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Annual Review – 2011

Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) is a campaigning public health charity that works to eliminate the harm caused by tobacco. ASH is a registered charity, founded in 1971 by the Royal College of Physicians.

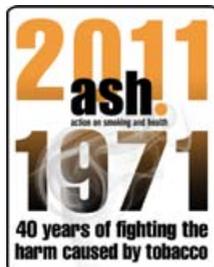
Chair's Introduction

Forty years ago, a small group of doctors from the Royal College of Physicians, dismayed at the rising toll of deaths from an entirely preventable cause and lack of political action to tackle the problem, founded Action on Smoking and Health. Since then, smoking rates among adults in Britain have halved and 73% of children now report that they have never smoked. Whilst ASH cannot claim all the credit for this success, by working collaboratively with medical and charitable organisations, it has played a key role in the reduction of smoking in the UK and in helping to change the public's attitude to smoking. Even the Prime Minister, who initially opposed the smokefree legislation, has acknowledged that it has been a success

On behalf of my fellow trustees, I am delighted to present this year's review of ASH's extensive activities and achievements. It is particularly pleasing to report that ASH was a recipient of this year's WHO World No Tobacco Day award for significant accomplishments in tobacco control - a very fitting way of commemorating ASH's 40th anniversary.



Professor John Moxham



Overview of 2011

The main focus of our work this year has been on ensuring that the policies set out in the Government's Tobacco Control Plan for England are fully implemented. As local government prepares to take on responsibility for public health in 2013, ASH is working to ensure that tobacco control remains a public health priority. Specifically, we have been working with the Faculty of Public Health, Local Government Group and the three Regional offices of tobacco control to produce a suite of materials to prepare tobacco control advocates for the transition.

This year ASH celebrated its 40th anniversary. The event was marked by a special reception in parliament, hosted by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Smoking and Health and also at this year's UK National Smoking Cessation conference where ASH staff contributed to a special policy strand on harm reduction.

ASH continues to build relations with parliamentarians in Government and in Opposition parties to ensure that tobacco control remains a priority in their respective health strategies.

ASH has also stepped up its collaboration with the UK Centre for Tobacco Control Studies based at the University of Nottingham. For example we issued a joint submission to the Treasury in advance of the Budget. ASH has also joined the Health Equalities Alliance, a new group of NGOs campaigning on health inequalities.



“ASH is an evidence-based and professional organisation with a proven track record of helping to support effective implementation of the Government’s tobacco control policies. Smoking remains the major preventable cause of health inequalities, death and disease. Reducing smoking remains a priority and the role played by ASH in galvanising the public health community to work collaboratively is essential to our success in achieving this goal.”

Professor Dame Sally Davies, Chief Medical Officer

Campaign for a comprehensive tobacco control policy

Tobacco Control Plan

In March, the Government launched a ‘Tobacco Control Plan for England’, following the publication of its Public Health White Paper in November 2010. We were encouraged by the fact that the Government published its strategy to tackle smoking just 10 months after the General Election. The Tobacco Plan builds on previous achievements in tobacco control and sets out a comprehensive package of measures with “national ambitions” to reduce smoking prevalence among adults, young people and pregnant women by 2015.

We were particularly pleased to see that the Government promised to hold a consultation on plain packaging and to implement the ban on cigarette vending machines in October 2011 as well as the legislation to prohibit the display of tobacco in shops. The latter applies to England only, although other jurisdictions in the UK are expected to follow suit within the next twelve months.

Other key features of the Plan include:

- Continuing to use tax to maintain the high price of tobacco
- Encouraging more smokers to quit by using local stop smoking services
- Publishing a three year marketing strategy
- Protecting public health policy from the vested interests of the tobacco industry
- Supporting local implementation of effective measures to tackle tobacco use.

Smoke Free Action Coalition – Make smoking history for our children

Following the publication of the Government's Tobacco Plan, the Smokefree Action Coalition agreed a new strategy with the strap line "Make smoking history for our children". The principal goals of the strategy are:

- to ensure that the Tobacco Plan for England is fully funded and implemented at national and local level;
- to ensure an effective consultation on plain packaging of tobacco products based on the evidence
- to ensure that ambitious tobacco policies are included in the manifestos of the main political parties, ahead of the next General Election.

Defending the law to ban tobacco promotions at the point of sale has been a key priority of the SFAC over the past twelve months. Although the legislation was passed as part of the Health Act 2009, the newly-elected Coalition Government announced that it was "*considering options for the display of tobacco in shops, recognising the need to take action both to reduce tobacco consumption and to reduce burdens on businesses*". Despite fears that the Government might give in to industry pressure, the point of sale ban has remained in place, albeit with a longer timescale before full implementation. Large shops such as supermarkets will be required to put tobacco products out of public view from 6 April 2012 but small shops will not be required to do so until April 2015.

