

From the Minister of State
Caroline Flint MP



Richmond House
79 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2NS

Tel: 020 7210 3000

PO00000136813

Dr Caroline Lucas MEP
Suite 58
The Hop Exchange
24 Southwark Street
London
SE1 1TY

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Dear Caroline,

Thank you for your letter of 30 August to Patricia Hewitt about smoking and blindness. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area.

May I firstly praise the work that the Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB) has undertaken in highlighting the link between sight loss and smoking. The importance of reducing the prevalence of tobacco use remains high on the Government's agenda, and work that contributes to this is to be welcomed.

The introduction of current written warnings on tobacco packs has proven to be successful in educating smokers on the risks involved in tobacco use, and have prompted more smokers to attempt to quit than previous smaller warnings. The Department has recently finished a consultation on introducing picture warnings on tobacco packs, which we hope will further increase the effectiveness of pack warnings.

The Department's priority with pack warnings is their efficacy and impact with smokers. We would therefore support any proposed changes to the current set of warnings that can be shown to replace less effective warnings with a more effective ones. International evidence, of course, would be one of the key criteria for assessing any proposed changes.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Yours sincerely,
Andy Burnham

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