



ash ● Annual Review 2006
 action on smoking and health



Summary of 2006

The last twelve months have been historic for tobacco control, both here in the UK and worldwide.

This time last year the Health Secretary was still planning to implement smokefree legislation for England which would have excluded private members' clubs and pubs not serving food.

Working closely with the Chair of the Health Select Committee, the Rt Hon Kevin Barron MP and John Grogan MP, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Beer Group, ASH helped persuade Labour to allow a 'free vote' on the legislation. The Smokefree Action Coalition then swung into action and lobbied effectively to build support for all enclosed public places to go smokefree.

On the day of the vote, 14th February 2006, the Prime Minister, Chancellor, and Health Ministers all voted against their original proposals for exemptions for pubs and clubs, ensuring a massive majority of 200 for comprehensive smokefree legislation.

The Government estimates 600,000 people will quit smoking across England when the smokefree legislation comes into effect. Millions of nonsmokers will be able to work and attend leisure venues without their health being adversely affected by other people's smoking. This legislation is the most important step forward for public health in this country for many decades.

Internationally, February saw the first Conference of the Parties of the World Health Organisation's (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) in Geneva. The FCTC is the world's first-ever public health treaty. With over 140 countries now having become Parties, it is the world's most successful treaty. The Framework Convention Alliance (FCA), on which Deborah Arnott is a board member, is working for the effective development and implementation of the treaty.

ASH and the Smokefree Action Coalition won the Global Smokefree Partnership award for 'Outstanding Campaign' at the 13th World Conference on Tobacco or Health in July.

Whilst ASH developed the strategy, supported and steered the Smokefree Action Coalition, we should not forget that the work of many others has been critical to its success. In particular we would like to thank the core group: Asthma UK, the British Heart Foundation, the British Medical Association, Cancer Research UK, the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, the National Heart Forum, the Royal College of Physicians and Smokefree Liverpool. ASH also could not have succeeded without our many supporters in Parliament; in particular the Rt Hon Kevin Barron MP, Chair of the Health Select Committee; David Taylor MP, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Tobacco and Health; John Grogan MP Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Beer Group and Lord Richard Faulkner. All have worked tirelessly to ensure the legislation was passed without exemptions in both Houses of Parliament.

The ASH board would also like to thank the ASH staff who have worked tirelessly on this campaign and in all areas of ASH's work. They have shown great dedication and should be pleased with their achievements this year.

This annual review outlines the whole range of work undertaken by ASH during the past twelve months, not just the smokefree campaign.

“We are absolutely delighted that the legislation has been passed. It is the best public health news for the last 30 years and will result in untold health benefits for years to come.”

Deborah Arnott, Director of ASH

Smokefree workplaces

Smokefree workplaces and enclosed public places are close to being a reality in England. The legislation is due to be implemented in summer 2007. England will then join Scotland, where legislation came into effect on 26th March 2006, and Wales and Northern Ireland, where it is due to come into effect in spring 2007. With almost 60 million people, the UK will be the largest jurisdiction in the world with smokefree legislation.

The Health Act covers all enclosed workplaces and contains no exemptions for pubs, or private member clubs. More than two million people in England and Wales who work in places where smoking is allowed will benefit from this legislation. Another ten million who work in places where smoking is allowed somewhere on the premises, will also benefit from the workplace being smokefree. All nonsmokers will also benefit by being able to visit leisure venues without being subjected to secondhand smoke.

Throughout the progress of the Bill and as part of the consultation process, ASH made detailed submissions to the Department of Health, other relevant government departments and related organisations such as the Health and Safety Executive. ASH also gave both written and oral evidence to the House of Commons Health Select Committee.

“ASH is a casebook example of how a small but well-organised and effective group can stimulate and guide a powerful movement. ASH provided a sense of direction, a sharp sense of campaigning tactics and political intelligence. Their work is essential.”

Peter Hollins, Chief Executive of the British Heart Foundation

ASH was able to demonstrate the high level of public support for the smoking ban through a series of polls during the campaign. The key opinion change was the increase in support for completely smokefree pubs and bars from around half, in a MORI poll conducted for ASH in Spring 2004, to two thirds in a YouGov poll, carried out for ASH and Cancer Research UK, in December 2005.

