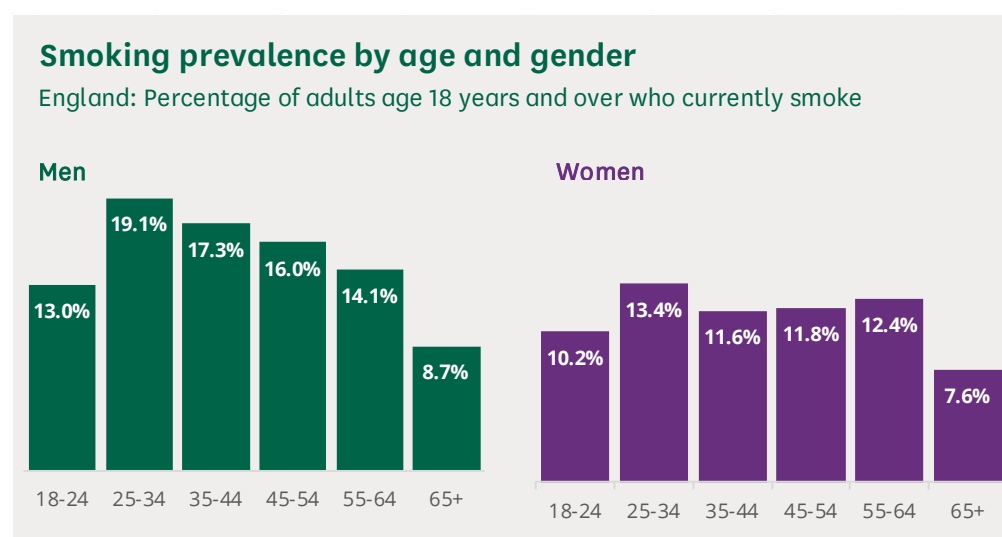
Smoking is a leading cause of preventable illness and death. There were 506,100 hospital admissions due to smoking in 2019/20, and in 2019 there were 74,800 deaths attributed to smoking among adults aged 35 and over.<sup>1</sup>

In 2022, around 12.7% of people aged 18 years and over in England were current smokers, as measured by the [Annual Population Survey \(APS\)](#). This was around seven percentage points lower than the 2011 rate (19.8%).<sup>2</sup>

APS data is the official measure used to monitor and track progress against the [Tobacco Control Plan for England](#). The Tobacco Control Plan aimed to reduce smoking prevalence among adults in England to 12% or less by the end of 2022. This target was not met.

The 'smokefree' target, outlined in [Advancing our health: prevention in the 2020s](#), aims to reduce adult smoking prevalence to 5% or less by 2030.

Men are more likely to be current smokers than women. In 2022, 14.5% of men in England smoked compared with 10.9% of women. Those aged 25-34 were more likely to be smokers than other age groups.<sup>3</sup>



Source: ONS [Adult smoking habits in England](#)

<sup>1</sup> NHS Digital [Statistics on Smoking, England 2020](#)

<sup>2</sup> ONS [Smoking habits in the UK and its constituent countries](#)

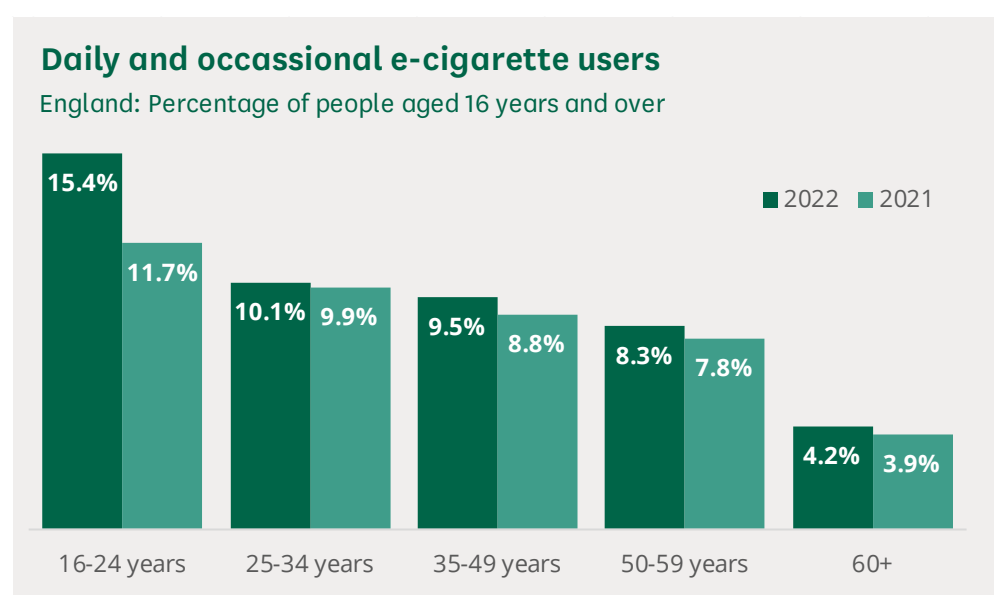
<sup>3</sup> ONS [Adult smoking habits in England](#)

## Vaping among adults

In 2022, around 5.0% of those aged 16 and over in England reported that they were currently daily users of an e-cigarette (daily vapers). A further 3.4% reported that they were occasional vapers.

The proportion of people reporting daily or occasional vaping was highest among current smokers (25.7%) and ex- smokers (17.0%) compared with those who have never smoked cigarettes (2.4%).

In 2022, 16-24 year olds were more likely to report daily or occasional vaping than all other age groups. There was a significant increase in daily or occasional vaping compared with 2021 rates, rising from 11.7% in 2021 to 15.4% in 2022.



