

Tobacco and Vapes Bill becomes law

29.4.2026 - | Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs

The next generation will be smoke-free as Tobacco and Vapes Bill is granted Royal Assent.

- Government creates the UK's first smoke-free generation by phasing out tobacco sales
- Lifesaving legislation the most significant public health reform in generations
- New law will protect children from smoking and vaping – alongside record funding to help support millions of adults to quit.

Future generations will now be saved from the harms of smoking as the Tobacco and Vapes Bill, becomes law.

The Bill has been granted Royal Assent today, delivering a historic step towards a smoke-free UK and protecting people from the harms of tobacco by making it illegal to sell tobacco to anyone born on or after 1 January 2009.

This world-leading legislation means today's children will never legally be sold cigarettes, breaking the cycle of addiction and disadvantage that has persisted for decades.

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Wes Streeting said:

This legislation marks a turning point for the nation's health. By ending the cycle of tobacco addiction for future generations, we are taking one of the boldest steps in decades to prevent illness before it even begins.

For too long, smoking has claimed lives, widened inequalities, and placed avoidable pressure on our health services. This law changes that trajectory—protecting young people from ever starting, while backing current smokers with the support they need to quit for good.

A smoke-free generation is now within reach, and this government is determined to deliver a healthier, fairer future for everyone.

Smoking remains the leading preventable cause of death, responsible for around 80,000 deaths a year in the UK, and is a major driver of cancer, heart disease and stroke. It also places a significant burden on the NHS and wider economy.

The new law delivers a core manifesto commitment of this government and is a central pillar of the 10 Year Health Plan, supporting the shift from sickness to prevention and helping people live longer, healthier lives.

It also helps tackle the challenge of youth vaping, protecting future generations from the risks of nicotine addiction, while still enabling vapes to be accessible and effective to adult smokers seeking to quit.

The Act includes measures to ban the advertising and sponsorship of vapes and nicotine products, as well as powers to restrict their packaging, branding and displays that are designed to appeal to children.

It gives powers to strengthen smoke-free protections in certain public places, particularly to protect children and medically vulnerable people from second-hand smoke.

Chief Medical Officer for England, Professor Sir Chris Whitty said:

Smoking causes serious harm across the life course and remains a major cause of diseases including lung diseases, heart disease, stroke, bad pregnancy outcomes and premature death.

Second-hand smoke is also extremely dangerous, particularly for children, pregnant women, and people with medical conditions.

Cigarettes take choice away by addicting people and most smokers wish they had never started but are trapped.

Marketing vapes at children is utterly unacceptable and this Act takes powers to restrict it.

On the 13 February the government launched a consultation on proposals to extend existing indoor smoke-free places to certain outdoor settings and to introduce new heated tobacco and vape-free places.

In addition, the law introduces stronger enforcement powers, including the ability to implement a retail licensing scheme and tackle illicit tobacco and vape sales. These measures will help ensure responsible retailing and prevent rogue traders from profiting from addiction.

Dr Claire Fuller, NHS England National Medical Director, said:

This legislation is a major step forward in tackling one of England's biggest public health challenges.

The NHS will support the Bill's ambition by providing advice and treatment to help hundreds of thousands of people stop smoking – and we will work with our local authority partners to reduce tobacco-related disease among future generations.

Alongside this legislation, the government is investing in record levels of support to help the UK's 5.3 million smokers quit, including providing record levels of funding for local stop smoking services.

Michelle Mitchell, Chief Executive Officer at Cancer Research UK, said:

This is a truly historic achievement that will help to save and improve lives. With the new law in place, we are moving towards a future where children will grow up shielded from the lifelong harms of tobacco. It will mean more people living a life free from the grip of deadly addiction, fewer people facing a cancer diagnosis and less pressure on an already over stretched health service.

Today's milestone is the result of decades of research, overwhelming support in Parliament, tireless campaigning and backing from people whose lives have been devastated by smoking. Governments across the UK must now ensure the Act is

implemented fully in every nation, alongside support to help people quit smoking. A future free from the lethal harms of tobacco is firmly within reach.

Three-quarters of smokers say they wish they had never started. By helping people quit and preventing future generations from starting, this legislation will reduce health inequalities, improve quality of life, and deliver long-term benefits for society.

Hazel Cheeseman, Chief Executive at Action on Smoking and Health, said:

This is a truly watershed moment in public health. It is no longer a question of if smoking will end but rather a question of when. Smoking has prematurely taken millions of lives in the UK over the last 50 years. Ridding our society of the pain and suffering it causes is a gift to future generations.