In January 2006 Asthma UK and ASH published a regional breakdown of the numbers of people who would quit if comprehensive smokefree legislation was passed. The survey highlighted the benefits for those with asthma. This information came at a crucial time in the parliamentary debating process and just before the vote.

Supporting the local alliances was a key element of the smokefree action campaign. ASH attended local meetings, gave evidence, and worked with local coordinators to get positive stories in local and regional press as well as responding to negative articles regarding the legislation. ASH also delivered media training to more than fifty local advocates.

“ASH has a high reputation among Parliamentarians for its work. They have provided MPs with lucid, accurate and timely research and briefing materials on secondhand smoke. ASH submitted written and oral evidence of the highest calibre to the Health Select Committee's inquiry into smoking in public places. This was crucial in assisting the committee to reach the conclusions it did.”

Rt Hon Kevin Barron, MP

International award



The Smokefree Action Coalition was presented with an award for ‘Outstanding Campaign’ at the inaugural Global Smokefree Partnership Awards. The ceremony took place at the 13th World Conference on Tobacco or Health in Washington, US, in July.

The prestigious award was presented by Cynthia Hallett, Executive Director of Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights and accepted by ASH Director Deborah Arnott for the Coalition.

ASH information and media work

ASH staff are contacted daily to provide reaction to, and information on tobacco-related news stories. We continue to be the key source of input to the media on tobacco issues in the UK.

During 2005-06 ASH issued 45 press releases. Our weekly ‘reach’ (the number of people exposed to our messages) was just under 5 million people, not including the internet. On average, each week, there were 13 mentions of ASH in the print media and 5 appearances on radio and TV.

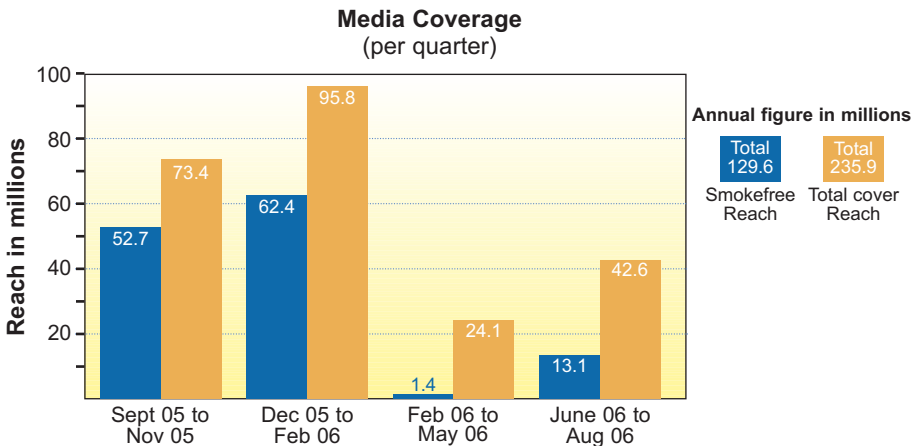
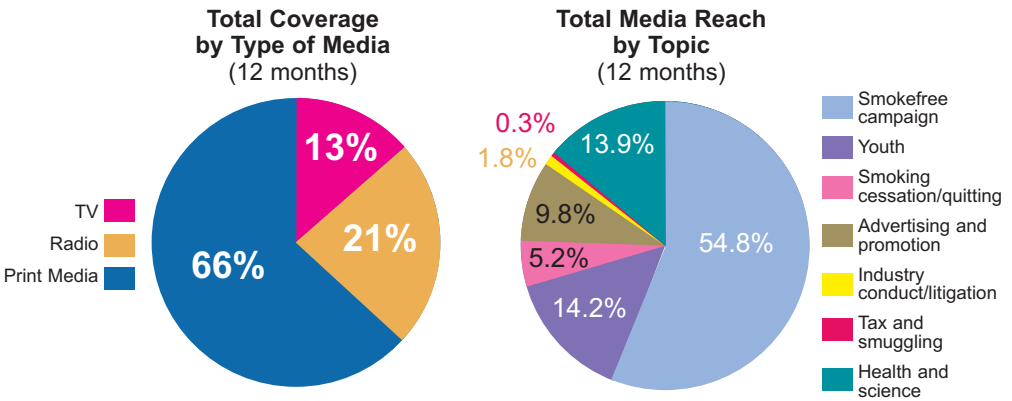
ASH media coverage was highest from September to February when the Health Bill entered parliament. Around 64% of all of ASH’s media coverage related to the smoking ban legislation during the year.

