

BREATHE 2025

INSPIRING A
SMOKEFREE GENERATION

MAXIMISING THE IMPACT OF STANDARDISED PACKAGING: COMMUNICATIONS BRIEFING

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Prepared for local authority tobacco control and communications teams, and anyone with an interest in increasing coverage of standardised packaging and related opportunities for smoking cessation in the media.

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STANDARDISED TOBACCO PACKAGING

Most smokers take up the habit before the age of 18, and young people are therefore a key target for tobacco industry marketing.(1) In the UK, branded cigarette packs are the last remaining form of tobacco advertising. However, recently implemented legislation means that by May 2017 all cigarette packs and packets of hand-rolling tobacco sold in the UK will be a standardised drab green-brown colour, and will feature large pictorial and text health warnings. The packs will no longer be brightly coloured or feature well-known logos; the only branding on the packs will be the product name, which will be printed in a standard font and size. Evidence has shown that plain, unbranded cigarette packs are considered to be less attractive than branded packs, particularly by young people, and that they increase the effectiveness of health warnings.(2)

The new regulations on the appearance of tobacco packaging came into force in May 2016, and all packs on sale in the UK must comply with the new regulations by May 2017.

The primary aim of standardised packaging is to reduce the uptake of smoking among young people; however, it also offers new opportunities for adult smoking cessation (see 'The opportunity: Increasing adult smoking cessation' below for details). The purpose of this briefing is to describe these opportunities and provide advice and ideas for action in regional and local areas, to obtain local media coverage which can maximise the impact of standardised packaging on smoking cessation.



THE OPPORTUNITY: INCREASING ADULT SMOKING CESSATION

In 2012, Australia became the first country in the world to implement standardised packaging of tobacco products. A review of the legislation published in 2016 found that since introducing standardised tobacco packaging, Australia has seen fewer younger people taking up smoking and that smoking prevalence has fallen.(3) In addition, a 78% increase in calls to the stop smoking helpline in New South Wales (the peak at 4 weeks after introduction) suggests that the legislation has also driven quitting behaviour in adults.(4)

Two thirds of smokers say they want to quit smoking, and around a third have tried to quit smoking in the last year(1, 5). The evidence from Australia suggests that these proportions will increase as a result of standardised tobacco packaging, and that smokers may be particularly open to smoking cessation support around the time of its implementation. Standardised packaging therefore provides a window of opportunity to increase both the number and the success rate of quit attempts.

Local organisations involved in tobacco control can help to seize this 'teachable moment' and enhance the effect of the packaging legislation on adult smokers through action at a local and regional level by engaging the media and public, and through an effective response by Local Stop Smoking Services (LSSS).

An important way of doing this is through proactive activity to maximise coverage of standardised packaging in traditional and social media. This will help to raise awareness of and influence local discourse about the topic which, in turn, is likely to increase motivation and attempts to quit smoking. Combining coverage of the legislation with information about the range of available support, particularly LSSS, is important to maximise the success rate of additional quit attempts generated by standardised packaging.

The advice and ideas which follow have been compiled based on interviews with 16 individuals with experience of tobacco control and related communications, including staff in local authorities, Public Health England, and NGOs. Participants were asked about their experiences of obtaining media coverage on tobacco control issues, with a focus on local coverage. Participants provided suggestions on how to garner the interest in the media, examples of recent media coverage in their local area, and their thoughts on which stories on standardised packaging would be of local interest.

WHAT'S THE STORY?

Standard packs are being introduced to reduce the number of children and young people who start to smoke. But their introduction also opens up a window of opportunity when more adult smokers are motivated to quit. Our challenge is to seize this moment, getting out messages and information that will encourage and help smokers to make a successful quit attempt.

There are three key time phases:

1. now to the start of 2017: a critical planning phase as the first packs begin to appear in some areas, and which includes Stoptober, the national quit campaign
2. from January 2017 when we can expect standard packs to start appearing in bulk
3. from May 2017 when all packs in the UK must be standard packs

During these months we need to take every opportunity going and that we can create to

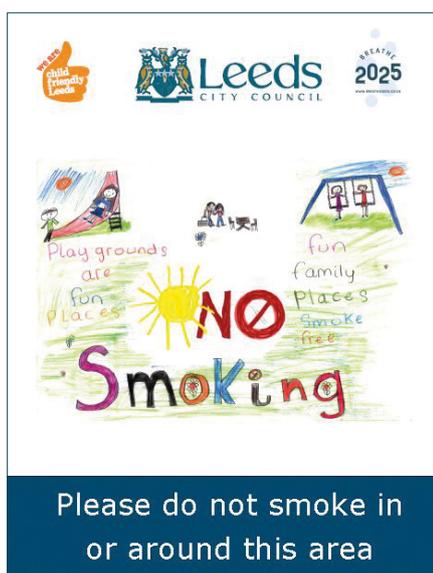
- highlight all the support there is from the LSSS to quit smoking
- push all the positive outcomes – that you can succeed and what it will mean
- show it's the norm: everybody's quitting
- the time is NOW to put a plan in place to quit
- keep talking about standardised packs
- use the Graphic Health Warnings to talk about the health and family consequences of smoking
- highlight the financial cost of smoking – is this value for money?

