

Annual review 2015

cigarette ends

**ash.**  
action on smoking and health



# Introduction

As a small charity ASH is renowned for punching far above its weight and this year has been no exception. Over the past 12 months, following a very active campaign by ASH and other members of the Smokefree Action Coalition, we have witnessed the final stages of the passing of legislation to implement standardised tobacco packaging, which will finally be implemented in the UK in May 2016.

Standardised “plain” packaging was proposed by ASH in its 2008 report *Beyond Smoking Kills*, which also included the first UK-based research supporting its implementation. Since then, and particularly over the past year, ASH, together with Cancer Research UK, has been at the forefront of the campaign to ensure that the measure was kept high on the political agenda until the regulations were finally passed. This achievement was acknowledged by Charity Times which gave ASH and Cancer Research UK the award for Campaign Team of the Year for the work on standardised packaging.

The other campaign priority for this year was for a new tobacco strategy. In June, just after the General Election, ASH launched *Smoking Still Kills*, a major new report endorsed by more than 120 health and welfare organisations, which sets out a range of policy recommendations we believe are essential to a new strategy. The report was funded by Cancer Research UK and the British Heart Foundation, overseen by an editorial board chaired by Trustee Peter Kellner, President of YouGov, and informed by input from regional seminars.

At a Parliamentary reception to launch the report, Jane Ellison MP (who was re-appointed as Minister for Public Health after the General Election) was congratulated by the audience for announcing that the Department of Health had committed to replacing the *Tobacco Control Plan for England* with a new strategy. A new strategy will be popular, given that three quarters of the public support action to reduce smoking, with over a third agreeing that the government could do more.

As this review shows, ASH has also been working hard to support effective implementation of current government strategy for tobacco control as set out in the *Tobacco Plan for England* at national, regional and local level.

While we can take a moment to celebrate achievements, much still remains to be done in order to continue to drive down smoking rates. ASH and colleagues in the Smokefree Action Coalition will continue to press for sustained (and preferably increased) investment in tobacco control at all levels of government. This will be essential if we are to conquer what is still the largest preventable cause of ill-health and premature death.



Professor John Moxham  
Chairman



Deborah Arnott  
Chief Executive

# Campaigning

## Children and Families Act

### Standardised Packs

This year's No Smoking Day - Wednesday 11th March 2015 - was a momentous day in the history of tobacco control as regulations for standardised packaging were finally passed in the House of Commons by 367 to 113 votes, an overwhelming majority.

The then Shadow Public Health Minister Luciana Berger MP gave ASH and the Smokefree Action Coalition an honourable mention at the start of her speech in the debate on the Regulations: *"Today we have an opportunity to consider secondary legislation to introduce standardised packaging of tobacco products, which puts us within touching distance of a precious victory for children. I thank everyone who has campaigned to get us to this point, especially Action on Smoking and Health and the Smokefree Action Coalition. We are here today because colleagues on both sides of the other place successfully made the case for these provisions in the Children and Families Act 2014."*

ASH first started campaigning for standardised (plain) packaging in 2008 in *Beyond Smoking Kills* - a report which put forward 44 recommendations including standardised packaging. It has been a long and challenging campaign but was helped by the growing consensus across the political spectrum in favour of the measure.

Days before the vote in the Commons, ASH published a Legal Opinion which concluded that standardised tobacco packaging is compatible with European law and that the UK Government was entitled to regulate tobacco packaging. The Opinion countered industry claims that it would be entitled to compensation if the measure went ahead. Standardised packaging is scheduled to be introduced from 20th May 2016. However, as expected, the industry has challenged the law. ASH was granted permission to intervene in the legal challenge. At the time of writing, the court hearing was scheduled for December 2015.

### Smokefree cars

The regulations to prohibit smoking in a private vehicle when a person under the age of 18 is present were passed on 11th February and the measure took effect on 1st October. The law applies to England and Wales. ASH research

shows that it is well supported by the general public with 85% of adults in England in favour. When the law prohibiting smoking in workplaces was passed it was accompanied by declines in smoking in the home. The new law on smoking in cars should also help to change attitudes and behaviour among the minority of people who continue to smoke around children, not just in the car but also in the home.

