

# Government has failed to deliver on smoke free pledge for England

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Two years on from its pledge to make England smoke free by 2030, the UK government has failed to deliver on the policies it promised to deliver this ambition, say a group of leading doctors, professional bodies and charities in *The BMJ* today.

In an [open letter](#) to the Prime Minister and Secretary of State for health, they say smoking is likely to have killed more people last year than covid-19 and it will carry on doing so for many years to come unless the government takes action.

They call for a US-style 'polluter pays' levy on tobacco manufacturers to fund the strategy, saying "the time has come to make the tobacco manufacturers pay to end the epidemic they and they alone have caused."

The rate of decline in smoking in the years leading up to 2019 was not sufficient to deliver this ambition, they explain. In the last two years it is estimated that over 200,000 children under 16 have started to smoke, two thirds of whom will go on to become regular smokers.

Delivering the Smokefree ambition "would play a major role in achieving Government manifesto commitments to increase [healthy life expectancy](#) by five years by 2035, while reducing inequalities and levelling up the nation," they write.

The blueprint to achieve this is laid out in the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Smoking and Health recommendations for the forthcoming Tobacco Control Plan, but it needs to be properly funded.

The APPG report sets out how a levy on manufacturers could raise £700 million in year one alone, without the costs being passed on to smokers, now that we have left Europe. "This could pay for delivery of the Tobacco Control Plan, and provide additional funding that [public health](#) desperately needs."

They point out that in 2019 Imperial Tobacco made £71 for every £100 in sales. "These are extreme profits, many times higher than those made by other consumer product manufacturers," they say. "The time has come to make the [tobacco manufacturers](#) pay to end the epidemic they and they alone have caused."

**More information:** Open letter to the prime minister and secretary of state on the second anniversary of England's announcement that it would be smoke-free by 2030, *The BMJ*, [DOI: 10.1136/bmj.n1839](https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n1839)

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