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## Tobacco and Vapes Bill

Second Reading, House of Commons

16 April 2024

### About the BMA

The BMA is a professional association and trade union representing and negotiating on behalf of all doctors and medical students in the UK. It is a leading voice advocating for outstanding health care and a healthy population. It is an association providing members with excellent individual services and support throughout their lives.

### Overview

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- **The BMA has long campaigned for robust anti-smoking measures to be implemented and supports this Bill.**
- Doctors witness first-hand the devastating effects of smoking on their patients.
- The BMA has a long history of supporting measures to reduce tobacco-related harm and has developed wide-ranging policy in this area.
- Despite long term trends of smoking decline, smoking remains a leading cause of preventable illness and premature death in the UK.

### BMA position

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#### Tobacco

**The BMA supports the measures in this Bill which will ensure that anyone born on or after 1<sup>st</sup> January 2009, will never legally be sold tobacco products. Stopping a new generation of tobacco users will significantly decrease the harms from tobacco for future generations.**

The number of smokers in the UK is declining, with smoking prevalence now 12.9%<sup>1</sup> of the adult population (18 years and over) in the UK, down from a prevalence of 20.2% of the population in 2011<sup>2</sup>. Tobacco control measures such as increasing the age of sale from 16 to 18 has played a significant part in this decline. However, there are still 6.4 million adult smokers in the UK<sup>3</sup> and over 100,000 children in England alone take up smoking each year.<sup>4</sup> The vast majority of smokers start before they are 18 years old, and virtually all do by the age of 25.<sup>5</sup> Among those teenagers who try smoking, 70% will go on to be daily smokers.

Doctors witness first-hand the devastating effects of smoking on their patients. Smoking remains a leading cause of preventable illness and premature death in the UK (accounting for approximately 74,600 deaths a year in England alone)<sup>6</sup>, and is a key driver of health inequalities as well as causing a myriad of health harms including 16 types of cancer, heart disease, COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) and strokes.<sup>7</sup>

In the next year, around 280 children a day – almost 30,000 – will take up smoking.<sup>8</sup>

Smoking disproportionately affects the most disadvantaged people and remains the leading preventable cause of illness and death in the UK, accounting for almost 75,000 premature deaths a year in England alone.<sup>9</sup> Around two in three lifelong smokers in England will die of smoking related deaths<sup>10</sup>, with smoking causing a myriad of health harms, including 16 types of cancer, heart disease, COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), strokes<sup>11</sup> and increases the risk of dementia<sup>12</sup>. This puts a huge strain on our already overstretched NHS. In England alone, smoking is estimated to cost the NHS £2.4 billion every year, equivalent to 1.6% of the health service's budget.<sup>13</sup>

Smoking is the leading cause of health inequalities and accounts for half the difference in life expectancy between the richest and poorest. And while smoking rates have fallen over the years, the difference in smoking rates between these groups has actually widened. Those with long-term mental health conditions are twice as likely to smoke cigarettes, which is the biggest cause of their 10–20-year reduction in life expectancy. If you are pregnant and live in a deprived area, you are six times more likely to smoke than if you live in a less deprived area. This inequality has generational consequences, as children growing up in a household where people smoke are not only exposed to second-hand smoke but are four times more likely to smoke themselves.<sup>14</sup>

## Vapes

The proposed Bill is vital because it will set out much-needed powers for government to regulate the use of vapes – something that has increased exponentially in recent years.

While vapes were initially introduced as a smoking cessation aid – and do help a minority of smokers to quit - over the last few years they have become the pocket-sized villains of public health. They're discreet, disposable, and the industry have increasingly designed them in a range of flavours and packaging to appeal to children and young adults. Around 4% of young people (11–17-year-olds) in Great Britain are now regularly using vapes<sup>15</sup> and the number of disposable single-use vapes thrown away has soared from 1.3 million to nearly 5 million per week. This is equivalent to 8 per second being thrown away – almost four times the number since the research was first conducted in 2022<sup>16</sup>. resulting in around 10 tonnes of lithium ending up in landfills each year.<sup>17</sup>

**The BMA strongly supports the Tobacco and Vapes Bill in its entirety and urges MPs to support this legislation.**

*For more information on the BMA's position, please contact Lauren Taylor, Public Affairs Officer, at [ltaylor@bma.org.uk](mailto:ltaylor@bma.org.uk)*

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandlifeexpectancies/bulletins/adultsmokinghabitsingreatbritain/2022>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandlifeexpectancies/bulletins/adultsmokinghabitsingreatbritain/2022#smoking-prevalence-in-the-uk-by-sex-age-and-region>

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- <sup>3</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandlifeexpectancies/bulletins/adultsmokinghabitsingreatbritain/2022>
- <sup>4</sup> <https://ash.org.uk/media-centre/news/press-releases/this-world-no-tobacco-day-280-children-will-start-smoking-in-england-enough-to-fill-over-17-school-minibuses>
- <sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/towards-a-smoke-free-generation-tobacco-control-plan-for-england>
- <sup>6</sup> <https://www.nhs.uk/common-health-questions/lifestyle/what-are-the-health-risks-of-smoking/#:~:text=Smoking%20is%20one%20of%20the,with%20debilitating%20smoking%2Drelated%20illnesses>
- <sup>7</sup> <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/causes-of-cancer/smoking-and-cancer>
- <sup>8</sup> <https://ash.org.uk/media-centre/news/press-releases/this-world-no-tobacco-day-280-children-will-start-smoking-in-england-enough-to-fill-over-17-school-minibuses>
- <sup>9</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/smoking-and-tobacco-applying-all-our-health/smoking-and-tobacco-applying-all-our-health>
- <sup>10</sup> <https://ukhsa.blog.gov.uk/2021/07/06/smoking-attributable-deaths-in-england-when-the-information-changes/>
- <sup>11</sup> <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/causes-of-cancer/smoking-and-cancer>
- <sup>12</sup> <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/about-dementia/managing-the-risk-of-dementia/reduce-your-risk-of-dementia/smoking>
- <sup>13</sup> <https://ash.org.uk/media-centre/news/press-releases/smoking-costs-society-17bn-5bn-more-than-previously-estimated>
- <sup>14</sup> <https://ash.org.uk/uploads/Smoking-and-health-inequalities-July-2022.pdf>
- <sup>15</sup> <https://ash.org.uk/uploads/Headline-results-ASH-Smokefree-GB-adults-and-youth-survey-results-2023.pdf?v=1684400380>
- <sup>16</sup> [Disposable single-use vapes thrown away have quadrupled to 5 million per week \(materialfocus.org.uk\)](https://materialfocus.org.uk)
- <sup>17</sup> <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/stories/2022-07-15/rise-of-single-use-vapes-sending-tonnes-of-lithium-to-landfill>