This is a moment to be seized, not only to protect the generations to come but to accelerate our support for the millions who are already smoking. Age should be no barrier to being part of a smokefree future, whether you're 70 or 17, now is the time.

By tackling the root causes of ill health, the Tobacco and Vapes Act will ease pressure on the NHS, support economic growth, and help build a healthier, smoke-free future for the country.

Sarah Sleet, Chief Executive at Asthma + Lung UK, said:

The landmark Tobacco and Vapes bill, which becomes law today, will transform the nation's health. A smoke-free generation is one of the most significant pieces of public health legislation in decades. No longer will the tobacco industry be able to wreak havoc on the lungs of future generations.

In addition, this new law introduces desperately needed restrictions on where vapes, cigarettes and heated tobacco products can be used. It will protect vulnerable people, including those with lung conditions, around schools and outside hospitals. Now that this historic and long-awaited moment has been reached, the government must continue to provide better support for existing smokers and hold big tobacco to account for the untold damage they have caused to our lungs.

Mum of three Sue Mountain, 60, from South Shields, started smoking aged 11. She underwent laser treatment aged 48 after a biopsy revealed she had laryngeal cancer in 2012. The cancer then returned in 2015 and then again in 2017, but she is now cancer free. Sue said:

Tobacco companies denied the link between smoking and cancer for decades – long after doctors had proved it.

At the same time, they made cigarettes more addictive, depriving families of their loved ones, and causing cancers, COPD, heart attacks and strokes which had to be picked up by the NHS. All so shareholders and executives could make more profit.

As a former smoker, it's not that you love smoking, but you need it because it's an addiction. Phasing out sales of lethal tobacco will stop more children becoming the next

generation of people sitting in a hospital terrified and having to tell their family they have cancer.

Charmaine Griffiths, Chief Executive of the British Heart Foundation, said:

This is a true landmark moment for public health. For everyone who has lost someone to a smoking related heart attack or stroke, for every clinician who has seen the toll of tobacco at the bedside, and for every young person who will now grow up free from the harms of smoking - we celebrate this historic achievement that will save lives for generations to come.

Professor Steve Turner, President, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, said:

The Tobacco & Vapes Bill has the exact type of bold ambition and long-term thinking that makes meaningful change for children and young people. This will help to improve child health outcomes and narrow the unacceptable health inequalities gap.

Paediatricians are thrilled to have supported this important piece of legislation, which will reduce the unacceptable burden that tobacco and vaping places on today's youth, and also protect future generations from the harms of nicotine addiction. I celebrate this landmark moment for child health. This is a clear signal that the wellbeing of children and young people can and should come first.

Cllr Dr Wendy Taylor MBE, Chair of the Local Government Association's Health and Wellbeing Committee, said:

The creation of a smokefree generation, preventing young people from ever starting to smoke, is one of the most effective ways to improve health outcomes and manage future pressure on our health and care services.

Reducing the appeal of vapes to children with tighter controls on flavours, packaging and promotion, is an important step in addressing the concerning rise in youth vaping.

The comprehensive licensing scheme for retailers selling tobacco and vape products will support councils to prevent underage sales and curb the illicit market.

Legislation alone will not be enough to ensure these measures succeed. Councils must be properly resourced to enforce the new regulations, deliver stop smoking services, and protect communities from harmful and illegal products.

Greg Fell OBE, President of the Association of Directors of Public Health, said:

This Bill is the greatest piece of public health legislation in a generation and is a huge landmark.

Smoking kills but by protecting our children and young people from ever becoming

addicted to this lethal product, we will save thousands of lives and give the next generation the freedom to live a future where everyone can live a healthy life for longer.

The Bill also shifts the focus away from individual choice and treating the consequences of smoking towards preventing harm in the first place. This is key to improving the nation's health and we hope signals a change in how we tackle the negative impacts on our health from the consumption of other unhealthy products, including gambling and alcohol.

Ailsa Rutter OBE Director of Fresh and Balance, whose own father died from smoking-caused COPD at the age of 61, said:

The North East has seen the largest fall in smoking over the last two decades in England, with a massive shift in social norms around smoking and thousands of people quitting for good.

Most people who smoke would like to be able to quit or have tried before - and the great news is there are more effective ways to quit smoking in our region than ever before.

We wholeheartedly support the smokefree generation policy and a future when our children don't end up hooked to lethal tobacco smoking. The aim is to have a future free of the death and disease of tobacco and this is another step towards this.

