

## A change of age for tobacco

The Department of Health today launched a campaign to inform retailers and the public that the selling of tobacco products to under 18s will be illegal from 1<sup>st</sup> October. New Government legislation will raise the age of sale for tobacco from 16 to 18 years of age. Details of the campaign can be found at [www.tobaccoagechange.co.uk](http://www.tobaccoagechange.co.uk). [Site live from Monday 23/07/07]

Changing the legal age of the sale of tobacco follows the introduction of the Smokefree legislation on July 1<sup>st</sup> 2007 and is aimed at reducing smoking prevalence rates among young people which currently stand at around 9 per cent of 11-15 year olds<sup>1</sup> and 26 per cent of 16-19 year olds.<sup>2</sup>

Help is at hand for teenagers wanting to quit, with the NHS providing a range of options through the NHS Smoking Helpline on 0800 169 0 169 and [www.gosmokefree.co.uk](http://www.gosmokefree.co.uk). Between April and December 2006, 11,258 under 18s set a quit date with their free local NHS Stop Smoking Service, with 37% successful at four weeks.<sup>3</sup>

Dawn Primarolo, Minister for Public Health said, "Currently, half of all teenagers who smoke will die from diseases caused by tobacco if they continue to smoke throughout the course of their life. Raising the minimum age at which teenagers can be sold tobacco products will reduce the availability of cigarettes, and could therefore discourage young people from taking up smoking in the first place."

Retailers that stock tobacco will have a legal obligation not to sell to under 18s and will risk prosecution and a fine of up to £2,500 if they do so.

Association of Convenience Stores Chief Executive, James Lowman, said: "The Government's campaign must ensure that everyone knows what is expected of them when the law changes. Retailers will be the frontline defence against under 18s buying tobacco and this campaign will help them to do this job. We welcome the opportunity to work with the Department of Health to ensure customers are aware of the change and that no one is caught by surprise on 1st October."

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Health - *Smoking, drinking and drug use among young people in England in 2004*

<sup>2</sup> General Household Survey 2003-4

<sup>3</sup> Statistics on NHS Stop Smoking Services in England, April 2006 to December 2006, Q3 Quarterly Report