

Elen de Lacy
Chief Executive
ASH Wales Cymru
14 – 18 City Road
Cardiff
CF24 3DL

08 July 2015

Dear Assembly Members

We very much appreciate the time your committee is taking to look at The Filter project and our petition to save the service.

The Filter is a youth-dedicated stop smoking and prevention service, managed by ASH Wales Cymru and is the only service of its kind in Wales. The Filter was launched across Wales at the beginning of 2013 with the support of Big Lottery funding. The Filter offers a wide range of services including: face-to-face workshops, bespoke training for professionals and youth volunteers, engagement through social media, online stop smoking support and information via a youth dedicated website: thefilterwales.org.

The Filter service is unique and ASH Wales Cymru has built up a wealth of youth expertise and learning during the life of the project. The Filter's approach is flexible and can be adapted to a range of professional disciplines, youth settings and groups of young people. It is a multi-level service, peer-led intervention which educates and empowers young people about the facts and myths about smoking.

The service is delivering on many aspects of the Welsh Government's Tobacco Control Action Plan. We know the service is needed - the equivalent of a classroom full of young people start smoking every day in Wales; but in the period 1st April 2014 – 31st March 2015, **only 66 young people** aged under 18 were treated by Stop Smoking Wales compared to **6,544 adults** aged 18-60+

Responding to the letter from the Minister for Health and Social Services to William Powell AM on 27th June we would like to clarify a few points:

- The petition was started on 19th May
- Following the launch of the petition, Welsh Government officials asked us to submit a detailed business case to them.
- The business case has now been submitted to the Welsh Government however we wanted to continue the petition to show the National Assembly the wider support across Wales for the project and to gather support from AMs.

The Filter service is a key project that needs Welsh Government funding to continue its core services, it would be a sore loss if this valuable service ceased to exist for both young people and professionals across Wales

I have enclosed the Executive Summary of our business case that we have submitted to the Welsh Government.

We look forward to your committee on 14th July.

Many thanks and best wishes

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'E. de Lacy', followed by a long, sweeping horizontal flourish that ends in a small hook.

Elen de Lacy
Chief Executive, ASH Wales Cymru

ash wales
cymru

action on smoking and health

FUNDING PROPOSAL: THE FILTER WALES
JUNE 2015



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document outlines ASH Wales Cymru's business case to the Welsh Government to support the work of The Filter service until 2017. ASH Wales Cymru has developed The Filter to fill a gap in existing smoking cessation services and to complement school-based prevention initiatives that are ongoing in Wales. Through the project, ASH Wales Cymru has developed strong and extensive links with community-based organisations and The Filter service is valued by both professionals and young people across Wales.

The Filter Wales

In 2012, ASH Wales Cymru received three-years of funding from Big Lottery to develop an all-Wales Smoking Cessation and Prevention Service – The Filter. The project has developed significantly over this period and includes a dedicated bi-lingual youth information website, social media channels, training for professionals, and youth prevention and cessation workshops. This unique project engages with young people aged 11-25 in the most deprived areas of Wales, where adult smoking prevalence is at its highest. The service places itself in out-of-school settings including in Further Education settings, youth clubs and Pupil Referral Units - complementing existing school-based interventions. The project has developed according to the needs of young people and youth provisions across Wales. Funding for this project finishes in October 2015.

There is no other service of this kind in the UK. In Wales, stop-smoking services are geared towards adults and prevention work is limited to school-based activities. Over the course of the project, The Filter team has worked with over 5,500 young people face-to-face at more than 250 sessions across Wales. Over 800 professionals have been trained and The Filter website has had over 45,000 unique visitors.

A small scale independent evaluation of The Filter Project led by Cardiff University concluded that all three strands of the Filter service were feasible, flexible and adaptable to deliver. The face-to-face training for professionals and workshops for young people were well received, and the online health promotion resources had success in securing engagement. The researchers identified that young people who are not engaged with education and more likely to smoke, are less likely to listen to one off workshops in school settings, offering one-directional information. They are more likely to engage in informal, flexible, fun activities but there are no engagement programmes other than the Filter in Wales which offer this.

To evaluate this complex intervention, DECIPHer at Cardiff University are currently carrying out a Stage II NIHR-funded feasibility study and process evaluation of the

Filter in Further Education settings. This will be completed in autumn 2015. If the Welsh Government is able to provide continued funding for The Filter service, it is highly likely that this research will progress to a full randomised-controlled trial in 30 Further Education settings in Wales. This trial will therefore assess the effectiveness of The Filter intervention. An evaluation of this kind is essential to provide youth-led solutions to the challenges of youth smoking in Wales.

The problem

The equivalent of a classroom full of young people start smoking every day in Wales; but in the period 1st April 2014 – 31st March 2015, only 66 young people aged under 18 were treated by Stop Smoking Wales compared to 6,544 adults aged 18-60+. We know that the younger the age of uptake of smoking, the greater the harm as early uptake is associated with subsequent heavier smoking, higher levels of dependency and a lower chance of quitting. The highest rates of smoking prevalence and smoking-attributable mortality can be found in the most deprived areas of Wales.

The Welsh Government's Tobacco Control Action Plan for Wales, published in 2012, has as its central aim to drive down adult smoking prevalence levels to 16% by 2020. To achieve this ambitious target, youth uptake of smoking must be reduced alongside reducing smoking prevalence levels and tackling health inequalities. Targeting youth smoking cessation and prevention services to areas of greatest need is essential if we are going to ensure a future healthy and smokefree population for Wales.

Funding proposal

ASH Wales Cymru is seeking funding over the next 2½ years from the Welsh Government to continue this much needed and successful service. There is currently a gap in provision in Wales for both prevention interventions in out-of-school and Further Education settings; and also for a dedicated youth cessation service. There is no other service in Wales that meets the needs of young people and seeks to engage with them in relevant ways, The Filter fills this gap.

The Filter service will offer three strands:

1. Tobacco prevention and cessation workshops
2. Youth smoking cessation support
3. Training for professionals.

These three strands will be backed up by online support through The Filter's youth dedicated website and social media channels. The project will run throughout 22 local authorities across Wales; however its main focus will be to target areas of

greatest need, where adult smoking rates are at their highest. ASH Wales will engage with more than 1700 young people per annum face-to-face, and reach many more via our online services.

The total cost of the intervention over the 2½ year period will be £342,220. ASH Wales Cymru has developed clear objectives and outcomes for each strand of the service. We will implement robust evaluation mechanisms to measure the effectiveness of the current intervention in reaching young people, and professionals across Wales. It is also anticipated that a definitive trial in Further Education settings will run alongside our internal evaluation.

Exit strategy

ASH Wales Cymru is in the process developing and implementing a fundraising strategy to ensure a more sustainable funding base for The Filter. We have already received funding via an EU grant and we are also promoting the service across the UK on a commissioning basis. These areas of work however take time to build and implement. It is essential that the core costs of the project are funded over the next 2½ years to allow ASH Wales Cymru to sustain the project into the future.

Conclusion

The Filter provides an invaluable and unique service combining prevention work, cessation support, youth work, training and digital expertise. The Filter offers face-to-face and online services that engage young people in relevant ways, to tackle the extremely damaging public health challenge of smoking in our communities in Wales.

If the Welsh Government is not able to provide funding for this unique service, then work with more than 1700 young people and 200 professionals a year will be lost alongside our well-established community networks. Our harder to reach young people in Wales will no longer have a service which meets their needs.