

ash

Annual Review 2009

action on smoking and health

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Annual Review – 2009

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

Writing in my final months after seven years as Chair of ASH, provides the opportunity to review the extraordinary progress made in Tobacco Control in the UK since 2003. Obviously the outstanding achievement was the passage of the smoke free legislation in 2006 where ASH played such a crucial role in England. And this has been followed this year by major success over the ban on the display of tobacco in shops and the ban on cigarette sales from vending machines.

Along with continuing progress on tax and smuggling, the international Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, the harm reduction strategy and many other initiatives, this represents seven years of staggering achievement for our outstanding Chief Executive, Deborah Arnott, and her able and hard working team.

I shall relinquish my position as Chair with great regret but also with enormous satisfaction at the huge progress made during this period. And I extend my best wishes to my successor, Professor John Moxham, who has all the qualities required to lead ASH to even greater success in the new decade.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Donald Reid', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Donald Reid

Overview of 2009

2009 has been another momentous year for ASH and tobacco control in this country. The passing of the Health Act in November, which included putting tobacco out of sight in shops and a complete prohibition on the sale of tobacco from vending machines, marked the culmination of a year of intensive lobbying by ASH and other members of the Smokefree Action Coalition. Regulations will determine the precise details but the point of sale ban is expected to enter into force in October 2011 in large shops such as supermarkets and in 2013 in small shops. The vending machine ban is also expected to take effect in October 2011.

In addition to the campaigning work on the Health Bill, ASH continued to work with our Coalition partners on tax and smuggling issues. As usual we made a submission to the Treasury before the Spring Budget and also in advance of the December Pre-Budget Report, stressing the need for ongoing tobacco duty rises and measures to reduce tobacco smuggling.

We have also been urging the Government to conform to the new guidelines to Article 5.3 of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) in any engagement it has with the tobacco industry. The guidelines require Parties to the FCTC to be accountable and transparent when dealing with the industry and state that Parties should only interact with the industry when strictly necessary.

ASH has also continued to play an important role in the development of further international guidelines for the implementation of the FCTC as detailed in the rest of this report.

As this review was going to press the Government was due to launch its new tobacco control strategy which promises to be far-sighted and ambitious. It is expected to include updated targets for a reduction in smoking prevalence and a new harm reduction initiative in line with the recommendations set out in the Beyond Smoking Kills report published last year by ASH. Truly a satisfactory end to a very important year.

Health Bill

By far the most important and challenging task for ASH over the past year was the building of parliamentary support for the tobacco control measures in the Health Bill.

The situation in December 2008 had not been so rosy: prior to the Queen's speech, it had become clear that industry lobbying to oppose the proposed legislation might be successful. ASH and the public health community successfully argued the case with Government and ensured that the proposal to end tobacco displays was included in the draft Health Bill. However, on vending machines, a compromise position was reached which would have permitted their use but with greater restrictions.

The Government Bill was introduced in the House of Lords where Labour does not have a majority. Working with Coalition partners, the ASH campaigns team, headed by Martin Dockrell, developed and implemented a strategy which involved researching and writing briefing materials, setting up meetings with the health teams of the major political parties, and lobbying parliamentarians at key stages of the Bill. In advance of the report stage of the Bill in the Lords we placed an advertisement in The Observer newspaper calling on Peers to support the tobacco control measures in the Health Bill which had over 100 signatories from health and social welfare organisations.



Although the point of sale proposals survived intact, an amendment calling for a complete ban on the sale of tobacco from vending machines was lost by 48 votes. Another amendment was tabled requiring the Government to review the case for the plain packaging of cigarettes. Although this was not passed, it provided the opportunity for peers to debate the issue.

An additional amendment was tabled in the Lords to ensure that the Government adhered to Article 5.3 of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. This requires Governments to ensure that public health polices are free from tobacco industry influence. Although this amendment did not survive Third Reading the Public Health Minister later confirmed that the Government was committed to implementing the FCTC recommendations.

The ban on vending machines was eventually achieved though the hard work and lobbying led by the British Heart Foundation and persuasive argument at the report stage of the Bill, especially by Ian McCartney MP. In his closing statement at Third Reading, Health Secretary Rt Hon Andy Burnham MP accepted that a total ban on cigarette vending machines was the will of the House of Commons. He went on to say “The Government... will consider how best to put its will into effect... Tonight his [Ian McCartney’s] campaigning force has yet again delivered another major step forward in protecting the health of the children of this country.”

