Health (Tobacco, Nicotine etc. and Care)(Scotland) Bill

Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland

The Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland (REHIS) is pleased to present written evidence to the Health and Sport Committee regarding the Health (Tobacco, Nicotine etc, and Care) (Scotland) Bill. The Institute is the professional body representing the Environmental Health profession in Scotland. Please find our written response under each question below.

Nicotine and smoking in hospital grounds

1. Do you support the Bill’s provision in relation to Nicotine Vapour Products (NVPs)?

The Institute fully supports the provision of the Bill with regards to NVPs and that such provision will bring NVPs in line with current legislation regulating the sale, availability and promotion of traditional tobacco products.

2. Do you support the proposal to ban smoking in hospital grounds?

The Institute welcomes the proposal to ban smoking in hospital grounds and believes that this will be a significant milestone for public health in Scotland. The Institute believes that the offences are clear with the Health Board and local authority having responsibility for enforcement.

3. Is there anything else you would add/remove/change in the Bill with regards to NVPs or smoking in hospital grounds?

The Institute believes that the restrictions for the use of tobacco products should be extended to NVPs and that their use should not be allowed in any enclosed public space. This is because there is insufficient evidence to suggest that the use of NVPs is safe or that they are a safer alternative to consuming traditional tobacco products. The Institute believes that tobacco consumer culture may also be influenced by the continued acceptance of allowing NVPs to be consumed in enclosed public spaces and may encourage others, including non-smokers, to start using NVPs through social pressure and acceptance.

The Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland
The Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland (the Institute) has been in existence for over 139 years and has around 1,000 members the majority of whom are Environmental Health Officers working in that capacity for Scottish local authorities. The Institute is incorporated by Royal Charter, is an independent self-financing organisation, is an independent awarding body for the profession and for a wide range of community training qualifications, and is a registered Scottish charity (No. SC009406). The Institute neither seeks nor receives grant aid and its charitable activities are funded significantly by the subscriptions received from its members.

The objects for which the Institute is established are for the benefit of the community to promote the advancement of Environmental Health by:

- stimulating interest in and disseminating knowledge concerning Environmental Health;
- promoting education and training in matters relating to Environmental Health; and
- maintaining, by examination or otherwise, high standards of professional practice and conduct on the part of Environmental Health Officers in Scotland.

Environmental Health Officers in Scotland are part of a graduate only profession and by virtue of their underpinning academic education, professional practical training, professional qualifications and experience are well placed to apply a holistic public health approach to the education of the public and to the enforcement of a wide range of environmental and public health legislation.

The Institute is an independent awarding body for the profession and currently accredits the BSc (Hons) Environmental Health degree courses delivered at the University of Strathclyde and at the University of the West of Scotland as well as the MSc Environmental Health degree courses delivered at the University of Strathclyde and at the University of Derby (distance learning option). Environmental Health students, graduate and under-graduate, who wish to pursue a career as an Environmental Health Officer require to undertake a period of professional practical training and to successfully complete the Institute’s Professional Examination which determines their professional competence to practice.

In terms of EU Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of Professional Qualifications within Member States and under the European Communities (Recognition of Professional Qualifications) Regulations 2007 the Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland is a UK Competent Authority for the Profession titles Environmental Health Officer and Chartered Environmental Health Officer.