

UPDATE REPORT ON PROPOSALS FOR STANDARDISED PACKAGING OF TOBACCO PRODUCTS

Purpose of Report

This report provides an update on progress in relation to Department of Health and the Devolved Administration's national consultation on policy proposals to require cigarettes packs and other tobacco packaging to conform to a standardised format.

Background

A review of research evidence (Moodie et al, 2011)¹ indicated that there is strong evidence to support the propositions set out in the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control relating to the role of plain packaging in helping to reduce smoking rates.

Specifically; the review suggests that plain packaging would reduce the attractiveness and appeal of tobacco products, increase the effectiveness of health warnings.

In addition, the studies in the review show that plain packaging is perceived by both smokers and non-smokers to reduce initiation among non-smokers and cessation-related behaviours among smokers.

A government consultation on proposals relating to plain packaging was held in the summer of 2012. A letter of response to the consultation was endorsed by the Cabinet on 16th July 2012. The consultation closed in August 2012.

Update on progress

At the time of this report, no information has been released summarising the contributions to the consultation or its findings. In May 2013 there was no mention of plain tobacco packaging in the Queens Speech.

A BBC interview by Jeremy Hunt on the day of the speech confirmed that no decision has been taken as yet.

Also in May 2013, a collaboration of professional bodies including the Royal College of General Practitioners, the Faculty of Public Health and the British Medical Association wrote an open letter to the Prime Minister expressing concern over the lack of progress (see attached letter)

In the meantime, the Scottish government have published a strategy that includes plain packaging. However they are awaiting the findings of the Coalition's consultation before making firm plans for legislation.

Dr Lisa McNally, Consultant in Public Health, Bracknell Forest Council

¹ Moodie et al 2011) Plain Tobacco Packaging: A Systematic Review, University of Stirling, 2011
http://phrc.lshtm.ac.uk/project_2011-2016_006.html