ASH and other SFAC members responded to the consultation on a proposal to revise the EU Tobacco Products Directive. In particular ASH made a strong case for picture warnings on tobacco packs to be mandatory (at present EU member states can choose whether or not to have pictorial warnings). We also argued for the removal of tar, nicotine & carbon monoxide levels from cigarette packs (as they do not accurately reflect how much of these chemicals a smoker inhales and are misleading to smokers) and for plain, standardised packaging.

For further information on the SFAC and how organisations can join see: www.smokefreeaction.org.uk

"The CIEH was one of the first members of the Smokefree Action Coalition and we recognise the pivotal role ASH has played in building this alliance into an effective campaigning body.

Having successfully worked together during the campaign for the smokefree laws, I know that we can depend on ASH to provide essential leadership and expertise on tobacco policy during the challenging period ahead when responsibility for public health is transferred to local authorities."

Graham Jukes
Chief Executive,
Chartered Institute
of Environmental
Health

'Top of the Agenda' & Local Toolkit

Over the past year ASH has been working with the Local Government Group, Faculty of Public Health and regional offices of tobacco control to produce a range of materials to assist people working in local government who will be taking on responsibility for public health in 2013.

The first of these - ASH's "Top of the Agenda" : a brief guide to tobacco advocacy in the new public health environment - was published to coincide with the workshops conducted at the UK National Smoking Cessation Conference (UKNSCC).

Following the advocacy guide, we launched a slide set and briefings for Directors of Public Health to use with councillors. This includes a ready reckoner to allow users to produce estimates of the local cost of smoking including, for example, the costs to the population, the economy and the NHS. Similar materials for tobacco control alliances and the local voluntary sector are in development. The toolkit can be viewed at: www.ash.org.uk/localtoolkit

Plain packaging

Legislation to require plain or standardised packaging of tobacco products is now a priority campaign for ASH following the Secretary of State for Health's pledge to hold a consultation on the issue. At the time of writing, we are watching the situation unfold in Australia where the federal government has pledged to introduce plain packaging in December 2012. This is already proving to be one of the most hard-fought battles with the tobacco industry which is strongly resisting the measure.

All Party Parliamentary Group on Smoking and Health

ASH continues to act as the Secretariat for the All Party Group on Smoking and Health. In February we produced the first APPG political bulletin which was circulated to around 600 supportive parliamentarians (400 MPs and 200 Peers). A second edition was published in June to coincide with ASH's 40th Anniversary which was celebrated at a special meeting of the APPG in June.

In November the APPG held an inquiry into the issue of smoking in cars. A number of health experts were invited to present evidence to the Group and the Inquiry report was sent to the Department of Health to provide evidence in support of a scheduled second reading of a 10 minute rule bill by Alex Cunningham MP to ban smoking in private vehicles when children are present.



“For forty years ASH has played a major role in putting tobacco control on the political agenda. However, smoking remains the major cause of inequalities in our society - so tackling smoking must remain a priority. The transfer of responsibility for public health to local government provides us with major opportunities, but also significant challenges in the months and years to come. We know we can depend on ASH to continue to provide high quality support, encouragement and leadership as we move into this new era.”

Nick Forbes
Leader of Newcastle
City Council

Tax & smuggling

This year ASH worked with the UK Centre for Tobacco Control Studies (based at the University of Nottingham) to produce a joint submission to the Treasury in advance of the Budget. The submission was endorsed by 72 health organisations. We were pleased to see that the Chancellor decided to maintain the tax escalator introduced by the previous Government by raising cigarette duty by 2% above inflation. In addition the tax structure was revised, as we had recommended, in order to help narrow the gap between the highest and lowest priced cigarette brands, and between hand-rolled tobacco and manufactured cigarettes, in line with the revised European Union tax directive. This will reduce the likelihood of smokers ‘trading down’ and instead should help more smokers to quit. However we were disappointed that the Government did not raise cigarette taxes by 5% above inflation as we had recommended.



ASH was also involved in discussions with HMRC about the new Government anti-smuggling strategy and we were pleased to see that the report made reference to both ASH and the UKCTCS as partners. The new strategy includes

increased funding for tackling tobacco smuggling and is a positive step forward. However, we are concerned that no objectives have been set for the reduction in smuggling to be achieved in return for this new investment.

