

Hospital grounds, school grounds and playgrounds to be smoke-free in Wales by summer 2019

Strengthening the laws around smoking in public in Wales will further protect non-smokers from second-hand smoke and de-normalise smoking for children and young people.

While most hospitals already have no smoking policies in their grounds, it is currently difficult for staff to enforce this.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething, has visited the maternity unit at Glan Clwyd Hospital, where staff told him they had received complaints from mothers about people smoking outside the hospital when they enter and leave with their young babies.

The Hospital Management Team has also received complaints about people smoking at the newly refurbished main entrance and at other entrances across the site.

The changes will make it illegal to smoke in the hospital grounds, with legal backing for fines to be issued to smokers breaking the rules, therefore improving the environment for patients, visitors and staff.

Vaughan Gething said:

“I am proud that Wales continues to be at the forefront of UK action to reduce smoking and prevent young people from taking it up in the first place.

“We have seen significant changes to the attitudes to smoking since 2007. Back then we received some resistance to change, but we have seen a remarkable culture-change and I am pleased our plan to extend smoke-free areas to outdoor public spaces has received overwhelming public support.

“This is another step in the right direction to de-normalise smoking in Wales.”

Smoking contributes most to the current burden of disease in Wales, causing approximately 5,450 deaths each year and costing the NHS an estimated £302m annually.

Support is at hand for people who wish to give up smoking. The Welsh Government's Tobacco Control Delivery Plan commits to helping more people to quit by encouraging the use of integrated smoking cessations services, and strengthening the referrals to these services, particularly for groups with

high-smoking prevalence.

The NHS offers free help and advice to people wanting to give up smoking through Help Me Quit.

Teresa Owen, Executive Director of Public Health at Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, said:

“A hospital is no place for smoking and the Health Board is determined to create a smoke-free environment. We receive numerous complaints about people smoking around the hospital, particularly near the main entrance. We need to find a way of ensuring our site is smoke free, while also supporting more patients, visitors and staff to quit.”

The changes to the smoke-free legislation will be introduced under the Public Health (Wales) Act 2017, which was passed by Assembly Members last year.