

PHB 06

Bil Iechyd y Cyhoedd (Cymru)

Public Health (Wales) Bill

Ymateb gan: Coleg Brenhinol yr Ymarferwyr Cyffredinol

Response from: Royal College of General Practitioners

Public Health (Wales) Bill

1. The RCGP Wales thanks the Health, Social Care and Sports Committee for the opportunity to provide written evidence on the Public Health (Wales) Bill. RCGP Wales is a membership organisation which represent GPs and doctors training to be GPs from across Wales.

2. This written evidence is supplementary to the written and verbal evidence given previously.

3. We agree with the general principles of the Bill to improve and protect the health and well-being of the population of the people of Wales.

4. In particular, we welcome the re-statement of the restrictions on smoking in enclosed and substantially enclosed public places and to develop for the Welsh Ministers a regulation-making power to extend the restrictions on smoking to additional premises or vehicles. We particularly welcome the addition of place restrictions on smoking in school grounds, hospital grounds and public playgrounds.

5. It is now well recognised that smoking and secondary smoking have detrimental effects on health linking to increased rates of respiratory disease, heart disease, dementia and cancers. This is well documented in the Explanatory Memorandum. Children can also learn behaviours by watching adults and this includes smoking as outlined in the Memorandum so we particularly support the ban on smoking in school grounds and public playgrounds.

6. We support the ban on smoking in hospital grounds both NHS and private, but regret that this is not extended to all health premises, including health centres and clinics. This would enhance the public awareness that smoking is harmful.

7. We recognise that stopping smoking can be difficult for many people but the NHS is committed to supporting those who wish to cease smoking and there is evidence which shows that life expectancy and quality of life is improved because of reducing and quitting. Smoking cessation support needs to be signposted well in all hospital premises together with the ban.

8. We welcome the creation of a national register of retailers for both tobacco and nicotine products with the provision for Welsh Ministers with a regulation-making power to add to the offences which contribute to a Restricted Premises Order (RPO) in Wales. We are particularly pleased that nicotine products have been included. Despite the limited evidence of these causing harm, the increasing use of

these devices, particularly by children and young people is concerning as the future consequences to their health is yet to be determined.

9. We support the prohibition of the handing over of tobacco and/or nicotine products to a person under the age of 18. Any mechanism to reduce the access to children and teenagers under 18 having access to these products is to be welcomed.

10. We welcome the creation of a mandatory licensing scheme for practitioners and businesses carrying out 'special procedures', namely acupuncture, body piercing, electrolysis, and tattooing. There is increasing awareness of the potential hazards of these procedures particularly blood born virus transmission but some of the inks used in tattooing do contain carcinogens. There needs to be mechanisms in place to ensure that providers of these services provide their clients with information about the health risks and particularly of infections and the risks associate with potential referral of piecing and tattooing.

11. We particularly welcome the prohibition of intimate piercing of those under 16 years as this group is very vulnerable to peer pressure and the implications of complications may not be fully understood.

12. The requirement of Welsh Ministers to make regulations to require public bodies to carry out health impact assessments in specified circumstances is particularly supported. This is a welcome addition to the Public Health (Wales) Bill.

13. Within the changes for determining applications for entry to the pharmaceutical list of a health board there needs to be provision to ensure that the impact on local dispensing doctors is also considered. New pharmacies opening can result in the loss of GP dispensing rights. This may adversely affect the sustainability of the GP in the locality. This is not only a rural issue as some GPs on the edges of towns cover the surrounding villages which at present have no pharmacy services.

14. Accessing public toilets is an essential part of well-being and public health. Plans should be published and challenging locally to ensure that the needs of those in the locality are met.

15. We support the further parts of this Bill.