

The Clerk  
Committee for Health, Social Services & Public Safety  
Room B32, Parliament Buildings  
Ballymiscaw  
Stormont  
Belfast  
BT4 3XX  
11<sup>th</sup> December 2015

## **Re. Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill –Health Committee Call for Evidence**

Dear Clerk,

Cancer Focus Northern Ireland welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Committee's call for evidence in relation to the Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill.

As Northern Ireland's leading cancer charity, Cancer Focus NI continues to be extremely active in campaigning to improve the health of the local population. With tobacco being the single biggest cause of preventable deaths here, helping people quit, as well as preventing young people from taking up the habit has been a key priority within our cancer prevention work.

Tobacco kills half of all its long term users, which is why Cancer Focus has co-ordinated ASH (NI) since 1973, to ensure effective tobacco control strategies are introduced here. We led campaigns for Smoke-free places, the advertising ban, point of sale, vending machines and retailers' sanctions legislation. We co-ordinate the No Smoking Day Campaign in Northern Ireland and provide the Smokebusters campaign to around 31,000 School children (65% target group) each year. We provide Smoking Cessation Services in community, workplaces and schools, and we train professionals to do likewise.

We welcome this Bill, in particular those parts which are aimed at continuing the work we already do to dissuade young people from taking up smoking:

### **Part 1 –Regulation of sale of nicotine products and tobacco**

Cancer Focus NI supports regulations that will prohibit the sale of nicotine products to under 18s (Clause 1), and from vending machines (Clause 2). We are also

satisfied with the proposal to create an offence for proxy purchasing of nicotine products (Clause 1).

The proposals within Part 1 will be important practical instruments to assist in making it more difficult for young people to access nicotine products, including e-cigarettes, either directly, or through a proxy.

Our key concern, however, is in an omission from this Bill of a provision to introduce a ban on smoking in cars. Since July 2007, Smoke-free legislation has been very successful in protecting adults from second-hand smoke in workplaces and public places. It is disappointing that we still do not have legislation to protect children in situations where they have little control or choice. While our neighbouring jurisdictions have already legislated to make smoking in cars carrying children illegal (in place in England and Wales, and on the statute book in the Republic), this Bill has been introduced without its inclusion.

We wish to acknowledge the support from members of the Health committee towards an amendment within the Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill which would see a ban on smoking in cars being introduced in this mandate. We do acknowledge the Minister's belated announcement to proceed with advancing an amendment at Consideration Stage that would see smoking in cars with children being outlawed in Northern Ireland.

Cancer Focus NI has been taking the message into schools about the harmful effects of smoking, as part of our 'Smokebusters' Programme. We recognise that children and young people should not only be dissuaded from taking up smoking, but must be protected from the harmful impact caused by passive smoking, such as exposure to second hand smoke when travelling in vehicles with adults smoking.

It is our intention to use our engagement with school children and their teachers over coming weeks to draw their attention to this important Bill, so they can make their voices heard about the need to protect their health by introducing a smoking ban in cars.

Finally, we would welcome the opportunity to give evidence in person to the committee, if this would be considered helpful.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Roisin Foster". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Roisin Foster

Chief Executive