

# ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP ON SMOKING AND HEALTH

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Chair: Paul Burstow MP  
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Vice-Chairs:  
Rt Hon Kevin Barron MP  
Baroness Finlay  
Baroness O'Cathain  
Lord Rennard  
John Robertson MP

29 August 2014

Dear colleague

## **Electronic Cigarettes: A Position Statement**

We are writing to you about what we believe to be the proper policy response to the increasing use of electronic cigarettes.

Our letter follows a joint meeting of the All Party Parliamentary Groups on Smoking and Health, on Pharmacy and on Heart Disease, which took place on 10<sup>th</sup> June this year. The meeting was informed by the contributions of a number of national experts, including Professor David Walker, the Deputy Chief Medical Officer, and Professor Robert West, the Director of Tobacco Studies at University College London. We attach a position statement agreed by us as chairs of the APPG on Smoking and Health and on Pharmacy. This statement summarises the evidence and our thinking about the key principles of good regulation.

It is of course a principal public health priority to reduce the continuing burden of death and disease by the consumption of tobacco, which still causes around 100,000 premature deaths in the UK every year. While quitting completely remains the best option for all smokers, many, particularly amongst the most disadvantaged in society, find it hard to do so because of their addiction to nicotine.

The MHRA and NICE support a harm reduction approach for smokers unable to quit which includes temporary or long-term use of medicinally licensed nicotine containing products as an alternative to smoking. Such a policy has been endorsed by the current Coalition Government and its Labour predecessor in their tobacco control strategies.

However, more recently, there has been considerable growth in the use of unlicensed products known as electronic cigarettes. Their use has tripled in the last two years such that it is now estimated that there are over 2 million regular users in Great Britain. This has led to a polarisation in views with, on the one hand, those concerned that growing use of these products will renormalise smoking and, on the other, those who believe these products have the potential to end the tobacco epidemic.

Currently, electronic cigarettes come under general consumer safety regulations but from 2016, they will be regulated in conformity with the EU Tobacco Products Directive. This will require them either to be licensed as medicines or to be regulated in an analogous manner to tobacco products. We want the UK Government to implement the Directive so as to maximise the potential benefits, by ensuring that electronic cigarettes are effective in helping those

who wish to cut down or cease smoking tobacco products, while at the same time minimising the chance that they may be used by young people and others who have never smoked.

This is our joint position, not the settled policy of the APPGs, but we hope you will find it useful at a time when the debate on electronic cigarettes continues to grow and the Government is making preparations to implement the EU Tobacco Products Directive. We would be pleased to discuss the issue with you, or provide any further information.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Burstow'.

Rt Hon Paul Burstow MP  
Chair, APPG on Smoking and Health

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Barron'.

Rt Hon Kevin Barron MP  
Chair, APPG on Pharmacy