Public opinion research

Once again ASH commissioned YouGov to conduct opinion research to assess levels of public support for various tobacco control measures. Previous surveys have shown continuous growth in support for smokefree legislation overall while the 2010 survey revealed growth in support from smokers in particular. The 2011 survey also revealed continuing high levels of support for raising tobacco tax (61% in favour versus 23% against), putting tobacco out of sight in shops (56% in favour versus 21% against) and plain packaging of tobacco (46% in favour versus 23% against).

The survey revealed a high level of support for a ban on smoking in cars when children under 18 are present: 78% of adults said they were in favour whilst 56% said they would support a ban on smoking in cars with any passenger. Interestingly, it seems that smokefree vehicles are already the norm: 70% of adults say that they do not allow other people to smoke in their vehicle, with only 7% allowing smoking at any time.

Nicotine regulation

The outcome of the public consultation on the regulation of nicotine-containing products was released at the time of the launch of the Tobacco Plan for England in March. ASH had argued for nicotine-containing products to be permitted but regulated to offer smokers a safer alternative to cigarettes. The MHRA has commissioned further scientific and market research into some of the questions raised by the consultation and a decision is now expected in the spring of 2013.

ASH's Chief Executive, Deborah Arnott, has been appointed to the NICE working group developing public health guidance on harm reduction approaches to smoking. (The NICE Programme Development Group looks at the evidence available and considers comments made on draft versions of the guidance issued for consultation before making final recommendations.)

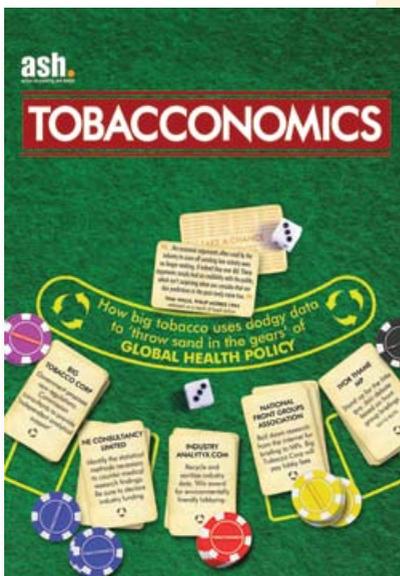
Smoking cessation

ASH has been involved in discussions about the need to update NICE guidance on smoking cessation. In addition ASH has responded to proposals for new NICE guidance on cessation services for people using smokeless tobacco.

Tobacco Industry

Tobacco industry denials about the health consequences of smoking are well documented but industry claims about the economic consequences of tobacco control measures have not been scrutinised to the same extent. Inspired by a conference presentation on this topic, ASH researched and produced “Tobacconomics”, a report that explains how the tobacco industry uses bogus economics to obstruct health policy.

Examples include the revelation that Imperial Tobacco falsely told shareholders that the Irish tobacco display ban had resulted in £0.5 billion in lost tobacco duty. The report is available on the ASH website at: <http://bit.ly/tobacconomics>



BAT AGM

This year's activity by ASH to mark BAT's AGM on 28th April sought to highlight the company's complicity in child labour and to reveal BAT's covert lobbying against the tobacco point of sale display legislation. ASH staff were joined by young people from across the North West and London who confronted shareholders going into the meeting about BAT's involvement in child labour in the developing world.

BAT funding and support for the campaign against the point of sale display ban fronted by the National Federation of Retail Newsagents (NFRN) and lobbyists Hume Brophy was revealed as a result of an investigation by ASH in collaboration with journalists from the Guardian and the Observer. Although BAT initially denied the claims, questions from Kevin Barron MP representing ASH at the BAT AGM forced BAT to reveal its involvement. An article in the Guardian headed "BAT denies allegations that it funded anti-tobacco ban lobby" published on April 27th was followed on April 28th by an article headed "BAT admits bankrolling newsagents tobacco campaign".



"The Royal College of General Practitioners is pleased to be a member of Smokefree Action Coalition which, under the leadership of ASH, has campaigned so successfully for effective measures to reduce the harm caused by tobacco."

Dr Clare Gerada MBE
Chair of Council,
Royal College of
General Practitioners

RIP cigarettes

After a sustained campaign over a number of years for “fire-safer” (reduced ignition propensity) cigarettes by a coalition of health and fire-safety organisations in the UK and Europe, CEN, Europe’s standard making body, finally published a new standard and test method for assessing the ignition propensity of cigarettes in November 2010. This was followed by an equivalent British standard, issued by the BSI in December 2010. The standards were adopted by the European Commission on 9 August 2011. This means that from mid November 2011 all cigarettes manufactured for use in the EU will be required to comply with the new standards. The introduction of the new standards is expected to lead to a substantial reduction in the number of fatalities and serious injuries caused by fires started by discarded cigarettes.



