



## Annual Review – 2012

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.

All photographs by  
Nicolas Chinardet  
except page 7 by  
Danny Fitzpatrick  
for British Heart  
Foundation.

## Chair's Introduction

On behalf of my fellow trustees, I am pleased to present this year's review of ASH's activities and achievements for 2012. This has been another important year for ASH. Once again ASH has provided excellent leadership in building support for implementation of the Government's Tobacco Control Plan and the campaign for plain, standardised tobacco packaging.

ASH is also to be commended for initiating the CLear standard which is already proving to be very well received among local authorities and for providing resources to assist those working in local government taking on their new public health role in 2013.

I am also delighted to report that in recognition of the outstanding achievements in tobacco control of ASH's chief executive, Deborah Arnott, Deborah was made an honorary fellow of the Royal College of Physicians.

ASH's exemplary campaigning work was also recognised by the award of the prestigious American Cancer Society Luther Terry Award for Outstanding Organisation. The Awards, presented at the World Conference on Tobacco or Health in Singapore, are named after the first US Surgeon General who, in 1964, published the first US report on smoking and health. I entirely endorse the words of Dr. John Seffrin, chief executive officer of the American Cancer Society and presenter of the awards when he said:

*"The existence of a global tobacco treaty – the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control – covering 90 percent of the world's population would have been unthinkable in 1964, and would have not become reality had it not been for the outstanding leadership of exceptional individuals and organizations like those receiving this distinguished award."*

Despite the undoubted successes, there remains much to do to further reduce smoking and to counter the misinformation disseminated by the tobacco industry which will no doubt increase in response to regulatory pressures. ASH is well equipped to take on this challenge and I have every confidence that it will succeed.



Professor John Moxham

## Overview of 2012

The main focus of ASH's activities this year has been on building public knowledge and understanding about plain, standardised packaging to ensure informed responses to the Government's consultation on this topic. In September the High Court in Australia dismissed the tobacco industry's challenge to the Australian Government's decision to press ahead with standardised packaging. This momentous ruling means that colourful branded packs are now being replaced with drab green-brown cartons (as shown on the front cover of this report) which have the effect of bringing the health warning to the fore, thereby making it less likely that children would find smoking attractive.

ASH has continued to maintain a high profile in the international arena. In March, staff presented papers at the World Conference on Tobacco or Health held in Singapore. At the conference, we were honoured to be given the prestigious American Cancer Society's Luther Terry award for outstanding organisation.

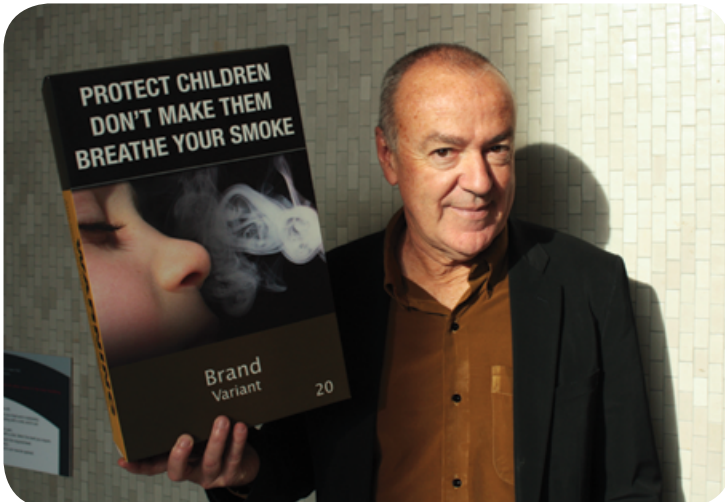
ASH's Chief Executive, Deborah Arnott, spoke at a conference to mark the 50th anniversary of the 1962 Royal College of Physicians report on smoking and health. In addition ASH has been invited to offer advice to colleagues in Norway and France about how civil society can best work with governments to ensure political commitment and promote behaviour change.

In recognition of Deborah's outstanding achievements in tobacco control she was made an honorary fellow of The Royal College of Physicians.



