

## Health groups press Prime Minister not to drop standard packs for cigarettes

02 May 2013

After today's report in *The Sun* [1] that the Government has abandoned plans to bring in standard packaging for cigarettes and other tobacco products, members of the Smokefree Action Coalition [2] have written to the Prime Minister to express their concern. The health groups say that such a step would seriously undermine the Government's credibility on public health.

In their joint letter to the Prime Minister, members of the SFAC including the Faculty of Public Health, the Royal College of Physicians, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health and the British Medical Association, say that abandoning standardised packaging would be to miss a golden opportunity to take a further step to cut smoking rates and the toll of death and disease that smoking causes.

Since the launch of the public consultation on standard tobacco packaging in April 2012 there has been a groundswell of support for the measure with nearly two-thirds of the public and a majority of MPs across all political parties in favour. [3]

The health groups say that if the Government will not go ahead with the introduction of standardised packaging then Parliament should decide in a free vote as was the case with smoke-free legislation. The Labour Party has already committed to supporting the measure.

Deborah Arnott, Chief Executive of health charity ASH said: *"Reports that the Prime Minister has rejected plans for standard packaging are very worrying. But this does not mean that the battle is over. With a majority of MPs and peers as well as the general public in favour of standard packs we believe that Parliament should be given the chance to decide."*

### Notes and links

[1] [Plain fag packets plan up in smoke](#), The Sun, 2/5/13

[2] The Smokefree Action Coalition is an alliance of over 100 health organisations.

The following are signatories to the letter to the Prime Minister :

Dr Clare Gerada, Chair of Council, Royal College of General Practitioners,  
Janet Atherton, President, Association of Directors of Public Health  
Harpal Kumar, Chief Executive, Cancer Research UK Professor  
Lindsey Davies, President, Faculty of Public Health  
Dr Peter Carter, Chief Executive and General Secretary, Royal College of Nurses  
Dr Mark Porter, Chair of Council, British Medical Association  
Graham Jukes, Chief Executive, Chartered Institute of Environmental Health  
Penny Woods, Chief Executive, British Lung Foundation  
Simon Gillespie, Chief Executive, British Heart Foundation  
Francine Bates, Chief Executive, The Lullaby Trust  
Sir Richard Thompson, President, Royal College of Physicians  
Dr Hilary Cass, President, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health  
Deborah Arnott, Chief Executive, ASH

The letter is available to download as a [pdf](#).

[3] A poll by YouGov for ASH found that overall 64% of adults in Great Britain were in favour of standard packaging.

Total sample size was 12171 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 1st and 19th February 2013. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

A separate YouGov poll conducted on the 10th and 11th March 2013 revealed the views of the public by which party they support. Support by voting intention was 62% of those intending to vote Conservative, 63% of Labour and 60% of Liberal Democrats. There was majority support across all ages, genders and social classes. This was a representative sample of 1684 adults.

Respondents were shown what a standard pack could look like, including larger health warnings as in Australia and envisaged under the revised EU Tobacco Products Directive

All members of the SFAC (over 100 organisations) support standardised tobacco packaging.