Quick tips

- Plan ahead for events that are likely to make an interesting story in your local area. Develop a standardised packaging communications plan, pulling on the skills, knowledge and experience of tobacco control leads, stop smoking services and communications teams.
- Have expert spokespeople primed and ready to talk to the media about standardised packaging and LSSS support.
- Involve the LSSS in your communications planning. The services can help you to identify quitters who might have quit in response to standardised packaging, and who are willing to be interviewed by the media.
- Present an insight into the local perspective, for example by using voxpops or surveys, or by citing local data. Local data are available from Public Health England's **Local Tobacco Control Profiles for England**.
- Make use of infographics, photos, and videos. Several infographics are included in this document, and numerous additional resources are available from Breathe 2025, Cancer Research UK and Public Health England (see below).
- Consider low-cost paid options for supplementing local media exposure, such as paying for advertising in newspapers in exchange for subsequent free media coverage, or placing adverts on Facebook, which can be closely targeted to particular groups and can represent good value for money.
- Collaborate with the local media to engage with the local population about smoking (See case study 1).
- Consider whether you can target particular subgroups of the population where smoking prevalence is understood to be high through stories in local foreign language newspapers, or ethnic minority radio (See case study 2).
- Publicise and use the **'track the pack'** map. This will both offer opportunities for media stories and trigger when and where you could make stop smoking support more visible.
- Think about what might be happening to the individual smoker's experience of smoking that might be increasing their motivation to quit and how you might elements of this it in your local quit promotions. Younger adult smokers in particular might be finding it generally less satisfactory – perceptions that their tobacco is less appealing, poorer value for money, for example.
- Keep an eye out for the publication of new evidence on the impact of standardised packaging, both from Australia and the UK, and in other countries who are implementing the legislation, such as France, Ireland and New Zealand, to use as a news hook. Evidence of the impact on smoking behaviour in the UK is likely to emerge from late 2018 onwards.

CASE STUDY 1: SMOKEFREE PLAYGROUNDS IN LEEDS

In 2015 Leeds City Council collaborated with the local paper, the Yorkshire Evening Post, to engage local children, families and others to build support and awareness of plans to introduce a new voluntary smoking ban in all of its children's play areas. The council set up a competition for local children to design signs for local play areas, promoted through the newspaper, as well as social media and other channels. The paper gave editorial support for the competition and reported the results, leading to repeated positive coverage of the issue of adults smoking in front of children. More than 180 children entered the competition, and the winning designs have been used outside local playgrounds since January 2016. Competition entries were also used by the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health for guidance on changes in smoking legislation, allowing more winners and wider message exposure.



KEY MESSAGES

For smokers

- There's never been a better time to quit
- More and more people are quitting: There are 7 million smokers in England but 15 million ex-smokers
- Quitting success rates are at the highest level ever recorded: The Smoking Toolkit Study has found that in 2016, one in five quitters is quitting successfully
- There are lots of ways to quit and support from your LSSS will increase the chances of success

For non-smokers

- New standard tobacco packaging will help make sure fewer young people start smoking

For (health) partners

- Standard packs bring a window of opportunity when more smokers have more motivation to quit. Use this time to publicise ways to quit and encourage people to have a go. There's never been a better time.
- Local stop smoking services offer the best chance of success. They are up to four times more effective than no help or over the counter nicotine replacement therapy.
- E-cigarettes are the most popular means of quitting and NHS stop smoking services are the most effective with 7 out of 10 smokers who combine the two quitting successfully.

There's never been
a better time to quit

#seizethemoment

quitnow.smokefree.nhs.uk



Where to go for more information

- Breathe 2025: Various resources on standardised packaging, including a briefing for local authorities, infographics and health warning images. <http://www.breathe2025.org.uk/resources/#standardised>
- Public Health England: PHE's September 2016 Health Matters resource on standard packs includes a range of infographics and information about standardised packaging and how local areas can seize the opportunity to support smokers to quit
- Cancer Research UK: infographics (<https://uk.pinterest.com/cruk/tobacco/>) and videos
- ASH: Factsheets, briefings for LAs and health professionals, reports <http://www.ash.org.uk/current-policy-issues/advertising-and-promotion/standardised-plain-packaging>