UK Government

NHS



Smoke-free Generation Campaign

Partner Toolkit | November 2026

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Welcome

As part of the 10-Year Health Plan, the introduction of Smoke-free Generation legislation marks a major milestone in improving the nation's health. From 1 January 2027, anyone born in or after 2009 will never legally be sold tobacco products, helping to create the UK's first smoke-free generation and bringing us a significant step closer to ending the harms caused by smoking.

Smoking remains the leading preventable cause of ill health, disability and premature death. The Smoke-free Generation legislation has been introduced to break the cycle of tobacco addiction and protect future generations from the harms of tobacco, creating a healthier, fairer future for everyone.

While the legislation is an important step forward, its success depends on public awareness, understanding and support. This toolkit provides campaign materials, key messages and practical guidance to help you, our partners, to raise awareness of the change, support the national Smoke-free Generation campaign, and ultimately to contribute to the successful implementation of Smoke-free Generation legislation.

The Smoke-free Generation forms part of the **Tobacco and Vapes Act 2026**, which became law on 29 April 2026. The Act introduces a range of measures relating to tobacco, vaping and nicotine products. Further information about the Act and its implementation can be found in the Background section of this toolkit.

Who this toolkit is for:
This toolkit is designed to support anyone working towards a smoke-free future. This may include (but is not limited to):

- **Local Authorities**
- **NHS organisations (ICBs, Trusts, GPs, Dentists, etc)**
- **Schools, colleges and other education providers**
- **Stop smoking/health and wellbeing service providers**
- **Other government departments**
- **Charities and third sector organisations.**

Campaign outline

The national Smoke-free Generation campaign will help people understand what is changing, when it is changing and why.

Unlike traditional smoking cessation campaigns, it is not specifically targeted at people who smoke. As the campaign supports a change in legislation, its primary role is to ensure the wider public understands the new law.

Campaign objectives
This national campaign is solely designed to support the implementation of the Smoke-free Generation element of the Act (i.e. the change to age of sale of tobacco).

The campaign aims to:
1. Communicate & build awareness of the age of sale changes to the public.
2. Ensure audiences understand the changes to the law.
3. Increase support and get the public behind the changes.

Campaign audiences
The campaign's target audience is split into two distinct groups:
- Adults aged 18+
- Young people aged 13–17

It is worth noting that schools/colleges, retailers and enforcement bodies are also key target audiences, but will be engaged separately from the campaign.

Campaign timings and media plan
We will deliver two phases of national campaign activity to support the implementation of the Act.

Phase 1: 16 November 2026 to 6 December 2026
Raising awareness ahead of the legislative changes being introduced.

Phase 2: 1 January 2027 to 29 January 2027
Supporting awareness and understanding as the legislation comes into effect.

Here's an overview of the paid media channels we'll use for each phase of the campaign:

Media type	Description	November	January
TV	Linear TV channels including ITV, C4 and Sky		●
BVOD/SVOD	Broadcast/subscription video-on-demand channels including ITV, C4, Sky, Amazon Prime, Disney+ and Netflix	●	●
OLV	YouTube online video streaming channel	●	●
Radio	Various stations across the Bauer and Global media groups	●	●
Digital Audio	Audio and display within Spotfiy	●	●
OOH	Multiple out-of-home sites on roadsides, shopping malls, music venues, London Underground, and other locations		●
Social Media	Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Reddit and Snapchat	●	●
Influencer	Bespoke content developed with social media influencers	●	●

Campaign creative

‘New Dawn’
The campaign creative route is called ‘New Dawn’. This approach positions the introduction of Smoke-free Generation legislation as a significant milestone in the UK’s journey towards ending the harms caused by smoking.

Built around the concept: **“the beginning of the end for smoking”**, the creative uses a new dawn to symbolise a healthier future and the beginning of a new era.