### Proxy purchasing and electronic cigarettes

ASH welcomed the implementation of the other tobacco regulations contained in the Children and Families Act, namely the prohibition of sale of electronic cigarettes to persons under the age of 18 and the ban on proxy purchasing of both tobacco and electronic cigarettes by adults for under-18s.

## Smoking Still Kills

The *Smoking Still Kills* report sets out our policy agenda for tobacco control for the next five years, in the same way as its predecessor *Beyond Smoking Kills* did in 2008. The report challenges all stakeholders to re-double efforts to accelerate the rate of decline in smoking, and to eliminate the current inequalities in smoking rates between the most affluent and poorest in society, with specific targets to:

- Reduce smoking in the adult population to 13% by 2020 and 9% by 2025
- Reduce smoking in the routine and manual socio-economic group to 21% by 2020 and 16% by 2025
- Reduce smoking among pregnant women to 8% by 2020 and 5% by 2025
- Reduce regular and occasional smoking among 15-year-olds to 9% per cent by 2020 and 2% by 2025

The report also sets out a longer term ambition to reduce smoking to below 5% across all socio-economic groups by 2035.



*Smoking Still Kills* conference, Friends House, London - 10 October 2014

339 public health professionals attended the regional events.

These targets and the policies to support them have already been incorporated into the new cancer plan for England (*Achieving world class cancer outcomes: A strategy for England 2014-2020*). Many of the tobacco control measures proposed in *Smoking Still Kills* are already in place but need to be renewed or reinforced with a stronger focus on reducing health inequalities. At the launch of the report, when the Public Health Minister announced that the Government would be developing a replacement for the current *Tobacco Control Plan for England*, she also said the Department of Health would read the report with interest.



Public Health Minister, Jane Ellison MP and Deborah Arnott at the launch of *Smoking Still Kills*, Houses of Parliament - 09 June 2015



Spending on tobacco control is extremely cost effective yet resources for both national and local tobacco control are far from secure. *Smoking Still Kills* recommends that the tobacco industry be charged a levy to help meet the costs that smoking causes.

The report has been widely disseminated including via a joint conference on the future of tobacco control with the Local Government Association, the Association of Directors of Public Health and Public Health England. The event provided an opportunity to brief senior local stakeholders on the next steps for tobacco control as well as providing a showcase for best local practice.

## Tax & smuggling

After nearly a year of advocating for a tobacco levy with all three major UK political parties, ASH was delighted that in the 2014 Autumn Statement the Chancellor announced that he would consult on introducing a levy on the tobacco industry because as he put it "*Smoking imposes costs on society, and the government believes it is therefore fair to ask the tobacco industry to make*

*a greater contribution.*” This announcement followed a similar proposal put forward by the then leader of the Labour Party, Rt Hon. Ed Milliband MP, at the Labour Party conference, and by the Liberal Democrats.

As well as responding to the consultation, ASH’s annual (Spring 2015) Budget submission, produced in conjunction with the UK Centre for Tobacco and Alcohol Studies (UKCTAS) and endorsed by 64 organisations, also supported the introduction of a tobacco levy.

The submission also urged the government to implement a Minimum Consumption Tax (MCT); to further regulate raw tobacco; to publish an updated anti-smuggling strategy; and to consult on measures to support implementation of the WHO FCTC Illicit Trade Protocol, including the introduction of a retail licence.

This year there was a second Budget in July following the General Election. In the submission for this Budget ASH & UKCTAS repeated the call for a tobacco levy and for sustained funding for HMRC’s anti-smuggling strategy. Unfortunately the Chancellor said that he had decided not to proceed with the tobacco levy but did announce an enhanced strategy to tackle illicit trade.

## Tobacco Industry

### BAT AGM

The British American Tobacco AGM took place on 29th April and once again ASH coordinated a youth noisemaking event, attended by around 100 young people.



After the AGM ASH held a workshop exploring the policy options surrounding the future of tobacco control. As well as presentations from young people, speakers included Tom Kibasi (Lord Darzi’s adviser on the London Health Commission report), Cllr Jonathan McShane (Hackney Council), Ansa Hussain from Tobacco Free Futures and the ASH Chief Executive.

