



Department
of Health &
Social Care

The Tobacco and Vapes Act 2026

National campaign planning

Partner/stakeholder briefing 1

August 2026

Overview

This is the first in a series of briefings which aims to keep partners and stakeholders informed of progress to develop a new national campaign designed to support the implementation of the Tobacco and Vapes Act 2026.

It has been produced jointly by the:

- DHSC Behavioural Programmes Unit (BPU); who lead on the development and delivery of the campaign
- DHSC Tobacco and Vapes Division; who lead on the wider implementation of the Act.

These briefings relate solely to the national campaign activity – they do not cover other aspects of implementation such as guidance and enforcement. The Department will prepare and manage communications for key implementation and delivery milestones of the Act separately.

We will update and recirculate this briefing when there is new information to share. It is not intended for public audiences but can be shared internally with colleagues involved/interested in the implementation of the Act.

Any questions specifically about the campaign can be emailed to partnerships@dhsc.gov.uk.

Campaign overview

The Tobacco and Vapes Act will create a smoke-free generation; meaning, from 1 January 2027, anyone born on or after 1 January 2009 will never legally be sold tobacco products. The Act includes other measures too, but this campaign will focus solely on communicating the change to age of sale.

Campaign objectives

- 1: **INFORM:** Raise awareness and understanding of the new age-of-sale changes
- 2: **ENTHUSE:** Build favourability and support for the law change and a smoke-free UK.
- 3: **REASSURE:** Proactively mitigate any concerns surrounding the law and its enforcement.

TARGET AUDIENCES*

Primary:
General Public (all adults 18+)

Primary:
Young people (13-17 yrs)

Secondary:
Schools / Colleges / Educators

*Retailers and enforcement bodies are also key target audiences but will be engaged separately from the campaign.

National smoking campaigns: year at-a-glance

Sep

Oct

Nov

Dec

Jan

Feb

Mar



Partner-led activity

↑ Supporting local partner activity to drive quit attempts/promote support

Smoke-free Generation

Burst 1: SFG

↑ Build awareness in advance of 1st Jan legislative changes

Burst 2: SFG

↑ Campaign presence to support retail & maintain awareness



↑ 'The Power to Quit' campaign

Separate smoking cessation campaign using tried and tested creative

Please note: Exact timings TBC.

Timings

- As illustrated on the previous slide, we plan to deliver two phases of national campaign activity to support the implementation of the Act.
- Although exact timings are to be confirmed, we plan to launch 'burst 1' in November 2026 to raise awareness ahead of the legislative changes being introduced, with 'burst 2' going live in January when they take effect. We will let you know once exact dates have been confirmed.
- We are currently in a period of campaign development which includes the development of different potential creative routes and user testing. Once complete, we will identify our preferred route and begin production of adverts and campaign assets, ready for launch.

How you can support

- We welcome your support to extend the reach of the campaign locally once it launches, and we will provide a suite of campaign resources and a toolkit to help you.
- These will be available to download from the Campaign Resource Centre (CRC) in October, prior to the campaign launch in November. If you are not already registered on the CRC, please do so now to ensure you receive notifications when resources are added.
- We understand you may also wish to undertake other local communications prior to the launch, such as PR activity and local stakeholder comms. We have included some key messages on the next slide to help you.

Key messages about the Act for local communications

The landmark Tobacco and Vapes Act received Royal Assent on 29 April 2026. As set out in the Government's 10 Year Health Plan, the Act will help deliver our ambition for a smoke-free UK and enable us to:

- create the UK's first smoke-free generation, meaning anyone born on or after 1 January 2009 cannot be sold tobacco products – helping end the cycle of addiction and disadvantage.
- strengthen the existing ban on smoking in public places to reduce the harms of passive smoking in certain outdoor settings, particularly for children and vulnerable people.
- stop vapes and nicotine products from being deliberately branded, promoted, and advertised to children to stop the next generation from becoming hooked on nicotine.
- provide powers to introduce a licensing scheme for the retail sale of tobacco, vapes and nicotine products in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, and expand the retailer registration scheme in Scotland.

Key messages beyond the Act...

