

Smoking: Key national policy context

Councillor Briefings, July 2022

Key points:

- Despite substantial progress in reducing smoking prevalence as the result of comprehensive and sustained activity, further action is needed on tobacco to achieve the smokefree 2030 ambition.
- The NHS Long Term Plan, new Tobacco Control Plan for England, and development of new NHS structures, promise opportunity to accelerate progress on tobacco.
- However, these opportunities present risks in addition to ongoing challenges around public health funding, COVID-19 recovery, and the tobacco industry.

What is the overall picture for tobacco control in England?

Progress so far

The UK is recognised as a [world leader on tobacco control](#) as a result of sustained comprehensive action at national, regional and local levels. In England, smoking rates are at their lowest ever level of [13.9% among the general adult population](#). The Government has set an ambition for [England to be smokefree by 2030](#), meaning a rate of 5% or less across all population groups.

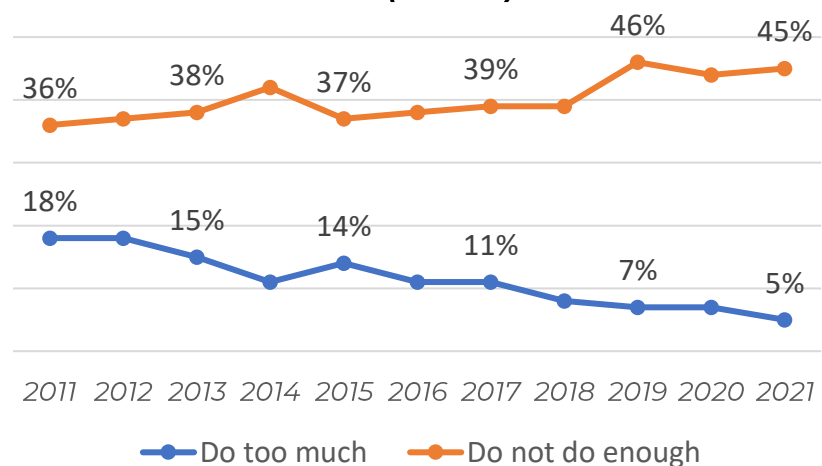
Continued need

At present, England is [not on track to meet the 2030 target](#). Smoking remains the [leading cause of preventable death in England](#) and a major [driver of health inequalities](#), accounting for half the difference in life expectancy between the richest and poorest in society.

Public and political support

Tobacco control is [overwhelmingly supported by the public](#), with 45% thinking the Government should do more on smoking.

% population in England who think that the Government's activities to limit smoking... 2011-2021 (YouGov)



Opportunities and challenges for further action

Funding

According to [The Health Foundation](#), public health grant allocations have been reduced in real terms from £4.2 billion in 2015-16 to £3.3 billion in 2021-22. On a per head basis that equates to a 24% cut since initial allocations were made in 2015-16. Work by [ASH and Cancer Research UK](#) shows that this has led to consecutive cuts in stop smoking service budgets over the last 5 years. ASH and partners are calling for the introduction of a levy on the tobacco industry to fund tobacco control measures in addition to supporting calls for more investment in public health.

Tobacco Control Plan

A new Tobacco Control Plan for England, due in Summer 2022, will provide an ambitious framework for local action. The current plan, published in 2017, set key milestones for achieving a 'smokefree generation' where 5% or less of the population smokes. Government has since set a deadline for this ambition to be met by 2030 and the new plan will be focused on delivering this. The [APPG on Smoking and Health's latest report](#) sets out the bold new measures needed to do this.

NHS Long Term Plan

The [NHS Long Term Plan](#), published in January 2019, made significant commitments to better address smoking:

- By 2023/24, all people admitted to hospital who smoke will be offered NHS-funded tobacco treatment services.
- Adapting this model to the needs of pregnant smokers and their partners.
- Offering a new 'universal smoking cessation offer' for long-term users of specialist mental health and learning disability services.

Development of Integrated Care Systems (ICS)

Following changes brought about by the 2022 Health and Care Act, ICS have been formalised as statutory bodies. All parts of England are now covered by one of 42 ICS, populating around 500,000 to 3 million people. ICS have been given a duty to more broadly coordinate an area's overarching approach to health, social care and public health. Given they can reach beyond the NHS to work alongside local authorities and other partners to address wider determinants of health, ICS will be an important place for driving progress on tobacco. Ensuring tobacco control is a strategic priority for ICS going forward will therefore be key.

Javed Khan's Independent Review: Making Smoking Obsolete

Published in June 2022, [Javed Khan's Independent Review](#), commissioned by former Health Secretary Sajid Javid, looked into ways to make England Smokefree by 2030. Khan recommended a total of 15 interventions to help meet the government's target but he has identified four 'must-dos' for the Government:

1. Urgently invest £125 million per year in a comprehensive Smokefree 2030 programme. If the Government cannot fund this themselves, they should make the polluter pay
2. Raise the age of sale of tobacco from 18 by one year, every year, until no one can buy a cigarette in this country.
3. Offer vaping as a substitute for smoking
4. The NHS to prioritise prevention, with further action to help people stop smoking across all its services including primary care

The recommendations will be considered by ministers and a response will be published as part of the government's Health Disparities White Paper and Tobacco Control Plan, both due Summer, 2022.

Tobacco industry

The tobacco industry has a long history of intervening with public health policy in the UK, including through direct contact with local authorities. [Article 5.3 of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control \(FCTC\)](#) requires the tobacco industry to be excluded from the setting of any public health policy, including at a local level. As the industry increasingly tries to present itself as a partner in public health, [pushing its heated tobacco 'reduced risk products'](#), adherence to Article 5.3 remains a top priority.