“ASH is to be congratulated as a professional and influential organisation that effectively brings together the public health community to tackle the damage that tobacco use causes in our communities. ASH is a role model for organisations campaigning on health issues, and plays an important role in building support for evidence-based tobacco control measures.

“Over the past decade, the Government has made tobacco control a public health priority and I recognise the invaluable support that ASH has provided to our important work to improve peoples’ health”

Gillian Merron,
Minister of State for
Public Health

Survey of Retailers

ASH's Senior Policy and Campaigns Officer, Hazel Cheeseman, organised a survey of over 100 tobacco retailers in London and Nottingham. Assisted by Catriona Rooke, a researcher at Nottingham University and other ASH staff, the survey sought to gather information on the type and size of tobacco display, to find out who was paying for the display, what incentives shopkeepers were given and how frequently industry representatives visited the shops.

Almost all shops had tobacco-industry funded gantries and a number of retailers were very open about the coercive nature of the relationship they were forced to submit to in order to get the gantries. The research has been submitted for publication in the journal Tobacco Control.



Smoking in Films

ASH has responded to a proposal by Liverpool City Council to apply an "18" classification to films shown in Liverpool that include smoking, in order to protect children from tobacco imagery. Whilst supporting the aims of the policy we raised concerns about how this would work in practice and the limitations of a single local authority taking such action. If Liverpool implements any measures unilaterally, ASH would like to see an evaluation of the policies put in place comparing uptake amongst young film goers in Liverpool with other cities without such measures.

Tax and smuggling

As in previous years, ASH made submissions to the Treasury in advance of the Budget and autumn Pre-Budget Report. With support from our Smokefree Action Coalition partners we have lobbied Government for measures including:

- A sustained real price escalator on tobacco duty of at least 3% above inflation in order to drive down smoking prevalence;
- Joint targets to be set by HM Revenue & Customs and the UK Border Agency for reductions in the market share of illicit cigarettes and hand-rolled tobacco;
- Measurement and reporting of the market share of counterfeit as a proportion of the total illicit market;
- Government support for the adoption of a strong illicit trade protocol to the FCTC;
- Sustained funding for a comprehensive, cost-effective tobacco control strategy.

To coincide with the latest round of international negotiations to tackle tobacco smuggling, ASH commissioned a cost-benefit analysis of the impact of the illicit trade protocol in the UK. The report by Paul Johnson, a former Chief Micro-economist at the Treasury, found that if the protocol were adopted it could reduce smuggling in the UK by up to 80% and save 760 lives a year. In addition, the adoption of the protocol would be worth £5.7bn to the UK in net present values due to healthcare savings, increased output due to reduced mortality and reduced absteneeism, as well as adding £1.3 billion to annual tax revenues.

The overall conclusion of the report is that the benefits of adopting the protocol would far outweigh the costs of implementation. The report can be viewed on the Tax & Smuggling pages of the ASH website.

“ASH is highly respected in the public health and political community and has successfully worked independently and in partnership to reduce tobacco related harm over many years. The tobacco control agenda continues to be important and Cancer Research UK looks forward to continuing to work closely with ASH.”

Harpal Kumar,
Chief Executive
Cancer Research
UK

Framework Convention on Tobacco Control

ASH's Chief Executive, Deborah Arnott, participated in a number of international meetings on the development of guidelines for the implementation of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). Deborah is the European Board member and an active representative of the Framework Convention Alliance, the coalition of over 350 non-governmental organisations from over 100 countries working for the effective development and implementation of the FCTC. Framework Convention Alliance Project Director, Alison Cox, has been coordinating the international NGO effort to move the FCTC forward.

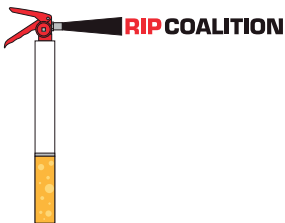
FCTC Guidelines

A working group on Article 14 on smoking cessation and a meeting of the working group to develop draft guidelines on Articles 9 and 10 on product regulation both made good progress towards the development of draft guidelines.

The Illicit trade protocol and guidelines on Article 9,10 and 14 are all due to be presented for adoption by the fourth Conference of the Parties.

Reduced Ignition Propensity (RIP) cigarettes

ASH's Chief Executive Deborah Arnott attended the ISO working group meeting on RIP cigarettes in London in July as an observer. This is the group that has been mandated to develop a test for RIP cigarettes. The European Commission has set a deadline of August 2010 for completion of the standard.



