

The facts not the fiction: protecting children from tobacco marketing

About Cancer Research UK

- Cancer Research UK is the world's leading charity dedicated to saving lives through research.
- We spent £334m on research in 2009/10.
- We receive no government funding for our research.

Cancer Research UK's position:

- There is a strong evidence base that point of sale (PoS) displays make cigarettes seem like a normal consumer product. The Tobacco Advertising and Promotions Act (2002) was introduced because it was shown that marketing encourages young people to start smoking.¹ PoS displays are a loophole in the legislation.
- Peer reviewed economic research from the Republic of Ireland, using data from AC Nielsen, shows no impact on retailers from removing PoS displays. It will help reduce smoking rates over the long-term, giving retailers time to adapt.
- Legislation and regulations to remove PoS displays of tobacco are ready to be implemented.
- Standardised packaging of tobacco will take the very important step of removing marketing through the pack and complements the removal of PoS displays. Health warnings would be retained because they are an effective way to inform consumers of the risks of smoking and encouraging them to quit.

Key facts:

- Smoking remains the single major preventable cause of cancer yet tobacco marketing is still used to **recruit new, young smokers**.
- Approximately **340,000 under-16s** try cigarettes for the first time each year² and it is estimated that eight out of ten smokers start before the age of 19.³
- Low cost solutions for refitting are possible.
- You may also wish to be aware that the Tobacco Manufacturers' Association funds the 'Responsible Retailers' and 'Save Our Shop' campaigns through the Tobacco Retailers Alliance.

Myth: Removing tobacco PoS displays will cost retailers up to £5k in refit costs.

Fact: Experience suggests that the implementation burden to shops will be minimal. Shop refits in Ireland have cost an average of £300.



The systems for covering tobacco displays are very easy to use and do not need to cost anything approaching the thousands of pounds as claimed by the tobacco industry.

In fact the evidence from Ireland where the legislation was implemented in July 2009 does not support the argument it will put retailers out of business.⁴ A report on the Irish experience in the trade magazine *The Grocer* found that “*the outlook may not be as gloomy as feared – at least not for retailers.*”⁵ The UK Association of Convenience Stores found the average cost of compliance in Ireland was £300 for those retailers which had to pay, but the tobacco industry paid for many to convert.⁶

Irish retailers use the removal of PoS displays to advertise products with a higher value to the retailer (picture: Ann McNeill, 2010).

Small retailers have been given an additional two years until October 2013 to comply with the display regulations, allowing ample time to explore a range of possible solutions.⁷ Small shops in the UK have adapted to survive despite the long-term decline in smoking rates from 45% of the population in 1974 to 21% of the population today.⁸

Myth: Removing tobacco PoS displays will cause small businesses to close.

Fact: There is no good evidence to support this from other countries. Research^{9, 10} recently published in a peer reviewed journal by Professor Ann McNeill of the University of Nottingham, which examined cigarette sales data in Ireland, found no change to long-term trends in sales for any type of shop.

Adult smokers will continue to buy their usual cigarettes from their usual sources. Over 90% of smokers have already decided what brand to buy before entering the shop¹¹ and retailers will be able to provide a list of all tobacco products available to help inform these purchasing decisions.

The National Federation of Retail Newsagents (NFRN) has claimed that “the research does not examine the impact on small shops. All it does is conclude that the ban did not reduce total cigarette sales in Ireland”. This is completely inaccurate. The research covered a range of retail categories including TSNs (TSNs are independent stores and garages that have at least 50% of their profits from tobacco, sweets and newspapers) and independents.

The research used data from AC Nielsen. It found that “visual inspection of the available cigarette sales data for these channels and the independents and TSNs also indicated seasonal patterns and an underlying downward trend; no changes were observed following the legislation, over and above these trends across all the different categories”.

The NFRN claimed that removing displays will harm small shops because it will slow transaction times and lengthen queues and therefore reduce their convenience. It also claims members would lose passing trade from people unable to pop in to check whether their brand is sold as they will assume that larger shops have a bigger selection. However, if any of these claims were true they would have had a significant impact on sales and be reflected in the data.

There is a good case to be made for removing PoS displays as being an opportunity not a threat. As Charles Wilson, Chief Executive of the leading wholesaler Booker, said in a trade magazine recently: “we are investing heavily in non-tobacco areas, as frankly that is where the future is”.¹²



Ken Riley, operator of four “Supervalu” stores in and around Dublin: “People come in and buy their cigarettes like before. Tobacco doesn’t need advertising. I don’t know why we didn’t do this years ago. **In the long term, if I’m selling less tobacco I’m selling more of the things where I can make a healthy profit.**” (November 2010)

(picture: ASH, October 2009).

A retailer in Dublin has a drawer for cigarettes next to the till for convenience and security (picture: ASH, October 2009).



Myth: Youth smoking rates have risen after tobacco displays were removed.

Fact: Tobacco displays influence behaviour over time and are shown to affect how teenagers think about smoking.