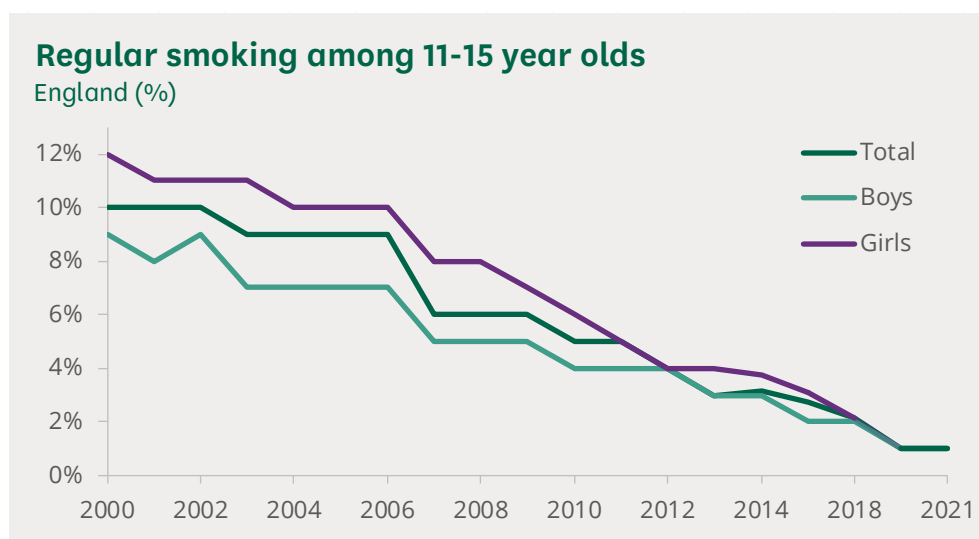
Source: ONS [E-cigarette use in England](#)

## Smoking among young people

The [Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use among Young People in England](#) survey series provides data on smoking among school pupils aged 11-15 years in England.

The prevalence of smoking shows a declining trend since the turn of the century and the latest data shows that in 2021, only around 1% were classed as regular smokers - smoking at least once a week - and gender differences are no longer apparent.





Source: NHS Digital [Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use among Young People in England, 2021](#)

Smoking prevalence among children and young people increases significantly with age. In 2021, less than 1% of 11 year olds reported regular smoking compared with 7% of 15 year olds. Around a quarter (25%) of 15 year olds were either current or past smokers compared with 2% of 11 year olds.

There was a marked increase in the number of children and young people reporting use of e-cigarettes since 2014, when e-cigarette use was first included in the survey. Overall the percentage reporting that they were current e-cigarette users, increased from 6% in 2014 to 15% in 2021.

The change in e-cigarette use was largely attributable to rates for girls, which increased from 6% in 2014 to 18% in 2021. Over the same period, e-cigarette use among boys rose from 6% to 9%.

## 2

# The smokefree 2030 ambition for England

In 2019, the government published its green paper on preventative health; [Advancing our health: prevention in the 2020s](#).<sup>4</sup> Here, it announced an ambition for England to become ‘smoke-free’ by 2030, achieved when adult smoking prevalence falls to 5% or less. This included an “ultimatum” for industry to make smoked tobacco obsolete by 2030, and an intent for smokers to quit or move to “reduced risk products like e-cigarettes”.

The government has said that the smokefree 2030 ambition is focused on smoking prevalence and does not cover vaping prevalence.<sup>5</sup>

The public health charity, Action on Smoking and Health (ASH), [welcomed the Government’s target](#), but warned that accomplishing it would require innovative new policies and funding.<sup>6</sup> Speaking of this “extremely challenging target”, the government itself has acknowledged that to “achieve this vision of a smoke-free future, we need bold action to both discourage people from starting in the first place, and to support smokers to quit”.<sup>7</sup>

In October 2021, the government [launched the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities \(OHID\)](#). This formed part of a wider reform of the public health system in England which saw the dissolution of Public Health England (PHE) and the formation of the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) which is responsible for health protection. OHID is responsible for “building the scientific evidence, leading and developing the policy, and delivering core services” in relation to smoking, as well as other issues such as obesity and excess alcohol consumption.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Cabinet Office and Department of Health and Social Care, [Advancing our health: prevention in the 2020s- consultation document](#), 22 July 2019

<sup>5</sup> PQ 190924 , 28 June 2023

<sup>6</sup> ASH, [ASH welcomes Government commitment to finish the job and end smoking by 2030](#), 22 July 2019

<sup>7</sup> Cabinet Office and Department of Health and Social Care, [Advancing our health: prevention in the 2020s- consultation document](#), 22 July 2019

<sup>8</sup> Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, [About us](#) [downloaded on 1 November 2022]

## 2.1

# Smoke free policies in the Devolved Administrations

Public health policy is a devolved matter in the UK and each of the devolved executives sets its own policy on smoking cessation.

The Welsh Government has also set a smokefree target for 2030, set out in its [long-term Tobacco Control Strategy](#) (published July 2022).<sup>9</sup>

Similarly, the Scottish Government has set a target of 2034, with accompanying policy set out in its [Tobacco Control Action Plan 2018](#).<sup>10</sup>

The Welsh and Scottish Governments have also used an adult smoking prevalence of 5% as a threshold for the smokefree target.

Northern Ireland's ten year [Tobacco Control Strategy](#) was published in 2012 and does not set a smokefree target.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Welsh Government, [A smoke-free Wales: Our long-term tobacco control strategy](#), 26 July 2022

<sup>10</sup> Scottish Government, [Raising Scotland's tobacco-free generation: our tobacco control action plan 2018](#), 20 June 2018

<sup>11</sup> Northern Ireland Department of Health, [Tobacco control](#), accessed 16 October 2023

### 3

## The Khan Review

In [February 2022](#), the then Health Secretary Sajid Javid gave a statement in the House of Commons where he updated MPs on work the government was undertaking on health inequalities.<sup>12</sup>

Mr Javid announced the government would publish a health disparities white paper in Spring 2022, “aiming to break the link between people’s background and their prospect for a healthy life”.

Mr Javid said the government was also launching two reviews, linked to the white paper, which would focus on health disparities.