Illicit trade Protocol

There has been considerable progress in the international negotiations on a Protocol on Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products. The Protocol is being discussed under Article 15 of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). A decision is required by the end of the fourth and final International Negotiating Body (INB) in March 2010, for adoption at the next session of the FCTC Conference of the Parties in Uruguay in the last quarter of 2010.

The third INB, attended by Deborah Arnott and FCA Illicit Trade Protocol Manager, Ian Willmore, held in Geneva in June this year, made relatively little progress towards an agreed text. However, inter-sessional meetings, with a small number of delegates from each WHO region and NGOs as observers, were held in October and November. Progress at these meetings has been more rapid but much still remains to be done before the Protocol is ready to be adopted at the Fourth Conference of the Parties in Uruguay in November 2010.

“I hugely admire the valuable work carried out by ASH - an organisation that is so often instrumental in driving forward the public health debate in this country. I look forward to continuing to collaborate with them in the future.”

Shadow Minister for Health, Mike Penning MP



Above: Courtesy of the picture library at <http://www.illicittobacco.org>

Tobacco Packaging

Evidence on the need for, and viability of having cigarettes sold only in plain or standardised packaging is growing apace. Research commissioned by ASH examining the impact of packaging revealed that both adults and young people are being misled by the colours and branding on cigarette packs. Both age groups were more likely to rate packs with the terms “light” “smooth” “silver” or “gold” as having lower tar and lower health risk than ‘regular’ variants. Adults thought the cigarettes with these descriptors would be easier to quit whilst children signified these would be the brands of their choice if they took up smoking. More than half of adults and youth thought that brands labelled “smooth” would be less harmful than the standard brand. The colour of packs was also associated with perceptions of risk and brand appeal. For example, compared to Marlboro packs with a red logo, cigarettes in packs with a gold logo were rated as lower health risk by 53% and easier to quit by 31% of adult smokers.

The research was published in the European Journal of Public Health: Hammond D et al. Cigarette pack design and perceptions of risk among UK adults and youth.

Note: Following the debate on the Health Bill the Public Health Minister Gillian Merron said the Government was committed to reviewing the case for plain packaging. This is likely to be the next big battleground between the tobacco industry and the health community.



Tobacco and Tennis

Working with colleagues in Switzerland, ASH's Research Manager, Amanda Sandford has drawn attention to a covert tobacco sponsorship deal with a top international tennis organisation which appears to breach UK and international law. The Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) which is based in London, represents the world's top male tennis players and includes details of all the world-wide tournaments on its website. The Swiss Indoor event in Basle, which took place in early November, is currently sponsored by Davidoff, a cigarette brand owned by Imperial Tobacco. Although the official sponsor is Oettinger-Davidoff, a Swiss luxury goods company, Imperial Tobacco acquired the Davidoff cigarette brand in 2006 and has used this to exploit weak Swiss law which allows tobacco sponsorship.

The televising of the tournament has resulted in the tobacco brand being beamed into the homes of millions of people around the world. ASH has urged the ATP to end its association with tobacco and has also written to the Government to clarify whether reference to the Davidoff sponsored event on a UK website is a breach of the UK Tobacco Advertising and Promotion Act.

“As well as displaying a formidable knowledge of tobacco control policy, this year ASH staff demonstrated their strong command of the complex legislative process around the Health Bill. At the British Heart Foundation, we found their role invaluable in gaining political support for a ban on cigarette vending machines - a further impressive victory in the protection of children's future heart health from the dangers of tobacco.”

Peter Hollins,
Chief Executive,
British Heart
Foundation



BAT AGM

This year our colleagues at ASH Wales took the lead in organising a demonstration at BAT's annual general meeting. Debbie Millward, ASH's Policy & Campaigns Officer arranged for some of the young protestors to meet MPs at Westminster after the AGM protest.



Top left: Protestors outside the BAT AGM venue.

Top right: Meeting Hazel Blears MP.

Above: David Taylor MP discusses tobacco issues with young people at the House of Commons.

NICE Citizen's Council meeting on harm reduction

Deborah Arnott was invited to address a recent meeting of the NICE Citizen's Council as an expert witness on the topic of harm reduction. This is a panel of lay people who serve for a maximum of three years. The Council is used by NICE to offer insight and recommendations to its Board on a range of issues, ensuring that a public perspective is taken into account when it considers how to develop guidance in the future.

The Council was asked to look at the issue of harm reduction in tobacco control and to assess whether it would be a valid strategy for the NHS to use in relation to smoking and what the pros and cons of a harm reduction approach might be.