## Imperial Tobacco AGM

In January, ASH organised a demonstration outside the Imperial Tobacco AGM in Bristol. The event was attended by approximately 30 people, including young people from Cut Films and the University of Bristol, as well as local Bristol Councillors.



photos: Chunhui Wong

Preceding the event, ASH worked closely with SEATCA (the South East Asian Tobacco Control Alliance) to run a social media campaign and an online petition, which was signed by over a 1000 people from 65 countries, to highlight an unfair tax deal between the government of Laos and Imperial Tobacco. The agreement has had the effect of limiting the amount of tax on tobacco products making them cheaper and more affordable.

## World No Tobacco Day on illicit trade

To mark World No Tobacco Day on May 31st – the theme of which was illicit tobacco - ASH produced a new briefing: *Illicit Tobacco: What is the tobacco industry trying to do?* The briefing reports on how the tobacco industry uses the threat of an increase in the illicit trade to try to prevent new tobacco control policies, such as standardised packaging, from being implemented.

## WHO FCTC Article 5.3

Earlier in the year ASH was alerted to a meeting convened by the Pakistan Finance Minister which was attended by BAT and the British High Commissioner. It was reported that the Commissioner had lobbied on behalf of the tobacco industry against the country's proposals for tobacco health warnings. Following criticism by ASH, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office denied that any lobbying had taken place but committed to reminding overseas missions of their obligations to act in accordance with Article 5.3 of the FCTC. ASH also published a briefing for councillors on Article 5.3.



# Networking & coalition building

## Smokefree Action Coalition

The Smokefree Action Coalition (SFAC) is a group of over 300 organisations committed to promoting public health. It was set up by ASH to advocate for smokefree workplaces and is now committed to reducing the harm caused by tobacco more generally. The SFAC played an important role in much of the work of ASH including the campaigns for standardised tobacco packaging and the new law prohibiting smoking in cars when children are present.



## APPG on Smoking and Health

In March the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Smoking and Health hosted a meeting on electronic cigarettes and the next steps in tobacco control. The purpose of the meeting was to inform the position of the APPG going forward and to give Members the opportunity to ask questions of experts in the field.



The APPG also held a reception to celebrate the Luther Terry award to the Department of Health's Tobacco Control Team for "*Exemplary Leadership by a Government Ministry*". This prestigious triennial award by the American Cancer Society honours the UK as a world leader in tobacco control. The meeting was attended by the Public Health Minister Jane Ellison MP as well as the Department of Health tobacco team.

Following the General Election the former Chair of the APPG, Paul Burstow left Parliament. He is now Chair of a mental health trust and has become a trustee of ASH. At the APPG AGM he was warmly thanked for his hard work and dedication to tobacco control. During his two years as Chair of the APPG Paul, together with other members of the APPG, played a crucial role in helping get standardised packaging legislation passed through Parliament. Bob Blackman, Conservative MP for Harrow East and former leader of the London Borough of Brent was elected as the new Chair.

In September, in advance of the Chancellor's Comprehensive Spending Review, the APPG held an inquiry into the cost effectiveness of tobacco control which took evidence from a number of health and economic experts. The inquiry resulted in two key recommendations: that spending on tobacco

control should be increased from around £200m to £300m a year, and that, given the Chancellor's announcement that he would not be proceeding with the levy, the cost of additional tobacco control funding could instead be met by an increase in the existing tax escalator on tobacco products from 2% above inflation to 5% above inflation for the next five years together with changes to the tax structure.

## **ASH in the devolved nations**

ASH continues to co-ordinate with our sister ASH organisations in the devolved nations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to share experience as tobacco policy evolves across the United Kingdom.

## **International Networking and Coalition Building**

### **EU Smoke Free Partnership**

ASH continues to play a role in supporting the Brussels based Smoke Free Partnership, which works to promote tobacco control advocacy and policy research at EU and national level. Deborah Arnott is on the Board of the Partnership, as are Alison Cox for Cancer Research UK and Susanne Logstrup for the European Heart Network. Work this year has focused on the EU Tobacco Tax Directive, which is currently under revision, as well as preparation for implementation of the EU Tobacco Products Directive, which starts in 2016. In addition, the Partnership has been working to build support for ratification of the FCTC's Illicit Trade Protocol.

### **World Conference on Tobacco or Health**

ASH staff attended the 16th World Conference on Tobacco or Health held in Abu Dhabi. The ASH Chief Executive gave presentations on electronic cigarettes and implementation of Article 5.3 (protecting tobacco control policies from the interests of the tobacco industry) at local government level.