## Implementation of the Tobacco Control Plan

Two key milestones of the Government's Tobacco Control Plan for England were reached this year when the point of sale display regulations for supermarkets entered into force in April and the public consultation on plain standardised packaging for tobacco took place over the summer.



## Plain, Standardised Packaging

ASH worked with colleagues and member organisations of the Smokefree Action Coalition to build awareness and encourage responses to the consultation on standardised tobacco packaging. This began with an expert conference to brief colleagues on the issue and was followed by the launch in April of the *Plain Packs Protect* campaign. This initiative, led and resourced by Smokefree SouthWest, was designed to encourage people to register their support for standardised packs and to inform MPs of their views. By the close of the consultation, the campaign had recorded 211,653 supporters. ASH submitted a detailed response to the consultation, summarising the evidence to support the measure and pointing out industry myths, such as the wrongful assertion that standardised packaging would lead to an increase in smuggling.

To provide further evidence of the likely impact of plain standardised packaging, ASH commissioned a study to assess young people's attitudes and beliefs towards tobacco packaging. The results were included in ASH's consultation response and are now being written up for submission to a peer reviewed publication.



## CLeaR & Local Tobacco Control

ASH has developed a new tool to assist people working in local government who will be taking on responsibility for public health in 2013. Called CLeaR, which stands for three linked components of the model: Challenging services, Leadership and Results, it is a self-assessment tool which allows local authorities or health and well-being boards to review existing local action on tobacco, ensure that they follow best practice and identify further areas for improvement. The assessment model integrates local priorities with national guidance, assisting councils to align best practice tobacco control with local strategies. To date, 75 councils (more than half of relevant councils in England) are in line to participate in the scheme.

To further assist local authorities, a new edition of the popular *Local Costs of Tobacco* reckoning tool was made available online from September. This uses the most recent prevalence data to estimate costs of smoking in a locality.



## **All Party Parliamentary Group on Smoking & Health**

The APPG on Smoking and Health and APPG on Heart Disease held a joint meeting on standardised packaging on 18th January, attended by a total of 22 parliamentarians, the vast majority of whom were supportive of the proposals. Following the meeting several MPs issued press releases in support of standardised packaging, which resulted in local media coverage.

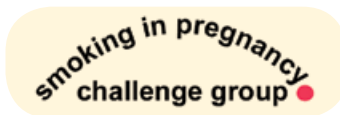
Later in the year the Officers of the APPG held a meeting to discuss covert lobbying by the tobacco industry. Following this event a briefing on tobacco front groups prepared by ASH was sent to Government Ministers to inform them of the scale of the problem. The briefing can be viewed at: [http://www.ash.org.uk/files/documents/ASH\\_835.pdf](http://www.ash.org.uk/files/documents/ASH_835.pdf)

Also planned is an APPG inquiry into the illicit trade in tobacco following the adoption of the Illicit Trade Protocol at the fifth WHO FCTC Conference of the Parties in November 2012.



## **Smoking in Pregnancy**

In March, ASH organised an expert seminar on smoking in pregnancy in conjunction with the UK Centre for Tobacco Control Studies, Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths, SANDS and BLISS. The meeting was chaired by Liz Woodeson, Director of Health and Wellbeing at the Department of Health. The meeting led to the formation of the *Smoking in Pregnancy Challenge Group* which is working to integrate efforts to reduce smoking in pregnancy. The Group will then make recommendations to the Department of Health in early 2013.



## **Tax & Smuggling**

As in previous years, ASH made a detailed submission to HM Treasury and HM Revenue & Customs in advance of the Budget urging the Chancellor to raise the tobacco tax escalator from 2% to 5% above inflation. The submission was endorsed by 91 organisations. We were greatly heartened by the fact that the Chancellor responded positively and tobacco tax was increased above inflation in line with our recommendation.

We were also encouraged by the release of official statistics later in the year showing that there had been a fall in tobacco smuggling during 2010/11, continuing the downward trend since 2005. These figures provide further evidence to undermine tobacco industry allegations that raising taxes and the introduction of other tobacco control measures leads to a rise in smuggling.

