COMMUNICATIONS

Sharon Hodgson MP Meeting Brief



Sharon Hodgson MP

Constituency: Washington and Gateshead South

Party: Labour

First elected: May 2005

Position in Government: Minister for Public Health and Prevention

BIOGRAPHY

- Sharon Hodgson was born in Gateshead, North East England, and educated locally before working as an accounts clerk, before later attending Newcastle College and the Trades Union Congress Academy in London.
- After a period working for the British bank, Northern Rock, she became a full-time mother and began volunteering for the Labour Party during the 1997 General Election, going on to become a party organiser in 1999 and a Labour Link officer for UNISON.
- She served as the Secretary of Mitcham and Morden Constituency Labour Party (CLP) before seeking selection in Gateshead for the 2005 General Election, leading in the polls with a majority of 14,245 votes.
- Following boundary changes in 2010, she secured selection for the new Washington and Sunderland West seat and was re-elected to Parliament with a majority of 11,458 votes.
- Hodgson held a number of Shadow ministerial roles in opposition, including in the Department for Education, the Government Equalities Office, the Department of Health and the Ministry of Defence. This included almost four years as the Shadow Minister for Public Health, from 2016 to 2020.
- She has also been Parliamentary Private Secretary to a number of key MPs, including Liam Byrne MP, Bob Ainsworth MP, Dawn Primarolo MP and Sir Keir Starmer MP
- Following the announcement of Ashley Dalton MP's resignation due to her ongoing treatment for breast cancer, Hodgson was appointed Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Public Health and Prevention in March 2026.
- Sharon lives locally to Gateshead and employs her husband as a caseworker. She is an officer for Labour Friends of Israel, previously its Vice-Chair. In 2024, her office was graffitied with the words *"328 days blood on your hands"*, and in 2025, it was burned down in an unrelated incident by a 28-year-old who denied targeting the MP.

HODGSON ON TOBACCO AND VAPING

Sharon Hodgson MP has consistently supported vaping as a method to reduce smoking over her political career, particularly among children, welcoming vaping's role in a smokefree future as a less harmful alternative for adult smokers.

Tobacco and Vapes Bill:

- Hodgson has championed the Tobacco and Vapes Bill since its inception, recently describing it as the "most significant public health intervention in a generation" aimed at creating a smoke-free generation.
- On the generational smoking regulation, she stressed the consideration given to retailers in verifying a customer's age, reasoning that the single date of 1 January 2029 should make this a simpler task that it is currently.

Vaping as a cessation tool:

- Hodgson has acknowledged that vaping is less harmful than smoking in the short to medium term and can be an effective quit aid for adult smokers, especially when combined with behavioural support.
- In her capacity as Shadow Public Health Minister from 2016-2020, Hodgson endorsed the role of e-cigarettes as a 'crucial player' in driving towards a smoke-free society, whilst calling for correct regulation to ensure that they do not become regarded as the 'silver bullet' of cessation.
- Some uncertainty over the safety of vapes expressed in the past, particularly around the long-term impacts on health of a relatively new device. She has often caveated the fact that vaping is 95% less harmful than cigarettes with the statement that e-cigarettes are not completely risk-free.

Child protection focus:

- Sharon has emphasised that the Tobacco and Vapes Bill legislation is aimed at reducing youth uptake, preventing branding and marketing that appeals to children, and ensuring products are not misused by minors.
- She emphasises that children and adult non-smokers should never vape due to unknown long-term health impacts.

Sharon Hodgson MP's position, as articulated through her ministerial responses, underscores a strong commitment to public health through legislative action against tobacco and vaping, particularly concerning youth access, while also supporting adult cessation efforts.

AREAS FOR UKVIA ENGAGEMENT

Hodgson's experience in public health and vaping policy predates her recent ministerial appointment, with almost four years served as Shadow Minister. In opposition, she pressed the Government hard on providing proper funding for smoking cessation services in order to meet national smoking reduction targets and viewed vaping in the context of a wider smoking cessation eco-system, rather than a singular 'silver bullet'.

Maintaining the balance between smoking cessation and youth protection:

- Whilst generally supportive of vaping as a cessation tool for smokers, Hodgson has firmly expressed the need to protect children and non-smokers from vaping and other nicotine products.

- The UKVIA should articulate its complimentary position on this, assuring the Minister that the association is also against youth take-up, and recognise vaping as a smoking alternative for those trying to quit tobacco, rather than a new habit to be picked up.

Local authority smoking cessation services funding:

- Both in opposition and in Government, Hodgson has focussed attention on the importance of local Stop Smoking Services in England, and the need for local authority-led programmes to have adequate investment to enable all smokers to access their support.
- With all smoking cessation services being ring-fenced within the Public Health Grant from April, the UKVIA should engage with Hodgson about the role of e-cigarettes and vapes, as well as public awareness campaigns, in these services.

Support for retailers:

- As the Tobacco and Vapes Bill progresses with significant regulatory changes to how businesses can promote and sell vaping and nicotine products, the UKVIA should ensure that the Minister understands the pressure this could put responsible vendors under.
- UKVIA should therefore discuss with her methods of protection and clarity to ensure smoking cessation products remain easily accessible to those trying to quit smoking.