

Campaigners Welcome Care Minister's Support

17 May 2013

The Smokefree Action Coalition, an alliance of over 100 health organisations leading the campaign for legislation on the standardised packaging of tobacco products[1], has warmly welcomed the public statement of support for the policy from Care Minister Norman Lamb MP (Liberal Democrat: North Norfolk), reported in the [Guardian newspaper](#) today. He joins Public Health Minister Anna Soubry MP (Conservative: Broxtowe), in backing the policy. [2]

Mr Lamb's statement will add to the pressure on the Coalition Government to back legislation on the issue in this Parliament. Although a Bill on standardised packaging was not included in the last Queen's Speech, both Prime Minister David Cameron and Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt have stated that the policy is still being considered. The Smokefree Action Coalition wants Parliament to be allowed to decide on the issue in a free vote, as with legislation on smokefree public places in 2006.

Smoking is an addiction that usually starts in childhood. Every year more than 200,000 children in the UK start smoking. Among adult smokers, about two thirds report that they took up smoking before the age of 18. Almost two fifths start smoking regularly before the age of 16. [3] Half of all lifetime smokers will die from smoke-related disease. Smoking remains the major cause of premature death and disease killing over 100,000 people in the UK each year, more than the next six causes of preventable death put together. [4]

Leon Livermore, chief executive of the Trading Standards Institute said:

"Trading Standards colleagues up and down the country work in partnership to tackle issues caused by underage smoking. Clearly smoking is one of the most significant impacts on public health and as an Institute we welcome Norman Lamb's statement. It must be in the public interest for an open debate to take place and for Parliament to have a free vote on such an important topic. We should not allow vested interests to take precedence over Parliamentary authority"

Professor John Britton CBE of the Royal College of Physicians Tobacco Advisory Group said:

"Legislation on standardised packaging is an essential step to protect the health of children from insidious tobacco industry promotion. Norman Lamb's statement of support is very welcome and will increase the pressure on the Government to act. The public has a right to expect that it should be properly debated in Parliament."

BMA Director of Professional Activities, Dr Vivienne Nathanson, said:

"It is very good to hear that Norman Lamb supports standardised packaging for cigarettes."

"Packaging is a key marketing tool for the tobacco industry and can influence young people to start smoking. This can lead to life-long addiction to a product that kills and destroys health. As doctors we see this first-hand and so we support moves designed to reduce the number of people taking up smoking. Standardised packaging will help achieve this and should be taken forward with no further delay."

Notes:

[1] Packaging of cigarettes is last remaining area of tobacco advertising in the UK, following a general ban on advertising in the Tobacco Advertising and Promotion Act 2002, and a ban on retail displays of tobacco products (which came into force in April 2012 in for large stores and will come into force in all other stores from April 2015) under the Health Act 2009). Australia introduced standardised packaging from 1st December 2012.

[2] Interview on BBC Radio 4 Today programme, Friday 19th April 2013

[3] ASH Factsheet [Young People and Smoking](#), March 2013

[4] ASH Facts at a Glance: [Smoking Statistics](#)

