

Cross Party Group (CPG) on Improving Scotland's Health: 2021 and Beyond

Annual Summary of Meetings: October 2017 to September 2018

Introduction

In 2016, the ScotHealth 2021 Coalition, formed of ASH Scotland, Alcohol Focus Scotland (AFS), Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems (SHAAP) and Obesity Action Scotland (OAS), worked with MSPs to establish a new Cross-Party Group with a broader public health/prevention focus. The Group aims to join up thinking and experience in tackling health-harming commodities. ASH Scotland and Alcohol Focus Scotland continue to provide the Secretariat for the Group.

The Group has the following registered purpose:

- to take a **solutions-oriented focus** on how to improve the health of the people of Scotland by reducing the health harms caused by alcohol, tobacco, poor diet and obesity and
- to **join up knowledge and learning**, and to **identify positive ways forward**, with a range of stakeholders committed to improving public health and to preventing and reducing non-communicable diseases for the next generation.

The Group follows these agreed principles:

- ✓ **Public health:** population measures are most effective and cost-effective
- ✓ **Rights:** people have a right to health and wellbeing
- ✓ **Prevention:** avoid harm rather than treat symptoms
- ✓ **Inequalities:** reduce impacts on the most disadvantaged
- ✓ **Aspirational:** make a difference for the next generation
- ✓ **Evidence:** use best evidence & theories of change
- ✓ **Impartial:** free of commercial or vested interest
- ✓ **Action:** identify and take practical steps

As of January 2018, Jenny Marra MSP stepped down from co-convening the Group. The Group thanked her for her chairing and support. The Group agreed to David Stewart MSP and Brian Whittle MSP becoming co-Conveners along with Kenneth Gibson MSP. The Group aims to hold three meetings a year, with co-Conveners taking it in turn to chair.

The CPG has met three times (twice formally and once informally) in its second year: 26th October 2017, 24th January 2018 and 22nd May 2018. Each meeting was attended by between 30 and 50 people. The Group has brought together a variety of stakeholders from different fields, from politicians and public health organisations, to service providers, academics and members of the public. Now one of the largest CPGs, membership currently consists of 66 organisations, 8 individuals, and 9 MSPs.

This report provides a summary of the topics presented and discussed at the three meetings held during this time period.

Meetings Summary

Thursday 26th October 2017: AGM with Minister for Public Health and Sport, Aileen Campbell MSP

The Minister for Health and Sport, Aileen Campbell thanked AFS and partners for their support in minimum unit pricing and developing the alcohol strategy refresh. She spoke of the need to ensure a visible read-across the government's alcohol, drugs, and diet and obesity strategies.

The Minister answered questions from CPG members on adverse childhood experiences, high risk groups, protecting children from commercial advertising of unhealthy products, and citizen involvement in strategy development.



Wednesday 24th January 2018: Children's right to be protected from health harming products #YOYP

Speakers: **Professor Amanda Amos**, Professor of Health Promotion at the University of Edinburgh, and **Bruce Adamson**, Children and Young People's Commissioner in Scotland.

Professor Amos's presentation highlighted the different influences on the behaviours of children and young people regarding tobacco, and talked of the need to protect children and young people from the key influencer of the industry. Protection opportunities involve reducing both the supply and demand of tobacco, alcohol and unhealthy foods, through tackling availability, affordability, appeal, acceptability and addiction. Prof. Amos talked of successful action that has been taken in Scotland around protecting children from tobacco, such as the increased price of tobacco products. Further suggestions included the use of hypothecated taxes, such as the previous Public Health Supplement, and marketing restrictions. The conclusion of the presentation was that industrial epidemics of alcohol, tobacco and unhealthy foods are major issues for children and young people, and over the life course. Children and young people have the right to be protected from these health harming commodities.

Bruce Adamson explained that his role as Commissioner for Children and Young People since May 2017 is to promote and safeguard all rights of children. He highlighted the strong links between poverty and health, and that health inequalities have not been addressed by declining trends in consumption. Mr Adamson mentioned his work with members of the ScotHealth Coalition, and spoke of the right to health as it is linked to other rights. The underlying human rights principle is that all children should grow up in happy, healthy environments; this extends to preventative health, to grow and develop to their full potential, and that governments have an obligation to address the underlying conditions. Despite good Scottish policy and law, we were not good at reaching children and young people who are affected by health inequalities. Mr Adamson concluded that we need to change the ways we engage children and young people in the decision-making process.

Tuesday 22nd May 2018: Joint informal meeting with the Health Inequalities CPG on health inequalities and unhealthy environments



Speakers: **Dr Niamh K Shortt**, Reader in Health Geography and co-director of the Centre for Environment, Society and Health (CRESH), University of Edinburgh, and **Hilda Campbell**, Chief Executive of COPE Scotland.

The meeting was jointly chaired by Clare Haughey MSP and David Stewart MSP. Due to low MSP attendance, the meeting was not recorded as an official meeting of either CPG.

Dr Niamh Shortt presented her research on how the environment shapes our health, health behaviours and resulting health inequalities. She noted the sharp rise in non-communicable diseases which have lifestyle related causes, and the importance of our physical and social environment in shaping our health. Recent research shows that deprived neighbourhoods are disproportionately affected by clustering of alcohol, tobacco and fast food outlets. Similar [research](#) has been conducted for Alcohol Focus Scotland on alcohol outlet availability and harm across the different local authority areas in Scotland. The relative harm of the availability of these outlets was also most apparent in the lowest income groups. Policies in Scotland need to focus on creating healthy environments and restricting unhealthy ones and should have a strong focus on tackling health inequalities. There needs to be action on the availability, marketing and price of health harming products.

Hilda Campbell, Chief Executive of COPE Scotland, explained how health inequalities can be challenged through a community development, assets based approach. COPE Scotland is a community led service in Drumchapel, West Glasgow, committed to finding new ways of addressing mental/emotional distress and promoting resilience and self-management through the principles of co-production and design. People living within deprived communities are tired of hearing that they will die younger than everyone else, that they will suffer from a range of co-morbidities and that they are on a lower income than everyone else. What they need is to be empowered to affect the change that they need and want. We need to find a new way of doing things: by asking people what *they* want to change in their own area, we can empower those directly affected by clustering to be leaders of the change. An ounce of prevention is worth more than a pound of care. Funding structures need to allow for services, projects and activities within communities to develop and flourish.

It was agreed that a motion to highlight the work of the Groups in holding this joint meeting would be lodged. The [motion](#) was submitted by David Stewart MSP on 7th June 2018.

Other Achievements

The CPG is one of 38 initiatives featured in the NCD Alliance's [Civil Society Global Atlas](#) as an example of international good practice on partnership working for action on NCDs, published in January 2018.