The first review, into “potential ethnic bias in the design and use of medical devices”, would be led by Professor Dame Margaret Whitehead.<sup>13</sup>

The second review would consider the government’s ambition to be smokefree by 2030, and would be led by Javed Khan, former CEO of children’s charity Barnardo’s. Mr Javid set out the premise for the review:

Whilst the Government has made good long-term progress in reducing smoking rates, there are still nearly 6 million smokers in England, and an estimated 64,000 people died from smoking in 2019 alone. Smoking is one of the largest drivers of health disparities and causes a disproportionate burden to our most disadvantaged families and communities.<sup>14</sup>

The Health Secretary further explained that the review would support the government to identify “the most impactful interventions to reduce the uptake of smoking, and support people to stop smoking, for good”.<sup>15</sup> The government later said that the review would inform a new Tobacco Control Plan, which was due to be published in 2022.<sup>16</sup>

[A DHSC press release](#) explained that the reviews on medical devices and the 2030 smokefree target form part of OHID’s agenda to address inequalities in health and care.<sup>17</sup>

The government has since indicated that it will no longer publish the health disparities white paper and will instead publish a Major Conditions Strategy (discussed in section 5.2).

<sup>12</sup> Statement UIN HCWS591, [Health Update](#), 4 February 2022

<sup>13</sup> Gov.uk, [Equity in medical devices: independent review](#), accessed 1 November 2022

<sup>14</sup> Statement UIN HCWS591, [Health Update](#), 4 February 2022

<sup>15</sup> Statement UIN HCWS591, [Health Update](#), 4 February 2022

<sup>16</sup> [PQ 150257](#), 20 April 2022

<sup>17</sup> DHSC, [Government launches landmark reviews to tackle health disparities](#), 4 February 2022

## 3.1 Terms of Reference

The [Terms of Reference](#) explained that the review would make recommendations about which policies should be put in place to achieve the government's smokefree 2030 ambition, particularly to address the health disparities associated with smoking.<sup>18</sup> It was to make focused policy and regulatory recommendations in two areas and consider:

- The most impactful interventions to reduce the uptake of smoking particularly among young people.
- The top interventions to support smoking cessation, particularly in deprived areas of England where there are significant health disparities.

Whilst the review was to focus on England, it was also to consider whether policies would be suitable for UK-wide implementation.

## 3.2 Recommendations and conclusions

The [Khan Review: making smoking obsolete](#) was published in June 2022. The report found:

without further action, England will miss the smokefree 2030 target by at least 7 years, and the poorest areas in society will not meet it until 2044. To have any chance of hitting the smokefree 2030 target, we need to accelerate the rate of decline of people who smoke, by 40%.<sup>19</sup>

It pointed to increasing public support for government action to limit smoking, noting that “those who think the government is not doing enough to tackle smoking has risen from 29% in 2009 to 46% in 2022”.

The report put forward 15 recommendations in total. This included four ‘critical must dos’ for the government:

### 1. Increased investment

I have set out the case for comprehensive investment now of an additional £125 million per year in smokefree 2030 policies, to fund the easily accessible, high quality support that smokers need to help them quit. This includes investing an extra £70 million per year in stop smoking services, ringfenced for this purpose.

If the government cannot fund this themselves, they should ‘make the polluter pay’ and either introduce a tobacco industry levy, or generate additional corporation tax, with immediate effect.

---

<sup>18</sup> OHID, [Independent review of Smokefree 2030 policies: terms of reference](#), published 9 March 2022

<sup>19</sup> OHID, [Making smoking obsolete: summary](#), updated 25 August 2022

## **2. Increase the age of sale**

The government must stop young people starting to smoke, which is why I recommend increasing the age of sale from 18, by one year, every year until no one can buy a tobacco product in this country.

## **3. Promote vaping**

The government must embrace the promotion of vaping as an effective tool to help people to quit smoking tobacco. We know vapes are not a ‘silver bullet’ nor are they totally risk-free, but the alternative is far worse.

## **4. Improve prevention in the NHS**

Prevention must become part of the NHS’s DNA. To reduce the £2.4 billion that smoking costs the NHS every year, the NHS must deliver on its commitments in the Long Term Plan. It must do more, offering smokers advice and support to quit at every interaction they have with health services, whether that be through GPs, hospitals, psychiatrists, midwives, pharmacists, dentists or optometrists. The NHS should invest to save, committing resource for this purpose.<sup>20</sup>

The report made several other recommendations across four parts, described below.

Part 1, “Invest in reaching smokefree 2030”, called for the government to invest in reaching smokefree 2030 with funding as set out above.

Part 2 discussed “Stopping the start”, which in addition to raising the age of sale for tobacco, recommended raising the cost of tobacco duties on all tobacco products by more than 30%, restricting tobacco sales to retailers that have a tobacco licence and strengthening smokefree legislation in hospitality, hospital grounds and outdoor public spaces.

Part 3, “Quit for good”, called on the government to offer vaping as a substitute for smoking, and invest £15 million per year in a media campaign to provide public information about smoking and vaping.

Part 4, “System change”, proposed investments of £15 million per year to support pregnant women to quit smoking, £2 million per year in new research and data, and £8 million to ensure regional and local prioritisation of stop smoking interventions through the leadership of Integrated Care Systems. It also proposed that information about smoking and mental health should be provided to patients and healthcare professionals, and that smoking cessation treatment should be part of mental health care.

Notably the report touched on the government’s wider commitment to “levelling up”, suggesting that reducing smoking prevalence is “one of, if not the most, effective ways to ‘level up’ health and wealth”.

---

<sup>20</sup> OHID, [Making smoking obsolete: summary](#), updated 25 August 2022

## Funding

The report acknowledged existing pressures on government finances and offered three models for funding its recommendations:

### Option 1: additional funding from within government

This funding should be ringfenced and targeted.

