

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

## Annual Summary: October 2018 to September 2019

### Introduction

The original proposal to form the group arose from a review of the long-standing Tobacco and Health Cross-Party Group. 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

The Group currently has three co-Conveners: Kenneth Gibson MSP, David Stewart MSP and Brian Whittle 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 over the year: 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2018, 20<sup>th</sup> February 2019 and 12<sup>th</sup> June 2019. 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 72 organisations, 6 individuals, and 9 MSPs.

This report provides a summary of the topics presented and discussed at the three meetings held during this time period October 2018 to September 2019.

## Meetings Summary

### 12<sup>th</sup> June 2019: Empowered communities reducing use of and harm from unhealthy commodities, chaired by Co-Convener Brian Whittle MSP



Speakers: **Tom Bennett**, Team Leader, Forth Valley Recovery Community and **Stephanie Girdwood**, Project Worker, Healthy Valleys in Lanarkshire.

**Tom Bennett** gave an overview of the Forth Valley Recovery Community (FVRC), explaining how the holistic support provided by the organisation, such as helping people get back into education and employment and with their diet and general health. Mr Bennett spoke of the opportunity offered by FVRC to its community members to train

to be a community volunteer and peer support worker. Support is provided by the community through recovery cafes, 'Recovery in the wild' and 'Recovery rambling'. The presentation finished by noting how the FVRC has been able to find new ways to help people.

**Stephanie Girdwood** described the origins of the Healthy Valleys project in Lanarkshire, and highlighted their vision to reduce health inequalities, and have people take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing. Detail was provided on their smoke-free project, run in a very rural area with high smoking and deprivation rates but low rates of access to quit support. The Stop Smoking Programmes supported people in all aspects of their life, which was resource-intensive but successful. As part of the Smoke-Free Homes initiative, they went door-to-door as they knew that some people wouldn't access the groups, and they provided ongoing support.

### 20<sup>th</sup> February 2019: Marketing unmasked: dispelling the myths and taking a stand, chaired by Co-Convener Kenneth Gibson MSP.

Speakers: **Dr Nathan Critchlow**, the University of Stirling and **Ms Vivienne Maclaren**, chair of Scottish Women's Football (SWF).

**Dr Nathan Critchlow** presented findings from the Youth Alcohol Policy Survey, which revealed that young people are exposed to alcohol marketing on a regular basis. Dr Critchlow explained that the effects of alcohol marketing come from cumulative exposure to all types of marketing, from the traditional forms such as TV advertising, product design, price offers and event sponsorship to the newer digital forms, such as social media, games, websites and sponsored content. The research found that young people's exposure to alcohol marketing was associated with susceptibility to drink in never drinkers; brand identification; increased consumption; and higher-risk drinking.





**Vivienne Maclaren** spoke to the group about the decision of Scottish Women's Football (SWF) to reject sponsorship offers from the alcohol and gambling industries. Influencing factors were explained, from the demographics and experiences of the players, to the need to provide them with positive role models. Ms Maclaren explained that the SWF Board refused an offer of alcohol sponsorship because the partner didn't fit with their approach, questioning why they would have a partner that's pushing alcohol to children. SWF want to partner with positive brands to help create a 'clean sport' and believe that they will get bigger commercial sponsors in time who can benefit their members in the long-term rather than those who are only interested in short-term investment. SWF acknowledge that they have a responsibility to their members, which is why they are taking a stand against alcohol and gambling sponsorship in sport. They have a duty to help and encourage women and girls to play football and understand how to enjoy and live healthy lives.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> October 2018: AGM with the Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing, Joe FitzPatrick MSP, chaired by Co-Convener Brian Whittle MSP**

The Minister spoke about the health challenges Scotland faces including an ageing population; inequalities; changing patterns of diseases, the impact this has on public services and the need to be prevention focused. Mr FitzPatrick also talked about the six public health priorities that have been published and the new body, Public Health Scotland, which will be launched in the autumn of 2019.

The Minister then went on to answer questions on the use of targets, increasing the number of people in treatment and preventing alcohol and drug related deaths, and the role of the alcohol industry in public health. In his answers, the Minister referenced the new treatment and care, and prevention strategies which will be published later this year.

The Group was very encouraged to hear from the Minister in response to a question from AFS that there is no place for the alcohol industry in influencing public health policy.

### **Other Achievements**

On the 19th June 2019, MSPs from across the political spectrum debated the need for Scotland's children to be better protected from the negative effects of alcohol, tobacco and unhealthy food marketing following a Member's Motion lodged by Co-Convener, Kenneth Gibson MSP. This motion highlighted the discussion of these issues at the Improving Scotland's Health: 2021 and Beyond Cross-Party Group in February.

In his speech, Kenneth Gibson called for the Scottish Government to formally acknowledge alcohol marketing had "no place in childhood" and that all children should play and learn in places that are protected from exposure to alcohol advertising.

MSPs from the SNP, Labour, and Scottish Conservatives raised various issues including banning outdoor advertising and limiting adverts in cinemas, consulting with children and young people, supporting young people whose parents have alcohol problems, and the need for education at an early age.

All the speakers have signed the pledge developed by Alcohol Focus Scotland, Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs, BMA Scotland and Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems, that 'all children should play, learn and socialise in places that are healthy and safe, protected from exposure to alcohol advertising and sponsorship.'