

Regulations on Standard Packaging of Cigarettes Published: Health Professionals Want Law Passed Before Election



26 June 2014

**PLEASE NOTE: Standardised packs are NOT plain white packs [1]
They carry graphic and text health warnings as above [1]**

A full Media Briefing on standardised packaging, including evidence, pictures etc can be downloaded [here](#).

The consultation documents can be found [here](#).

Laws requiring standardised (“plain”) packaging of cigarettes in the UK must be in place by the next election, health and medical organisations warned today. The Smokefree Action Coalition, made up of over 250 medical and public health organisations[2], has welcomed the publication today of draft Regulations on tobacco packaging, but is calling on the Prime Minister to make sure that they are put to a vote in Parliament before the 2015 General Election.[3]

In April this year, Sir Cyril Chantler’s review, set up by the Government to advise on whether standardised packaging would be good for public health, reported that there was strong evidence to support the policy[4].

Standardised packaging will ensure that the tobacco industry can no longer advertise and market its products to young people through branding on cigarette packs. Most smokers began their habit as children. Among existing adult smokers, two thirds report that they began to smoke before the age of 18, and almost two fifths before the age of 16. Since the Chantler review was published over 34,000 children under 16 have started to smoke.

The tobacco industry is gearing up for a last ditch fight against the Regulations, hiring agencies to get emails sent to the Prime Minister [5], and publishing misleading and false claims about how the policy has worked in Australia [6], and about the effect of the policy on the illicit tobacco trade [7]. But standardised packaging remains popular with the public. A YouGov poll conducted for ASH in March 2014 found that overall 64% of adults in Great Britain support or strongly support plain standardised packaging with only 11% opposed to the measure. [8]

Baroness Claire Tyler, President of the National Children’s Bureau commented:

“There is strong support for standardised packaging in Parliament, and among the general public. No-one but the tobacco industry and the front groups it funds wants to see another generation of children and young people starting to smoke. The draft Regulations are welcome, but we are getting very close to the deadline if we are to get the Regulations passed before the next General Election. We will be using the six week consultation period to reinforce the message to Ministers and MPs that standardised packaging is needed now.”

Deborah Arnott, chief executive of ASH, said:

“Over six months ago Parliament voted overwhelmingly to support the standardised packaging of cigarette packs, recognising that this important public health measure is vital to the health of the next generation. After much dithering and delay the Regulations to make it happen have finally been published for consultation, but time is running out if they are to be voted on by Parliament before the General Election. With every day’s delay hundreds more children start smoking and the tobacco industry’s continuing influence at the heart of Government becomes more and more obvious.”

Dr Carol Ewing, Vice President for Health Policy at the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, said:

“The consensus among medical and public health professionals is clear: we need standardised packaging to help stop the next generation of children from starting to smoke and help cut smoking rates overall. We very much

welcome the publication of the draft Regulations today, but want to make sure that they are put to a vote in Parliament and passed before the next General Election.”

ENDS

NOTES

[1] The earliest standardised packaging is likely to come into force is Spring 2016. It will have to conform to EU mandated health warnings under the Tobacco Products Directive, which come into force in May 2016. Under these rules:

- the health warnings on the front and back and any outside packaging must be 65% of the total area [Article 10.1.(c)]
- Health warnings on the front and back must be at the top of the pack and include picture and text warnings as required by the Directive.
- Text messages on front and back have been revised for full list see appendix 1 on page 34 of the Directive. Text messages on the front and back also need to include smoking cessation information [Article 10 1. (b)]
- All health warnings (both on front and back and lateral surfaces) must be surrounded by a black border of a width of 1mm inside the surface area. [Article 8.6]
- The tar, nicotine and carbon monoxide yields on the sides of packs have been replaced by health warnings on the bottom part of the lateral sides of the packs with a width of not less than 20 mm and a height not less than 16mm to cover 50% of the surfaces on which they're printed [Article 9 3.] and printed in black Helvetica bold type on a white background (Article 9 4.(a) a general warning on one side which is 'Smoking Kills – quit now' [Article 9 1.] on one side and an information message on the other 'Tobacco smoke contains over 70 substances known to cause cancer'. [Article 9 2.]
- Other information required on the pack is proof that tax has been paid and overt (and covert) markings as proof of authenticity.

The colour used on the sample pack shown in this Briefing is that required by the Australian legislation: Pantone 448C.

[2] The Smokefree Action Coalition is an alliance of over 250 organisations including the medical royal colleges, the BMA, children's organisations like the National Children's Bureau, the Association of Directors of Public Health, the Faculty of Public Health, the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, the Trading Standards Institute and major health charities such as Cancer Research UK and the British Heart Foundation: all support standardised packaging. [Find out more](#)

[3] The consultation period on the draft Regulations lasts for six weeks. The Government will then have to notify the European Union of the draft Regulations, under Directive 98/34/EC. This process can take up to six months. Therefore, there is only a relatively short time left for the Government to publish the draft Regulations on standardised packaging if they are to be voted on by Parliament before the General Election.

[4] Sir Cyril Chantler concluded that: *"...there is enough evidence to say that standardised packaging is very likely to contribute to a modest but important reduction in smoking... Given the dangers of smoking, the suffering that it causes, the highly addictive nature of nicotine, the fact that most smokers become addicted when they are children or young adults and the overall cost to society, the importance of such a reduction should not be underestimated."* Quote from [Review press release \(full report\)](#)

[5] FOREST, which receives virtually all its funding from British American Tobacco (BAT), Japan Tobacco International (JTI) and Imperial Tobacco Ltd (ITL), have hired the marketing agency Kreate to collect "digital signatures" for the "Hands off Our Packs" petition to the Prime Minister. Kreate describes itself as

“an experiential agency that specialises in the delivery and staffing of face-to-face experiences”. Agencies have also been commissioned directly by BAT to run a six week, *“anti-plain packs roadshow”*, aiming to sign up 100,000 people to oppose plain packs. The company is reported to have allocated £500,000 to the activity. Over 100 people a day will be working on this campaign.

[6] The tobacco industry in Australia reported an increase in tobacco sales from 21.015bn in 2012 to 21.074bn in 2013, and claimed that this showed standardised packaging was not working. Although the industry report a small (0.28%) increase in sales year on year, they do not report the increase in the Australian population between 2012 and 2013. Adjusted for population, tobacco sales per person have in fact fallen, from 920.4 in 2012 to 906.9 in 2013. [Is smoking increasing in Australia?](#), The Guardian, 6 June 2014

[7] The Chantler review concluded that standardised packaging need not increase the illicit trade in tobacco. **All the key security features on existing packs of cigarettes would also be present on standardised packs (including coded numbering and covert anti-counterfeit marks)**. Andrew Leggett, Deputy Director for Tobacco and Alcohol Strategy at HM Revenue and Customs has said about standardised packaging that *“We’re very doubtful that it would have a material effect [on counterfeiting and the illicit trade in tobacco]”*. [Oral evidence to the House of Lords European Union Sub Committee (Home Affairs) on 24th July 2013.] The Australian Government and customs officials have rejected tobacco industry claims that illicit trade in Australia has risen since the introduction of standardised packaging. See [p.48](#) of the Explanatory Memorandum to the Australian Excise Tariff Amendment (Tobacco) Bill 2014 and [p.6](#) of Sir Cyril Chantler’s independent review into standardised packaging.

[8] The poll total sample size was 12,269 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken by YouGov between 5th and 14th March 2014. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+). Respondents were shown what a standard pack could look like, including larger health warnings as in Australia.