### Option 2: a 'polluter pays' industry levy

Introduce a 'polluter pays' industry levy on profits from cigarette sales, which can directly fund the full range of comprehensive measures to help us reach smokefree 2030 and make smoking obsolete. This is my preferred option. Despite high tobacco duties (around £10 billion per year), tobacco manufacturers still make significant profits – approximately £1 billion every year in the UK (reference 40). And the tobacco industry's profit margin is as high as 67%, far higher than the margins for any other consumer staple product, which typically range from 12 to 20%.

[...]

### Option 3: a corporation tax surcharge

A corporation tax surcharge would impose a surcharge of a percentage on the profits of manufacturers. The surcharge would effectively be an additional percentage of corporation tax. There is already a corporation tax surcharge for banks. Alternatively, a levy could be designed to deliver a fixed sum annually to the government, with contributions of individual firms based on a measure such as market share. In the US they do this. The Food and Drug Administration collects user fees from tobacco manufacturers and importers, based on market share.

It further explained that a "polluter pays" levy could be introduced in the form of a charge applied as a percentage of profits. It cited the results of a [2022 survey carried out by YouGov and ASH](#), which "suggests that 76% of adults support a levy".<sup>21</sup>

## 3.3

## Stakeholder response

ASH welcomed the review, and in particular, its call for an annual investment of £125 million to fund its recommendations.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> ASH, [Public support for Government action on tobacco: Results of the 2022 ASH Smokefree survey](#), May 2022

<sup>22</sup> ASH, [ASH and APPG on Smoking and Health welcome bold Javed Khan review to deliver Government's Smokefree 2030 ambition](#), 9 June 2022

Bob Blackman, Chairman of the APPG on Smoking and Health, also welcomed the publication of the “bold review” and called on the government to “deliver a sufficiently funded Tobacco Control Plan”.<sup>23</sup>

In a letter to the British Medical Journal, representatives of several health organisations including the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, the Association of Directors of Public Health UK, the British Heart Foundation and the Royal College of General Practitioners expressed support for the Review and urged the government to provide the funding it called for.<sup>24</sup> The letter highlighted [concerns about the contribution smoking makes to health inequalities](#) and life expectancy.

The think tank, the Taxpayer’s Alliance suggested that the Review’s proposals “seek to push us further towards a complete prohibition on smoking” and warned that they [“are likely to put pressure on the pockets of the poorest in the UK”](#).<sup>25</sup>

James Lowman, Chief Executive of the Association of Convenience Stores (ACS) expressed [concern about how the proposals regarding the age of sale](#) would work in practice and impact small shop operations:

Increasing the legal age of sale by one year every year would disrupt the very effective measures put in place to enforce an age restriction at 18, which applies not just for tobacco but to many of the products local shops sell. We need to look at how this would work in practice, but it looks like it would be operationally very challenging for small shops. Underage smokers aren’t buying tobacco from shops, who have an excellent record of implementing the Challenge25 policy, but from friends, family and the black market.<sup>26</sup>

He also suggested the proposal for tobacco licensing needs to be “fleshed out”, cautioning that new restrictions which could prevent new entrants from entering the market damage investment and the provision of other products and services. Mr Lowman also highlighted lost tax revenue resulting from illegal tobacco sales and called on the government to address this.

---

<sup>23</sup> ASH, [ASH and APPG on Smoking and Health welcome bold Javed Khan review to deliver Government’s Smokefree 2030 ambition](#), 9 June 2022

<sup>24</sup> British Medical Journal, [Legal smoking age in England should rise every year, review recommends](#), 9 June 2022

<sup>25</sup> Taxpayers’ Alliance, [The Khan review: making choice obsolete](#), 16 June 2022

<sup>26</sup> ACS, [Khan Review: Proposed annual age increase for tobacco could disrupt successful age restriction policies in store](#), 9 June 2022



## 3.4

# The government's initial response to the Khan Review

In April 2022, the government said it did not plan to publish a response to the Khan Review.<sup>27</sup>

The then Health Secretary Sajid Javid made a Statement in the Commons, on 9 June 2022, the day of the review's publication.<sup>28</sup> He said [the government would consider the review's recommendations](#) and that this would help to inform a forthcoming white paper on health disparities. Mr Javid also said the government would complement this work by publishing a new Tobacco Control Plan (see section 5 of this briefing), and that the government was determined to address the challenges raised in the review and to meet the smokefree 2030 target.

---

<sup>27</sup> [PQ 150257](#), 20 April 2022

<sup>28</sup> Hansard, [Statement UIN HCWS87: Health Update](#), 9 June 2022

## 4 Creating a ‘smokefree generation’; government proposals and consultations on smoking and youth vaping

In section 4.1, we have provided an overview of government policy papers and consultations issued in support of the government’s aim to reduce smoking prevalence and improve the regulation of vaping (particularly with the purpose of reducing vaping among children).

In the following sections, we have set out detail on the government’s resultant proposals on raising the age of sale of tobacco, reducing youth vaping, supporting smoking cessation and enforcement on illicit tobacco and vaping sales.

### 4.1 Overview

The government’s key proposals include:

- **Increasing the age of sale for tobacco**, such that it would be an offence for anyone born on or after 1 January 2009 to be sold tobacco products.
- **Making vape products less attractive to children**, by introducing restrictions on vape flavours and descriptions, promotion, packaging and point of sale displays and increasing the price of vapes, all intended to make vaping products less attractive to children.
- **Restricting non-nicotine vape products**, by introducing legislation to prohibit the sale of non-nicotine vapes to under 18s and exploring further restrictions on these products.
- **Strengthening enforcement**, by introducing new powers for local authorities to issue fixed penalty notices to enforce age of sale legislation of tobacco products and vapes.

