



News Release

Secondhand smoke campaign returns this week

- Campaign coincides with new laws which makes it illegal to smoke in private vehicles carrying under 18s in England
- Regulations to protect the 26% of 11-15 year olds who are exposed to cigarette smoke in their family's car¹
- Campaign raises awareness of the damage secondhand smoke causes children in cars ahead of law change on 1 October

Public Health England this week re-launches its campaign to highlight the hidden dangers that secondhand smoke in homes and cars can cause to children's health – coinciding with the passing by Parliament of regulations to end smoking in cars carrying children in England.

Secondhand smoke is particularly harmful to children as they breathe more rapidly and have less developed airways. Children being exposed to secondhand smoke results in more than 300,000 GP consultations and 9,500 hospital admissions every year.²

The government estimates that three million children in England are exposed to secondhand smoke in their family car,³ which puts them at risk of serious conditions including, respiratory infections and meningitis and triggering asthma.⁴ A survey by the British Lung Foundation found that 86% of children who are exposed to smoking in cars would like the smoker to stop; yet only 31% actually feel able to ask them to do so.⁵

Professor Dame Sally Davies, Chief Medical Officer said:

“The passing of regulations to make smoking in cars carrying under 18s illegal is a significant victory for protecting children's health from secondhand smoke. Smoking just a single cigarette in a car exposes children to high levels of air pollutants and cancer causing chemicals like arsenic, formaldehyde and tar.

“Children are least equipped to speak out to protest against secondhand smoke, so I welcome this legislation to end smoking in cars when they are present.”

Professor Kevin Fenton, National Director for Health and Wellbeing for Public Health England added:

“Many parents aren’t aware that over 80% of secondhand smoke is invisible and odourless. Our campaign shows parents what is really there and brings to life that no matter how careful you are, children still breathe in harmful poisons. A completely smokefree home and car is a strong and positive step towards protecting the health of our children.”

The government and public health professionals see this vote as a significant milestone in protecting children from the health risks of secondhand smoke. The law will come into force on 1 October 2015, and people failing to comply could face a £50 fixed penalty notice.

Dr Penny Woods, Chief Executive of the British Lung Foundation, said:

“After years of campaigning on this issue, we could not be more delighted by the government’s commitment to help stop smoking in cars with children present.

“With so many children being exposed to secondhand smoke in the family car every week in the UK, we are certain that this measure will prove to be one of the most significant moments for public health since the smokefree legislation of 2007.”⁶

The Smokefree Homes and Cars campaign features advertising on TV, radio and online from 9 February 2015. It highlights that many parents are often unaware of the damage smoking in the home and car causes to children’s health, and encourages them to quit.

Smokers can search ‘smokefree’ or visit nhs.uk/smokefree for a range of free support and quitting advice, including the Smokefree app and Quit Kit.

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Notes to editors

1. All campaign imagery, adverts and wider key messages around the legislation can be downloaded by media from:
<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/bfgxu9ts6w73gz7/AADegh2kw78nAUGtGaeqxMtLa?dl=0>
2. Public Health England exists to protect and improve the nation’s health and wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities. It does this through world-class science, knowledge and intelligence, advocacy, partnerships and the delivery of specialist public health services. PHE is an operationally autonomous executive

agency of the Department of Health. Website: www.gov.uk/phe. Twitter: [@PHE_uk](https://twitter.com/PHE_uk), Facebook: www.facebook.com/PublicHealthEngland

3. While smoking rates have declined over past decades, smoking is still the biggest cause of preventable illness and premature death in the country - accounting for almost 80,000 deaths in England a year. One in every two long-term smokers will die prematurely from a smoking related disease unless they quit.

For further information, images or interviews, please contact:

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¹ Smoking drinking and drug use among young people in England in 2012. Health and Social Care Information Centre, 2013 <http://www.hscic.gov.uk/catalogue/PUB11334>

² Royal College of Physicians (2010). *Passive Smoking and Children*. RCP, London
<https://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/sites/default/files/documents/passive-smoking-and-children.pdf>

³ Smoke-free (Private Vehicles) Regulations Impact Assessment 2014
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/329863/Impact_Assessment.pdf

⁴ Royal College of Physicians (2010). *Passive Smoking and Children*. RCP, London
<https://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/sites/default/files/documents/passive-smoking-and-children.pdf>

⁵ BLF/ TNS survey, conducted 20-27 January 2011

⁶ Smoking has been prohibited by law in virtually all enclosed and substantially enclosed work and public places throughout the United Kingdom since July 2007. Smokefree legislation in England forms part of the Health Act 2006.

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/28/pdfs/ukpga_20060028_en.pdf