



Department
of Health &
Social Care

Creating a Smokefree Generation

February 2024

The Smokefree Generation Policy

- On 4 October 2023 the Prime Minister announced his ambitious plan to create a 'smokefree generation', and the government published the command paper "[Stopping the start: our new plan to create a smokefree generation](#)".
- The headline policy in this announcement was the plan to protect future generations by bringing forward legislation to **make it an offence to sell tobacco products to anyone born on or after 1 January 2009**. In effect, this means anyone who turns 15 in 2024, or younger, will never be legally sold tobacco.
- This is the most significant public health intervention in a generation.
- To accompany the Smokefree Generation policy, the announcement also included i. additional support for current smokers, ii. measures to tackle youth vaping, and iii. Increased funding for enforcement to tackle the illicit trade and underage sales.

Policy paper

Stopping the start: our new plan to create a smokefree generation

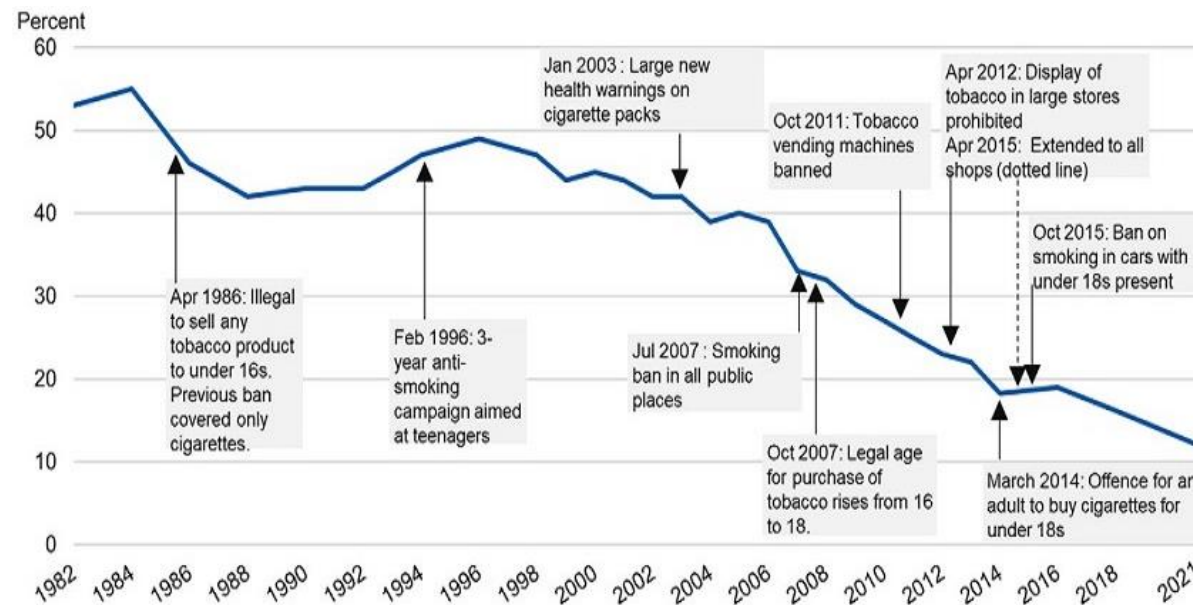
This command paper sets out the proposed actions the government will take to tackle smoking and youth vaping.

From: [Department of Health and Social Care](#)

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The journey to a Smokefree Generation



Smoking prevalence in England mapped against key interventions from 1982 to 2021 - *Smoking, drinking and drug use among young people in England, 2021*

Feb 2019 – APPG on Smoking and Health recommends raising the age of sale to 21

April 2023 – Minister Neil O'Brien speech at the Policy Exchange on Achieving Smokefree 2030 – doesn't mention age of sale.

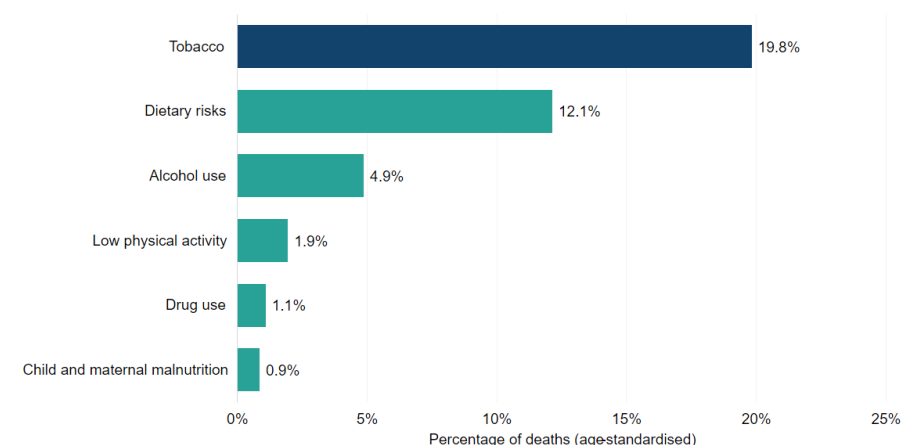
June 2022 - The Khan review recommends the SFGGen model

