



APPG on Smoking & Health Political Bulletin

A new era in tobacco policy

Many of you, like me, have lost loved ones to smoking and there can be no denying that smoking is often very harmful, to smokers and those around them. Many Parliamentarians feel it is important to help smokers quit and to protect future generations from taking up this dangerous habit. That is why the APPG on Smoking and Health has strong cross-party support as well as backing from all the major health groups like the BMA, the medical royal colleges and key health charities.

The focus on health in recent weeks has, understandably, been on the significant NHS reforms. But the measures in the Health and Social Care Bill which transfers responsibility for public health to local government are just as important. The only way to stem the ever increasing demands on the NHS, which needs a 3% budget increase each year just to keep providing its current services, is improving public health outcomes.

I'd like to congratulate Andrew Lansley and his Public Health Minister, Anne Milton, for putting tobacco control at the heart of their new public health strategy. Like me they supported smokefree legislation in 2006 and I know that they both understand the urgency of the task.

England leads Europe in this area and is vying for top place globally. The Tobacco Plan can keep us at the top, but to do so it needs to be ambitious, both in the goals it sets for continuing to drive down smoking and by keeping at the forefront of policy innovation.

We are very pleased that the Secretary of State committed to launch a consultation on plain, standardised packaging for tobacco products. However, we would also like to see him commit to implementing the legislation to strengthen the advertising ban and put tobacco out of sight in shops. The latter is a necessary measure to help prevent children becoming smokers, which, as local shopkeeper John McClure says in this issue, will not be difficult for retailers to implement.

The Secretary of State has made much of his commitment to public health and to tackling smoking. We will be examining his Tobacco Plan carefully for proof that he plans to turn his words into actions.

Stephen Williams, Chair, APPG on Smoking & Health



David Evennett MP supporting No Smoking Day

No Smoking Day – 9 March 2011

No Smoking Day, one of the world's longest running and most successful public health campaigns, would like to support MPs to get involved in the events in their constituencies. Last year, almost one million people across the UK quit smoking on No Smoking Day.

This year, on **Wednesday 9 March**, community centres, hospitals, military bases, prisons, schools, and local businesses will all host No Smoking Day events in almost every constituency across the UK. Many thousands of smokers in your constituency are ready to quit; they just need support and encouragement.

Ways you can help include:

- Supporting a local event
- Issuing a press release
- Sending a message via Twitter or Facebook
- Signing Early Day Motion 1400

Contact **Vishnee Sauntoo** on **020 7739 5110**, or email mail@nosmokingday.org.uk for information about events in your area and help with media releases.

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Don't use nudge to fudge

There is often a tension between the government's desire to reduce the regulatory burden on business and at the same time encourage and empower citizens to act in particular ways for the sake of their own or others' health. This tension is strongest when it comes to behaviours such as smoking, which are highly addictive and cause misery and death on a huge scale.

It is not a question of whether, but only of under what circumstances, a government should apply more restrictive measures. This is not new territory. The Nuffield Council on Bioethics has produced a very helpful 'ladder' to help guide such decisions which ranges from simple provision of information to restriction and even elimination of choice.

In the case of smoking, most smokers are motivated to try to stop but success rates are extremely low because the drivers to take up smoking in sections of our society are strong and its highly addictive nature makes it difficult to stop.

Recognising this, smokers and non-smokers support government actions to make cigarettes less attractive and available to the young, increase the financial cost of smoking and restrict where and when people can smoke. Like Ulysses ordering his crewmates to tie him to the mast while his ship passed the island of the sirens to avoid the vessel being lured on to the rocks, smokers welcome restrictive measures that they perceive will help save them.

Flaws in the nudge doctrine

The 'nudge' doctrine, which appears to permeate government thinking, has many flaws and internal contradictions. Firstly that one should begin *a priori* with a blanket decision to restrict the options for behaviour change interventions to those that do not involve regulation, restriction or coercion. Secondly that one can say with any objectivity what is and is not a 'nudge'.

For example changing the default of workplace pensions schemes to an opt-out system is supposed to be a 'nudge' strategy, cited in the Government's Behavioural Insight Team (BIT) report published recently. However, it comes into effect through changes in pensions' legislation, with compliance enforced by the Pensions Regulator.

