

Welsh Government launch new plan to stub out smoking

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.

The National Survey for Wales 2016/17 showed that 19% of adults smoked; a significant reduction from 25% in 2005/6. This exceeded the Welsh Government target of reducing smoking rates to 20% by 2016.

The new three-year Tobacco Control Delivery Plan will build on the progress already made following the first 10 years of the smoking ban in Wales.

Actions in the new plan include;

- Introducing a statutory ban on smoking in hospital grounds, school grounds, public playgrounds and outdoor care settings for children by summer 2019
- Helping more smokers to quit by encouraging the use of integrated smoking cessation services
- Strengthening referral pathways to smoking cessation services, particularly for groups with high smoking prevalence.

The majority of smokers in Wales (around 6 in 10) want to quit, and just over 4 in 10 have made an attempt to quit in the last year, according to the National Survey for Wales. Large numbers of these individuals 'go-it-alone', yet this is the least effective method of quitting. In order to achieve a further reduction in adult smoking levels in Wales, more need to be motivated to quit and to be encouraged to use cessation services that are already available.

Public Health Minister, Rebecca Evans said:

"As part of our plan for a healthier and more active Wales, we want to support as many people as possible to give up smoking.

"The Tobacco Control Delivery Plan 2017-2020 aims to make smoking cessation services provided by healthcare professionals more accessible. Reducing the rate of smoking will in turn reduce the number of number of people exposed to second hand smoke.

"I'm pleased that we are leading the way in protecting our future generations through the Public Health (Wales) Act 2017, which includes a ban on smoking in playgrounds and school grounds. In order to continue the remarkable culture-change relating to smoking that we have seen in Wales in recent years, I want everyone to 'Choose Smokefree'."

Last year, a Tobacco Control Strategic Board was established, Chaired by the Chief Medical Officer for Wales, Frank Atherton, to oversee the delivery of the new plan and ensure momentum is maintained to achieve the 16% target. The Chief Medical Officer for Wales, Frank Atherton said:

“Reducing smoking prevalence in Wales will not only benefit the nation’s health, but will also relieve some pressure on the NHS.

“The work we have done as the Strategic Board and its sub-groups for cessation, prevention and reducing exposure to smoking has developed this delivery plan. We are confident the actions detailed will help us reach the target of reducing the number of smokers to 16% of the population by 2020.”