### **Sustainable Development Goals**

ASH worked collaboratively with others including the Framework Convention Alliance and the Non-Communicable Disease Alliance to support the inclusion of a requirement to strengthen implementation of the FCTC Sustainable Development Goals (target 3.a) We also advocated for tobacco taxation to be included as a funding mechanism in the SDG Financing for Development document. With our encouragement the European Union and the UK were strongly supportive. This will provide a useful hook for encouraging governments, development agencies and funders to support global FCTC implementation, particularly on tobacco taxation.

# Policy implementation

## Supporting local tobacco control

### Local Government Declaration on Tobacco Control and NHS Statement of Support for Tobacco Control

To date 83 councils (64 top tier and 19 district councils) have signed the Declaration. ASH and colleagues in the SFAC attended a number of regional network meetings to publicise the Declaration and the NHS Statement. New resources, including a document on implementing the Declaration and best practice case studies have been placed on the SFAC website.



Paul Burstow MP, Simon Stevens, Prof John Moxham, Deborah Arnett, Statement reception, House of Commons - 23 February 2015

Support for the NHS Statement also continues to grow and in the spring ASH held a Parliamentary Reception for the Statement to celebrate the initiative's first six months. Guest speakers included Simon Stevens, Chief Executive of NHS England. The reception was very well attended by senior NHS figures with good feedback from attendees about both the Statement as a tool for keeping tobacco control on the NHS agenda and the event itself. More than 30 NHS organisations have now signed the Statement. We also distributed our *Implementation Guide* for organisations who have signed the Statement already and this is now available online.

Over the year ASH has worked with Public Health England (PHE) in a series of events to make the case for evidence-based tobacco control locally.

We have updated existing local toolkit briefings, and new councillor briefings on tobacco-related fires and litter are in production. The briefings are tailored by region and based on figures presented in the ASH Ready Reckoner.

### Health inequalities toolkit

In October ASH launched a health inequalities toolkit, designed to make the case for tobacco control within local authorities. The toolkit includes a 'local poverty calculator' which enables local authorities to see the number of households with adult smokers who are living below the poverty line, and what proportion would be lifted out of poverty if these smokers quit smoking.

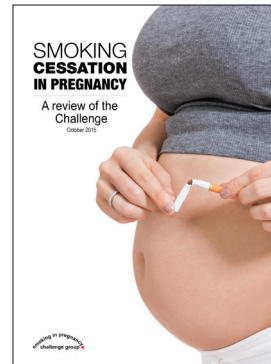
The toolkit contains a series of briefings on key groups with high smoking rates. These groups include those with mental ill health or multiple complex disorders, low income families and LGBT communities. In order to engage organisations involved in work on disadvantage and poverty, an event to launch the new resources is planned.

### **CRUK-funded report on the impact of NHS reforms on local tobacco control**

Last year Cancer Research UK commissioned ASH to conduct a survey of people working in tobacco control at the local level to assess the impact of the NHS reforms on their work. The survey was repeated again this year and early analysis suggests that funding in 2015 is facing many more challenges than were found in the 2014 survey. This has been exacerbated by the Chancellor's announcement that there would be a £200 million reduction in the amount allocated to local authorities for their public health budgets. Some local authorities are already cutting back on their stop smoking services, a policy that is likely to have serious implications for the health of the local population.

## **Reducing Smoking in Pregnancy**

ASH has been working with Public Health England (PHE), Linda Bauld, Professor of Health Policy at the University of Stirling and Francine Bates, Chief Executive of the Lullaby Trust to produce an update of the Smoking in Pregnancy Challenge Group's 2013 Report. This report reviews progress against each recommendation and identifies priority areas for future action. It has been developed by Challenge Group members and feedback from a range of professionals and academics working in the field. Earlier in the year a seminar was held in partnership with PHE which was attended by around 100 professionals.