Various groups have claimed that smoking rates have risen after tobacco displays have been removed. Sometimes they rely on changes within the margin of error of the surveys they cite, for example the NFRN claimed Irish youth smoking rates rose on the basis of Professor McNeill's research while ignoring her warning that the change was not statistically significant. Patrick Basham, writing for the Institute of Economic Affairs, claimed that Icelandic teenagers smoked more after displays were removed by comparing figures for **daily** smokers before legislation with figures from a different survey for **daily and occasional** smokers afterwards. He also cites figures from Canada based on an analysis by Japan Tobacco International, which are not strong enough to back up his claims. For more information see the Cancer Research UK [Science Blog](#).¹³

Myth: Removal of tobacco displays is an attack on freedom and personal choice.

Fact: Adults can smoke as long as they are not harming others, but also have an obligation to protect children from harm.

Adults can smoke as long as they are not harming others.¹⁴ It was on this basis that making public places smokefree gained strong cross-party political support. Customers who wish to buy a tobacco product will still be able to make their purchases freely. But this same political principle also includes an obligation to protect children from harm.¹⁵

The protection of children is the primary focus of the proposed measures. It has long been accepted both domestically and internationally¹⁶ that special safeguards are needed to provide children with the best possible environment in which to grow and develop. The World Health Organisation argues that "States have a duty to take all necessary legislative and regulatory measures to protect children from tobacco and ensure that the interests of children take precedence over those of the tobacco industry".¹⁷

For adult smokers trying to quit, these proposals provide a different type of freedom – freedom from marketing that undermines their choice. Over two-thirds of smokers want to quit¹⁸ but the nicotine in cigarettes is as addictive as heroin or cocaine.¹⁹ PoS displays can stimulate impulse purchasing amongst those trying to stop.²⁰ In an Australian study 31% of smokers reported that the removal of cigarette displays would help them quit.²¹

Myth: Removing tobacco PoS displays will increase smuggling.

Fact: There is no evidence to support the idea either that those who buy tobacco from shops would seek out illicit sources or that the measure might lead retailers to sell illicit products under the counter.

No good evidence has been provided by those who suggest that tobacco displays help to reduce smuggling. It has been implied that those who buy tobacco from shops would seek out illicit sources simply because they could not see the products in their usual outlet but this argument has not been validated. If there was a significant effect it would have been shown in the research carried out by Professor Ann McNeill cited earlier that examined cigarette sales data in Ireland.

There is also no clear logic behind the suggestion that removing PoS displays might lead to retailers selling illicit products under the counter. There is no evidence that this has happened in jurisdictions that have covered up PoS displays.²² The basic designs of cigarette packs are not hard to counterfeit – the key markings that officials use in combating fraud are such that the packets have to be handled to be distinguished.

Good progress has been made in tackling tobacco smuggling, with significant reductions in the number of smuggled cigarettes since 2000.²³ However, more needs to be done.

Myth: The tobacco advertising ban already strongly restricts advertising at the point of sale.

Fact: Only an A5 poster is meant to be allowed at the point of sale. Evidence shows the whole tobacco display makes tobacco products look attractive to young people.



Examples of tobacco point of sale displays in England. Left photo: Paul Hooper; right photo: MacGregor report.²⁴

Advertising and promotion of tobacco encourages children to smoke.²⁵ Since tobacco advertising was banned in 2002, retailers have only been allowed to display an A5 size advertisement at PoS – of which 30% is a health warning. However, the displays themselves have increasingly been designed and paid for by tobacco companies to act as a major channel for promoting their products. PoS displays are

placed prominently in shops behind the cashier and typically close to displays of confectionery and chewing gum.²⁶ A Cancer Research UK report²⁷ examining the impact of PoS displays through analysing both previous studies as well as new data, concludes that:

- Since the implementation of the Tobacco Advertising and Promotions Act (2002), PoS displays have taken over as the most important source of tobacco marketing for young people. In 2006, almost half (46%) of UK teens were aware of tobacco marketing at the PoS.
- The odds of a young person professing an intention to smoke may increase by 35% with every brand that they can name as having seen advertised at PoS.
- International evidence suggests that removing packs from sight at PoS could reduce adolescents' exposure to cigarette brand impressions in stores by as much as 83%. It would also help adults to quit.

Tobacco packs are themselves a significant form of advertising that is used to build brand relationships with young people.²⁸ Measures allowing packs to remain visible are not sufficient. To effectively ensure that children are given greater protection from tobacco marketing, tobacco products need to be placed out of sight in retail outlets.

Quotes from recent focus group research:

'Things like [cigarette] displays arouse me to buy. Looks cool'
(Female, 14, C2DE, Smoker)

'Have seen this type [shows pack of Mayfair] in shops on the shelves and with my friends in schools. Like, it's cool and fun to smoke' (Male 12, C2DE, Smoker)

'Say you enter into the shop you see this massive display over the counter. In the shops things like this attracts people to smoke' (Male, 11, ABC1, Non-smoker)

Brown, A., & Moodie, C. Adolescents' perceptions of tobacco control measures in the UK. Submitted to *Addiction Research and Theory* (2009)

Myth: Point of sale displays help smokers differentiate between brands.

Fact: The vast majority of smokers do not use displays to choose their cigarettes.