## Government call for evidence on youth vaping (April – June 2023)

In April 2023, the government published [a call for evidence into youth vaping](#) to “identify opportunities to reduce the number of children (people aged under 18) accessing and using vape products, while ensuring they are still easily available as a quit aid for adult smokers”.<sup>29</sup> The call for evidence was hosted by the Office for Health Improvements and Disparities, from April to June 2023, and set a focus on:

1. Building regulatory compliance: ensuring only adult smokers can access legally compliant vape products.
2. The appeal of vape products: how the appearance and product characteristics of vapes may attract children.
3. Marketing and promotion of vape products: how the marketing and promotion of vapes may attract children.
4. The role of social media: the impact of social media on the uptake and use of vaping by children.
5. Effective educational approaches so that children are provided with the facts on vapes to help them understand the risks.
6. The impact of vapes on the environment, particularly disposable products.
7. Understanding the vape market including the price and composition of different vaping products.<sup>30</sup>

## The government’s response and new policy paper on creating a smokefree generation (October 2023)

The government set out its response to the call for evidence in its October 2023 policy paper, [Stopping the start: our new plan to create a smokefree generation](#). The paper set out the proposed actions the government intends to take to reduce the prevalence of smoking and youth vaping.

The paper set out an ambition to create the first ‘smokefree generation’, laying out a “route to prevent addiction to smoking before it starts, to support smokers to quit and to stop vapes being marketed to children”.<sup>31</sup> The government committed to:

- Considering new legislation to regulate the flavours of vapes and their descriptions. Options for how the government might do this would be set out in a further consultation.
- Considering new legislation to regulate the display of vaping products at the point of sale.

---

<sup>29</sup> OHID, [Youth vaping: call for evidence](#), published 11 April 2023

<sup>30</sup> OHID, [Youth vaping: call for evidence](#), published 11 April 2023

<sup>31</sup> DHSC, [Stopping the start: our new plan to create a smokefree generation](#), 4 October 2023

- Considering the further regulation of vape packaging and product presentation, ensuring that neither the device nor its packaging is aimed at children.
- Considering restricting the sale of disposable vapes using powers under section 140 of the [Environmental Protection Act 1990](#).
- Seek to introduce legislation to prohibit the sale of non-nicotine vapes to under 18s. The government also plans to consult on whether to impose further restrictions on non-nicotine vapes.
- Considering, in a consultation, whether to explore further regulatory measures for other nicotine consumer products such as nicotine pouches.
- Addressing a loophole which allows retailers to give out free samples of vapes and other nicotine containing products to under 18s.

## Government consultation on creating a smokefree generation (October – December 2023)

On 12 October 2023, DHSC published its consultation, [Creating a smokefree generation and tackling youth vaping: your views](#). The DHSC is seeking views on a range of proposals to reduce vaping among young people, including those set out in the October 2023 policy paper:

- Making it an offence for anyone born on or after 1 January 2009 to be sold tobacco products
- Restricting the flavours and descriptions of vapes so that vape flavours are no longer targeted at children – we want to ensure this is done in a way that continues to support adult smokers to switch
- Regulating point of sale displays in retail outlets so that vapes are kept out of sight from children and away from products that appeal to them, such as sweets
- Regulating vape packaging and product presentation, ensuring that neither the device nor its packaging is targeted to children
- Considering restricting the sale of disposable vapes, which are clearly linked to the rise in vaping in children. These products are not only attractive to children but also incredibly harmful to the environment
- Exploring further restrictions for non-nicotine vapes and other nicotine consumer products such as nicotine pouches
- Exploring whether increasing the price of vapes will reduce the number of young people using them

- Introducing new powers for local authorities to issue on-the-spot fines (Fixed Penalty Notices) to enforce age of sale legislation of tobacco products and vapes.<sup>32</sup>

## 4.2 Raising the age of sale of tobacco

In October 2023, Prime Minister Rishi [Sunak set out the government's plans to create a 'smokefree generation'](#). Proposed new legislation would make it an offence for anyone born on or after 1 January 2009 to be sold tobacco products. This would effectively raise the smoking age by one year, every year, until it applies to the whole population, and the government reports that “this has the potential to phase out smoking in young people almost completely as early as 2040”.<sup>33</sup>

The government has identified tobacco retailers as the focus of the proposals and has emphasised that it will not criminalise smoking.<sup>34</sup> The government has also made clear that the phased approach would mean that anyone who can legally be sold cigarettes now will not be prevented from doing so in the future.

### Detail on the proposal

The DHSC's October 2023 policy paper, [Stopping the start: our new plan to create a smokefree generation](#), sets out further detail behind the proposal.<sup>35</sup> [The Children and Young Persons Act 1933](#) makes it an offence to sell tobacco to a person under the age of 18. The government has proposed that the products in scope of the new legislation will mirror those in scope of the 1933 Act, therefore applying to all tobacco products, cigarette papers, waterpipe tobacco (such as shisha) and herbal smoking products.

Vapes and nicotine replacement therapies would not be in scope because they do not contain tobacco and are often used as a smoking quit aid.<sup>36</sup>

In the policy paper, the DHSC has provided modelling based on [four smokefree generation scenarios](#), introducing different changes to the

---

<sup>32</sup> Department of Health and Social Care, Prime Minister's Office, 10 Downing Street, Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, Rebecca Pow MP, The Rt Hon Steve Barclay MP, and The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP, [Government sets out next steps to create 'smokefree generation'](#), 12 October 2023

<sup>33</sup> Prime Minister's Office, 10 Downing Street and The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP, [Prime Minister to create 'smokefree generation' by ending cigarette sales to those born on or after 1 January 2009](#), published 4 October 2023

<sup>34</sup> DHSC, [Stopping the start: our new plan to create a smokefree generation](#), 4 October 2023

<sup>35</sup> DHSC, [Stopping the start: our new plan to create a smokefree generation](#), 4 October 2023

<sup>36</sup> DHSC, [Stopping the start: our new plan to create a smokefree generation](#), 4 October 2023

minimum age of sale and accompanying changes to estimated smoking instigation rates.<sup>37 38</sup> Based on its modelling, the DHSC explained:

While the modelling suggests prevalence will continue to decline in all smokefree generation scenarios, it forecasts that this measure could further reduce smoking rates in England among 14 to 30 year olds such that, within 3 to 10 years of implementation, they could be half of current rates and close to 0% as early as 2040.<sup>39</sup>

The policy paper provides further detail on the expected health and economic gains the proposal is expected to generate.

