

P-04-553 A full and independent investigation in to the health risks of wireless and mobile phone technologies in Wales including all schools – Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 14.10.14.

Dear all at the petition panel,

Many thanks for forwarding the replies from Rhodri Williams of Ofcom and Health Minister Mark Drakeford regarding an independent investigation into the health risks of wireless and mobile phone technologies.

I claim no scientific or medical expertise in this area so will rather reply to the points raised in the reply letters in an objective way and point to research I've come across from people who have properly investigated this complex issue in great detail. I hope this will be helpful and relevant to this devolved Welsh issue of health.

I'm glad that Mr Rhodri Williams of Ofcom acknowledges the findings by the World Health Organisation that wireless devices all emit non ionizing radio frequencies, which the World Health Organization (WHO) has classified as potentially carcinogenic.

Regarding Mr Drakeford's letter: as health is a devolved issue, and rather than relying solely on the advice of Public Health England, I believe it would be right to request that Mr Drakeford recognises the duty of the Welsh Government to do its own independent and balanced research and investigation in this area using research and recommendations available by the myriad of international authorities, both independent and government funded. Many of these are mentioned here. People have voted for devolution on the basis that specific areas such as health are devolved, as set in law in the Government of Wales Act 2006. Whilst I appreciate Public Health England taking time to offer their advice I do not think it's right that Mr Drakeford relies on them to speak on behalf of the Welsh Government in this devolved area and it's concerning if Mr Drakeford and the Welsh Government are failing in their devolved legal remit as is is clearly set out in law.

In reference to Mr Drakeford and Public Health England's letter, both cite a 2012 UK HPA AGNIR report to make their points. However this report has been heavily

criticized as being an uncomprehensive and biased report as this Safe Schools Information Technology Alliance (SSITA) document explains:

"This report has been widely criticised, e.g. Professor Dariusz Leszczynski (Finnish Radiation Protection Agency) commented that unlike the claims on the HPA website the UK HPA AGNIR Report 2012 is not a comprehensive review but it is a biased review. From our own review, there are numerous reference to studies which have found harmful effects and yet these are not referenced in the conclusion e.g. Page 86: Cellular studies– “ ..there are also studies ... did show potential genotoxic effects... a clear answer is still elusive"

In addition, the HPA does actually recognise that the possibility of harm remains: Professor Anthony Swerdlow, chair of the HPA's Advisory Group which prepared the report, has said: "Long term effects from childhood use are also largely unknown".

HPA recommend a precautionary approach. Finally, none of the aforementioned papers of Wi-Fi

adverse effects are cited in the HPA report as the cut-off date for papers was Dec 2010"

The SSITA report mentioned above can be found here:

<http://www.wifiinschools.org.uk/resources/Wi-Fi+concerns+Oct2012.pdf> Please take a look in order to evaluate the balance of evidence.

As mentioned in the petition, on 27th May 2011, The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe called on Member States to reduce exposure to radio frequency electromagnetic fields, asking for particular attention to be given to children and young people (who are most at risk) , and called for restrictions on the use of wireless technologies (Wi-Fi) in schools, with a clearly stated recommendation for fully-wired networks to be used in schools. This Council of Europe Resolution (1815) and other reports mentioned here cover the subjects seen in Mr Drakeford's reply. Below are some of the main points from this resolution. Of special consideration is section 8.3.2: "for children in general, and particularly in schools and classrooms, give preference to wired Internet connections":

"8.1.3. Put in place information and awareness-raising campaigns on the risks of potentially harmful long-term biological effects on the environment and on human health, especially targeting children, teenagers and young people of reproductive

age;

8.3. concerning the protection of children

8.3.1. develop within different ministries (education, environment and health) targeted information campaigns aimed at teachers, parents and children to alert them to the specific risks of early, ill-considered and prolonged use of mobiles and other devices emitting microwaves;

8.3.2. for children in general, and particularly in schools and classrooms, give preference to wired Internet connections, and strictly regulate the use of mobile phones by schoolchildren on school premises;"

The resolution also states that Governments should reconsider the scientific basis for the present electromagnetic fields exposure standards set by the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection which have serious limitations, and apply as low as reasonably achievable (ALARA) principles.

The Council of Europe resolution also called for better liaison between education, health and environmental ministries, which up until now has been sadly, and alarmingly, lacking. The adopted resolution underlines the fact that the precautionary principle should be applicable when scientific evaluation does not allow the risk to be determined with sufficient certainty.

