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Half the public in North West think the Government is not doing enough to reduce smoking FOUR YEARS after the Government pledged to make England smokefree

New data issued today [19th July] shows that people in North West want further action to address smoking on the day parliamentarians gather to mark four years since the Government committed to make England smokefree by 2030 [1]. Progress has been stalled by first the pandemic and then the changing political leadership but the clock is running down with 7 years left to meet this ambition and smoking rates still at 13%.

ASH Smokefree GB survey carried out by YouGov [2] finds that 49% of adults in the North West think the Government is not doing enough to address smoking with only 8% saying they are ‘doing too much’. There is majority support for further action to:

* Place a levy on tobacco companies (76% support, 7% oppose)
* Raise the age of sale to 21 (64% support, 15% oppose)
* Tobacco retail licensing (84% support, 5% oppose)
* Increasing government investment in public education campaigns (69% support, 8% oppose)
* Pack inserts to motivate quitting (66% support, 9% oppose)

Many of these recommendations were included in the independent Khan review published in June 2022. The review author Dr Javed Khan will address the meeting in Parliament. Ahead of the meeting Dr Khan said:

*"Reaching a smokefree 2030 is achievable but it requires more action than the Government has currently committed to. My 2022 review called for a holistic response that will make smoking obsolete in this country. Without doubt, sustainable and increased funding is needed to support those with the highest rates of smoking, something which could be levied from the tobacco industry. Anything less risks leaving some groups behind and widening the already substantial inequalities caused by smoking."*

Announcements in April [3] of a new ‘swap to stop’ scheme to distribute 1 million vape kits to help adults to quit, a financial incentive scheme for pregnant smokers and pack inserts to promote quitting in cigarette packs are welcome but they do not meet the scale of the ambition needed nor do they match the level of support the public have for change.

The Public Health Minister Neil O’Brien. Minister O’Brien who will be speaking at the event commented:

*“I am delighted that the Government will be supporting many more smokers to quit through our ‘swap to stop scheme’ providing a million smokers with access to vaping kits and our new incentive scheme for pregnant smokers. These are important steps on the path to achieving a smokefree country by 2030. We will also shortly be launching a consultation on requiring tobacco to be sold with pack inserts to motivate quitting which will help many more to stop. The Government continues to be committed to reducing smoking and addressing the inequalities which it causes.”*

Chairman of the APPG on Smoking and Health, Bob Blackman MP said:

*“The Government is to be congratulated for the measures to end the tobacco epidemic announced earlier this year. However, while they are a great first step, they’re not nearly enough to deliver our nation’s smokefree 2030 ambition. The public know this, there’s overwhelming popular support for the Government to go further and faster. Ending smoking will protect our health and social care system and improve productivity in the here and now, as well as delivering future generations from the appalling suffering and premature death caused by smoking.”*

Cathy Hunt, 57, is a mum of four from County Durham who has undergone two rounds of lung cancer surgery and had a kidney removed in June. She is the face of the Fresh (a regional tobacco control organisation in the North East) “Smoking Survivors” campaign urging other smokers to quit. Cathy was first diagnosed with lung cancer and had half a lung removed in 2015. She is attending the event today and supports call for greater investment in public education campaigns and a levy on tobacco companies. Cathy says:

*“You hear the word cancer and the first thing I thought was “how do I tell my girls?” For me it was only when I found out I had cancer that I stopped smoking, and even then quitting was the best thing I could do. But this is exactly why you need those warnings and constant reminders on the TV…to stop more people getting that to that awful stage. It is so easy to put it to the back of your mind otherwise.*

*“I was 11 when I started smoking and most smokers begin as kids, long before you really understand addiction, or the risks. But tobacco companies understand the risks all too well. Tobacco companies are profiting and they should be sued and that money paid used for treatment and prevention.”*

**ENDS**

**Notes to the Editor**

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[1] Commitment was made in Advancing Our Health in the 2020s published in July 2019: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/advancing-our-health-prevention-in-the-2020s/advancing-our-health-prevention-in-the-2020s-consultation-document>

[2] All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 1307 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 22/02/2023 - 15/03/2023 . The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults. (aged 18+). Data is weighted by age, gender, region, education status, social grade, and ethnicity.

[3] Announcements made by Minister O’Brien in April 2023: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/minister-neil-obrien-speech-on-achieving-smokefree-2030-cutting-smoking-and-stopping-kids-vaping#:~:text=A%20'swap%20to%20stop'%20partnership,help%20them%20completely%20stop%20smoking>.

Action on Smoking and Health is a health charity working to eliminate the harm caused by tobacco use. For more information see: [www.ash.org.uk/about-ash](http://www.ash.org.uk/about-ash). ASH receives funding for its programme of work from Cancer Research UK and the British Heart Foundation, and provides the secretariat to the All Party Parliamentary Group on Smoking and Health.