To reflect the scale and significance of this moment, the creative features a towering monolith in the shape of a giant cigarette packet, symbolising the powerful hold tobacco has had over the nation and generations of people. As the light of the new dawn breaks on 1 January 2027, it triggers the ignition of the monolith, which gradually burns away and is reduced to ash. This powerful visual transformation represents the beginning of a new era and the end of tobacco’s hold on future generations.

Audience testing found the concept to be memorable, distinctive and engaging across both adult and youth audiences, and smokers and non-smokers. More about the development/testing process can be found in the **Background section**.



Campaign materials

A suite of free, ready-to-use materials is available to help you support the campaign through your own channels.
They include:

- Posters
- Social media assets
- Digital screens
- Explainer videos
- Digital assets including email signature and web graphics
- Multilingual assets

Due to the legislative nature of this campaign, materials are not editable.

Please note that assets featured in this toolkit should not be used until 16 November 2026.





Posters

To support the campaign, you can:

Print the posters and display across your sites and communal area, such us meeting rooms, canteen, notice boards, etc.



A3 Poster



A4 Poster

Social media static assets

To support the campaign, you can:

Share the assets on your social media channels and online.



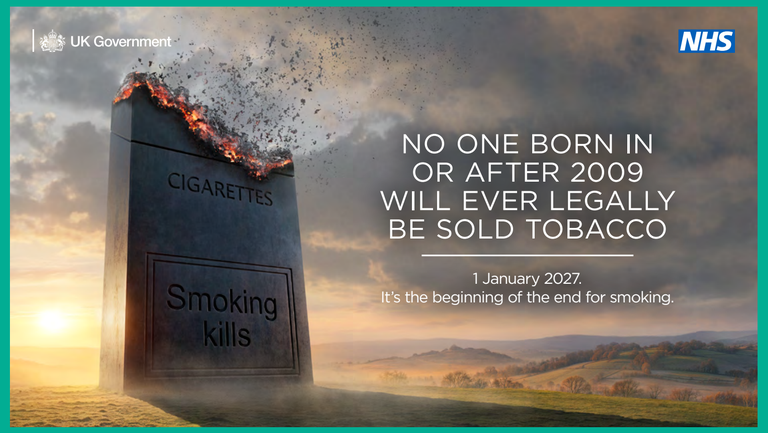
1x1



4x5



9x16



16x9

Suggested social media posts

Post 1: General awareness
From 1 January 2027, anyone born in or after 2009 will never legally be sold tobacco. This landmark change will help create the UK's first smoke-free generation and protect future generations from the harms of smoking.
Learn more about the Smoke-free Generation: https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking/tobacco-vapes-act/
#SmokeFreeGeneration

Post 2: Positive future focus
A smoke-free generation means a healthier future.
From 1 January 2027, anyone born in or after 2009 will never legally be sold tobacco, helping to break the cycle of addiction and reduce smoking-related illness for generations to come. It's the beginning of the end for smoking.
#SmokeFreeGeneration

Post 3: Explaining the change
What is the Smoke-free Generation legislation?
It means that from 1 January 2027, the legal age of sale for tobacco will keep increasing year by year, so anyone born on or after 1 January 2009 will never legally be sold tobacco. It's a major step towards ending the harms caused by smoking.
Learn more about the Smoke-free Generation: **https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking/tobacco-vapes-act/**
#SmokeFreeGeneration

Post 4: Health harms
Smoking remains one of the biggest causes of preventable illness and death in the UK.

