

Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE CONSULTATION – SMOKING IN PUBLIC PLACES

RESPONSE BY THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS OF EDINBURGH

1. **Having considered the health risks associated with passive smoking, do you think that further action needs to be taken to reduce people's exposure to second-hand smoke? YES**

Please provide any other comments here:

There is incontrovertible evidence that second hand smoke is dangerous, increasing lung cancer, heart disease and stroke in adults and asthma in children. The increase in lung cancer risk is of the order of 20-30%^{1,2} and ischaemic heart disease 50%^{2,3}, and both are conditions which kill many Scots and conditions in which Scotland "leads" or nearly leads the world in terms of death rates. Scottish data also indicates that exposure to second hand smoke in the workplace decreases lung function by up to 40%⁴.

Exposure to second hand smoke during pregnancy increases the risk of premature birth and low birth weight babies.^{5,6} Second hand smoke harms children, doubling the risk of cot death in babies and asthma, lung infections and middle ear disease in young children.² Each year around 1,700 children are admitted to Scottish hospitals with lung disease due to exposure to second hand smoke.

The British Medical Association recently estimated that second hand smoke kills about 4 times as many as accidents in the workplace.⁷ Scotland must provide safe working environments for employees and action is needed to ensure this. In addition children are not able to make informed decisions about risks to their health and Scotland must provide them with safe places to eat and be entertained.

2. **Would you support a law that would make enclosed public places smoke free? (Public places include workplaces and public transport) YES**

Please provide your reasons or any other comments here:

A ban on smoking in public places is essential to improving Scotland's poor health record. The voluntary charter is not working, over 70% of pubs still allow smoking in all areas as does 40% of the leisure industry.⁸ At least 31% of working women and 21% of working men in Scotland are exposed to others' smoke at work.⁹

Tobacco smoke contains 5 regulated hazardous air pollutants, 47 regulated hazardous wastes, over 50 cancer causing agents and more than 100 chemical poisons.¹⁰ There is no safe level of exposure for many of these cancer causing agents and thus ventilation systems cannot remove these pollutants to safe levels. Over 80% of cigarette smoke is invisible odourless gas, so just because the air being breathed is colourless and odourless does not mean it is safe to breathe. In addition there is no evidence that ventilation systems reduce the risks of second hand smoke. Theoretical calculations indicate that the ventilation

extraction rates needed to reduce to acceptable levels the risk of second hand smoke would need to be over 10,000 air exchanges/hour which is totally impractical.¹¹ Thus the only proven way to reduce the risk of second hand smoke is to be totally smoke free¹² and ban smoking in public places.

3. If a law was introduced, do you think there should be any exemptions to it? NO

Please provide any suggestions or other comments here:

Any exceptions will decrease the health benefits of a ban. As Ireland, Norway, Sweden, New Zealand and New York have achieved bans it would be regrettable if the Scottish Executive did not take this the most important step they could take to improve Scotland's health and decrease avoidable deaths.

There is no cogent argument for delaying or phasing implementation of a workplace ban. Over 70% of Scots do not smoke and are entitled to a safe place of work or leisure. The argument repeatedly advanced that a ban will cost jobs is not supported by data from 26 well-designed investigations examining the financial impact of smoking bans around the world and banning smoking in public places may actually increase jobs in pubs and restaurants¹³ as the non-smoking majority find going out more pleasant. Of interest, 5 of the 6 studies which suggested there might be detrimental impacts on bars and restaurants of smoking bans were funded by the tobacco industry and all had major design flaws. The most recent data from New York City following their total ban on smoking in public places since March 2003 indicates that there was an increase in takings from bars and restaurants of 8.7%, an increase in the numbers employed in restaurants and bars and a 2.5% increase in the numbers of liquor licences in New York City.¹⁴

4. If we decide not to introduce a law, what could be done to encourage individual businesses to take voluntary action to become smoke-free or to provide more smoke-free provision?

Voluntary codes are not working. The entertainment industry has had its chance to act decisively, and did not. It is now time to act. Any delay in taking action will adversely and irreversibly effect the health of many living Scots.

Zoning of pubs to provide smoking and non-smoking rooms which are both physically separate and independently ventilated is not a solution as not only does smoke often drift into the "smokefree" rooms¹² but this will still expose the bar staff in the smoking room to an unsafe work environment. While this might appear acceptable to some in the short term there is little doubt that individuals working in these smoky environments will in future bring actions against employers when they develop smoke related illnesses.

5. What else could be done to reduce people's exposure to second-hand smoke?

Continued efforts to increase awareness among smokers of the health risks of smoking and support for those who wish to stop.

6. Please let us know any other views you have about smoking in public places.

One of the major benefits arising from banning smoking in public places has been a significant decrease in tobacco consumption. This has resulted both from an increase in quit rates with an average 4% decrease in those who smoke and also from a decrease in the number of cigarettes smoked by those who continue to smoke but can no longer do so at work.¹⁵ There is also evidence that they become more aware of the hazard their smoking poses to the health of others and smoke less in the company of children in their own homes.¹⁶ This highly significant decrease will itself have major beneficial effects on the health of Scots in addition to the direct benefits of banning second hand smoke in public places.

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