

MEDIA RELEASE

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Next steps for action on tobacco control

Making tobacco more expensive and less available should be central to a new national tobacco strategy, experts in tobacco control have said. They also want to see mass media campaigns to encourage smokers to stop smoking services and reduce exposure to second-hand smoke.

NHS Health Scotland and the Scottish Collaboration for Public Health Research and Policy (SCPHRP) at the University of Edinburgh have published a study of expert views on successes, challenges and future actions on tobacco control policy in Scotland.

The experts – including policy makers, practitioners and researchers – recommended that effective policy actions should focus on reducing health inequalities and could include:

- Adjusting the price of tobacco by increasing the price of tobacco products or having a minimum price for tobacco.
- Reducing the availability of tobacco, for example by incentivising retailers to not sell tobacco.
- Mass media campaigns focused on smoking cessation and second-hand smoke exposure.

21% of adults in Scotland smoke (one in five adults), a substantial drop from 28% in 2003. However, adult smoking prevalence has been static since 2013¹. Furthermore, smoking rates are still highest in poorer areas, with 35% of adults in the least well off areas smoking compared to 10% in the most well off¹.

Dr Garth Reid, Principal Public Health Adviser at NHS Health Scotland and one of the study's authors, said:

“Scotland's health is improving but the gap between the health of the best and least well off is widening. Smoking causes over 10,000 deaths each year and is the biggest cause of preventable death in Scotland. But it's where we are born and the conditions in which we live that influence the likelihood whether

¹ Scottish Government 2016. Scottish Health Survey.
<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Health/scottish-health-survey>

or not we smoke. Findings from this study highlight that changing the price and availability of tobacco could contribute to reducing health inequalities.”

John McAteer, Senior Research Fellow in SCPHRP at the University of Edinburgh and co-author, said:

“Smoking rates are no longer falling; they are at a stand-still. This is a stark reminder of how much still needs to be done to tackle smoking. Our study indicates what experts in the field think are the key areas that the Scottish Government should focus future tobacco control policy actions upon, in order to build on the successes of the 2013-2017 strategy.”

Experts agreed that the having a focused strategy on tobacco has paved the way for successful outcomes in the last five years, such as reduced cigarette brand awareness among young people and a decrease in the amount of children exposed to second-hand smoke in the home. They said it ensured the high profile of tobacco in the Scottish Parliament and has helped to shift public attitudes towards smoking. It has also enabled collaboration between sectors, including young people through the Ministerial Group that was set up to prevent people from starting to smoke.

-ENDS-

Contact

For further information and a copy of the study **Tobacco control policy in Scotland: A qualitative study of expert views on successes, challenges and future action**, please contact NHS Health Scotland’s Communications and Engagement Team on 07500 854574 or email nhs.HealthScotland-Communications@nhs.net

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