To see the draft in full and for further details please see here: <http://assembly.coe.int/Mainf.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/tall/eRES1815.html> Please take a look in order to evaluate the evidence.

The EU's top environmental watchdog, The European Environment Agency (EEA) is also calling for immediate action to reduce exposure to radiation from Wi-Fi, mobile phones and their masts. They have previously concluded that safety limits set for the radiation are "thousands of times too lenient"

Professor Jacqueline McGlade, the EEA's executive director has said: "Recent research and reviews on the long-term effects of radiations from mobile telecommunications suggest that it would be prudent for health authorities to recommend actions to reduce exposures, especially to vulnerable groups, such as

children." The EEA is also wisely advising that the precautionary principle be followed.

As mentioned in the original petition, the Russian, German and Israeli governments are all asking for these health risks to be addressed and for practical measures such as hard wiring in schools to be introduced instead of Wi-Fi. Switzerland's Federal Office of Public Health [FOPH] website states "It is currently not known whether the EMF created by WLANs pose a health risk". The Public Health Department of Salzburg has warned that Wi-Fi should not be installed in schools. On 3rd Oct 2012 The American Academy of Environmental Medicine issued the following statement on Wi-Fi in Schools: "Adverse health effects from wireless radio frequency fields, such as learning disabilities, altered immune responses, and headaches, clearly exist and are well documented in the scientific literature. Safer technology, such as use of hard-wiring, is strongly recommended in schools"

The International Commission for Electromagnetic Safety [ICEMS] strongly advise limited use of cell phones and other similar devices by young children and teenagers. Irish, Austrian and many other internationally recognised authorities have also expressed a need for safer precautionary use of technology. France has imposed a ban on all mobile phone use in schools.

Conclusion

According to scientific research by the authorities mentioned here, children and their physiology are considered at greater risk from exposure to electro magnetic frequencies as they absorb more radiation into their brains, bone marrow and muscles and their bodies and brains are still developing. This data is especially relevant to Wi-Fi because, although exposure from Wi-Fi devices is likely to be lower than from mobile phones, Wi-Fi in schools exposes children to microwave radiation 6 hours a day, 5 days a week, year after year.

With this in mind, I believe there is a duty on the Welsh Government to conduct an independent investigation and to adopt the elemental precautionary principle when it comes to mobile communication devices, especially so in Welsh schools where there is a duty to provide a safe environment for all children whilst in their care.

I would also be glad if Mr Drakeford could explain whether, in the absence of an independent Welsh investigation, he and the Welsh Government think it appropriate to not follow the precautionary principle recommended by the World Health Organisation, the Council of Europe, The European Environment Agency and many other international authorities including the former Health Protection Agency that is mentioned in Mr Drakeford's letter, and are happy to take contradictory advice from Public Health England – a body meant for England even though an equivalent devolved health body exists in Wales, Public Health Wales.

I do not believe petitions like this should have to be made at all. It should be expected that government should be able to carry out this kind of basic precautionary practice without having to be requested to do so. It is of concern that there needs to be a petition at all to remind the Welsh government of their basic duties in what should be this fully devolved area of health..

The Precautionary Principle is defined as:

“The precautionary principle applies where scientific evidence is insufficient, inconclusive or uncertain and preliminary scientific evaluation indicates that there are reasonable grounds for concern that the potentially dangerous effects on the environment, human, animal or plant health may be inconsistent with the high level of protection chosen.” (From the European Commission communication on the precautionary principle).

May I recommend that the Welsh Government contact these following mentioned bodies as a starting point in any independent investigation:

<http://www.wifiinschools.org.uk/resources/Wi-Fi+concerns+Oct2012.pdf>

<http://ssita.org.uk/the-health-protection-agency/>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/environment/green-living/eu-watchdog-calls-for-urgent-action-on-wifi-radiation-402539.html>

<http://www.bioinitiative.org/ceo-wireless-letter/>

<http://assembly.coe.int/Mainf.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta11/eRES1815.html>

<http://emfsafetynetwork.org/wireless-devices-potential-cancer-risk-says-world-health-organization/>

http://www.iarc.fr/en/media-centre/pr/2011/pdfs/pr208_E.pdf

<http://www.canceractive.com/cancer-active-page-link.aspx?n=3120>

http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanonc/article/PIIS1470-2045%2811%2970147-4/fulltext#article_upsell

<http://wiredchild.org/component/content/article/46-hidden/99-icnirp.html>

<http://www.powerwatch.org.uk/elf/overview.asp>

<http://www.wifiinschools.org.uk/>

Thank you again for your patience in reading this reply,

Regards