The work of the Challenge Group, co-ordinated by ASH, has been credited by PHE with raising the level and quality of activity in this area. Rates of smoking in pregnancy in England have started to fall more quickly since the Group first reported in 2013. To support the ongoing work of the Group we have created a section on the SFAC website where resources can be held: [www.smokefreeaction.org.uk/SiP.html](http://www.smokefreeaction.org.uk/SiP.html)

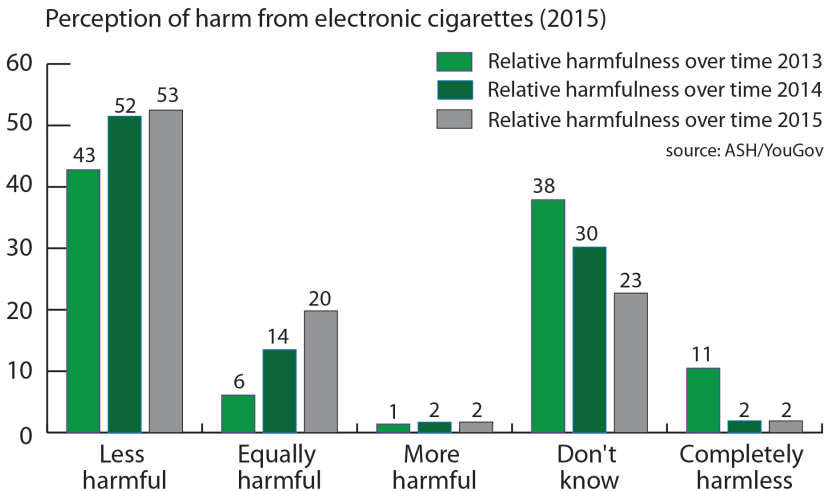
# Mental Health and Smoking Action Report

ASH has embarked on a project to develop a consensus position on smoking and mental health focused on the actions needed to significantly reduce the rate of smoking among people with a mental health condition. A round table event chaired by ASH Trustee, The Rt Hon. Paul Burstow, with experts on mental health and public health was held in October, and following this a report will be published in 2016.

## E-cigarettes and harm reduction

Over the past year ASH staff have held workshops and addressed a number of events to share the evidence base around electronic cigarettes.

Generally there is agreement across the public health community that there are significant potential benefits for public health from electronic cigarettes but that we need to keep monitoring the evolution of the market and manage any potential risks through appropriate regulation. This evidence was helpfully summarised by PHE in the evidence review it published in August.



ASH's annual opinion survey this year revealed a further increase in use of the devices with an estimated 2.6 million people in Great Britain currently using them. Usage remains almost exclusively among current and former smokers who are mainly using them as an aid to quitting smoking and/or preventing relapse. Among children, both regular use and experimentation are also largely confined to current smokers or those who have tried smoking.

Between 2013 and 2015 there has been a change in the perception of harm from electronic cigarettes. While there has been an increase in the number of people who accurately think that e-cigarettes are less harmful than tobacco products there has also been a rise in the proportion of people who think they are equally or more harmful (see bar chart). This may be a consequence of mixed messages about the relative risks of e-cigarettes reported in the media. The Public Health England evidence review published in August was very clear that electronic cigarettes are much less harmful than tobacco. We await the results of our next YouGov survey in Spring 2016 to see whether this has an impact on public perception of relative risks.

## Smokefree prisons

ASH was pleased by the Government announcement of a roll out for the policy of making prisons in England and Wales smokefree first announced in 2012. Prisons in Wales will go completely smokefree in the New Year followed by a cluster of prisons in south-west England in Spring 2016. The rest of the prison estate in England will follow suit (policy for prisons in Scotland and Northern Ireland is set domestically rather than at UK level), although at present the timescale for this has not been announced.

ASH has been lobbying for this measure since 2005 when our smokefree laws were first under development, but to our disappointment at that time prisons were exempted. There is a clear evidence of the need for prisons to go smokefree: a report on air quality published at the same time as the announcement concluded that: "*Smoking in prisons thus represents a significant health hazard to prisoners and staff.*" Evidence from other countries where prisons have gone smokefree suggests that there have been few problems with enforcement and that it has resulted in improved health for both inmates and staff.

# Information and media

## Websites

Traffic on the website is significantly up from last year, with almost 500,000 unique visitors during the period between September 2014 and August 2015; an average of 980 per day. Traffic peaked during February-March 2015 which coincided with the high number of tobacco control regulations going through Parliament. The percentage of new visitors remains constant at about 80%. This amounts to almost 1.5 million page views over that period.

Most users of the ASH website are from the UK (77%), with most overseas visitors coming from the USA, followed by India, Germany and Canada.

