

**21 March 2024**

**Government Policy Paper: Stopping the Start:  
Our New Plan to Create a Smokefree  
Generation.**

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**Purpose of the report**

**Government Policy Paper: Stopping the Start: Our New Plan to Create a  
Smokefree Generation.**

1. On the 8 November 2023 Government announced a new Policy Paper: Stopping the start: our new plan to create a smokefree generation.
2. Smoking is a leading cause of preventable death and illness in the UK. The Government in 2019 pledged to make England 'smokefree' by 2030 – achieved when adult smoking prevalence falls to 5% or less.

**Smoking - stopping the start.**

**3. Overview**

3.1. It is recognised that there is no more addictive product that is legally sold in our shops than tobacco, which is why 'stopping the start' of addiction is vital. Three-quarters of smokers would never have started if they had the choice again. It is much easier never to start than to have to quit.

3.2. The great majority of smokers start as teenagers - 83% before the age of 20. Drawing on the 2022 Khan Review recommendations, the Government will bring forward new legislative proposals to raise the age of sale indefinitely. The government wants to continue the current downward trajectory and get smoking rates to 0%. There is no safe age to smoke.

**4. Legislating to create a smokefree generation**

4.1. The Government will bring forward legislation making it an offence to sell tobacco products to anyone born on or after 1 January 2009. In effect, the law will stop children turning 14 or younger this year from ever legally being sold tobacco products - raising the smoking age by a year each year until it applies to the whole population. This will ensure children and young people do not become addicted in the first place.

4.2 As is the case with current age of sale legislation, the emphasis will be on those who sell tobacco products - the government has never and will not criminalise smoking. Furthermore, the phased approach means that anyone who can legally be sold cigarettes now will not be prevented from doing so in the future. These changes will be brought in following an implementation period, alongside ongoing support for current smokers to quit.

## **5. Context**

The Children and Young Persons (Sale of Tobacco etc) Order 2007 increased the legal age of sale for tobacco products from 16 to 18 years old in England and Wales. There have been calls in recent years to go further. The Khan Review recommended the Government raise the age of sale by one year each year to stop people from ever starting to smoke and create the first smokefree generation.

## **6. Recommendation**

The Committee is asked to note the information.

Further information can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/stopping-the-start-our-new-plan-to-create-a-smokefree-generation/stopping-the-start-our-new-plan-to-create-a-smokefree-generation>

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