



NEWS RELEASE Thursday 5th December 2013

POLL: PLAIN PACKAGING GIVEN THUMBS DOWN

+ Nine out of ten think plain packs are not the best way to stop young people smoking

Health Minister James Reilly's plan to introduce plain packaging for tobacco has been given the thumbs down.

In the first major opinion poll since the Cabinet approved a draft Bill on plain packaging, just nine per cent of people surveyed think it is the policy most likely to reduce youth smoking rates in Ireland.

More than half the population thinks health education in schools would be most effective in reducing smoking rates.

Of four policy options considered in the poll, mandatory health education in schools (51 per cent), tackling the illicit trade (23 per cent) and banning adults from buying cigarettes for children (14 per cent) are all considered more likely to work than plain packaging (9 per cent).

With Minister Reilly presenting his proposed new laws to the Oireachtas Health Committee today, the poll also shows that the public would prefer if he got on with the job of tackling overspending by the Department of Health.

Given a list of four issues the Minister should prioritise in 2014, plain packaging ranked last on just 4 per cent. In contrast, 45 per cent want the Minister to prioritise the health budget overspend, 32 per cent childhood obesity, and 18 per cent under-age drinking.

The poll of 1,002 adults, carried out by Red C for the smokers' group Forest Éireann, coincides with the introduction today of the Public Health (Standardised packaging of Tobacco) Bill in the Oireachtas Committee on Health and Children.

John Mallon, spokesman for Forest Éireann, said:

“The poll shows just how out of touch Minister Reilly is. He has made plain packaging of tobacco a personal mission but only a very small minority think it is the best way to stop children smoking. Even fewer want it to be his number one priority in 2014.

“James Reilly should concentrate on tackling the health budget overspend, and if he really wants to stop young people smoking he should focus on policies that have worked in other countries - health education in schools and tackling the black market that sells cigarettes to children at pocket money prices.”

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For further comment:

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Notes to editors:

1. A random sample of 1,002 18+ adults were interviewed on the telephone by Red C between 18-20 November 2013.
2. Forest Éireann is funded by Forest UK which receives donations from tobacco companies in Britain and Ireland.

For more information see our website:

www.foresteireann.org