

Public Health (Wales) Bill / Bil Iechyd y Cyhoedd (Cymru)

Evidence from Margaret Hermon – PHB 45 / Tystiolaeth gan Margaret Hermon – PHB 45

Public Health (Wales) Bill: Consultation questions

Tobacco and Nicotine Products

The Bill includes proposals to ban the use of nicotine inhaling devices, such as e-cigarettes, in enclosed spaces like restaurants, pubs and at work. Shops will also have to join a register for retailers of tobacco and nicotine products, and it will become an offence to “hand over” tobacco and e-cigarettes to anyone under the age of 18.

Question 1

Do you agree that the use of e-cigarettes should be banned in enclosed public and work places in Wales, as is currently the case for smoking tobacco?

No. The use of an electronic cigarette, or vaping as it is know, bears no relation to smoking either in harm to the user or to those in their vicinity. Employers, hoteliers, brewery chains etc. are at liberty to prohibit any activity on their premises as they see fit so legislation is unnecessary and pointless.

Question 2

Do you believe the provisions in the Bill will achieve a balance between the potential benefits to smokers wishing to quit with any potential dis-benefits related to the use of e-cigarettes?

No. The potential benefit to a smoker is the saving of his/her life by switching from a killer habit to a 96% safer one. The dis-benefit to those who have already made the switch is that a ban on use in specific areas could well dis-incentivise them into a return to smoking. The number of vapers in U.K has increased from a few thousands in 2010 (when I switched) to 2.6 million currently and rising; this has happened with virtually no advertising, just word of mouth. To cut the rate of smoking related disease it is essential that e-cigarettes are visible so that vapers can spread expertise.

Question 3

Do you have any views on whether the use of e-cigarettes re-normalises smoking behaviours in smoke-free areas, and whether, given their appearance in replicating cigarettes, inadvertently promote smoking?

On the contrary, the use of e-cigarettes in pubs and clubs, where they are freely permitted and encouraged has resulted in more smokers kicking the habit in favour of vaping – some brewery chains have already rescinded bans for this reason. The appearance of e-cigs varies from a “look-alike” to a box to a small torch etc. – none could be confused with a tobacco cigarette since there is no odour of tobacco smoke which is unmistakable. Vaping can only normalise vaping and has the potential to consign smoking to the pages of history.

Question 4

Do you have any views on whether e-cigarettes are particularly appealing to young people and could lead to a greater uptake of their use among this age group, and which may ultimately lead to smoking tobacco products?

This, the so-called “Gateway” effect, has been dismissed by no less a body than A.S.H as being a non-existent threat, and they have the research to prove this. Children will always experiment – far better they should do so with a relatively harmless product than to “light up” and become addicted to tobacco cigarettes which, it is said, kills 50% of users.

Question 5

Do you agree with the proposal to establish a national register of retailers of tobacco and nicotine products?

It seems that if such a register is not already in existence it has not been needed. At a time of stringent cut-backs it would hardly seem to be a priority.

Question 6

What are your views on creating a new offence for knowingly handing over tobacco and nicotine products to a person under 18, which is the legal age of sale in Wales?

This would depend entirely on circumstances. Children as young as twelve (and under) are known to be already smoking addicted; I would feel duty-bound to assist in breaking this addiction by any means possible. If e-cigs had been available when my son was a 16 year old smoker I would certainly have provided him with this efficient alternative.

Other comments

Question 19

Do you believe that the issues included in this Bill reflect the priorities for improving public health in Wales?
No

Question 20

Are there any other areas of public health which you believe require legislation to help improve the health of people in Wales?
No

Question 21

Are there any other comments you would like to make on any aspect of the Bill?
In the matter of the electronic cigarette; to impose restrictions and limitations on the use of a technology that has the potential to save the health and lives of millions, while failing to deliver on the most basic requirements of health care is, at best, irrelevant – at worst, criminal. Legislation should be based on scientific fact, not on prejudice and false perceptions, and this piece of legislation is totally unnecessary – a conclusion reached by the rest of the U.K.