



ASH Wales Submission to Investing for Health Unit, DHSSPS in regard to Public Consultation on Minimum Age of Sale of Tobacco Products

About ASH Wales

ASH Wales was established as a branch of ASH UK in 1976. In 2007, ASH Wales became an independent organisation and is the leading voluntary organisation in Wales tackling tobacco use. Our main aim is to achieve a reduction in and eventual elimination of the health problems associated with tobacco use across Wales.

Why is Tackling Youth Smoking Important?

Tobacco use is the major cause of preventable death and ill health across the United Kingdom.

Most smokers start to smoke before they turn 18. 38% of smokers start before they are 16¹. The Cochrane report into youth smoking states that only 10% of smokers take up the habit after the age of 18.²

Early onset of smoking is highly related to the number of cigarettes smoked per day in adulthood.³

An individual who starts smoking at 15 years of age is 3 times more likely to die of cancer due to smoking than someone who starts in their mid-twenties.⁴

Smoking accounts for half the difference in life expectancy between social classes 1 and 5. Death rates from tobacco are 2-3 times higher among disadvantaged social groups compared with the more affluent.⁵

¹ Department of Health, *Consultation on Under Age Sale of Tobacco* July 2006.

² The Cochrane Collaboration, *Community Interventions for Preventing Smoking in Young People (Review)* 2007 Issue 3

³ The Cochrane Collaboration, *Community Interventions for Preventing Smoking in Young People (Review)* 2007 Issue 3

⁴ Doll, R. & Peto, R. *The Causes of Cancer: Quantitative Estimates of Avoidable Risks of Cancer in the United States Today*. *Journal of National Cancer Institute*. 1981 66 1191-1308.

Access to Cigarettes by Minors

Most smokers start before they turn 18 years of age. This demonstrates that access to cigarettes is not as difficult as it should be. This is due to both retailers selling cigarettes to children under the legal age and also to children obtaining cigarettes through alternate sources such as family and friends. However, the most common place for young people to access cigarettes is from small retailers.⁶

Retailers may experience a degree of difficulty in identifying a 14 or 15 year old and many young people of this age do not carry photographic id. Increasing the age to 18, in line with other restricted products simplifies the issue for retailers and enforcement officers.

Raising the age limit would make it more difficult to access cigarettes from small retailers. It also sends a strong message about the risks of smoking to young people and to the general public.⁷

Wales successfully implemented the increase in age of sales from 16 to 18 years in October 2007.

Recommendations

ASH Wales strongly urges Northern Ireland to implement the increase in age for the sale of tobacco products to minors.

ASH Wales urges Northern Ireland to adopt option 2 and to increase the age of sales of tobacco products to 18 years.

⁵ Acheson D. *Independent Inquiry into Inequalities in Health*. London TSO 1998.

⁶ Department of Health, *Consultation on Under Age Sale of Tobacco* July 2006.

⁷ Ministerial Advisory Council on Tobacco Control, Canada. *Challenging Conventional Wisdom On Youth Access To Tobacco: Redefining Youth Access Interventions*. [online] http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/pubs/tobac-tabac/ccwyatp-rqipatjp/index_e.html