ASH staff attended and assisted in a capacity building workshop on tobacco taxation in Dublin, organised by the European Smokefree Partnership. As the UK is a leader in tobacco control within Europe and in particular has a strong record of maintaining a high level of taxation, we were able to share knowledge and experience with colleagues from countries where tax has been under-used as a lever to reduce tobacco consumption and smoking prevalence.



## **Public Opinion Research**

As in previous years, ASH commissioned YouGov to conduct opinion research to measure levels of public support for various tobacco control measures. This year we found that when shown an image of a plain, standardised cigarette pack, 62% of adults in Britain expressed support for standardised packaging compared to just 11% who opposed the measure. Another interesting finding was that there had been a significant increase in the number of smokers who were aware of electronic or e-cigarettes (from 60% in 2010 to 77% in 2012) and that current usage had more than doubled in two years from 3% to 7%.

For the first time we also sought to find out to what extent people had tried shisha (tobacco waterpipes) in light of the rise in outlets providing waterpipes in certain parts of the country. Our survey found that 11% of adults have smoked shisha at some time but only 1% reported using shisha more than once a month.

## **Harm Reduction & Nicotine Regulation**

ASH arranged a half day seminar for the public health community at the end of October just after NICE launched a consultation on its proposed guidance on tobacco harm reduction. Over 70 key organisations attended and heard presentations from the Department of Health, NICE, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency and scientific experts on the evidence base. The seminar was designed to help ensure informed responses to the consultation. ASH released an updated and revised briefing on e-cigarettes, following the event.

ASH also participated in a symposium on electronic cigarettes at the Society for Research on Nicotine and Tobacco (SRNT) Europe meeting in Helsinki in October. Martin Dockrell, Director of Policy and Research, presented data on the attitudes of smokers and of smoking cessation professionals, and participated in a debate on the health impact of e-cigarettes. This research has been written up for peer reviewed publication.

## **EU Tobacco Product Directive**

ASH works in collaboration with the Brussels-based Smokefree Partnership on European issues. This year we met with DG Sanco and other relevant Directorates at EU level to support effective revision of the Tobacco Products Directive.

The draft proposed revised directive was due to be published in December 2012. However, following the sudden resignation of the EU Commissioner John Dalli in October, the future of the Directive appears uncertain, leading the pro-tobacco lobby to no doubt hope that the Directive would be de-railed. However, ASH and allies continue to work hard to ensure that the passage of the Directive through the European legislature proceeds as planned.

## **Tobacco Industry**

ASH has worked hard this year to dispel the many myths and disinformation put out by the tobacco industry and its allies, particularly about standardised packaging. Examples include countering the arguments in a report by the tobacco-funded libertarian think tank, the Democracy Institute which purported to show that standardised packaging would not work as a means of driving down tobacco use. Other industry 'front groups' include the Adam Smith Institute which produced a similar attack, arguing that standardised packaging would lead to an increase in illicit trade and breach international trade rules, an argument that has even been refuted by the tobacco industry's own legal advice revealed through litigation in the US.

ASH staff also presented an update to the *Tobacconomics* report at the World Conference on Tobacco or Health held in Singapore in March.

## **Divesting Pension Funds From Tobacco**

A new report by ASH in conjunction with the campaigning group FairPensions challenged the commonly held view that pension funds are 'duty bound' to invest in tobacco stocks. The report followed an investigation by The Independent newspaper which found that councils across Britain have at least £1.3 billion of employee pension funds invested in tobacco.

The report explains how pension funds can legally disinvest from the tobacco industry. It also points out that in the future, tobacco may no longer be the safe haven it once was and that shareholders need to be mindful of the raft of regulations now facing the industry which may have a direct impact on industry profit.

The report, *Local Authority pension funds and investments in the tobacco industry* can be accessed from the Fair Pensions website at [fairpensions.org.uk](http://fairpensions.org.uk)

## **Framework Convention on Tobacco Control**

### **WHO FCTC**

ASH was an observer to the working group on guidelines on Article 9 and 10 (product regulation and disclosure) which developed guidelines on Reduced Ignition Propensity cigarettes and disclosure of information on ingredients for adoption at the Conference of the Parties in November 2012. ASH was at the forefront of the campaign to require reduced ignition cigarettes in Europe which entered into effect in November 2011.

