



Association of Directors of Public Health (UK)

The Association of Directors of Public Health ADPH welcomes Government announcement to end smoking in cars with children

The Association of Directors of Public Health welcomes the Government's response to the public consultation on regulations to prohibit smoking in cars with children, and the announcement that the regulations are being laid before Parliament today so they can be voted on before the next general election.

The new regulations, which will ban smoking in cars containing children under 18, will be introduced by October 2015 [1].

ADPH continues to support strong tobacco control measures – including calling for government to implement evidence-based national action to:

- reduce the harm and health inequalities caused by tobacco – particularly in the most deprived communities;
- reduce the burden of premature death and disability caused by tobacco;
- protect the future health of children in the UK (in light of the 200,000-plus children in the UK who take up smoking each year).

In a recent ADPH survey, Directors of Public Health who took part put the following in their top 10 priorities for action to improve the public's health, protect children and young people and reduce health inequalities:

- Implementation of the regulations on standardised packaging of tobacco products
- Reinstating the tax escalator on all tobacco products at 5% ahead of inflation.

Dr Janet Atherton, President of the Association of Directors of Public Health (and Director of Public Health for Sefton), said:

“Directors of Public Health welcome the Government’s announcement of its intention to prohibit smoking in cars when children are present. The health of millions of children is at stake but this measure will go a long way towards protecting vulnerable children from an entirely preventable cause of ill-health. As the measure has widespread support among the public we do not anticipate any problems with enforcement.

We would also like to see the Government pass the regulations on standardised packaging to Parliament before the next general election. This is also a vital measure that will help reinforce a smokefree norm and discourage children from starting to smoke.”

A 2010 survey revealed that one child in five reported often being exposed to smoking in cars. Children are particularly vulnerable to secondhand smoke as they have smaller lungs and less developed immune systems. Smoke in cars is particularly dangerous, as children are confined and smoke concentration often reaches very high levels.

The British Lung Foundation estimates that 430,000 children are exposed to secondhand smoke in their family car every week. [2] Legislation is likely to significantly reduce the levels of exposure; when seatbelt laws were introduced in 1983 compliance rates jumped from 25% to over 90%. [3]

There is already widespread support for smokefree cars when children are present, both among the public and parliamentarians. A poll conducted in March by YouGov for ASH found that 77% of adults, including 64% of smokers, agreed that smoking should be prohibited in cars that are carrying children younger than 18 years of age. [4]

In Parliament, the primary legislation [5] was approved on a free vote by a majority of 376 to 107, a majority of 269 – a larger majority than that for the 2007 smokefree public places law. [6] The regulations have the support of the Prime Minister. [7]

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Further information

The Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH) is the representative body for Directors of Public Health (DsPH) in the UK. It seeks to improve and protect the health of the population through DPH development, sharing good practice, and policy and advocacy programmes. www.adph.org.uk

ADPH has a strong track record of collaboration with other stakeholders in public health, including those working within the NHS, local authorities and other sectors.

ADPH is a member of the Smokefree Action Coalition – a group of more than 190 organisations - committed to promoting public health and reducing the harm caused by tobacco. <http://www.smokefreeaction.org.uk/>

The systematic review of the evidence for plain tobacco packaging, commissioned by the DH and carried out by the Public Health Research Consortium concludes that “there is strong evidence to support the propositions set out in the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control relating to the role of plain packaging in helping to reduce smoking rates; that is, that plain packaging would reduce the attractiveness and appeal of tobacco products, it would increase the noticeability and effectiveness of health warnings and messages, and it would reduce the use of design techniques that may mislead consumers about the harmfulness of tobacco products.” http://phrc.lshtm.ac.uk/project_2011-2016_006.html)

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For interview requests please contact Enquiries at enquiries@adph.org.uk.

References

[1] Smoking in private vehicles carrying children: [written statement](#).

[2] Top Ten Myths about the ban on smoking in cars with children
<http://www.blf.org.uk/News/Detail/10-myths-smoking-in-cars>

[3] [Seat-belts and child restraints](#). World Health Organization/FIA Foundation, 2009.

[4] YouGov 2014 Total sample size was 12269 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 5th to 14th March 2014. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

[5] The Children and Families Act gained Royal Assent on 13 March 2014.
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/6/contents/enacted>

[6] A record of how MPs and Lords voted is available here:
<http://www.publicwhip.org.uk/division.php?date=2014-02-10&number=207&showall=yes#voters>

[7] Shortly before the vote the Prime Minister's official spokesman said that David Cameron thought that "the time has come" for a new offence of exposing children to smoke in vehicles.
<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/feb/10/david-cameron-backs-smoking-ban-cars-carrying-children>

[8] For the risk to children from exposure to tobacco smoke in cars, see for example: Semple S et al. Secondhand smoke in cars: assessing children's potential exposure during typical journey conditions. Tobacco Control 2012; 21: 578-583

**Association of Directors of Public Health
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