

RECEIVED 11 NOV 2009

From the Rt Hon Andy Burnham MP  
Secretary of State for Health



Your ref: 01093236

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- 9 NOV 2009

Dear Tessa,

Thank you for your letter of 12 October enclosing an example of correspondence you have received from a number of your constituents about tobacco legislation.

I am grateful to your constituents for their interest and support for these important measures.

The Government is committed to protecting children from the harms of smoking and to supporting people who smoke, to quit. We intend to publish a new comprehensive strategy for tobacco control before the end of this year, following our *Consultation on the future of tobacco control* last year, which received almost 100,000 responses.

At Report stage of the Health Bill in the House of Commons on 12 October, MPs voted on key provisions in the Bill. In a historic move, MPs agreed to the Government's proposals to remove tobacco from sight in shops, meaning that shops will no longer be allowed to promote tobacco in enticing multi-coloured displays.

MPs also agreed to an amendment tabled by Rt Hon Ian McCartney MP to prohibit tobacco vending machines. The Government is looking at how best to take this forward.

We are now consulting on the details of how powers in the Health Bill might be used. The consultation document was published on 12 October at:  
[www.dh.gov.uk/en/Consultations/Liveconsultations/DH\\_106454](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Consultations/Liveconsultations/DH_106454).

It runs until 4 January 2010 and I hope your constituents will send in their comments.

The tobacco consultation also raised the question of having plain packaging on tobacco products. There is some evidence to suggest that packaging may increase brand awareness among young people, and may mislead people about the relative safety of different tobacco products. However, as yet, no studies have shown that introducing plain packaging of tobacco would cut the number of young people smoking or enable people who want to quit, to do so. Given the impact that plain packaging would have on intellectual property rights, we would need strong and

convincing evidence showing the health benefits of this policy before it would be acceptable at an international level.

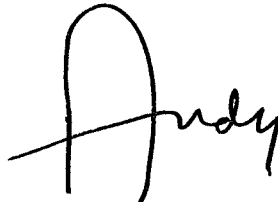
Although there are no plans to introduce plain packaging as part of the Health Bill, the Department of Health will work to develop the evidence in this area.

Whilst we have had some significant successes in recent years in reducing the prevalence of smoking and the numbers of deaths from smoking related diseases, there is still no room for complacency. With over 80,000 deaths a year in England, smoking remains the biggest single cause of preventable deaths and the biggest single cause of health inequalities.

That is why it is important that we take forward legislation to protect children and young people and to support those who want to quit.

I hope this reply is helpful.

*Best wishes,*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'A'.

**ANDY BURNHAM**