

# Letter of Support for a Smokefree Generation

Dear Member of Parliament,

As councillors who support the Smokefree Generation proposal, we are writing to urge you to support the Government's proposed legislation to raise the age of sale of tobacco by one year, every year, to help create a smokefree generation.

Councils are the stewards of local public health, and we see the impact that smoking has on our communities. Smoking is the biggest cause of cancer and death in the UK and two in three people who smoke will die from a smoking-related illness, with countless more left suffering from disability and disease.

ASH estimates the gross cost of smoking to public finances (including health service and social care costs) in the UK was £20.6bn in 2022, more than double the £10.2bn collected in tobacco duty in the same year. Most of this consists of lost income tax and higher benefit payments resulting from tobacco-related lost earnings, unemployment, illness and premature death. Creating a smokefree generation will help to alleviate these costs and ease the pressure on public services.

This policy is also supported by the public. [Polling](#) in England carried out by YouGov for ASH shows that raising the age of sale to create a smokefree generation is supported by 67% of the public, with only 14% opposed. This includes majority support from voters of the main political parties (Con 74%, Lab 72%, Lib Dem 65%) and across every region in England.

Since the UK Government announced the smokefree generation policy in October, there has been an increase in tobacco industry [lobbying](#) to block the proposal, including threatening [legal action](#) against the Government. The Public Health Minister, Dame Andrea Leadsom, has rightly [called out](#) Big Tobacco's attempts to "undermine the policy". These efforts are summarised on the Tobacco Tactics website: [Tobacco Industry Interference with Endgame Policies](#). The industry also promotes a range of misleading arguments about the smokefree generation proposal.

However:

- **Raising the age of sale will not worsen the illicit market** – Raising the age of sale will have a gradual impact over time, so is unlikely to significantly

impact the black market. It also won't impact adults who already smoke – it is about preventing young people from starting in the first place. The introduction of tough anti-smoking measures over the last two decades, including increasing the age of sale from 16 to 18 in 2007, did not lead to an increase in illicit sales. The illicit market for cigarettes has halved since 2000 from 22% to 11% thanks to robust enforcement activity.

- **Raising the age of sale will not harm small retailers** – Large independent surveys commissioned by ASH found that the majority of [retailers support](#) current and more stringent regulation of tobacco, and that previous regulations such as display bans and standardised packaging had [no impact](#) on their business, either positive or negative.
- **Raising the age of sale will be simple to enforce** – Increases in the age of sale have been implemented in the UK and around the world without major enforcement issues and led to declines in smoking in the age-groups affected. The policy is [supported](#) by the Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI) which will lead on enforcement.

If this legislation is passed, we are ready to work with national and local partners to support its implementation and prevent young people in our communities from taking up smoking, thereby protecting them from a potential lifetime of addiction, ill health and disease.

We welcome the Government's commitment to increase funding for measures and services that help people quit smoking and hope you can join us in asking for this to be sustained as it will be vital to achieve smokefree targets in England. If implemented, raising the age of sale will be one of the most impactful public health policies in a generation. We urge you to support the legislation as it goes through Parliament to make this a reality and cement the UK's position as a world leader in tobacco control.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr Bernadette Oliphant  
Cllr Lorna Fielker  
Cllr Gary Haley  
Cllr David Roche  
Cllr Barbara Mosterman  
Cllr Piers Allen

Cllr Luke Lancaster  
Cllr Megan Wright  
Cllr Sunny Brar

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Cllr John Bradbury  
Cllr Wendy Pattison  
Cllr Beverley Brewer  
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