



Department
of Health &
Social Care

*From the Rt Hon Dame Andrea Leadsom DBE MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Public Health,
Start for Life and Primary Care*

39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

PO-1486173

[REDACTED]
Association of Convenience Stores

By email to: [REDACTED]

18 January 2024

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your correspondence of 1 December about the Government's smokefree-generation proposals and for responding to the consultation. I apologise for the delay in replying.

As you will be aware, the consultation has now closed, and a consultation response will be published shortly. This, alongside regular engagement with the retail sector, will help to shape our future proposals to ensure that we understand the impacts on stakeholders, including retailers and small businesses, and what support might be required.

Smoking is responsible for around 80,000 deaths a year in the UK and causes approximately one in four cancer deaths in the UK. It also costs our country £17billion a year and puts a huge burden on the NHS. That is why the Government is planning to create a smokefree generation by bringing forward legislation so that children who turn 15 this year or younger will never be legally sold tobacco products.

History shows that implementing controls on tobacco does not lead to an increase in the illicit market. For example, when the age of sale was increased from 16 to 18 in 2007, this created 1.3 million more people who were no longer able to be sold cigarettes, and in theory would be in the market for illegal cigarettes. However, in practice, the number of illicit cigarettes consumed fell by 25 per cent, from ten billion in 2005/06 to 7.5 billion in 2007/08.

While e-cigarettes are less harmful than tobacco, and can be an effective aid to quitting, they are not harm free and should never be used by children. The Government is concerned about the significant recent rise in vaping among children, with youth vaping tripling in the last three years and one in five children having now used an e-cigarette. All too often, the evidence is showing that this is due to an underage sale. We agree that e-cigarettes are an important smoking cessation tool, which is why we are encouraging smokers to 'swap to stop', swapping cigarettes for e-cigarettes under a new national scheme, which is the first of its kind in the world.

The Government is also concerned about the threat that single-use disposable products pose to children and to the environment. Being cheap and easy to use, disposable e-cigarettes are the e-cigarettes of choice for children, with 69 per cent of current vapers aged 11 to 17 in Great Britain using them. Over five million disposable e-cigarettes are either littered or thrown away in general waste every week, a fourfold increase on a year ago. We are working closely with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on disposable e-cigarettes and will pass your concerns on to that Department, which has responsibility for this aspect.

On your points raised on displays in stores, unlike tobacco products, e-cigarettes are currently allowed to be displayed anywhere in a store including around the till area. It is not right that children can easily see and pick up e-cigarettes in retail outlets as a result of their being displayed within aisles, close to sweets and confectionary products and on accessible shelves. We have consulted on introducing regulations on point-of-sale displays to reduce the exposure of children to vaping products and on options to restrict flavours and regulate packaging, because we want to limit the appeal of e-cigarettes to children.

With regard to potential operational challenges, we have committed £5million this year and £15million per year thereafter to fund national marketing campaigns in England, which will support understanding and implementation. In addition, we are clear that violent and abusive behaviour towards any public-facing worker is never acceptable, and a Retail Crime Action Plan was launched in October to address this.

The Government is a signatory and party of the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and has an obligation to protect the development of public health policy from the commercial and other vested interests of the tobacco industry or those who work with them, in line with Article 5.3 of the treaty. As part of our Article 5.3 obligations, we will be publishing this letter and our response.

I hope this reply is helpful.



THE RT HON DAME ANDREA LEADSOM DBE MP