Changing social norms is another 'nudge' approach. To quote the BIT report, "*We generally do what we see or think others are doing but an important twist is that our estimate of what other people are doing is often distorted.*" In Ireland the proportion of young people who believed that smoking was a common habit in their peer group fell significantly from 62% to 46% after legislation was brought in to put tobacco out of sight in shops.

However, given the tobacco industry pays retailers to put tobacco right behind the sweets at the counter, it is only by government regulation that such measures can be implemented and the



Photo by Valentine Ottane

sought after change in perception achieved. It is also the only way to ensure that there is a level playing field for all retailers.

The Government's decision on the display legislation is eagerly awaited. Francis Maude said recently in the Guardian that "*This government does not believe that there is no role for legislation, nor that behavioural economics is a silver bullet.*" And that "*one thing we can be certain about: between banning and doing nothing there are many choices.*" We can only hope that the government is coming to realise that 'nudge' alone is a rapidly devaluing currency.

Susan Michie
Professor of Health Psychology
University College London

Action on Smoking and Health 40th Anniversary

Established in 1971 by the Royal College of Physicians, ASH has been at the forefront of tobacco control activity and has provided the secretariat to this APPG from its inception.

The APPG is hosting a reception to mark ASH's 40th anniversary and to look ahead to the future of tobacco control. Please join us:

Wednesday 15th June 2011 - 4.00 to 6.00 pm,
Dining Room B, House of Commons

If you are planning to attend, do let us know:
appg@ash.org.uk or telephone 020 7739 5902.

Advertising that saves lives

Advertisers of well-known brands know how important it is to maintain high levels of awareness in order to prompt action. The same applies to deterring smoking in the young and encouraging cessation among smokers. Professor Robert West explores how anti-smoking mass media campaigns save lives.

Mass media campaigns use print, broadcast media and the internet to reach large audiences. My submission to the APPG on Smoking and Health Inquiry into the effectiveness of tobacco control summarised the evidence from high quality studies that government mass media campaigns can be highly effective in encouraging smokers to stop and deterring smoking uptake in the young. Such communications are designed to promote healthy choices by filling an information gap and raising awareness. None of the campaigns run in recent years can be construed as 'lecturing' or 'nannying': activities which politicians and psychologists alike can agree are counterproductive.

Considering the information gap, we all know that smoking is harmful to the health. But how many know that after their mid-thirties every year of continued smoking costs smokers an average of 3 months of life? How many are aware that attempting to cut down on cigarette consumption confers little or no benefit? How many are aware that the NHS provides free expert 'behavioural support' for stopping that, together with one of the stop-smoking medicines increases the chances of stopping by a factor of four? All smokers need to be informed about the urgency of stopping, the fact that trying to reduce the amount they smoke does not reduce their risk and that there is free, effective, life-saving help with stopping available from the NHS.

Even for smokers who 'know' all this, there is still the question of 'awareness' at critical moments. Advertisers of well-known brands know how important it is to maintain high levels of awareness of their products and to generate feelings of anticipated pleasure or relief to prompt action. The same is true for smoking. The decision to stop smoking can always be put off to another day and statistics about death rates do not necessarily capture the imagination and motivate action. It is all too easy to put uncomfortable thoughts about smoking out of one's mind.

Suspension of mass media activity will cost lives

Data provided by the COI on spend on mass media campaigns show that Stop Smoking Service attendance, NHS Quitline calls and visits to the Smokefree website are all associated with smoking cessation behaviour (for an example see graph below).

In Spring 2010, in advance of the election, these campaigns were stopped and with very limited exceptions have not been restarted. As I stated in the chapter I wrote for the APPG report, the recent suspension of mass media campaigns may well lead to significant loss of life and with every month that passes

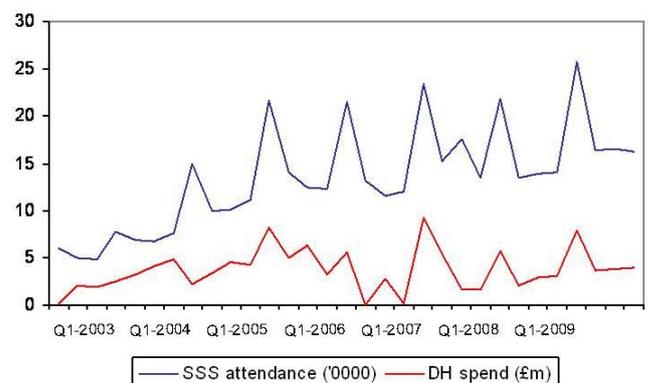
"The Government's new Tobacco Plan is due to be launched shortly. If it is to be successful it needs to be truly comprehensive and that means that it must include mass media campaigns."

without further activity the death toll will grow. The Government may argue that it is encouraging pharmaceutical companies to take up the slack but it remains to be seen how effective such campaigns will be given that their ultimate goal is to 'sell product' rather than reduce smoking prevalence. One thing is clear from the monthly surveys I have been collecting: smoking prevalence has not declined in 2010 (see 'Key Findings from the Smoking Toolkit Study in www.smokinginengland.info).