October 2023 – Prime Minister to create 'smokefree generation' in Party Conference speech

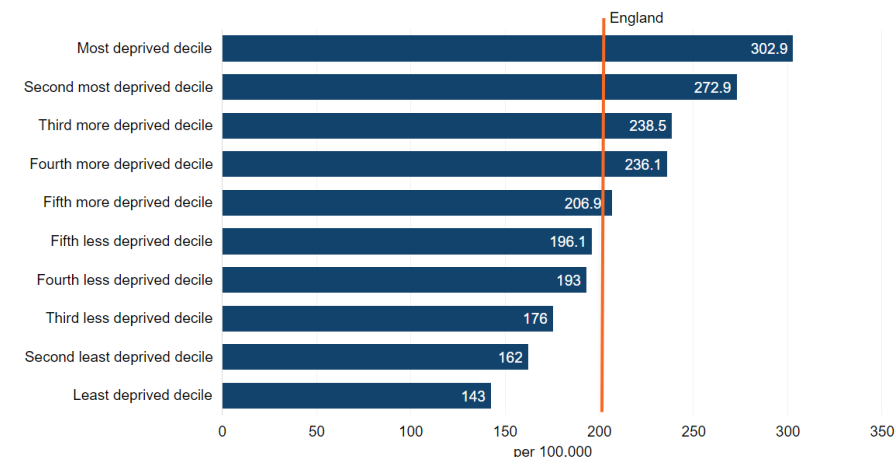
The Case For Change

- Smoking is the biggest preventable cause of death in the UK. It is responsible for around **80,000 deaths per year**, including **64,000 in England**. Smoking causes around **1 in 4 cancer deaths in the UK** and is responsible for just over **70% of all lung cancer cases**. No other consumer product **kills up to two-thirds of its users**.
- Smoking also **substantially increases the risk of many major health conditions** throughout people's lives, such as strokes, diabetes, heart disease, stillbirth, dementia and asthma. Smoking **increases the chance of stillbirth by almost half** and makes **children twice as likely to be hospitalised for asthma** from second-hand smoking.
- Smoking drives socioeconomic and geographic disparities in health outcomes. **People in the least deprived areas of the country live around a decade longer than people in the most-deprived areas** – smoking is the single biggest driver.
- In total, smoking **costs the country £17 billion a year** – through lost productivity and health and care costs. It places huge burden on the NHS and social care - almost **every minute of every day** someone is admitted to hospital because of smoking.
- 83% of smokers start before the age of 20**. Whilst youth smoking is reducing, rates in older teens remain high - **14.1% of 16 to 17 year olds in England were smokers in 2022**.

