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action on smoking and health



bulletin

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Inside this issue



Smokefree: A breath of fresh air

Described as “the biggest step in public health since the founding of the NHS”, after just two weeks, Smokefree England is proving popular, self-enforcing and good for business.



Where next for tobacco control?

With an end to advertising, sponsorship, smoking in the workplace and sales to under 18's, many are asking, is the battle finally over?



RIP – Roaring success in Europe

The week England went smokefree the EU took a step closer to combating cigarette related fires.



All Party Parliamentary Group on Smoking & Health AGM

The meeting will take place on Monday 16th July, 5pm - 6pm Committee Rm 17

A fresh start

Smokefree has been the success we all knew it would be – thanks to the support of parliamentarians from all parties. There are too many of you to thank you all individually but you know who you are. The extent of cross-party support was exemplified by the Health Select Committee whose strong report and support for an all party amendment in favour of comprehensive legislation were crucial in obtaining the free vote.

But it's not time to pack up and go home yet. While smoking rates amongst the most affluent have halved in the last thirty years, smoking rates amongst the most disadvantaged in society have remained above 70%, having changed little. The implications of this for the poorest families and their loved ones are horrendous. For we must not forget that one in two long term smokers die from their habit, in many cases suffering many years of disease and disability before they do.

So smoking continues to be a major issue of social justice and health inequalities given that it remains the major preventable cause of death, disability and disease. The Smokefree Action Coalition is carrying on campaigning and we need your support to ensure that



Deborah Arnott, Director of ASH

tobacco control retains its rightful share of the public health budget.

At the All Party Group at 5pm on Monday 16 July in Committee Room 7, I will be reporting back on international developments from the meeting of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in Bangkok, in particular on tobacco smuggling. We are one of the countries worst hit by tobacco smuggling, which by giving smokers access to cheap fags discourages quit attempts and loses the Government up to £3.5 billion a year in tax revenue. Come along and find out how this can be stopped.

D. Arnott

All Party Parliamentary Group on Tobacco & Health

The meeting will be held on:

Monday 16th July, 1700-1800, Committee Room 17.

The business of the APPG will be followed by a briefing from Deborah Arnott, Director of ASH on current international trends in tobacco control, following her attendance at the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the World Health Organisation's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

Smokefree England: A breath of fresh air

England is the largest jurisdiction to enforce comprehensive legislation and, despite ample media coverage of even the most trivial transgressions, support and compliance are as high as had been hoped.

Self-enforcing

Early data on compliance in England will not be available until August but in Northern Ireland and Wales first reports show 99% compliance without a single fine being issued.

Popular

Support for smokefree legislation for England has grown steadily. A You Gov poll for ASH, Asthma UK and the British Thoracic Society, found almost three out of four English adults support the legislation even when it is expressed as a law to apply specifically to bars. When the question is posed as “a law to make all workplaces smokefree” support rises to 4 out of 5 (78%), a finding supported by the BBC’s Populous survey which found 81% support. The BBC poll found support for legislation to be higher in Scotland (85%) where legislation has already been in force since March 2006.

The YouGov poll found smokers almost equally divided with 40% supporting the law and 44% opposing it. However a more recent survey conducted for the Government in June found support among smokers to be 47%.

Smokefree numbers

47 percent of English smokers support smokefree legislation

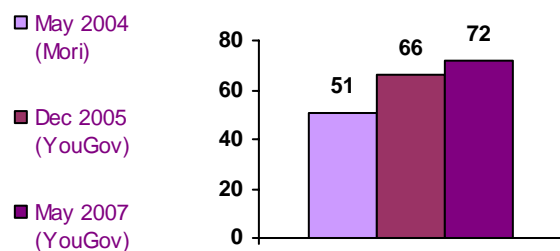
81 percent of English adults support the legislation

99 percent of premises in Wales and Northern Ireland comply with legislation

600 deaths in the UK were caused by exposure to secondhand smoke in the workplace each year.

700,000 smokers in England expected to quit by July 2008

Support a law to make pubs smokefree (%)



Good for business

The You Gov poll found 25% of adults expected to visit pubs more often compared to only 9% who expected to go less often. Early reports from Wales are also encouraging. Eddie Gershon, spokesman for pub chain JD Wetherspoon, argued the ban has been positive for the industry. Gershon commented,

“There are people who are now going to pubs who didn’t go before. Since the ban in Wales came in, we have attracted a lot of new customers and a lot more families with children. All in all, it’s something which bodes well for the future. We don’t appear to have lost any customers – those who smoke can do so outside where possible.”

Simon Buckley, chief executive of Welsh brewer Evan-Evans, was also positive

“It’s focused people on quality and they understood that unless they offer quality, they are not going to get the customers through the door. People are becoming discerning drinkers and we as a company are expanding.”