ASH was an observer at COP 5 of the WHO FCTC. The guidelines on RIP and disclosure were adopted as were the recommendations for Article 6 on tobacco taxation. Other key decisions taken by the COP which we worked hard to support included the setting up of a working group to support implementation by Parties of the FCTC.

## **BAT AGM**

This year's activity by ASH to mark BAT's AGM on 26th April sought to highlight the company's use of packaging to target children. Over 30 young people from Dudley, Cambridge and London joined ASH staff and confronted the company's shareholders going into the meeting about the use of packaging as a promotional tool to recruit new young smokers.

The BAT AGM was moved to Banqueting Suite on Whitehall from its usual location the Mermaid Theatre. This is a far more high profile site and ensured that the young people protesting against BAT were seen by many more members of the public than usual.

After the protest the young people met their MPs in the House of Commons to brief them on their campaign for standardised packaging.





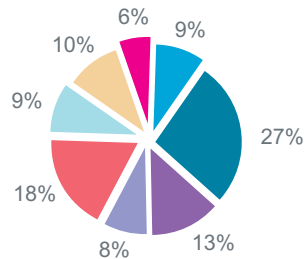
## ASH Information and Media Work

In March, ASH successfully passed its first Information Standard review audit, 12 months after receiving accreditation from the Government-backed quality standard body. ASH continues to update and review its publications and now has 32 detailed fact sheets in addition to the brief *Facts at a Glance* and a number of in-depth research reports.

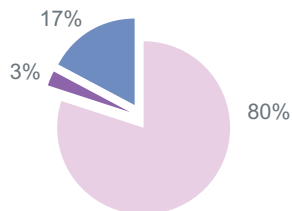
ASH responded to many government and other agency consultations over the year, including those held by foreign governments on issues such as standardised packaging and health warnings.

Over the year we issued 15 press releases. Our weekly reach (that is, the number of people exposed to references to ASH in news stories) was an estimated 5.2 million not including through the internet which is difficult to measure. Not surprisingly, the topic which attracted most media attention was that of standardised packaging which accounted for 27% of ASH's media coverage.

### Overall media coverage by subject area



### Total coverage by media type



## **ASH Website**

Over the past year we have been working to give the ASH website a fresher, less-cluttered look while at the same time improving signposting to the information available.

A comprehensive review of the website is currently underway. We are working to improve the design and navigation still further with a more intuitive structure and appropriate look. It is proposed that the content will be arranged by theme which should make it easier for users to find the information they are seeking as well as raising awareness of other related issues.

Traffic has more than doubled in the past two years and continues to grow. Over the period September 2011 to August 2012, the site received over 567,000 visits, totalling almost 2 million page views, at an average rate of 1554 visits per day. Almost 8 out of 10 of these (79%) were from new visitors. This is up from the previous year and possibly explained by a combination of improved signposting and a Google Grant we received in August 2011 providing ASH with free advertising on certain keywords in Google's search results.

Most of our visitors are from the UK and US but the proportion of US visitors has continued a downward trend (5% compared to 8% in 2011 and 14% in 2010) while the proportion of UK visitors is still growing from 61% to 72%.

ASH also maintains the Smokefree Action Coalition website and a webpage for the APPG on Smoking and Health.

## **Accounts 2011-12**

A full copy of the audited accounts for the financial year ended 31st March 2012 can be found on the ASH website at: [www.ash.org.uk/accounts2012](http://www.ash.org.uk/accounts2012)

## Acknowledgements

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



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Phil Rimmer	Business Manager
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6th floor, Suites 59-63  
New House  
67-68 Hatton Garden  
London EC1N 8JY

Telephone : 020 7404 0242  
email : [enquiries@ash.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@ash.org.uk)  
[www.ash.org.uk](http://www.ash.org.uk)