Age-standardised mortality attributed to risk factors, England, 2019

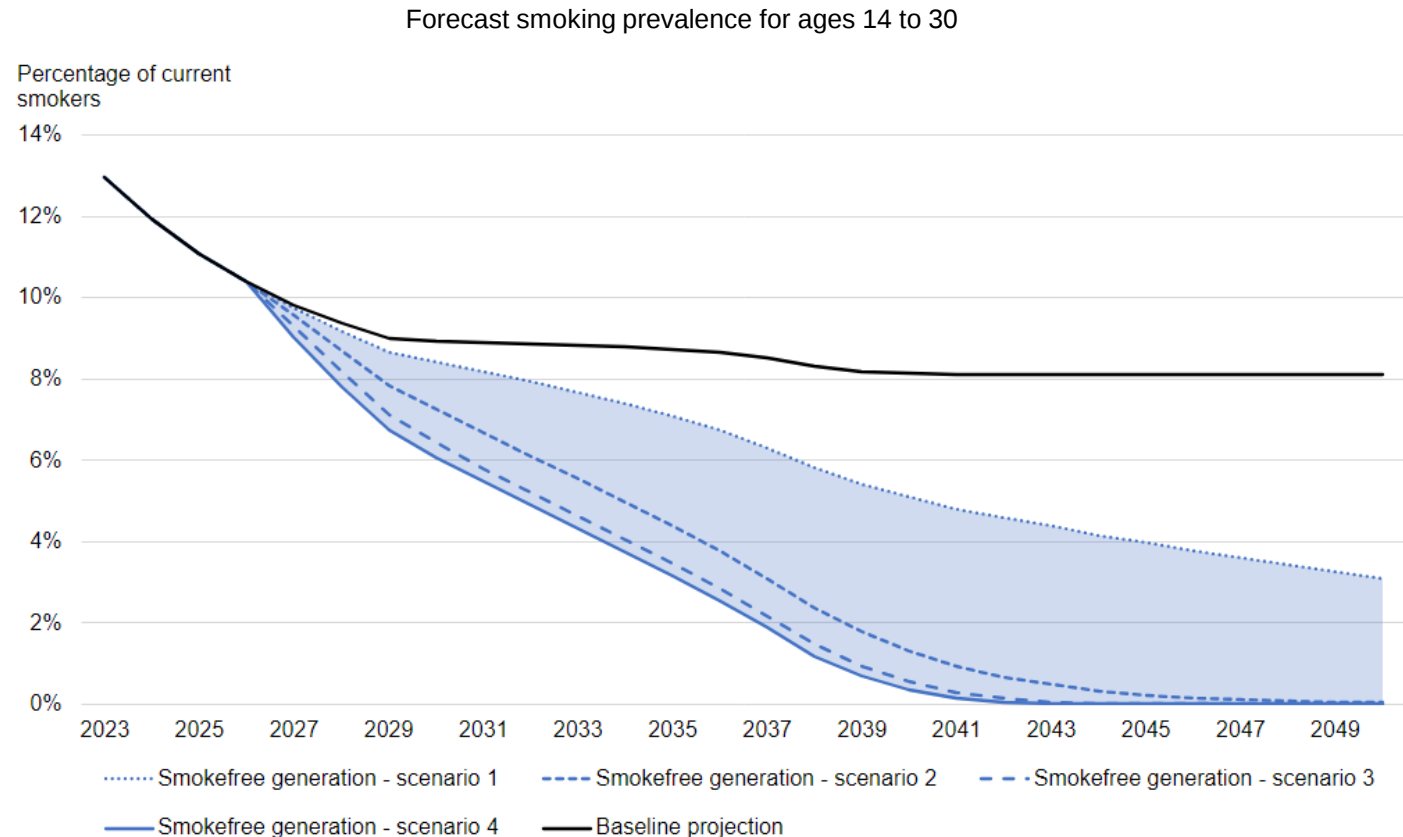


Smoking attributable mortality by deprivation, England, 2017 to 2019



Expected impact

- Our modelling shows that introducing a Smokefree Generation could:
 - 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**.
 - **avoid up to 115,000 cases of strokes, heart disease, lung cancer and other lung disease** by 2075.
 - provide cumulative productivity benefits of up to **£85 billion** by 2075.



- **Scenario 1:** Reflects a report published by the Institute of Medicine (IoM) in the US in 2015 that projected raising the age of sale by one year to 19 would reduce rates by 10% for most age groups below the threshold, and 5% for some.
- **Scenario 2:** Assumes a 30% reduction in instigation rates per year for those below the age of sale. Reflects a projection from UCL that raising the age of sale to 21 would reduce prevalence among 18 to 20 year olds by 30% and reduce instigation rates by the same amount.
- **Scenario 3:** Assumes a 60% reduction in instigation rates per year for those below the age of sale. Reflects mid-point of Scenario 2 and 4.
- **Scenario 4:** Assumes a 90% reduction in instigation rates per year for those below the age of sale. Reflects the assumptions used by the New Zealand government for its implementation of a smokefree generation, which assumed a 100% reduction in instigation rates. A 90% year on year reduction has been modelled here rather than assuming immediate universal cessation of smoking instigation.



Response to the plans for a Smokefree Generation

The announcement was received **very positively** across the public health and medical communities and the public:

- **Professor Sir Stephen Powis, NHS National Medical Director:** *This is a momentous public health intervention and we welcome the government's bold and ambitious action which will lead to longer and healthier lives.*
- **Cancer Research UK's Chief Executive, Michelle Mitchell OBE:** *Raising the age of sale on tobacco products is a critical step on the road to creating the first ever smokefree generation.*
- **Deborah Arnott, Chief Executive of Action on Smoking and Health:** *The twin track approach of raising the age of sale and tougher enforcement to stop young people starting, matched by substantial additional funding to motivate addicted smokers to quit and provide them with the support they need to succeed, will help get us on track to a smokefree future.*
- **Dr Jeanette Dickson, Chair of the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges:** *The Chair of the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges welcomes the Prime Minister's bold announcement to effectively end smoking in the UK. The damage done by smoking affects everyone, from unborn babies through to our oldest family members.*
- **John Herriman, chief executive at the Chartered Trading Standards Institute:** *Effective policing of the age of sale of tobacco will be critical to the effectiveness of the government's aim of eliminating smoking for future generations ... we look forward to working with DHSC to ensure that we have the tools and resources needed to support businesses and educate consumers as the country phases out tobacco products for good.*
- **67% of people in England** back the Prime Minister's plans to create a smokefree generation (ASH YouGov poll Nov 2023).