According to market researchers Neilsen, Scottish beer sales fell last year by 7% but they also report that sales were down in England by 4% over the same period. Food sales in Scotland are up.

A big step for public health

Speaking on July 1st at a “Smokefree Sunday Lunch” organised by the Royal College of Physicians and the British Heart Foundation, Dr Alan Maryon-Davis, President of the Faculty of Public Health described the legislation as “The biggest step in public health since the founding of the NHS”.

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Where next for Tobacco Control?

As England joins the rest of the smokefree UK and the age of sale for tobacco products rises to 18, it might be thought that the struggle for tobacco control is finally over. Yet the Smokefree Action Coalition has decided not to pack up and go home, but to push on for a comprehensive tobacco control strategy. Why? Because smoking remains the biggest cause of preventable deaths in the UK causing half the inequality in life expectancy between the richest and poorest in our society.



An ASH report published this spring highlighted the tobacco industry's youth oriented marketing

Children – The best possible start?

Almost half of children in the UK are exposed to secondhand smoke (SHS) at home but - as with smoking - the burden falls much more heavily on lower income families. Children exposed to SHS face a greater risk of respiratory diseases, asthma and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome as well as a three fold greater risk of lung cancer. Smokefree laws prevent parents smoking at work and in public, so reducing the health inequalities in child health will need fresh thinking.

Next steps?

International action on smuggling

Raise tax beyond inflation

Fund targeted cessation services from tobacco tax revenue

End point of sale display

Prohibit tobacco sales from vending machines

Introduce a positive licensing scheme similar to alcohol licensing

Introduce "reduced ignition propensity" cigarettes as standard (see page 5)

Renew national media campaigns

Plain packaging for tobacco products

This spring both the British Medical Association and ASH published reports highlighting the importance to the tobacco industry of recruiting young smokers. The BMA report found that although young people will certainly benefit from smokefree legislation, the law cannot protect those children exposed to tobacco *in utero* or secondhand smoke in the home. The BMA conclude that cessation services will need adequate funding and propose that 2% of tobacco tax revenues be ring-fenced for the purpose. These services should be targeted towards high risk groups including lower socioeconomic groups and expectant mothers. They also propose a ban on "10 packs" and increases in tobacco taxation beyond the rate of inflation.

Smoking and health inequalities

Not only does smoking continue to be the single greatest cause of preventable illness and premature death, it also accounts for half the inequality in life expectancy between the richest and poorest in the UK.

The considerable reductions in smoking prevalence over the last 30 years have disproportionately benefited higher socioeconomic groups among whom only 15% of adults smoke compared to 35% of those in routine occupations. Even this may

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understate the inequitable distribution of smoking. Studies have shown smoking levels among lone parents in receipt of benefits in excess of 75%.

It can be of little surprise that death rates from tobacco are two to three times higher among disadvantaged social groups than among the better off.

Smokefree homes?

The run up to July 1st saw fevered media speculation about proposals to legislate for smokefree homes or to ban smoking in front of children. Despite 91% public support for such a measure according to a BBC poll, health campaigners are making no such call, preferring to support greater education about the dangers to children of secondhand smoke.

An ONS report published in June shows that close to 9 out of 10 homes already operate restrictions on smoking. 61% prohibit smoking indoors and 25% permit smoking only at certain times or in certain rooms.

A comprehensive tobacco strategy

Months before Smokefree legislation came into force Lord Richard Faulkner invited key parliamentarians, researchers and health campaigners to discuss a blueprint of tobacco control. More recently the Smokefree Action Coalition, which includes ASH, CRUK, the BHF and the BMA resolved to push on. The focus? Child health and health inequalities

Click [here](#) for the BMA report.