That's why, from 1 January 2027, anyone born in or after 2009 will never legally be sold tobacco. Together, we can help create a smoke-free future.
#SmokeFreeGeneration

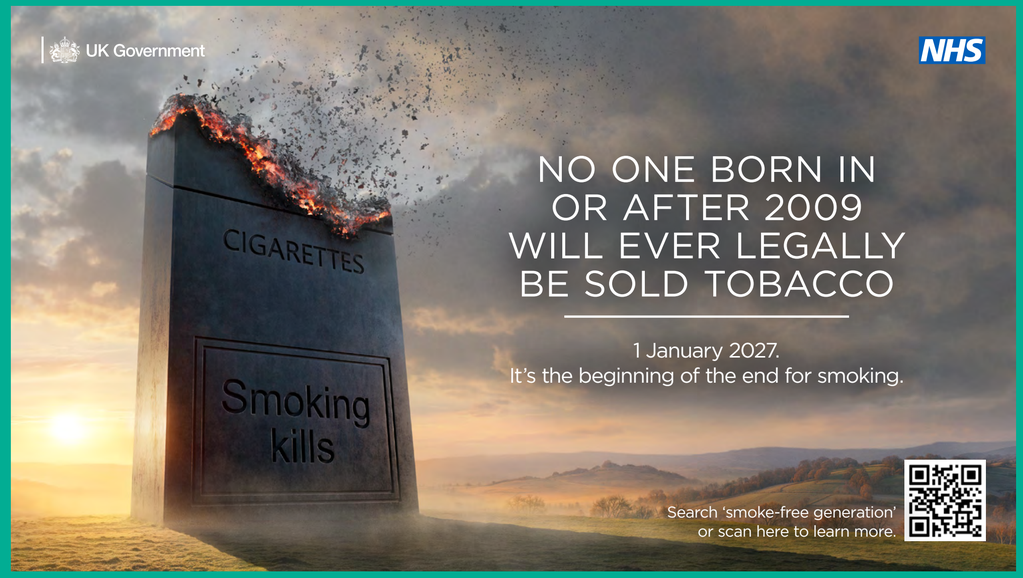
Post 5: Countdown Style
🚭 The countdown is on.
From 1 January 2027, anyone born in or after 2009 will never legally be sold tobacco. A once-in-a-generation opportunity to protect future generations from tobacco addiction.
#SmokeFreeGeneration

Post 6: Linking to stop smoking support
The Smoke-free Generation legislation is about protecting future generations from tobacco addiction. If you currently smoke, it's never too late to quit. Free, local support is available to help you take your own step towards a smoke-free future.
#SmokeFreeGeneration

Digital screens

To support the campaign, you can:

Use the assets on your digital screens or as a computer screensaver.



16x9



9x16

Explainer videos

To support the campaign, you can:

Use these videos on your digital and social channel e.g. website, social media, digital screens. The videos are available in full length as 90s as well as two 30s cutdowns, with and without subtitles.



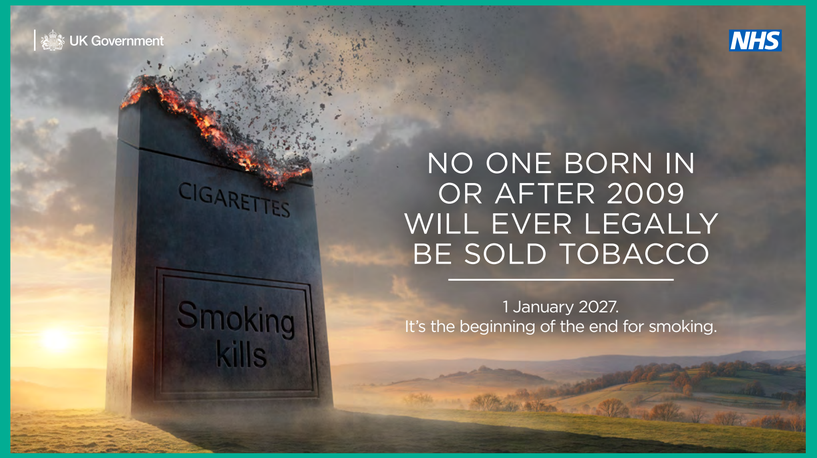
Digital assets

To support the campaign, you can:

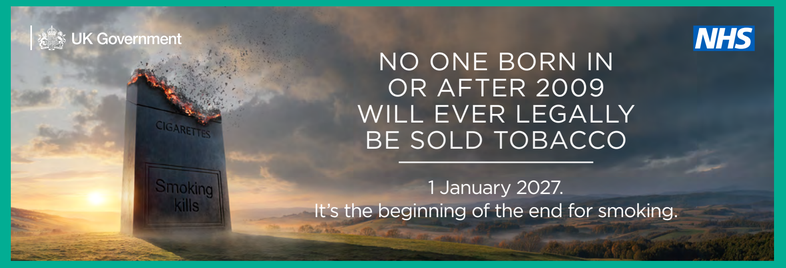
Use the digital assets on your website and internal communication channels such as email, intranet and newsletters.



9x16



16x9



Email signature

Multilingual assets

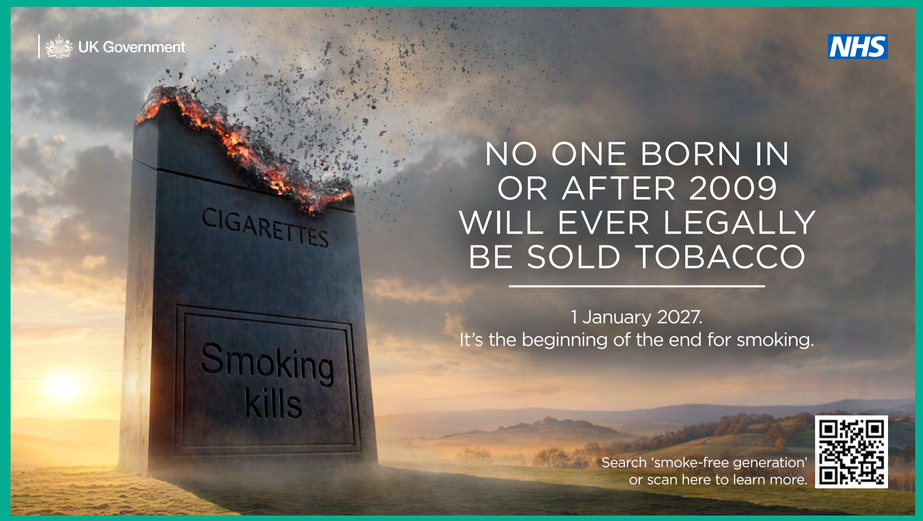
You can use the set of assets adapted for the languages noted below.

- Polish
- Urdu
- Punjabi
- Romanian
- Arabic
- Bengali
- Portuguese
- Gujarati
- Spanish

Multilingual assets will be available week commencing 9 November on CRC for download.



Posters:
A4 and A3



Digital Screens:
16x9 and 9x16



Social Assets:
4x5 and 9x16

Long-form copy

The copy below can help you write articles for local websites and bulletins. It is the same copy that's featured on the NHS Better Health website: **https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking/tobacco-vapes-act/**

What is the new law on the sale of tobacco?
From the 1 January 2027, a new law is coming into place which will make it illegal for shops and other retailers in the UK to sell tobacco products to anyone born on or after 1 January 2009.

This law is part of the Tobacco and Vapes Act 2026 and will help create the UK's first smoke-free generation.

What is changing under the new law?
Currently, retailers across the UK can legally sell cigarettes and other tobacco products to anyone aged 18 or over.

From 1 January 2027, this will change. The new age-of-sale law will make it illegal to sell tobacco products, herbal smoking products or cigarette papers to anyone born on or after 1 January 2009, even after they turn 18.

It will also be an offence for anyone aged 18 or over to buy these products on behalf of a person born on or after 1 January 2009. This means that, in the UK, it will never be legal to sell tobacco to anyone born on or after 1 January 2009, now or at any point in the future, creating the UK's first smoke-free generation.