Tobacco Plan must include mass media plan

The Government's new Tobacco Plan is due to be launched shortly by the Secretary of State for Health. If it is to be successful it needs to be truly comprehensive and that means that it must include mass media campaigns.

Professor Robert West
Director of Tobacco Studies, Cancer Research UK
Health Behaviour Research Centre, University
College London



DH spending on mass media campaigns and attendance at Stop Smoking Services

Tobacco displays: A retailer speaks out

The tobacco display ban is due to come into force in large shops by the end of the year. Most MPs will have had at least a handful of postcards and standard letters about it. I doubt the shopkeepers you've been approached by have been to Dublin, as I have, to listen to Irish retailers and see how the ban has worked there. In my opinion my fellow retailers have been frightened by a scare campaign largely funded by the big tobacco companies and I fear that they (and you) may have been seriously misled.

Removing displays costs just £300

Retailers I spoke to in Ireland found the display ban neither costly nor difficult to implement. The UK Association of Convenience Stores surveyed small Irish retailers and found the total average cost was just £300 and Irish retailers have used the freed up display space to promote high margin products on which they can earn a healthier profit.

So why are my colleagues in such a state? The truth is that they have been victims of a well funded scare campaign by tobacco manufacturers. The big tobacco companies know that they command no sympathy so they have used retailers as a human shield. By telling us that our businesses – many already under unprecedented pressure – could fold as a result of the law, they tried to frighten us into doing their lobbying for them. Full page ads appeared in the trade press, with photos of boarded up shops piled one on top of another.

No link between display bans and smuggling

They tell us our sales will tumble overnight in favour of the illicit trade, our loyal customers will forget where they buy their pack of 20 each day and will wander lost, until they fall into the arms of a helpful tobacco smuggler. We would face the fate of thousands of



retailers in Canada and Ireland which have supposedly closed as a result of the display ban. Nonsense of course. Smuggling is determined by the chance criminals think they have of making big profits and is nothing to do with the glitzy display in Mr McClurey's corner shop. In Ireland a year after the legislation came into force, there's no evidence it has led to reduced sales in shops. In Canada, better enforcement means that smuggling has fallen and legitimate sales are up.

Tobacco may make up 25% of a small retailer's turnover but little of that is profit as they're low margin products. The gross profit on cigarettes is only around 6-7%. I make four times that on newspapers, eight times that on fresh fruit and veg. In Ireland and the UK, smoking rates are falling and tobacco retail is in long term decline. Over time the display ban will hasten that a little. Some may think that falling smoking rates are bad for business but I don't. What my customers save on cigarettes, they have spare to spend on other things.

John McClurey, Gateshead

Forthcoming APPG on Smoking and Health events

ASH 40th Anniversary– Wednesday 15th June 2011 - 4.00 to 6.00 pm, Dining Room B, House of Commons

Joint event with the APPG on Heart Disease – Tuesday 5th July 2011 – 4.00 to 5.00 pm, Committee Room 6

Join the APPG on Smoking and Health

All parliamentarians from both houses are welcome to join the group, please email: appg@ash.org.uk.

Officers of the group:

Chair: Stephen Williams MP (Liberal Democrat)

Secretary: Jeremy Lefroy MP (Conservative)

Vice Chairs: Kevin Barron MP (Labour)
Baroness O'Cathain OBE (Conservative)
Lord Patel (Cross Bench)
Lord Rennard MBE (Liberal Democrat)
John Robertson MP (Labour)

The All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Smoking and Health is a cross-party group of Peers and MPs which was founded in 1976
“To monitor and discuss the health and social effects of smoking; to review potential changes in existing legislation to reduce levels of smoking; to assess the latest medical techniques to assist in smoking cessation; and to act as a resource for the group's members on all issues relating to smoking and public health.”

ASH provides the secretariat for the APPG.
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