“When ASH was set up in 1971 UK cigarette sales were still rising, and the UK had the world’s worst mortality rate from tobacco, including about 85,000 tobacco deaths a year in middle age (35-69).

Since then, ASH has been remarkably successful in translating research findings into practical policy measures that get acted on. Over the past 40 years the example of ASH has been copied in many countries, UK cigarette sales have decreased substantially and the UK has had the world’s best decrease in tobacco deaths, now down to about 25,000 a year in middle age. This is still an enormous number of premature deaths , so we still need ASH to protect more children from starting and to help more smokers to quit.”

Sir Richard Peto

Professor of Medical Statistics and Epidemiology at the University of Oxford

Framework Convention on Tobacco Control

ASH's Chief Executive, Deborah Arnott, continues to play an active role in the Framework Convention Alliance – the coalition of NGOs working to support full implementation of the FCTC. Work is ongoing on guidelines for Articles 9 & 10 on the regulation of tobacco products and Article 6 on tax.

Negotiations continue on the illicit trade protocol and a further session to discuss this will take place in March 2012 in Geneva.

The fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the FCTC will be held in Seoul, South Korea in November 2012.



“ASH has become one of the most vocal and respected tobacco control organizations not just in the United Kingdom but also in the world. It contributed significantly to the negotiations of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC), and has worked tirelessly since the Treaty’s ratification to bring together local tobacco control alliances with tremendous impact in the UK and globally. Among its many notable accomplishments, ASH is one of the few organisations that monitors and exposes tobacco industry lobbying, helping to ensure that Parties can live up to their obligations under WHO FCTC Article 5.3 to protect public health policies from the commercial and vested interests of the industry. A steady and valued collaborator for WHO, ASH proves its commitment to a tobacco free world every day, and I am looking forward to their ongoing contributions to the success of the WHO FCTC.”

Dr Douglas Bettcher
Director Tobacco Free Initiative, WHO

ASH INFORMATION AND MEDIA WORK

ASH has now received Information Standard accreditation. This is a quality standard which means that health information provided by the organisation has been peer-reviewed and meets minimum standards for health and social care information.

ASH was commissioned by the Race Equality Foundation to produce a briefing paper on tobacco use among black and minority-ethnic populations. An article drawing on the research findings used in the briefing was also published in the European Journal of Public Health.

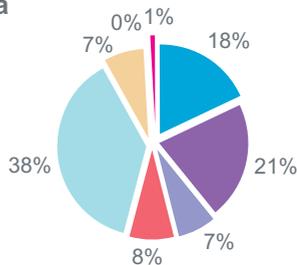
ASH has responded to the many calls received from members of the public who are affected by tobacco smoke drifting into their homes from neighbouring buildings. As this is not covered by the smokefree law, it is a tricky issue to solve. The briefing summarises the steps people can take to minimise if not eliminate the problem.

Over the past year ASH responded to many government and other agency consultations and issued 13 press releases. We produced a new fact sheet on smoking and meningitis in addition to the briefings above. The publications can be accessed at: www.ash.org.uk/information

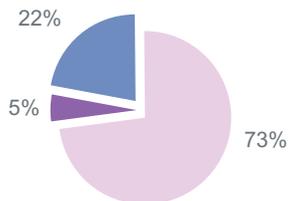
Monitoring of press and broadcast media coverage over the past year has found that our weekly reach (i.e. the number of people exposed to references to ASH in news stories) was an estimated 2.5 million.



Overall media coverage by subject area



Total coverage by media type



ASH Website

Over the past year the ASH website received 349,138 visits, totalling over 1 million page views; this at an average rate of 956 visits per day. More than three-quarters of these (77%) were new visitors.

In December 2010 the web traffic analysis system underwent some changes which led to a sudden upward adjustment in the number of recorded visits. However, even taking this into account, there has been an overall 52% rise in traffic compared to the previous year.

Most of our visitors come from the UK and US but the proportion of US visitors has fallen slightly (to 8% from 14%) while the proportion of UK visitors is up from 61% to 72%.

Accounts 2010-11

A full copy of the audited accounts for the financial year ended 31st March 2011 can be found on the ASH website at: www.ash.org.uk/accounts2011

Acknowledgements

ASH would like to thank the British Heart Foundation, Cancer Research UK, ASH International and the Department of Health, as well as our individual members, for supporting our work during the year.



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