Most adult smokers are brand loyal. Over 90% of smokers have already decided what brand to buy before entering the shop.²⁹ Retailers will be able to provide a list of all tobacco products available to help inform these purchasing decisions.

Claims that displays help customers to tell the difference between high and low nicotine varieties are misleading, because no types of cigarette are "healthier" than others and it is now illegal for manufacturers to claim that products are low tar, light or less harmful.

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- ¹ Hastings, G et al. (2008) Point of Sale Display of Tobacco Products. The Centre for Tobacco Control Research, University of Stirling. http://info.cancerresearchuk.org/images/pdfs/tobcon_pointofsalereport1
- ² Impact Assessment of prohibiting the display of tobacco at point of sale, for the Health Bill, Department of Health, January 2009. http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsLegislation/DH_093305. p.17.
- ³ Goddard E. (2008). General Household Survey 2006: Smoking and drinking among adults 2006. Office for National Statistics, Newport.
- ⁴ Quinn C, Lewis S, Edwards R, McNeill A. (2010) Economic evaluation of the removal of point of sale tobacco promotional displays in Ireland. Tobacco Control doi:10.1136/tc.2010.039602
http://tobaccocontrol.bmj.com/content/early/2010/11/18/tc.2010.039602.short?q=w_tobaccocontrol_ahead_tab
- ⁵ The Grocer, 8 August 2009 p.36
- ⁶ Implementation of the Tobacco Display Ban in Republic of Ireland. ACS (2009).
- ⁷ Impact Assessment of prohibiting the display of tobacco at point of sale, for the Health Bill, Department of Health, January 2009.
- ⁸ General Household Survey: Smoking and drinking among adults 2007, Office for National Statistics (2008).
http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_compendia/GHS07/GHSSmokingandDrinkingAmongAdults2007.pdf
- ^{9*} McNeill, A. et al. (2010) Evaluation of the removal of point of sale tobacco promotional displays in Ireland. Tobacco Control doi:10.1136/tc.2010.038141 http://tobaccocontrol.bmj.com/content/early/2010/11/18/tc.2010.038141.short?q=w_tobaccocontrol_ahead_tab
- ¹⁰ Quinn C, Lewis S, Edwards R, McNeill A. (2010) Economic evaluation of the removal of point of sale tobacco promotional displays in Ireland. Tobacco Control doi:10.1136/tc.2010.039602.
- ¹¹ BMRB Omnibus Survey, August 2008. Commissioned for Cancer Research UK.
- ¹² Convenience Store. (May 30, 2008) p 4.
- ¹³ Cancer Research UK Science Blog 13th September 2010 Patrick Basham's paper on tobacco displays doesn't add up. <http://scienceblog.cancerresearchuk.org/2010/09/13/patrick-basham%E2%80%99s-paper-on-tobacco-displays-doesn%E2%80%99t-add-up/>
- ¹⁴ However, most smokers start in childhood and are addicted before they are adults.
- ¹⁵ JS Mill (1859) On Liberty.
- ¹⁶ For example, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (to which the UK is a party) legally obliges the Government to protect children from harm.
- ¹⁷ World Health Organisation (2001) Tobacco and the rights of the child. WHO/NMH/TFI 01.3 WHO. www.who.int/tobacco/resources/publications/rights_child/en/
- ¹⁸ Royal College of Physicians (2000) Nicotine Addiction in Britain. RCP, London.
- ¹⁹ Since 1988, the U.S. Surgeon General, the Royal Society of Canada, and, most recently, the Royal College of Physicians, have all concluded that nicotine is an addictive substance that, in its addiction and withdrawal, displays similarities to such hard drugs as cocaine and heroin. Nicotine meets all the criteria that are used to define a drug of addiction or dependence.
- ²⁰ Hastings, G et al. (2008) Point of Sale Display of Tobacco Products. The Centre for Tobacco Control Research, University of Stirling.
- ²¹ Wakefield, M. The effect of retail cigarette pack displays on impulse purchases. Addiction. 103(2); 322 - 328
- ²² Smokefree Action Coalition Briefing (2009) Putting Tobacco Out of Sight and Out of Reach. <http://info.cancerresearchuk.org/publicpolicy/Ourpolicypositions/prevention/tobaccocontrol/>
- ²³ HMRC/UK Border Agency. (2008) Tackling Tobacco Smuggling Together. The Stationery Office Ltd. ID5978977. <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/pbr2008/tobacco-2800.pdf>.
- ²⁴ MacGregor, J. (2008) Tobacco Advertising at Point of Sale. Report carried out by trading standards officers for ASH.
- ²⁵ Hastings, G et al. (2008) Point of Sale Display of Tobacco Products. The Centre for Tobacco Control Research, University of Stirling.
- ²⁶ MacGregor, J. (2006) Tobacco Advertising at the Point of Sale: The trading Standards Experience. MacGregor Consulting Ltd.
- ²⁷ Hastings, G et al. (2008) Point of Sale Display of Tobacco Products. The Centre for Tobacco Control Research, University of Stirling.
- ²⁸ Ibid.
- ²⁹ BMRB Omnibus Survey, August 2008. Commissioned for Cancer Research UK.