

# Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill

## Response from Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) Wales

ASH Wales is the only public health charity in Wales whose work is exclusively dedicated to tackling the harm that tobacco causes in Welsh communities.

We are engaged in a wide range of activities including:

- Advocating for tobacco control public health policy
- Undertaking tobacco control research projects
- Training young people and those who work with young people to provide factual information about the health, economic and environmental effects of smoking
- Engaging young people and professionals working with young people through the ASH Wales Filter project
- Bringing health information and advice to the heart of the community

We also oversee the Wales Tobacco or Health Network (a network of over 300 individual members) and the Wales Tobacco Control Alliance (an alliance of 35 voluntary and professional bodies in Wales), providing forums for sharing knowledge and best practice. Further information about our work can be found at <http://www.ashwales.org.uk>

## General observations

ASH Wales agrees that improving the well-being of Wales should take into account the needs of future generations. As part of this we believe that reducing smoking levels should be at the heart of any attempt to ensure the goal of a healthier Wales. Tobacco use is unquestionably one of the major public health concerns. Approximately 21% of the adult population in Wales are smokers<sup>1</sup>. It is estimated that some 5450 people die in Wales each year as a result of smoking<sup>2</sup>. This is an average of 454 people every month, or around 15 people dying every day in Wales of a smoking-attributable illness, including malignant cancers, respiratory and circulatory problems. Some 80% of all deaths from lung cancer in Wales were considered to be attributable to smoking<sup>3</sup>. Smoking is also linked to a whole host of other cancers including cancer of the pancreas, stomach, liver, bladder, kidney, uterine, cervix and myeloid leukaemia.

Tobacco control measures are crucial in reducing smoking prevalence and the rates of smoking attributable diseases. Consequently, we at ASH Wales believe they should form an integral part of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill. Specifically, we recommend the Bill should aim to reduce smoking prevalence rates among young people and introduce smokefree outdoor spaces.

Smoking among young people is prevalent. It is estimated that each year around 207,000 children in the UK start smoking<sup>4</sup>. The 2011 General Lifestyle Survey of adult smokers

revealed that almost 40% had started smoking regularly by the age of 16<sup>5</sup>. In Wales, 14% of 15 year old girls and 9% of 15 year old boys report smoking regularly<sup>6</sup>. Given the impact of smoking on health therefore tobacco control measures targeted at young people are essential. To this end ASH Wales favours the introduction of tobacco control programs in schools and youth clubs in Wales as a means to ensure all children in Wales are fully aware of the dangers associated with smoking. We also back calls for implementation of standardised cigarette packaging legislation and banning tobacco displays at the point of sale in order to ensure young people are not exposed to tobacco advertising, given research has shown branded cigarette packs and tobacco displays both serve to encourage the uptake of smoking among young people<sup>7,8</sup>.

In terms of the establishment of smokefree areas in Wales we consider this to be a vital component of ensuring the healthier Wales goal of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill. The evidence that exposure to other people's smoke is dangerous to health is incontrovertible. The Government's advisers, the Scientific Committee on Tobacco and Health, for instance, reported in November 2004 that exposure to secondhand smoke was a "substantial public health hazard". The report found that exposure to secondhand smoke increased a non-smoker's risk of contracting lung cancer and heart disease by around 25%.<sup>9</sup> Children are particularly vulnerable to the effects of secondhand smoke exposure, which has been linked to an increased risk of a range of illnesses, including lower respiratory tract infections, asthma, wheezing, middle ear infections, sudden unexpected death in infancy and invasive meningococcal disease. Consequently, we at ASH Wales are strongly in favour of smokefree legislation, including smokefree playgrounds, homes and cars. Opinion polls show that public support for smokefree legislation is strong, with a March 2010 YouGov survey reporting that 80% of adults in England were in favour of smokefree legislation.

Together with the above, we at ASH Wales additionally recommend that the Bill should be consistent across all Local Authorities and Health Boards in Wales, and should coincide with the Tobacco Action Plan set out by the Welsh Government. This will ensure a joined up approach to tackling tobacco use in Wales, which we consider to be a fundamental component of any attempt to safeguard the well-being of future generations.

<sup>1</sup> Welsh Health Survey

<sup>2</sup> Public Health Wales Observatory (2010). Lifestyle and Health: Wales and its Health Boards.

Available online at:

[http://www2.nphs.wales.nhs.uk:8080/PubHObservatoryProjDocs.nsf/85c50756737f79ac80256f2700534ea3/a1e8a36c3d05ab5c802576f5005054eb/\\$FILE/Lifestyle\\_Wales\\_Final\\_E.pdf](http://www2.nphs.wales.nhs.uk:8080/PubHObservatoryProjDocs.nsf/85c50756737f79ac80256f2700534ea3/a1e8a36c3d05ab5c802576f5005054eb/$FILE/Lifestyle_Wales_Final_E.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Welsh Assembly Government (2006) Designed to Tackle Cancer in Wales: A Welsh Assembly Government Policy Statement, Designed for Life, December 2006

<sup>4</sup> Hopkinson, NS., Lester-George, A., Ormiston-Smith, N., Cox, A. & Arnott, D. Child uptake of smoking by area across the UK. *Thorax* 2013. doi:10.1136/thoraxjnl-2013-204379

<sup>5</sup> Office for National Statistics. General Lifestyle Survey Overview: A report on the 2011 General Lifestyle Survey. 2013.

<sup>6</sup> HBSC International Team (2010)

<sup>7</sup> Hoek et al. (2011). 'Effects of dissuasive packaging on young adult smokers.' *Tobacco Control*: published online October 21<sup>st</sup> 2011. *ASH Wales* (2011).

<sup>8</sup> Paynter, J. And Edwards, R. (2009) 'The impact of tobacco promotion at the point of sale: A systematic review.' *Ni Tob Res*: 11: 25-35.

<sup>9</sup> Secondhand smoke: Review of evidence since 1998. Scientific Committee on Tobacco and Health (SCOTH), November 2004: pg 4.