

April 2009

Cancer Research UK's response to the Scottish Government's consultation on achieving smoke-free mental health services in Scotland

1. *In order to achieve smoke-free mental health services in Scotland, how do you think we should proceed?*
 - *Retain the status quo (leaving the current exemption)*
 - *Produce detailed guidance material without the need to amend existing legislation*
 - *Remove the existing exemption which permits smoking in designated rooms by amending the existing legislation*
 - *Don't know*

Evidence, both internationally and from within the UK, suggests that smokefree environments within mental health settings in Scotland can be successfully achieved. In 2008 England and Northern Ireland lifted the exemption from smokefree laws for mental health facilities, and in Scotland there are already a number of hospitals that are smokefree. As such, Cancer Research UK believes that the Scottish Government should remove the exemption which permits smoking in designated rooms by amending the existing legislation.

Smoking prevalence among people with mental health problems is higher than in the general population. There are also high rates of smoking among mental health professionals. Smokefree mental health services in Scotland will help to tackle the institutional use of tobacco within mental health settings and help to reduce the health inequality that mental health patients suffer because of smoking and exposure to other people's tobacco smoke.

A 2007 report commissioned by NHS Health Scotlandⁱ found that there is support for the introduction of more smokefree environments within mental health services in Scotland. The report found that, as well as exacerbating inequalities in health and damaging the health of mental health professionals, granting an exemption to mental health services reinforced the stigma attached to mental health and potentially contributed to staff recruitment problems.

Smokefree policies can be successfully implemented in mental health settings and one of the main concerns - that patients will become more aggressive if prevented from smoking - is unjustified.ⁱⁱ

2. (a) *How extensive do you think smoke-free mental health services should be?*
 - *Complete i.e. both buildings and grounds*
 - *Partial i.e. buildings only*
 - *Don't know*

A complete smokefree policy that included the grounds would provide a supportive environment for those who want to stop smoking. Many smokers with mental health problems, and mental health professionals, do wish to stop smoking and having a completely smokefree environment would help them to successfully quit.

An external smoking area may not be a necessary prerequisite for successful smokefree policies to be implemented in mental health settings.ⁱⁱⁱ And, external smoking areas can present a number of problems, such as a lack of enforcement and staff safety issues when patients need to be escorted to these areas. Smoking also tends to spread beyond the designated smoking areas to other parts of the grounds.

If, in exceptional circumstances, it is deemed necessary to allow smoking it should be heavily restricted to, for example, a secure outdoor courtyard.

2. (b) *If you think it should be complete, how should it be implemented?*

- *In one step*
- *Phased over a long period of time*
- *Don't know*

Cancer Research UK is not best placed to comment on this. However a one-step approach has been used successfully elsewhere^{iv}, and the sooner mental health professionals and patients are protected from secondhand smoke, the better. A phased-in approach may also allow resistance to build up.

3. *What type of support do you think is required to help achieve smoke-free mental health services in Scotland? (Examples – stop smoking support, training)*

The report, 'Moving towards smoke-free in mental health services in Scotland' offers a comprehensive list of considerations for implementing smokefree policies in a mental health setting, which Cancer Research UK supports.

4. *Please let us know about any other views that you have about smoke-free mental health services.*

We have no additional comments.

We would be happy to provide any further information or detail as required. Please contact Helen Haggart at Helen.Haggart@cancer.org.uk, or on 020 7061 8153.

ⁱ A McNeill, L Bauld and J Ferguson, *Moving towards smoke-free in mental health services in Scotland*, April 2007.

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} Ibid.