Click [here](#) for the ASH report

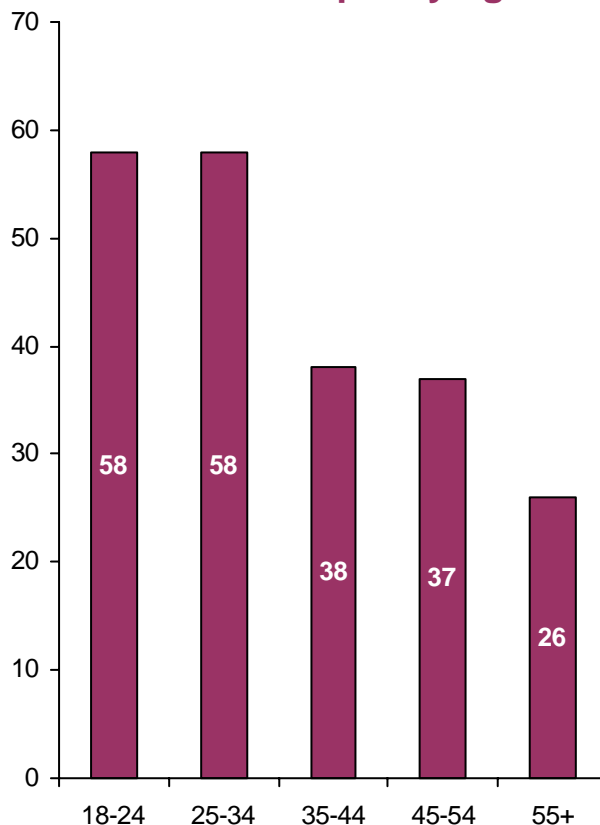
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Direct gains are likely as 600 deaths per year had been attributed to exposure to secondhand smoke at work. Other benefits will come if, as in New York, smokers smoke less and more homes go smokefree.

The biggest benefits will come when smokers use the legislation as a catalyst to quit. Seventy percent of smokers say they want to quit but our You Gov survey found that 40% of smokers intend to use smokefree pubs as an opportunity to quit. Almost 60% of young smokers intended to use the opportunity to quit. However, nicotine is highly addictive and many will find it difficult to translate that intention into a sustained and successful quit attempt.

Many will seek help but those who get NHS style behavioural support combined with effective medication increase their chances of success four fold.

Intention to quit by age



Smokes without fire

3,500 people have died in the UK as a result of household fires caused by cigarettes since the US Congress received a report that “fire safer” cigarettes were feasible. Arlene McCarthy MEP, Chair of the Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee is urging colleagues to sign a written declaration in support their adoption in Europe. The European Committee of the General Product Safety Directive has brought firesafer cigarettes a step with a vote scheduled for the autumn. A fire safety standard for cigarettes could reduce cigarette fires by two thirds, preventing many needless deaths.

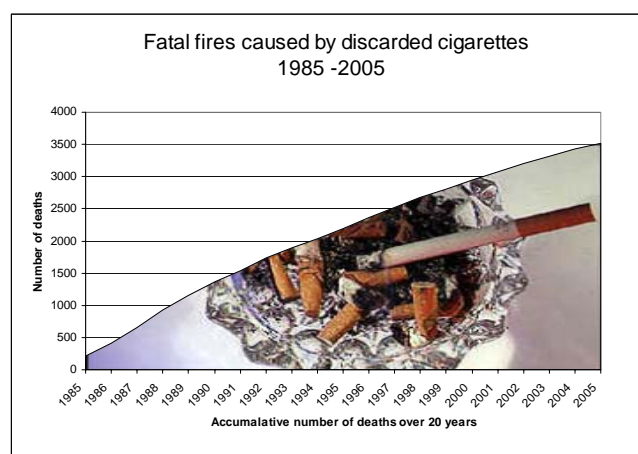
Health and Economic costs

According to the DCLG, cigarettes cause 4,300 fires, 1,600 injuries and 132 deaths per year - one death every three days. Victims are usually from the most disadvantaged groups and those killed in these fires are frequently children and the elderly. The economic impact is substantial. The average cost of cigarette fires is £25,500. Fire related injuries can be severe and the cost of medical treatment of those injured is substantial; Treatment can last 6 to 12 weeks and cost the NHS £1,500 a day. Making cigarettes “fire safer” costs less than a penny per pack.

Technology

The US Congress received a report in 1987 concluding that fire safer (reduced ignition propensity or RIP) cigarettes are technologically and economically feasible. One effective approach is to add ultra-thin concentric bands or “speed bumps” which restrict oxygen access causing the cigarette to extinguish if unattended.

Tobacco industry lobbyists argue that it will take years to develop a standard and years more for industry to comply. However there is already an established international standard with most major brands available in RIP compliant form in Canada and several US states. Some approaches to meeting the standard are associated with slightly higher levels of toxins but there is no evidence that these small increases affect the already highly toxic nature of cigarette smoke.



European Union progress

Research carried out in 14 EU member states and Norway found that 2,000 people are killed every year as a result of household fires caused by cigarettes. At the request of the United Kingdom the European Commission reviewed the standard required for RIP cigarettes with a vote scheduled for the autumn.

When New York first introduced the standard into state law the benefits were diluted by the large volume of non compliant cigarettes coming across the state line. It is hoped that Europe-wide action would prevent the same happening here.

Arlene McCarthy, Chair of the Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee has called on fellow MEPs to sign Written Declaration 66/2007.

Click [here](http://www.firesafercigarettes.org.uk) to visit the UK RIP Coalition website, www.firesafercigarettes.org.uk.

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