This law will apply to:
- All tobacco products (this includes cigarettes; hand rolling tobacco; cigars; cigarillos; pipe tobacco; waterpipe tobacco, such as shisha; nasal tobacco, commonly known as snuff; chewing tobacco; heated tobacco; tobacco blunts).
- Herbal smoking products (this includes herbal blunts; herbal cigarettes; herbal shisha).
- Cigarette papers.

Why is the Government making this change?
The ultimate aim is to protect future generations from the harms of smoking.

Around 83% of smokers start smoking in their teens. Starting young makes it easier to become addicted to nicotine an much harder to quit later in life.

By preventing young people from starting to smoke, the new law aims to create the first smoke-free generation and reduce the number of smoking-related cancers and deaths in the future.

Smoking addiction has devastating consequences. In the UK, around 75,000 people die from smoking-related illnesses each year. On average, that's 205 deaths a day, or 1 death every 7 minutes.

How you can support

We are grateful to the many organisations that have already helped raise awareness of and build support for Smoke-free Generation legislation. The success of this legislation will depend not only on implementation, but on ensuring that people understand what is changing, why it matters and how it will help protect future generations from the harms of smoking.

We do not expect any organisation to undertake paid activity to support this campaign – all paid activity is being managed by DHSC.

If you can support the campaign, we encourage you to:

1. Share campaign assets
Share the free social media, poster, digital screen, web and other campaign assets from this toolkit through your owned channels and partner networks.

2. Feature the campaign in your communications
Use the supplied copy and key messages in newsletters, bulletins, websites and other communications. Where appropriate, add local voices or perspectives.

3. Share local stories
Use relevant stories and examples to illustrate the impact smoking can have on individuals, families and communities, helping audiences understand why the legislation matters.

4. Engage your networks
Share campaign messages and materials with colleagues, partners and community organisations and encourage them to amplify the campaign.

5. Promote stop smoking support
While the legislation and campaign are focused on protecting future generations, it is important that people who currently smoke know that support is available. You may wish to use the campaign moment as an opportunity to signpost local stop smoking services and quitting support. You can do this using your established brands and local materials, referencing the Smoke-free Generation legislation alongside them.

Key messages and factsheet

Below are some motivating key messages we recommend including in your communications.

- From 1 January 2027, anyone born in or after 2009 will never legally be sold tobacco.
- Smoking remains one of the biggest causes of preventable illness and death. A Smoke-free Generation is about stopping that cycle for good.
- 1 January 2027 marks the beginning of the end for smoking.
- The Tobacco and Vapes Act marks a major step towards a smoke-free UK.
- The Act will help prevent future generations from becoming addicted to tobacco and nicotine.
- If you smoke, it's never too late to quit and be part of the Smoke-free Generation. Free expert support from your local stop smoking service is proven to give you the best chance of quitting successfully.
- Search 'smoke-free generation' or visit **https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking/tobacco-vapes-act/** to find out more about the changes.

Factsheet:
UK facts and stats

1. Since 2011, adult smoking prevalence in the UK has dropped from 20.2% to 9.8%. (i)
2. There are currently around 4.9 million adults in the UK who smoke. (i)
3. Smoking is the leading preventable cause of death, disability and ill health in this country. (ii)
4. Up to two-thirds of deaths in people who smoke can be attributed to smoking. (iii)
5. On average, someone who smokes loses approximately 20 minutes of their life for every cigarette they smoke. (vii)

England-only facts and stats

1. Smoking causes 1-in-4 of all cancer deaths in England. (iv)
2. Every year around 64,000 people in England die from smoking. (v)
3. In England, there are over 400,000 hospital admissions a year attributed to smoking. (vi)
7. Smoking is estimated to cost society £21.9 billion per year in England. This includes an annual £18.6 billion loss to productivity through smoking-related lost earnings, unemployment, and early death. (viii)
8. Smoking is estimated to cost the NHS and social care £3 billion per year. (viii)
9. The national average spend on tobacco is around £2,964 per smoker, per year. (viii)
10. Three-quarters of smokers wish they had never started. (ix)

Background

About the Tobacco and Vapes Act 2026

The Smoke-free Generation legislation is part of the wider Tobacco and Vapes Act 2026. The Act became law on 29 April 2026 and will create a smoke-free generation (SFG). On January 1, 2027, it will become illegal to sell tobacco products to those born on or after 1 January 2009.