The Smokefree Action Coalition website, also maintained by ASH, provides specific material for the 300 coalition members such as briefings and postcards on the Local Government Declaration on Tobacco Control and resources provided by the smoking in pregnancy challenge group. During the period September 2014 and August 2015 the SFAC website received 17,000 unique visits. See: [www.smokefreeaction.org.uk](http://www.smokefreeaction.org.uk)

ASH also maintains a webpage for the APPG on Smoking and Health on the ASH website. [www.ash.org.uk/APPG](http://www.ash.org.uk/APPG)

## Consultations

Over the past 12 months ASH staff responded to 22 consultations on a wide range of topics including the draft regulation on smoking in cars, the Tobacco Products Directive, illicit trade, litter, the tobacco levy and the proposed public health spending cuts.

## New publications

In addition to the various briefings produced for the updated local toolkit we published a new fact sheet on smoking and dementia in collaboration with Public Health England and the Alzheimer's Society. The fact sheet summarises the growing body of evidence that smoking increases the risk of dementia.

## Media coverage

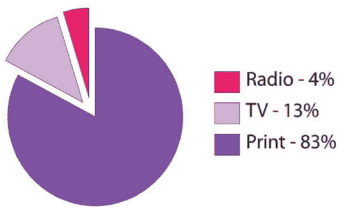
We issued 44 press releases (excluding SFAC and APPG releases).

Between September 2014 and August 2015, ASH received over 3000 mentions online and in the print press. In addition, ASH appeared on, or was referenced 249 times on the radio and 76 times on the television.

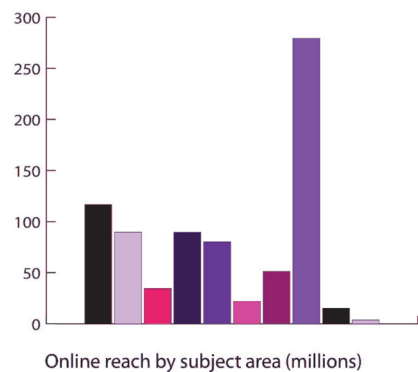
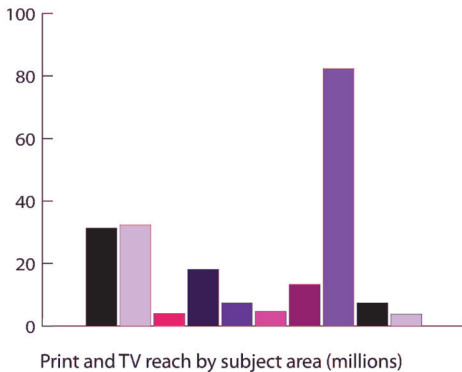
Our estimated weekly reach (opportunities to view), excluding online was 3.9 million. Online reach was an estimated 15 million a week.

Key issues covered in the media during this period included electronic cigarettes, standardised packaging and smokefree places (including cars and prisons). ASH's report *Smoking Still Kills*, with a particular focus on the proposed tobacco levy, also received considerable coverage.

Total ASH reach by medium



Subjects





## Awards

We were very pleased to receive the Charity Times' Campaigning Team of the Year award, jointly with Cancer Research UK, for our work on standardised packaging. In addition ASH and Cancer Research UK won a Communique award. ASH was also shortlisted alongside Cancer Research UK for a public affairs award and Third Sector's "*Big Impact Award*", all for the campaign on standardised tobacco packaging.



## Accounts 2014-15

A full copy of the audited accounts for the financial year ended 31st March 2015 can be found on the ASH website at [www.ash.org.uk/accounts2015](http://www.ash.org.uk/accounts2015)



Professor John Moxham speaking at the ASH AGM - Royal College of Physicians, 10 December 2014

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Sept. 2015)

Treasurer (until  
Sept. 2015)  
Vice-Chair

Chair

## Staff

Kate Alley	Special Projects Advisor
Deborah Arnott	Chief Executive
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Rasha Elzein	Intern
Emily James	Policy & Campaigns Officer
Phil Rimmer	Business Manager
Jenn Ruddick	Senior Policy and Campaigns Officer
Amanda Sandford	Information Manager
Ian Willmore	Special Projects Advisor

## Public Health trainees

Helen Asquith  
Katy Harker



## Acknowledgements

ASH would like to thank the British Heart Foundation, Cancer Research UK and our individual members, for supporting and funding our work during the year. We have also been funded by the Department of Health during the 2014-15 financial year for work to support the Government's tobacco control strategy.

