

External Affairs – Tobacco and Vapes Bill Royal Assent – partner factsheet (for information only)
April 2026

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For further information or any enquiries, please contact the DHSC External Affairs team at DHSCExternalAffairs@dhsc.gov.uk

Tobacco and Vapes Bill Royal Assent– partner factsheet

Key information

- The UK-wide Tobacco and Vapes Bill, developed alongside the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive, has received Royal Assent, having now completed all parliamentary stages.
- The legislation delivers a key government manifesto commitment to create a smoke-free generation and will make it illegal to sell tobacco products to anyone born on or after 1 January 2027.
- This means children turning 18 from 2027 onwards will be the first generation never legally able to be sold tobacco products.
- Smoking remains the leading preventable cause of death in the UK, responsible for around 80,000 deaths each year.
- There are approximately 5.3 million adult smokers in the UK today with around three-quarters saying they wish they had never started.
- Smoking costs the UK economy around £21.3 billion every year, including pressure on the NHS and lost productivity.
- The Act supports a shift from sickness to prevention, aligning with the government's 10 Year Health Plan and aims to protect future generations from nicotine addiction by banning vape advertising and sponsorship and by giving government powers to regulate vape and nicotine product packaging, flavours and display. This will help reduce their appeal to children.
- It introduces powers to strengthen smoke-free protections in certain outdoor settings through secondary legislation and enables a new retail licensing scheme for tobacco, vape and nicotine products across the UK - [Smoke-free, heated tobacco-free and vape-free places in England - GOV.UK](#)

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- Enforcement will be strengthened, allowing Trading Standards to issue fixed penalty notices for underage sales and related offences.
- Further implementation detail, including guidance and secondary regulations, will be published on GOV.UK following Royal Assent.
- This legislation is widely supported by public health experts and reflects strong public backing for action to protect children from smoking harms.

Q&A

What is happening?

The Tobacco and Vapes Bill has received Royal Assent, meaning it has completed all parliamentary stages and will become law. This is a major public health milestone.

What does this law actually do?

It creates the UK's first smoke-free generation, this means anyone born on or after 1 January 2009 can't be legally sold tobacco. The legislation also introduces stronger controls on vaping and tobacco regulation.

Why is the government introducing this now?

Smoking remains the leading preventable cause of death in the UK, responsible for around 80,000 deaths a year. This law focuses on preventing harm before it starts.

Does this mean smoking is being banned for everyone?

Adults who can legally buy tobacco today will always be able to do so. The smokefree generation means anyone born on or after 1 January 2009 can't be sold tobacco, in practise this means the age of sale will gradually rise over time.

Is this a prohibition policy?

No. This is about prevention, not prohibition. This policy progressively raises the age of sale for tobacco, while continuing to support adult smokers to quit.

How will this affect current smokers?

It will not criminalise or penalise current smokers. Instead, it is paired with expanded stop smoking services to help those who want to quit.

What about vaping – is that being banned?

No. Vapes are not banned. They remain available as a quitting tool for adult smokers, but their advertising and sponsorship will be banned.

Why is vaping included in the legislation?

Because of concerns about youth vaping and nicotine addiction, the Act

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introduces powers to enable restrictions on packaging, flavours and display subject to consultation. This will enable us to reduce their appeal to children.

Will this lead to a black market in tobacco?

The government is strengthening enforcement powers, including Trading Standards issuing £200 fines for underage sales and allows us to introduce a retail licensing scheme to help prevent illicit trade.

What enforcement measures are included?

Trading Standards will gain stronger powers, including fixed penalty notices for underage sales and other breaches of tobacco and vape regulations.

What about outdoor smoking restrictions?

The Act provides powers to strengthen smoke-free protections in certain outdoor settings. To protect children and medically vulnerable people from the second-hand harms of smoking we have launched a consultation on proposals to extend smoke-free laws to certain outdoor public places, including children's playgrounds and outside of hospitals and schools. We are also proposing to introduce vape-free and heated-tobacco free places.

Does this affect pubs, restaurants or hospitality businesses?

Where an indoor setting is already smoke-free, we propose to make it vape-free too. This will help make it clear to the public where it is illegal to use vapes and to enable enforcement agencies to enforce rules accordingly.

A number of pubs, restaurants and hospitality businesses already have vape-free policies, including large chains such as Greene King and Wetherspoons.

We are not proposing to introduce any restrictions on smoking or vaping at outdoor hospitality settings.

Our approach to public health always has to weigh up the benefits to public health against any potential consequences.

How does this support the NHS?

Reducing smoking-related illness will ease long-term pressure on the NHS. It is estimated that smoking costs the NHS and social care around £3 billion annually.

How does this help the economy?

Smoking costs the UK economy around £21.3 billion each year through healthcare costs and lost productivity. Reducing smoking will improve productivity and reduce public costs.

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Is there public support for this?

Yes. Polling shows strong public support for measures to protect children, including over 90% support for smoke-free school grounds and playgrounds. ASH reports that [71% of adults support the goal to make Britain a country where no-one smokes](#).

How many people smoke in the UK?

There are around 5.3 million adult smokers in the UK. While smoking rates at a national level are at their lowest recorded levels, at around 10.4% of adults, rates remain stubbornly high in certain areas of the country.

What support is there for people who want to quit?

The government is investing in expanded smoking cessation services, alongside national support programmes to help smokers quit.

What happens next after Royal Assent?

Further regulations and detailed implementation guidance will be developed and published on GOV.UK.

Is this legislation UK-wide?

Yes, the Tobacco and Vapes Bill is UK-wide. It has been developed in partnership with the devolved governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The territorial application of future regulations may vary, meaning some future regulations could apply UK-wide whilst others might apply only, for example, in England.

What is the long-term goal of this policy?

To create a smoke-free generation, reduce preventable illness and deaths, and shift the NHS and public health system from treating illness to preventing it.

Is this just the government acting as a “nanny state”?

No. This is about protecting children from addiction and reducing avoidable deaths. There is no freedom in addiction. Smoking is the leading preventable cause of death in the UK, and most smokers say they wish they had never started. The policy is designed to stop future generations being drawn into a highly addictive product, while adults who can legally buy tobacco today will continue to be able to do so. It also has strong public backing, particularly for measures that protect children in places like schools and playgrounds.