Smoke-free Generation – Partner Briefing

Monday 16th November 2026

Why you are receiving this briefing

From **1 January 2027**, it will be illegal for shops and other retailers to sell tobacco products to anyone **born on or after 1 January 2009**, even after they turn 18.

The change is part of the Tobacco and Vapes Act 2026 which aims to create the UK's first smoke-free generation and protect future generations from the harms of smoking.

A national public awareness campaign has been launched and we're asking for your support to help residents understand the changes and promote the support available to help people quit smoking.

Why this matters

- Smoking remains the leading cause of entirely preventable ill health, disability and premature death in England and is a leading driver of health inequalities
- Smoking can have a devastating impact on people's health and wellbeing; around 450 people die in Sunderland each year due to smoking, with 2,800 total years of life lost each year
- The new law is designed to prevent future generations from becoming addicted to tobacco, preventing hundreds of thousands of cases of serious illness and premature deaths.

What is changing?

From 1 January 2027

- It will be illegal to sell tobacco products to anyone born on or after 1 January 2009.
- The law applies to all tobacco products, including cigarettes, cigars, cigarillos, hand-rolling tobacco, pipe tobacco, shisha, nasal tobacco, chewing tobacco, heated tobacco, as well as herbal smoking products and cigarette papers.
- It will 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.

Other changes

From 29 October 2026

- Sale of all vaping and nicotine products restricted to people aged 18 years and over (unless licenced medicines e.g. NRT).
- Ban on vaping and nicotine product vending machines.
- Ban on free distribution and significant discounting of nicotine products.
- Introduction of Fixed Penalty Notices for certain offences

How partners can help

All partners can help raise awareness of the new law and support Sunderland's ambition to become a smoke-free city.

We are asking partners to:

- Familiarise yourself with the changes
- Help raise awareness of the changes by sharing the smoke-free generation campaign through your communication channels
- Help people to quit smoking by signposting to the wide range of free local support at www.linksforlifesunderland.co.uk
- Consider how smoke-free messages can be embedded within existing services, communications and programmes.

Five key facts about the new law

1. From 1 January 2027, it will be illegal to sell tobacco products to anyone born on or after 1 January 2009, even after they turn 18.
2. 1 January 2027 marks the beginning of the end for smoking
3. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to protect future generations from tobacco addiction
4. This law targets retail sales; it does not criminalise young people or current smokers

5. This does not affect current adult smokers, but is a great opportunity to encourage smokers to quit

Where to find out more

- You can find out more about the new law here
- You can access all national campaign materials at the DHSC Campaign Resources Centre **NB requires registration*
- DHSC have developed a package of Smoke-free Generation School resources in their School Zone
- ASH and Fresh have also developed a communication toolkit, which can be accessed here
- The public can read about the new Smokefree Generation law here
- You can find resources to support the More Ways to Quit campaign here
- Local stop smoking services can be found here

If you would like copies of the digital assets or printed posters or have any queries about any of the campaign material, please contact Rose Melia at rose.melia@sunderland.gov.uk

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Chair of Sunderland Smokefree Partnership