

Smoking in public places: a consultation on reducing exposure to second-hand smoke.

A response by Moss Pharmacy

Moss Pharmacy is one of Britain's largest pharmacy chains with over 800 branches nationwide, including 140 in Scotland. All of our pharmacies provide smoking cessation advice and our pharmacists see first-hand the effects of smoking on health. Please find below our response to the consultation on reducing exposure to second-hand smoke.

1. *Having considered the health risks associated with passive smoking, do you think that further action needs to be taken to reduce people's exposure to second-hand smoke?* **YES**

Non-smokers have only one way to reduce their exposure to second-hand smoke: the avoidance of "smoky" environments. Avoidance is not easy; for a non-smoker who is determined to reduce the risk to their health of others' choice to smoke, the choice of entertainment or other leisure venues will be restricted.

If the Executive wishes to safeguard the health of people who do not smoke, and encourage others not to, it is clear that this situation must be reversed to favour the non-smoking majority (less than a quarter of the population smoke). A ban on smoking in public places will put, quite rightly, the onus on the smoker, who chooses to take the risk with their health, to find an alternative place to smoke.

2. *Would you support a law that would make enclosed public places smoke-free?* **YES**

Moss Pharmacy would welcome a ban on smoking in enclosed public spaces, including workplaces. This protects non-smokers and any employees from the harmful effects of second-hand smoke. It also sends a clear message that smoking is not something society considers socially acceptable.

A ban, like the one being suggested, is especially important to the message that children and teenagers get about smoking. For too long this message has been confused: "It is OK for adults to smoke but not for you". After all, if adults don't appear to care about the detrimental health effects why should a child? The ban will send a clear message that smoking is not acceptable for adults or children.

3. *If a law was introduced, do you think there should be any exemptions to it?* **No**

The Scottish Executive needs to be clear about the reason for a ban on smoking in public places. It is solely to reduce the exposure of second-hand smoke to those that otherwise choose not to smoke, including people who work in that environment. Given this, it is difficult to see how a ban could be justified in some public places but not others, as all are likely to have employees and non-smokers present.

There is likely to be a minority of support for exemptions for pubs, clubs, and restaurants, either from smokers who don't want the additional effort of going outside to some kind of designated smoking area, or from businesses worried by the effect of a ban. However, a smokers "right to smoke" should not outweigh the rights of non-smokers and workers to breath clean air. Smoking and other leisure activities are not inexorably linked, and it is hard to envisage a situation where smokers refuse to use leisure facilities or go to pubs or restaurants because they are less able to smoke. There is evidence from the USA to suggest that a smoking ban will not have any long-term detrimental effect to the economy^{1 2}. The emerging picture from Ireland also supports this view.

The only exception that might be justified is for extraordinarily large buildings that, while they are technically 'enclosed', are of such size as to be almost as good as being outside. An example of this could be a football stadium that has a closable roof. However, the Irish experience has shown that a lack of exemptions makes a ban easier to enforce as all are seen as equal under the law.

4. If we decide not to introduce a law, what more could be done to encourage individual businesses to take voluntary action to become smoke-free or to provide more smoke-free provision?

As well as a provider of health services, Moss Pharmacy is an employer of more than 7,000 people across the UK. For many years we have banned smoking, in our pharmacies (for both members of the public and our pharmacy team), and in our offices. We do allow smoking in designated places outside of the building. This kind of workplace ban should be encouraged, and employers could provide access during work time to smoking cessation services, or organise in-house stop smoking support groups.

If smoking bans were voluntary, pubs, clubs and other entertainment businesses should be rewarded for becoming smoke-free. Smoking should at least be banned from the bar area, where staff spend most of their time, and the employer should be required to install a ventilation system to push smoke away from the bar.

However, all of these are half-measures and do not sufficiently tackle the problem of reducing the exposure of people to second-hand smoke, as an outright ban would. Any move to "smoke free areas" should be resisted as the laws of physics mean that smoke quickly drifts from one area to another, and so would be an ineffective measure.

5. What else could we do to reduce people's exposure to second-hand smoke?

The best way to reduce exposure to second-hand smoke is to deal with the source. A lot has been achieved by community pharmacy smoking cessation services, but more can be done to improve quit rates and public health in general by providing proper incentives for pharmacy to engage in public health activities. We hope that the

¹ Impact of a smoking ban on restaurant and bar revenues, El Paso Texas, 2002. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. February 27th 2004. 53(07) p150-152.

² Sales up despite ban on smoking. Washington Post. June 28, 2004; Page B01

new pharmacy contract in Scotland will use the skills available in the community pharmacy to help people to give up smoking and adopt a healthier lifestyle.

6. Please let us know about any other views you have about smoking in public places

It is important that as much as possible is done to prevent people from starting to smoke in the first place, and especially under 16s. For this reason more needs to be done to prevent sales of cigarettes to under 16s, perhaps by removing vending machines where under 16s might have access to them, and by introducing and enforcing stiffer penalties for vendors that sell to under 16s. More could also be done to help parents who find or suspect their child is smoking, and to help under 16s gain access to stop smoking support and NRT (currently not licensed in under-16s). This could be done via schools programmes or out of schools in pharmacies.

Moss Pharmacy has also done groundbreaking work with the Scottish Prisons Service to help prisoners to stop smoking, possibly one of the most challenging groups to work with regarding smoking cessation because of their environment. The success of this programme indicates that any group of the population can be helped to give up as long as they are given the proper encouragement, support and motivation.

The Executive should also give consideration to the penalties for breaking the ban, both for the smoker and for the business, as well as how the success of the ban will be measured. It is important to remember that while a reduction in the number of people smoking would be welcome, the aim of the ban is to reduce the exposure to second-hand smoke.

Information to help us understand your views:

7. Are your views personal or are you representing those of an organisation?

These views are expressed on behalf of Moss Pharmacy

Respondee Information

1. Name: Chris Street, Health and Pharmacy Adviser, on behalf of Moss Pharmacy.

Address: Fern House, 53-55 High Street, Feltham, Middlesex, TW13 4HU

Consultation title: Smoking in Public Places

2a/2b N/A

2c. Your name and address as respoondees will be made available to the public (in the SE library and/or on SE website). Are you content for your response to be made available also? **Yes**