

## Chantler Review Paves Way for Standard Tobacco Packs

03 April 2014

Laws requiring standardised (“plain”) packaging of cigarettes in the UK could be in place by the next election, after the Chantler review reported today that there is a strong public health case for the policy. As usual, the tobacco industry will threaten legal action, but the debate on the principle is now over. The Smokefree Action Coalition understands why the Government is having to proceed with caution, because the tobacco industry is highly litigious, but is “delighted” that a consultation on standardised packaging regulations will be launched in the very near future. Standardised packaging will ensure that the tobacco industry can no longer advertise and market its products to young people through branding on cigarette packs. [1][2]

Standardised packaging is popular with the public. A new poll by YouGov, published today and 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. [3]

Deborah Arnott, Chief Executive of health charity ASH said:

“Sir Cyril Chantler has quite rightly concluded that there is a strong public health case for standardised packaging of cigarettes and tobacco packaging, and that the tobacco industry’s arguments against the policy are spurious. This policy is the vital next step in reducing smoking rates, and cutting the toll and death and disease that smoking causes. We’re delighted that the Government has committed to consult on standardised packaging regulations which must be introduced as soon as possible.”

Dr Janet Atherton, President of the Association of Directors of Public Health, said:

“Sir Cyril’s review has recognised the strong public health case for standardised packaging. The Government must now bring in the regulations needed to introduce the policy without further delay. Stopping children from starting to smoke is a top public health priority, and standardised packs are needed to prevent the tobacco industry from using brightly coloured attractive packs to recruit new young addicts”.

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

“The Chantler review confirms the case for ridding tobacco packaging of the promotional features which make smoking so attractive to children. Hundreds of thousands of children start smoking every year, resulting in preventable conditions including respiratory infections, asthma, heart disease and cancer. Standardised tobacco packaging will highlight as never before the harm caused by smoking and we therefore urge the Government to implement this measure as soon as possible.”

On 28th November 2013, the Government announced that it had appointed the eminent paediatrician Sir Cyril Chantler to conduct an independent review into the public health impact of the standardised packaging of cigarettes and tobacco products. The announcement followed Parliamentary votes to include in the Children and Families Bill powers for the Health Secretary to introduce regulations on standardised packaging in England. The Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland Governments have also supported the policy.

Australia was the first country to introduce standardised packaging, in December 2012. Soon after standardised packs began to appear in Australian shops, smokers reported that they found cigarettes from plain packs less appealing or satisfying. Research showed that, compared with smokers who were still using branded packs, the plain pack smokers were 81% more likely to have thought about quitting at least once a day during the previous week and to rate quitting as a higher priority in their lives than smokers using brand packs. There was also a big increase in the number of people contacting smoking quitlines following the introduction of the new packs. [4]

The Chantler review has also concluded that standardised packaging need not increase the illicit trade in tobacco, rejecting

claims from the tobacco industry. 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 that “We’re very doubtful that it would have a material effect [on counterfeiting and the illicit trade in tobacco]”. [5]

## ENDS

Images of standardised packs are available for download [here](#) (zip file).

[Independent Review into standardised packaging of tobacco](#), Sir Cyril Chantler, King's College, London

### Notes and Links:

[1] 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.

[2] 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. (Source: ONS General Lifestyle Survey, 2008 & 2011.) Starting to smoke is associated with a range of risk factors, including smoking by parents and siblings, smoking by friends, the ease of obtaining cigarettes, exposure to tobacco marketing, and depictions of smoking in films, TV and other media.

[3] 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.

[4] Wakefield M et al (2013); [Introduction effects of the Australia plain packaging policy on adult smokers: a cross-sectional study](#); BMJ Open 2013;3:e003175 doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2013-003175

[5] Andrew Leggett, Deputy Director for Tobacco and Alcohol Strategy at HM Revenue and Customs. Oral evidence to the House of Lords European Union Sub Committee (Home Affairs) on 24th July 2013.