The Act will also aid in implementing a smoke free generation by:

- Strengthening the existing ban on smoking in public places to reduce harms of passive smoking in certain outdoor settings, particularly for children and vulnerable people. Note: This is subject to consultation.
- Stopping vapes and nicotine products from being deliberately branded, promoted, designed and advertised to children.
- Provide powers to introduce a licensing scheme for the retail sale of tobacco, vapes and nicotine products in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and expand the retailer registration scheme in Scotland.

We are taking a phased approach to implementation of the Act:

29 April 2026

- The Act received Royal Assent and became law.

29 October 2026

- Several measures come into force, including:
- Extension of the age of sale of 18 to all vaping and nicotine products.
- Ban on vending machine sales of vaping and nicotine products.
- Ban on the free distribution and substantial discounting of vaping and nicotine products.
- Introduction of fixed penalty notices for a range of offences relating to tobacco, vaping and nicotine products.

1 January 2027

- The smoke-free generation age-of-sale changes take effect. From this date, anyone born on or after 1 January 2009 cannot legally be sold tobacco products.

Background continued

How the campaign was developed

The Smoke-free Generation campaign has been developed through a robust evidence-based process, ensuring that the approach is grounded in audience insight and supported by extensive testing.

The campaign is built around a clear communications challenge: helping people understand a new and unprecedented policy while building support for its implementation. Research highlighted that most people already understand that smoking is harmful, but many were unfamiliar with the concept of a “smoke-free generation” and what the legislation would mean in practice.

Communications therefore needed to explain the policy clearly, address potential confusion, and position the legislation as a reasonable and proportionate response to a well-established public health issue.

Several creative territories were developed and tested with youth and adult audiences (smokers and non-smokers) to understand which approach would be most effective at increasing awareness, understanding and support for the legislation. Concepts explored a range of different themes, including public health progress, generational change and the long-term impact of smoking.

Audience testing showed that messages were most effective when they framed the legislation as a logical next step in tackling a product that is known to cause serious harm. Research found that positioning the age-of-sale change as the responsible answer to the simple fact that “smoking kills, so we’re killing smoking” resonated strongly with all audiences.

Testing also identified differences in how audiences responded to creative approaches. Some concepts that focused heavily on policy or historical smoking trends were seen as less personally relevant by younger audiences, while approaches that emphasised health risks, protecting future generations and creating a positive future performed more strongly.

References

i. Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2026) Adult smoking habits in the UK: 2025. Available at: **https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandlifeexpectancies/bulletins/adultsmokinghabitsingreatbritain/2025**

ii. Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (2026) Global Burden of Disease Compare. Available at: **https://vizhub.healthdata.org/gbd-compare/**

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iv. Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) (2023) Smoking and cancer. Available at: **https://ash.org.uk/resources/view/smoking-and-cancer**

v. Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) (2026) Local Tobacco Control Profiles. Available at: **https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/tobacco-control**

vi. NHS Digital (2024) Statistics on Public Health, England 2023. Available at: **https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/statistics-on-public-health/2023**

vii. Jackson, S.E., Jarvis, M.J. and West, R. (2024) The price of a cigarette: 20 minutes of life? Available at: **https://bit.ly/4k4BPN0**

viii. Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) (2026) ASH Ready Reckoner. Available at: **https://ashresources.shinyapps.io/ready_reckoner/**

ix. Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) (2021) Smokers encouraged to take part in Stoptober, as they report smoking more during pandemic. Available at: **https://www.gov.uk/government/news/smokers-encouraged-to-take-part-in-stoptober-as-they-report-smoking-more-during-pandemic**


Thank you
for supporting
this campaign