“The Royal College of Physicians established ASH in 1971 because we saw a real need for an effective pressure group to work on evidence-based tobacco control policy. The RCP has continued to support ASH’s work ever since. I believe ASH has played a vitally important role in reducing the amount of harm caused by smoking in Britain.”

Professor Dame Carol Black, President of the Royal College of Physicians

Usage of the ASH website continues to increase, with an average of 3,700 visitors a day. This is an increase of 58% year on year. The website continues to be an important source of information, material and guidance on tobacco related issues worldwide.

Currently the website is going through redevelopment and re-branding to make information easier to find. ASH is also establishing an easily-accessible archive section for historical information.





“I developed asthma from being exposed to secondhand smoke at my workplace. It cost me my job. Then when I sought help I was told I was ‘ahead of my time.’ No one should have their health affected by their work. This law will improve my quality of life and I feel vindicated for the stand I made for mine and other people’s health.”

Michael Dunn, 60, former casino worker

Health inequalities

Health inequalities are clearly demonstrated by the ASH mapping project.

In October ASH launched an interactive map that reveals the close link between smoking and poverty in England.

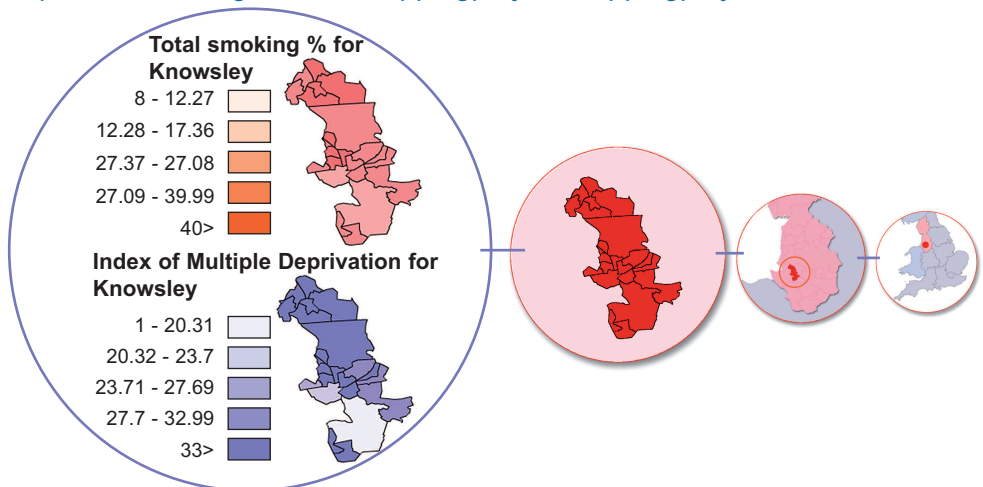
The mapping project shows the smoking rates and indices of deprivation for each ward and can be searched by region and district, or by entering a specific postcode. Since the project was launched online it has had over 6,000 unique visitors.

In the most deprived ward Princess, in Knowsley, Merseyside 52% of residents smoke, while the figure for the least deprived ward, Keyworth North in Rushcliffe, South Nottingham, is only 12%.

Director Deborah Arnott says: *“This important new project shows the iron chain that links smoking and deprivation. Smoking is the biggest killer in England, and it kills more people in poorer communities than in richer ones.”*

The maps are available here:

<http://www.ash.org.uk/html/mappingproject/mappingproject.html>





“I’m so pleased that smokefree legislation has been passed. I have asthma and when people smoke around me at restaurants I think ‘oh no not again, this is so unfair.’ It can be very frustrating. From next summer I will be able to go to any restaurant I choose and not worry about having asthma attacks or other problems with my health.”