The government has said it would also make it an offence for a person over the legal age to conduct ‘proxy purchasing’ for a person under the legal age.

The government has not yet set out exactly how it plans to legislate to introduce the proposals, but it has been reported that Conservative MPs will be allowed a free vote.<sup>40</sup>

Wes Streeting, the Shadow Health Secretary, has said that Labour would support the government’s proposal to raise the age of sale for tobacco.<sup>41</sup>

Action on Smoking and Health (ASH), alongside the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Smoking and Health, welcomed the proposals.<sup>42</sup>

## 4.3

### Reducing youth vaping

[OHID’s April – June 2023 call for evidence on youth vaping](#) set out an intention to build regulatory compliance to ensure that only adult smokers can access legally compliant vape products.<sup>43</sup>

It sought evidence concerning the appeal of vapes to children, the marketing and promotion of vape products (including on social media), and whether price-related factors affect the appeal of vapes to children.

The government published its response to the call for evidence in its [October 2023 policy paper](#), which set out government proposals on:

- restricting vape flavours

---

<sup>37</sup> DHSC, [Annex 1: modelling assumptions](#), 4 October 2023,

<sup>38</sup> The policy paper notes that DHSC modelling will continue to be further refined ahead of publication of a full impact assessment.

<sup>39</sup> DHSC, [Stopping the start: our new plan to create a smokefree generation](#), 4 October 2023

<sup>40</sup> BBC News, [Rishi Sunak defends his plan to ban smoking for younger generation](#), 4 October 2023

<sup>41</sup> The Telegraph, [Labour conference live: We’ll back Rishi Sunak’s smoking ban, Wes Streeting confirms](#), 8 October 2023

<sup>42</sup> ASH, [APPG Smoking and Health and ASH welcome Rishi Sunak’s announcement on smoking](#), 4 October 2023

<sup>43</sup> OHID, [Youth vaping: call for evidence](#), published 11 April 2023

- regulating vape packaging and product presentation
- regulating point of sale displays
- restricting the sale of disposable vapes
- introducing an age restriction for non-nicotine vapes
- exploring further restrictions for other nicotine consumer products such as nicotine pouches
- preventing industry giving out free samples of vapes to children.<sup>44</sup>

DHSC has published [another call for evidence on creating a smokefree generation and tackling youth vaping](#) that is seeking responses on these proposals.<sup>45</sup> The call for evidence remains open for submissions between October and December 2023.<sup>46</sup>

The UK Vaping Industry Association (UKVIA) has [expressed support for the government's consultation on youth vaping](#) and welcomed efforts to address child vaping.<sup>47</sup>

James Lowman, chief executive of the Association of Convenience Stores (ACS) [highlighted the role of vaping in smoking cessation](#) and said the purpose of the consultation should be “to properly regulate the vaping market and make sure it operates responsibly and sustainably”.<sup>48</sup> Mr Lowman also said that vaping products should never be sold to or used by children.

The Royal College of Physicians [welcomed the consultation](#) “to consider how we can stop the uptake of vaping among children and never-smokers while avoiding potential unintended consequences that discourage adult smokers from quitting”.<sup>49</sup>

## 4.4

## Supporting smoking cessation

In its [October 2023 policy paper](#), the government committed to providing:

- an additional £70 million per year to support local authority-led stop smoking services (SSS) - more than doubling current spend from £68 million per year (to a total of £138 million) and supporting around 360,000 people to set a quit date each year
- an additional £5 million this year and then £15 million per year after to fund new national anti-smoking campaigns - a substantial uplift on current spend

---

<sup>44</sup> DHSC, [Stopping the start: our new plan to create a smokefree generation](#), 4 October 2023

<sup>45</sup> DHSC, [Stopping the start: our new plan to create a smokefree generation](#), 4 October 2023

<sup>46</sup> DHSC, [Creating a smokefree generation and tackling youth vaping: your views](#), 12 October 2023

<sup>47</sup> UKVIA, [UKVIA statement following Government announcement of 8-week consultation on vaping in the UK](#), accessed 16 October 2023

<sup>48</sup> ACS, [Government sets out options for further vape and tobacco restrictions](#), 12 October 2023

<sup>49</sup> Royal College of Physicians, [Press release: Royal College of Physicians welcomes government consultation on youth vaping](#), 12 October 2023

- up to £45 million over 2 years to roll out our new national ‘Swap to Stop’ scheme - supporting 1 million smokers to swap cigarettes for vapes
- up to £10 million over 2 years to provide evidence-based financial incentives to support all pregnant smokers to quit.

## Providing free vaping kits through the ‘Swap to Stop’ scheme

In April 2023, the government announced a national scheme to support one million smokers to ‘swap to stop’, by providing them with a free vaping kit. The scheme would run over two years initially and be targeted at “the most at-risk communities first – focusing on settings such as job centres, homeless centres, and social housing providers”.<sup>50</sup>

The government’s [October 2023 policy paper](#) set out further detail on the scheme, noting that smokers joining the scheme must commit to quit smoking with expert support from a local stop smoking service.<sup>51</sup>

The government has set aside £45 million, over two years, to fund the scheme.<sup>52</sup>

## Vouchers for pregnant smokers

In April 2023, the government set out that it would offer (by the end of 2023), all pregnant smokers, financial incentives (in the form of vouchers) and behavioural support to help them stop smoking.<sup>53</sup>

The government’s [October 2023 policy paper](#) sets out that those who take part will receive up to £400 worth of vouchers.<sup>54</sup>

