Embargoed for 00.01 Wednesday 19th July

Half the public in the WEST MIDLANDS 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 the West Midlands want further action to address smoking. The data is published as MPs and peers gather to mark four years since the Government committed to make England ‘smokefree’ by 2030 [1]. Progress has been stalled and Cancer Research UK estimate it will be missed by 9 years [2]. Smoking is currently still killing one person every five minutes in England [3].

The ASH Smokefree GB survey carried out by YouGov [2] finds that 51% of adults in the West Midlands think the Government is not doing enough to address smoking, many more than the 26% who think the Government is doing about right, with only 7% saying they are ‘doing too much’. There is overwhelming majority support for further action to:

* Place a levy on tobacco companies (76% support, 6% oppose)
* Raise the age of sale to 21 (63% support, 13% oppose)
* Tobacco retail licensing (81% support, 4% oppose)
* Increasing government investment in public education campaigns (70% support, 7% oppose)
* Pack inserts to motivate quitting (66% support, 10% 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."*

In April the Government announced [5] 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.

Public Health Minister Neil O’Brien will be speaking at the event and commented:

*“Through our new measures, the Government will be supporting many more smokers to quit. One million smokers will be encouraged to ‘swap to stop’, swapping cigarettes for vapes under a new national scheme – the first of its kind in the world. We will offer evidence-based financial incentives for all pregnant women who smoke. We will also shortly be launching a consultation on cigarette pack inserts to provide further information to support smokers to quit. These are important steps on the path to achieving our bold ambition to be Smokefree by 2030.”*

There is strong public support across the political spectrum for a levy on tobacco manufacturers supported by the overwhelming majority of those surveyed who voted for the 3 largest British political parties at the 2019 general election (Conservative 75%, Labour 82%, Liberal Democrats 87%) [6].

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 attending the event in Parliament to let MPs know what she thinks about the progress being made. She is the face of a new quit campaign in the North East led by regional organisation Fresh and a local councilor. Cathy backs 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**

**For interviews and more information contact** **press@ash.org.uk** **or Hazel Cheeseman on Mob: 077 5435 8593**

[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] Cancer Research UK analysis showing we will miss the target by 9 years: <https://news.cancerresearchuk.org/2022/12/29/england-slips-further-off-track-for-smokefree-2030-target/>

[3] Cancer Research UK analysis showing level of deaths from tobacco: <https://news.cancerresearchuk.org/2023/05/31/tobacco-kills-one-person-every-five-minutes/>

[4] All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 1,095 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. The full set of data is available here: <https://ash.org.uk/uploads/Public-Opinion-Briefings-2023-v4.xlsx>

[5] 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>.

[6] Action on Smoking and Health. [Public support for Government action on tobacco, national brief](https://ash.org.uk/uploads/Public-support-for-Government-action-on-tobacco-in-Great-Britain-Results-of-the-2023-ASH-Smokefree-survey.pdf).

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.