Children's Commissioner, Dame Rachel de Souza, said:

This is a landmark moment in protecting children from addiction and the lifelong harms caused by smoking and vaping.

As Children's Commissioner, I want all children to grow up happy, healthy and well so the focus must now be on strong enforcement, with support provided to children already using nicotine, so this legislation delivers change for every child.

Mr Tim Mitchell, President of the Royal College of Surgeons of England (RCS England), said:

This legislation is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to finally end the scourge of smoking.

As surgeons, we see its devastating effects every day, with smokers facing far higher risks of surgical complications, delayed recovery and death.

The health of millions of people will be improved, reducing harm to families, and strengthening the nation's health.

Professor Sanjay Agrawal, Special Adviser on tobacco at the Royal College of Physicians, said:

This is a landmark moment for public health in the UK.

Every week I treat patients whose lives have been irreversibly damaged by smoking. It

remains the single biggest preventable cause of illness and death in the UK. The evidence is clear: stopping people from ever starting to smoke is the most effective way to end the cycle of addiction and disease.

This legislation gives today's children, and future generations, the chance to live in a society where smoking is consigned to history books. This means fewer people developing chronic disease, fewer hospital admissions, and fewer years of life lost early.

A better future for the nation's health starts today.

Professor Tracy Daszkiewicz, President of the Faculty of Public Health, said:

Today is a historic day for public health across the UK. The Tobacco and Vapes Act is the most significant tobacco control legislation in a generation, a world-leading commitment to protecting communities right across the UK from the immense harm caused by smoking.

We must now redouble our efforts to support people who smoke to quit, tackle the deep inequalities that contribute to high rates of smoking in our most disadvantaged communities, and push forward the broader policies that will make a smokefree UK a reality for everyone.

William Roberts, Chief Executive, Royal Society of Public Health, said:

This Bill will be a game-changer for the nation's health.

Smoking is the leading cause of premature death in the UK. It is responsible for 80,000 deaths a year, and one in four of all cancer related deaths.

Not only will this Bill protect future generations from tobacco harms, but it will also reduce preventable deaths and take pressure off the NHS.

Mark Rowland, Co-Chair of the Mental Health and Smoking Partnership and Chief Executive of the Mental Health Foundation, said:

The Tobacco and Vapes Act is a public health triumph that will protect the mental health of so many, particularly young people, who would have otherwise experienced the devastating mental and physical consequences of smoking. The idea that smoking reduces stress is a myth – instead, it is linked with a higher risk of anxiety or depression, and worsens psychiatric symptoms for those with existing mental health problems. Meanwhile, quitting smoking has been shown to be at least as effective as anti-depressants.

With a record number of young people now struggling with their mental health, this ban could not be more timely. The government must be commended for getting passing this bill in the face of sustained opposition from those who would seek to profit from smoking. Now, if we are to reduce the 15-20 year mortality gap for people with mental illness, more focus must be put on supporting people to quit, by ensuring smoking

cessation services are integrated through mental health services.

Phil Anderson, Strategic Director for External Affairs at the National Children's Bureau, said:

We know the negative impact of smoking and vaping on children's health outcomes. The Tobacco and Vapes Bill is a welcome step to prioritising prevention and early intervention that we know will make the most difference for children's health. We look forward to continuing work with government to ensure it delivers the best possible outcomes for children and young people.

Jacob Lant, Chief Executive of National Voices, said:

The smoking ban in 2007 was one of the most important government interventions in my lifetime in terms of improving public health.

Almost two decades on, the Tobacco and Vapes Act builds on this and means that no new young person will ever legally be able to smoke. Its impact will be profound, progressive and popular, exactly the sort of policy we need to see more of.

Dr Ruth Sharrock, Respiratory Consultant at Gateshead Health NHS FT, Clinical Lead for the Smokefree NHS Taskforce for the North East and North Cumbria ICB and Clinical Lead for Lung Cancer and Health Inequalities for the Northern Cancer Alliance. Dr Sharrock said:

Every week I still have to tell patients that they have lung cancer, or severe COPD, and watch as the bottom drops out of their world. The majority of these diseases have been caused by tobacco dependence, an addiction that takes away people's choices and health; patients suffering from them have had their chance at a healthy life expectancy stolen from them.

Nobody wants our children to become the next generation of adults with smoking-related illnesses on our hospital wards. This is a chance to enable today's children to have a life without the addiction, cost and diseases caused by tobacco.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/tobacco-and-vapes-bill-becomes-law>