## 4.5

## Enforcement on illicit tobacco and vaping sales

In the [October 2023 policy paper](#), DHSC highlighted the need for effective enforcement to support the success of smokefree policies, and committed to:

- providing £30 million additional funding per year (from April 2024) to support enforcement agencies such as Trading Standards, Border Force and HMRC to implement and enforce the law (including enforcement of underage sales) and tackle illicit trade

---

<sup>50</sup> HC Statement, [Achieving Smokefree 2030: cutting smoking and stopping kids vaping](#), 17 April 2023

<sup>51</sup> DHSC, [Stopping the start: our new plan to create a smokefree generation](#), 4 October 2023

<sup>52</sup> DHSC, [Stopping the start: our new plan to create a smokefree generation](#), 4 October 2023

<sup>53</sup> DHSC, [Smokers urged to swap cigarettes for vapes in world first scheme](#), 11 April 2023

<sup>54</sup> DHSC, [Stopping the start: our new plan to create a smokefree generation](#), 4 October 2023



- HMRC and Border Force publishing an updated Illicit Tobacco Strategy, which will:
  - set out plans to target illegal activity at all stages of the supply chain to stamp out opportunities for criminals in light of the new rules
  - establish a multi-agency Illicit Tobacco Taskforce, led by HMRC and Border Force, to oversee future evolution of our illicit tobacco strategy
- introducing new powers for local authorities to issue on-the-spot fines (Fixed Penalty Notices) to enforce age of sale legislation of tobacco products, as well as vapes
- enhancing online age verification to stop underage sales of tobacco products and vapes online.<sup>55</sup>

This followed [an earlier government commitment, made in April 2023](#), to provide £3 million funding to create a specialised “illicit vapes enforcement squad” to enforce the rules on the sale of vapes, and address illicit vapes and underage sales.<sup>56</sup> The government had previously announced the forthcoming update to HMRC’s Illicit Tobacco Strategy in April 2023.<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>55</sup> DHSC, [Stopping the start: our new plan to create a smokefree generation](#), 4 October 2023

<sup>56</sup> HC Statement, [Achieving Smokefree 2030: cutting smoking and stopping kids vaping](#), 17 April 2023

<sup>57</sup> HC Statement, [Achieving Smokefree 2030: cutting smoking and stopping kids vaping](#), 17 April 2023

---

## 5 Background to the government's smokefree 2030 policies

### 5.1 The 2017-2022 Tobacco Control Plan for England

The DHSC published the [2017-2022 Tobacco Control Plan for England](#) in July 2017. The plan acknowledged progress made in reducing smoking prevalence since the [previous 2011 Tobacco Control Plan](#)<sup>58</sup> but suggested that there was still more work to do.

Particular concern was raised about high smoking prevalence in young people, pregnant women and people with pre-existing health conditions or low socioeconomic status.

The plan set out the government's vision for a 'smokefree generation', delivered through four overarching ambitions:

#### 1. The first smokefree generation

People should be supported not to start smoking, so we aim, by the end of 2022 to:

- Reduce the prevalence of 15 year olds who regularly smoke from 8% to 3% or less.
- Reduce smoking prevalence amongst adults in England from 15.5% to 12% or less.
- Reduce the inequality gap in smoking prevalence between those in routine and manual occupations and the general population. To do this we need all public services to work together, leading the way in helping people to stop smoking. After 2022, we will continue to reduce smoking prevalence further, on our way to a smokefree generation.

#### 2. A smokefree pregnancy for all

Every child deserves the best start in life, so we aim, by the end of 2022 to:

- Reduce the prevalence of smoking in pregnancy from 10.7% to 6% or less.

---

<sup>58</sup> DHSC, [Healthy Lives, Healthy People: a tobacco control plan for England](#), published 9 March 2011

### 3. Parity of esteem for those with mental health conditions

People with mental ill health should be given equal priority to those with physical ill health, so we aim to:

- Improve data collected on smoking and mental health to help us to support people with mental health conditions to quit smoking.
- Make all mental health inpatient services sites smokefree by 2018.

### 4. Backing evidence based innovations to support quitting

We are committed to evidence-based policy making, so we aim to:

- Help people to quit smoking by permitting innovative technologies that minimise the risk of harm.
- Maximise the availability of safer alternatives to smoking.<sup>59</sup>

In a March 2023 Parliamentary Question, [the government was asked if it still intends to publish a separate Tobacco Control Plan](#). The government said:

In the coming weeks, the Government will unveil a set of proposals to realise the Smokefree 2030 ambition and respond to the recommendations in the Khan Review. This will be separate to the Major Conditions Strategy.<sup>60</sup>

Information on the forthcoming Major Conditions Strategy is available in section 5.3 of this briefing, and additional government comment on the publication of a new Tobacco Control Plan is available in section 5.4 of this briefing.

## APPG proposals for a new Tobacco Control Plan

In June 2021, the All Party Parliamentary Group ([APPG](#)) on Smoking and Health published a report setting out its recommendations for the forthcoming Tobacco Control Plan.<sup>61</sup>

The APPG made 12 recommendations including; requiring tobacco manufacturers to pay into a ‘Smokefree 2030 Fund’; target smoking cessation support to at-risk groups such as those with mental health conditions and those who are pregnant; reduce the appeal and availability of vaping and nicotine products to children and; consult on raising the age of sale for tobacco from 18 to 21 years.

