

Mark Drakeford AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-601
Ein cyf/Our ref MD/05473/14

William Powell AM
Assembly Member for Mid & West Wales
Chair Petitions Committee
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
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29 October 2014

Dear William,

Thank you for your recent letter on behalf of the Petitions Committee regarding Petition P-04-601 about the proposed ban on the use of e-cigarettes in public places.

Smoking remains a huge risk to public health in Wales with around 20% of our NHS admissions related to smoking, at a cost of more than £1million a day. We continue to invest in discouraging people from starting to smoke, as well as supporting those who want to quit. Our aim is to reduce smoking levels in Wales to 16% by 2020 with an ultimate vision of a smoke-free society, in which the harm from tobacco is completely eradicated.

With regards to the contribution e-cigarettes can make to help smokers quit, at present, they are unregulated products and are not licensed as aids to smoking cessation. As there is also insufficient evidence about the long-term safety of e-cigarettes we advise users to be cautious and urge people to speak to their GP or pharmacist, or contact Stop Smoking Wales for help to stop smoking, rather than relying on e-cigarettes alone.

As you are aware, the Public Health White Paper, *Listening to you: your health matters* which was launched on 2 April, sought views on whether or not the Welsh Government should consider restricting the use of e-cigarettes in enclosed and substantially enclosed public and work places such as restaurants. Our proposal in no way interferes with the use of e-cigarettes as an aid to smoking cessation as it does not restrict their use in places where smoking is permitted. Rather, it is concerned with the impact the use of e-cigarettes is having on the enforcement of the current smoking ban, that they are re-normalising smoking behaviours and may act as a gateway to smoking, particularly among children and young people.

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The consultation ended on 24 June and we are currently considering the 676 responses we received. A summary report will be published on the Welsh Government website in autumn and will inform next steps to be taken.

I hope the Committee finds this information helpful.

Best wishes,

Mark

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