

Smoking at all time low as Wales marks 10th anniversary of ban

The percentage of adults smoking is now at a record low. The Welsh Health Survey 2015 showed that 19% of adults smoke, a significant decrease from 25% in 2005/6. This has exceeded the Welsh Government target of reducing smoking rates to 20% by 2016.

The Minister marked the occasion by visiting Malpas Court Primary School in Newport. The school has recently achieved the National Quality Award as part of the Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes (WNHSS) and is the 130th School in Wales to do so. Tobacco use is one of the topics covered under the scheme. Pupils talked to the Minister about smoking and shared their thoughts on what a smokefree Wales means to them.

Clare Harvey, Health and Wellbeing Coordinator at Malpas Court Primary School said:

“As a smokefree school, we provide an environment that protects and promotes the health and wellbeing of the entire school community.

Through our PSE curriculum pupils learn how smoking is addictive, expensive and could have a detrimental effect on their health. As a Healthy School, we are invested in educating our pupils about such issues which protects them and our future generations. We are proud to be one of a small number of schools in Newport to be awarded the Healthy Schools NQA and we encourage our pupils to embrace this in daily school life.”

To help continue this success, the Minister has today announced funding of £417,000 over three years to ASH Wales, the leading third sector organisation working for a smokefree Wales. The funding will contribute to the delivery of the Welsh Government’s Tobacco Control Action Plan, which aims to reduce the prevalence of adult smoking to 16% by 2020.

Chief Executive of the tobacco control campaign group ASH Wales Cymru, Suzanne Cass, said:

“The smoking ban is one of the most important steps forward our nation has taken to protect our health. Since the ban was implemented in 2007, we have seen an incredible change in attitudes towards smoking which has resulted in 5% less people and 94,000 fewer adults still smoking.

“Thanks to this incredible funding from Welsh Government, we can continue to work together to support the remaining 19% of those still addicted to tobacco to choose smokefree and lead a healthier, happier life for themselves and their families.”

The Minister said:

“The ban on smoking in indoor public places has been a huge success. The percentage of adults smoking is now at a record low. This will improve people’s health and life expectancy, and will reduce pressures on the NHS.

“It also means that future generations are protected from the effects of smoking, and do not grow up seeing it as a normal activity.

“We are continuing our efforts to support smokers to quit by signposting them to free NHS cessation services. If passed, the Public Health Bill will ban smoking in playgrounds, schools and hospital grounds, to continue the remarkable culture-change we have seen around smoking in Wales in recent years. I want everyone in Wales to ‘Choose Smokefree’.”