

**From: Sent: To:** Executive News Service <EIS.Newsservice@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk> 05 November 2024 11:50  
**Subject:** EIS.Newsservice@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk DOH News Release - TOBACCO AND VAPES BILL OPPORTUNITY TO REDUCE PREVENTABLE DEATHS AND HEALTH INEQUALITIES – NESBITT

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

05 November 2024

### **Tobacco and Vapes Bill opportunity to reduce preventable deaths and health inequalities – Nesbitt**

Health Minister Mike Nesbitt has welcomed the introduction of the Tobacco and Vapes Bill at Westminster.

The Bill aims to introduce a progressive smoking ban to gradually end the sale of tobacco products across the UK, so that anyone born on or after 1st January 2009 will never be able to legally be sold cigarettes. This means there will be no restrictions on people who can already legally smoke.

The inclusion of Northern Ireland in the new Bill will be subject to the agreement of the NI Executive and support of the NI Assembly.

Minister Nesbitt said: **“The proposed measures in this Bill offer a huge public health opportunity to reduce preventable death and illness. This is particularly important in communities where the prevalence of tobacco use is the largest contributor to health inequalities. Reducing these health inequalities across Northern Ireland is one of my key areas of focus and I am positive this legislation will make a very significant difference going forward.”**

Also welcoming the introduction of the Bill, Chief Medical Officer Professor Sir Michael McBride outlined the harm caused by smoking. He said: “Smoking remains the number one preventable cause of death, disability and ill health in the UK and kills over 2,000 people here in Northern Ireland every year.

“The lung cancer incidence rate in areas where deprivation is highest is around two and a half times the rate seen in the least deprived areas. Smoking rates in the areas where deprivation is highest are typically almost three times the rate in the least deprived areas, while the smoking death rate in communities where deprivation is highest is twice as high as the rate in the least deprived communities. Sadly, children of smokers are often more likely to become smokers themselves.”

The Bill strengthens enforcement activity including the extension of the Tobacco Retailers Register to include vapes and other nicotine products. It also includes provision to allow for the introduction of a retail licensing scheme in the longer term to replace the Registration scheme. This will be subject to public consultation.

In addition, the new Bill includes further welcome enhancements including the extension of existing tobacco advertising, sponsorship and brand-sharing rules to include cigarette papers, herbal smoking products, vaping products and other nicotine products. The legislation will also allow regulations to be made to extend smoke-free provisions in public outdoor places (or workplaces) and to make smoke-free places also vape-free and heated tobacco-free.

Minister Nesbitt continued: **“This Bill will also stop vapes and other consumer nicotine products, such as nicotine pouches, from being branded and advertised to appeal to children. Together these measures will help stop the next generation from becoming addicted to nicotine.**

**“In addition, our health service incurs a significant cost in treating tobacco related conditions. Smoking costs health and care services in the UK £3.1 billion a year - resources that could be freed up to deliver millions more appointments, scans, and operations every year. Shortening the period of life spent in ill-health will help reduce pressures on our health services and improve the quality of life for many of our population.**

2

**“I intend to introduce a Legislative Consent motion shortly and it is my sincere hope that Assembly colleagues will remain supportive of the new and enhanced provisions included in the Bill. Meanwhile, my Department will continue to work closely with the UK Government on the range of proposals being considered within the new Bill.”**

Dr Joanne McClean, Director of Public Health at the PHA, said: “The Public Health Agency welcomes the publication of the UK Tobacco and Vapes Bill. This bill has the potential to create a seismic shift in our health and wellbeing by reducing the harmful effects of tobacco.

“No other consumer product kills up to two-thirds of its users. Not only does smoking cause harm for those who smoke but it also has a negative impact on those around them.

“There is also still uncertainty around the long term health effects of vaping. While vaping can help some people quit smoking, many young people who vape have never smoked, and become addicted to nicotine through vapes. We must do everything we can to reduce the harmful effect of tobacco and vaping use on our population.

“Ensuring people do not become addicted to smoking or vaping in the first place, and helping current smokers to quit, are two effective measures we can take to protect our population’s health, and the PHA will continue to work to reduce the prevalence of smoking in Northern Ireland to create a smokefree generation.”

Information on the Tobacco and Vapes Bill is available at [Smoking ban introduced to protect children and most vulnerable - GOV.UK](#)

**Notes to editors:**

1. Public support for measures included in A Tobacco and Vapes Bill proposed by the previous UK Government

in 2023 was made clear in the UK-wide consultation: [Creating a smokefree generation and tackling youth](#)

[vaping consultation: government response - GOV.UK](#). and received the legislative consent of the NI Assembly on 21st May 2024.

2. Advice and information on local smoking cessation services can be obtained at: [Local help and support | Stop](#)

[Smoking \(stopsmokingni.info\)](#)

3. For media enquiries please contact the DoH Press Office by email [pressoffice@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:pressoffice@health-ni.gov.uk).

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