---

<sup>59</sup> Department of Health, [Towards a Smokefree Generation: A Tobacco Control Plan for England](#), 18 July 2017

<sup>60</sup> [PQ 163856](#), 20 March 2023

<sup>61</sup> ASH, [The All Party Parliamentary Group on Smoking and Health recommendations for the Tobacco Control Plan 2021](#), June 2021

## 5.2 The health disparities white paper

In February 2022, the then Health Secretary Sajid Javid [set out that the government would publish a health disparities white paper](#) in Spring 2022, “aiming to break the link between people’s background and their prospect for a healthy life”.<sup>62</sup>

### Health disparities white paper succeeded by the Major Conditions Strategy

In September 2022, it was reported the then Health Secretary Dr Thérèse Coffey had decided not to publish the expected white paper on health disparities.<sup>63</sup> [However, responding to the claims at the time, the DHSC said](#) the information was “inaccurate” and that “no decisions have been taken”.<sup>64</sup>

In [January 2023, Health Secretary Steve Barclay made a statement in the Commons](#) setting out the government’s intention to develop and publish a Major Conditions Strategy (discussed in section 5.3 of this briefing). Mr Barclay said, “this work combines our key commitments in mental health, cancer, dementia and health disparities into a single, powerful strategy”.<sup>65</sup>

In May 2023, the government said the Major Conditions Strategy “succeeds” the health disparities white paper.<sup>66</sup>

## 5.3 The Major Conditions Strategy

Introducing the Major Conditions Strategy, Mr Barclay discussed the Government’s approach:

Our approach will be rooted in the best understanding of the evidence to tackle the major conditions which contribute to the burden of disease in England, namely:

- Cancers
- Cardiovascular diseases, including stroke and diabetes
- Chronic respiratory diseases
- Dementia

---

<sup>62</sup> Statement UIN HCWS591, [Health Update](#), 4 February 2022

<sup>63</sup> The Guardian, [Thérèse Coffey scraps promised paper on health inequality](#), 29 September 2022

<sup>64</sup> Pulse, [RCGP and BMA demand Coffey publishes health disparities white paper](#), 3 October 2022

<sup>65</sup> Statement HCWS514, [Government action on major conditions and diseases](#), 24 January 2023

<sup>66</sup> HC Deb, [Health inequalities: North-west London](#), Vol 732, 15 May 2023

- Mental ill health
- Musculoskeletal disorders<sup>67</sup>

During a [March 2023 debate on National No Smoking Day](#), Neil O'Brien, Minister for Primary Care and Public Health, said "tobacco and tobacco control will be threaded through the major conditions strategy".<sup>68</sup> Mr O'Brien noted that smoking is a contributor to most of the conditions the strategy is set to consider.

In August 2023, the DHSC published its policy paper, [Major conditions strategy: a case for change and our strategic framework](#). The paper sets out areas of the government's focus for the final and forthcoming strategy.

Chapter 2 of this paper focussed on primary and secondary prevention. It identified smoking as the biggest single cause of preventable illness and death and highlighted the government's proposals to support people to stop smoking and consult on further tobacco controls.

The government has said the strategy will be published in early 2024.<sup>69</sup>

## 5.4

### Will the government still publish a new Tobacco Control Plan?

The government had previously said a new Tobacco Control Plan would be published in 2022.<sup>70</sup>

In September 2022, the government said it was considering the recommendations set out in the [Khan Review of England's smokefree target](#) to inform the new Plan which would be published "in due course".<sup>71</sup>

During Dr Thérèse Coffey's tenure as Health Secretary, [it was reported the government was no longer intending to publish](#) a new Tobacco Control Plan.<sup>72</sup> This was reportedly due to Dr Coffey's and the then Prime Minister Liz Truss's "scepticism" about tobacco control. When asked about the reports, Dr Coffey said she was not aware that "any target has been scrapped", and that her priorities were focussing on other aspects of the health service.<sup>73</sup>

The government has been asked, subsequently, about the publication of a new Tobacco Control Plan.

---

<sup>67</sup> Statement HCWS514, [Government action on major conditions and diseases](#), 24 January 2023

<sup>68</sup> HC Deb, [National No Smoking Day](#), Vol 729, 9 March 2023

<sup>69</sup> [HL10101](#), 26 September 2023

<sup>70</sup> [PQ 150258](#), 20 April 2022

<sup>71</sup> [PQ 45535](#), 7 September 2022

<sup>72</sup> The Guardian, [Thérèse Coffey to drop smoking action plan](#), insiders say, 11 October 2022

<sup>73</sup> The Telegraph, [Therese Coffey indicates another U-turn over smoking health plan](#), 11 October 2022

During a March 2023 debate on national no smoking day, Mr O'Brien was asked to clarify "whether the tobacco control plan will come within the major conditions strategy".<sup>74</sup> Mr O'Brien did not respond directly to the question, but did say:

I will hopefully reassure the hon. Lady on that point shortly. I was saying that tobacco and tobacco control will be threaded through the major conditions strategy, but I will come to our specific plans to control smoking in a moment.<sup>75</sup>

Mr O'Brien went on to set out the expected scope of the Major Conditions Strategy and the link between smoking and the conditions to be included within the strategy. He also said that he would, in the coming weeks, "unveil a set of proposals to realise the smokefree 2030 ambition and to respond to the Khan Review's recommendations".

In a March 2023 Parliamentary Question, with reference to the Major Conditions Strategy, [the government was asked if it still intends to publish a separate Tobacco Control Plan](#). The government responded as below:

In the coming weeks, the Government will unveil a set of proposals to realise the Smokefree 2030 ambition and respond to the recommendations in the Khan Review. This will be separate to the Major Conditions Strategy.<sup>76</sup>

---

<sup>74</sup> HC Deb, [National No Smoking Day](#), Vol 729, C186WH, 9 March 2023

<sup>75</sup> HC Deb, [National No Smoking Day](#), Vol 729, C186WH, 9 March 2023

<sup>76</sup> [PQ 163856](#), 20 March 2023

The House of Commons Library is a research and information service based in the UK Parliament. Our impartial analysis, statistical research and resources help MPs and their staff scrutinise legislation, develop policy, and support constituents.

Our published material is available to everyone on [commonslibrary.parliament.uk](https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk).

Get our latest research delivered straight to your inbox. Subscribe at [commonslibrary.parliament.uk/subscribe](https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/subscribe) or scan the code below:



 [commonslibrary.parliament.uk](https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk)

 [@commonslibrary](https://twitter.com/commonslibrary)