- We continue to encourage existing smokers to quit.
- Funding for stop smoking services is now ringfenced in the Public Health Grant, protecting at least £153 million per year for these services. Ringfencing in this way provides greater certainty and flexibility for local areas to invest in these vital services.
- Our National Smokefree Pregnancy Incentives Scheme is making a real difference - supporting thousands of women to quit and contributing to nearly 5,000 smoke-free babies. As a result of this, and the delivery of tobacco dependence treatment in 99% of maternity trusts, smoking in pregnancy is at a record low, falling to 4.2% this year - down from 5.6% last year and more than halved from 10.6% a decade ago.
- We will deliver our manifesto commitment to ensure all hospitals integrate opt-out smoking cessation interventions into routine care.
- We are investing up to £10 million of new funding per annum in Trading Standards from 2025/26 to 2028/29, to tackle the illicit and underage sale of tobacco and vapes and help enforce the law.

Key dates for implementation of the Act

Event	Date	Detail
Vaping Product Duty	1 October 2026	The Vaping Products Duty takes effect on 1 October 2026. It introduces a flat-rate excise tax on all vaping liquid whether they contain nicotine or not and requires all retail packaging to feature a Vaping Duty Stamp.
Stoptober partner led quit smoking campaign	October 2026	Partner-led Stoptober campaign to drive quit attempts and promote locally available stop smoking support.
Commencement date for some Tobacco and Vapes Act measures	29 October 2026 (6 months after Royal Assent)	• Age of sale of 18 (and proxy purchasing offence) is extended to all vaping and nicotine products • Ban on vending machines selling vaping and nicotine products • Ban on free distribution and substantial discounts of vaping and nicotine products • Introduction of fixed penalty notices (FPNs) for a range of offences in the Tobacco and Vapes Act
First round of SFG campaign	November 2026	First phase of the Smoke-free Generation age of sale communications campaign
SFG age of sale changes	1 January 2027	Age of sale changes come into effect, making it illegal to sell tobacco products, herbal smoking products, or cigarette papers to anyone born on or after 1 January 2009.
Second round of SFG campaign	January 2027	Second phase of the Smoke-free Generation age of sale communications campaign
Smoking cessation campaign	February – March 2027	DHSC delivers smoking cessation campaign to encourage and support smokers to quit.
Advertising and sponsorship ban for vapes and nicotine products	Intended for 1 June 2027	Coming into force date for advertising and sponsorship ban for vapes and nicotine products.

FAQs

What is the aim of the campaign?

The campaign aims to raise awareness and build support for the change to age of sale for tobacco products; anyone born on or after 1 January 2009 will never legally be sold these products from 1 January 2027.

When will the campaign launch?

The campaign will be delivered in two separate 'bursts', with burst 1 going live in November 2026 to raise awareness ahead of the legislative changes taking effect, followed by burst 2 in January 2027. Exact campaign dates are tbc.

What does the campaign look like?

We are currently in a period of development and will share more details on the creative and key messages once tested and confirmed.

How can I support the campaign?

We will provide a suite of campaign resources and a toolkit to help you extend the reach of the campaign locally. You could do this through channels like social media, websites, intranets and digital screens. These resources will be available in October, ahead of the campaign launch.

FAQs

Can I undertake communication activity about the Act before the campaign launches?

Yes, you can undertake local communications activity ahead of the launch such as stakeholder communications and PR activity. However, you cannot promote the national campaign until it launches in November as the resources will not be available until this time.

Are partner organisations expected to undertake any paid promotion of the campaign?

No – DHSC will deliver all paid promotion of the campaign. Partner organisations are encouraged to use the free campaign materials on locally owned channels such as social media and websites, once available.

Where will the campaign signpost people to for more information?

The campaign will signpost people to a dedicated page (currently in development) on the NHS [Better Health quit smoking website](#), where they can read more about the changes and the benefits they will bring. For anyone who smokes, they can easily access other information and support to help them quit smoking.

Will the campaign run across the whole of the UK?

Whilst the legislation applies to the whole of the UK, DHSC is delivering this campaign in England only. DHSC is however working closely with the devolved administrations who may use elements of the campaign.



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Thank you.