Alex Percival, 16 asthma sufferer

Nicotine regulation

Following meetings between ASH and the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Authority (MHRA), the authority set up a working group to advise on how Nicotine Replacement Therapies (NRT) should be regulated. Dr Ann McNeill represented ASH. The working group recommended the introduction of new licensing conditions for the use of NRT: to use NRT to cut down then quit; permitting use among smokers under 18; for those with cardiovascular disease; and pregnant smokers.

The health consequences of continuing to smoke will outweigh any potential health risks from using NRT. This has been the principle that ASH has lobbied MHRA to adopt and its acceptance has allowed for the expansion of licensing conditions. ASH is confident future decisions will also be guided by this principle.

As National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidance was not going to be available within the near future, and health professionals were calling for advice about the new indications, ASH commissioned the writers of the original Thorax smoking cessation guidelines to produce guidance notes on the new indications for health professionals. These were promoted through the Regional Tobacco Policy Managers, Globalink and the health media and are available on the ASH website.

During the year Deborah Arnott, was appointed to the NICE public health programme guidance group on smoking cessation.

Tax and smuggling

ASH continued to meet regularly with HM Treasury and HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) to discuss issues around tax and smuggling. ASH also made a budget submission, supported by many other health charities.

This year we were pleased that HMRC finally launched a strategy for controlling smuggling of handrolled tobacco. The voluntary Memoranda of Understanding with the tobacco manufacturers are now backed up by new laws which came into force in October. Under these laws HMRC is now able to fine tobacco manufacturers up to £5 million if they fail to take sufficient steps to prevent their products being smuggled into the United Kingdom. Whether these laws will be effective remains to be seen.

Advertising and broadcasting

ASH made representations to the European Commission and motor cycle industry in January and August 2006 following breaches of the European Tobacco Advertising Directive.

Over the year ASH communicated with the Office of Communications (OFCOM) and was successful in ensuring guidance notes on smoking on television were clarified and tightened.

Reduced Ignition Propensity (RIP) cigarettes

Each year around 4,000 accidental domestic fires and 125 deaths in the UK are caused by smokers' materials. There is an established standard for Reduced Ignition Propensity cigarettes (RIP) already in place in New York and Canada. This requires cigarettes to be redesigned to reduce the likelihood that they will start fires by up to two thirds.

ASH has set up a campaign called the RIP Coalition to support the setting of standards for RIP cigarettes under the General Product Safety Directive (GPSD) of the European Union and is working in collaboration with partners round Europe. RIP cigarettes are a model of better, more effective, regulation of the tobacco industry.

Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC)

ASH's international work continues through the work being undertaken to ensure the effective implementation of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), working in collaboration with the Framework Convention Alliance.

Director, Deborah Arnott attended the first Conference of the Parties (COP) on the FCTC in February 2006. She said *"It was a unique opportunity with so many countries present discussing international tobacco control. We were successful in pushing for the development of protocols on illicit trade, cross-border advertising, and guidelines on protection from secondhand smoke."*

Regulation of tobacco products - Article 9 phase 1 of FCTC

ASH, working in collaboration with the Framework Convention Alliance, has been instrumental in ensuring effective representation for civil society to attend meetings regarding Article 9 (regulation of contents of tobacco products) of the FCTC. The regulation of tobacco contents is a complex field. ASH is pleased that a progress report, rather than guidelines, will be presented at the next COP in summer 2007. This will include a number of the recommendations put forward by civil society.

Cross-border advertising

ASH collaborated with Jonathan Liberman, from the Centre for Tobacco Control, Health Victoria, Australia in a project on cross-border advertising, supported by Cancer Research UK. On the basis of his work on the project, Mr Liberman was appointed as a member of the expert group set up to prepare a template for a protocol on cross-border advertising, commissioned by the World Health Organisation.

Accounts 2005-06

A full copy of the audited accounts for the financial year ended 31st March 2006 can be found on the ASH website at <http://www.ash.org.uk/html/about/fs2006.pdf>

Thanks

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

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