The Council reflected on a range of issues: for example, whether harm reduction would be palatable to smokers, whether it would undermine the message to quit, who would deliver harm reduction, the role of quit support, the ethical question of maintaining addiction, the effectiveness and appropriateness of existing products and the extent to which harm could be reduced by adopting this strategy. The Citizen's Council's report is due to be published in December 2009.

World Conference on Tobacco or Health

ASH staff Deborah Arnott, Amanda Sandford and Hazel Cheeseman gave several presentations at the World Conference on Tobacco or Health, held in Mumbai, India in March. We presented on the importance of public opinion polling to measure support for the smokefree legislation; the problem of tobacco smuggling in the UK; the costs & benefits of tackling illicit trade; and how we built support and maintained momentum for tobacco control after the smokefree law was implemented. The conference covered a wide range of issues with some stimulating debates on challenging issues such as harm reduction and whether smoking imagery should be controlled in movies.

"ASH is an authoritative and influential organisation which has contributed significantly to the development of public health policy in this country. I look forward to continuing to work with them on innovative policy measures such as standardised packaging for tobacco products."

Sandra Gidley,
Public Health
Spokesperson
for the Liberal
Democrats

ASH publications

In addition to the ASH economic cost benefit analysis on the Illicit Trade Protocol two new detailed factsheets have been added to our collection: one on Smoking and Surgery which has been endorsed by the Royal College of Anaesthetists and another on Smoking in cars. The latter was produced in response to a growing international movement towards the prohibition of smoking in vehicles, particularly when children are present. In addition we produced a briefing on so-called “electronic cigarettes. These are nicotine delivery devices in which the nicotine is heated and released as a vapour. All the above publications can be viewed on the Information pages of the ASH website.

ASH Information and Media work

As in previous years ASH’s information service continues to be in high demand. We routinely provide information to journalists, health professionals and the general public on a wide range of tobacco-related issues.

In addition, ASH staff have been invited to review articles for scientific journals and we continue to respond to government and other agency consultations. During the year ASH issued 15 press releases.

Our weekly reach (i.e. the number of people exposed to references to ASH in news stories) was an estimated 3.7 million, not including the internet. News items in which ASH was quoted or staff were interviewed include the proposals to ban tobacco displays, youth access to vending machines, electronic cigarettes, investments in tobacco, and compliance with the smokefree law.

Total coverage (million) by media type

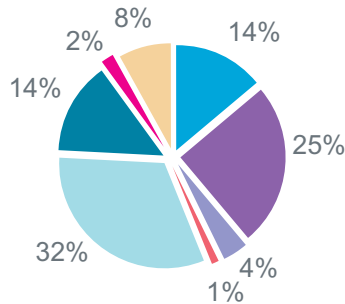


This year we said goodbye to ASH Website Manager, Rebecca Kingdom-Kruszewski, who had worked tirelessly for the past 18 months, identifying and fixing technical problems on the website and arranging for a new company to oversee the next stage in our web development programme. This role has now been taken on by Rebecca's replacement, Nicolas Chinardet who joined ASH in October.

Over the past year there were over ¼ million visits to the ASH website from 203 countries with just under ¾ million page views. This is an average of 731 visits per day. New visitors accounted for 78% of this traffic. The majority of our visitors (60%) are from the UK with the USA providing the second biggest source of visits.

Total media reach by topic

- Smoking ban
- Health & Science
- Tax & smuggling
- Industry conduct/litigation
- Advertising and promotion
- Smoking cessation/quitting
- Product regulation
- Youth



Accounts 2008-09

A full copy of the audited accounts for the financial year ended 31st March 2009 can be found on the ASH website at: www.ash.org.uk/accounts2009

“ASH has been wonderfully skilled in keeping the entire Tobacco Control community engaged, focussed and positive even when the chances of success seemed so modest. The Confederation are so grateful for the passion and raw intelligence such a small group of people have brought to a campaign which has delivered the core element of the public health agenda.”

Bryan Stoten,
 Managing Director, Public Management Associates and Chairman of the NHS Confederation

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 and funding our work during the year.



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Hazel Cheeseman	Senior Policy and Campaigns Officer
Nicolas Chinardet	Website Manager
Alison Cox	Framework Convention Alliance Project Director
Martin Dockrell	Director of Policy and Research
Debbie Millward	Policy and Campaigns Officer
Phil Rimmer	Business Manager
Amanda Sandford	Research Manager
Ian Willmore	Illicit Trade Protocol Campaign Manager