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

Professor Linda Bauld

I am writing to provide additional evidence to inform the Committee’s consideration of this Bill at stage one. My response is brief and is intended to supplement a more detailed response already submitted by Cancer Research UK and should be considered alongside CRUK’s submission. In addition to my post at the University of Stirling (where I serve as Professor of Health Policy, Director of the Institute for Social Marketing and Dean of Research) I also hold the CRUK/BUPA Chair in Behavioural Research for Cancer Prevention. This latter role (as CRUK’s ‘Cancer Prevention Champion’) involves leading the charity’s work on the primary prevention of cancer. Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of cancer and the main focus of my own research.

In addition, I thought it would be helpful to make two additional points. The first is that the Bill does not include any proposed national measures to ban e-cigarette use in enclosed public places or on NHS grounds. I believe this is the right decision as we simply do not have evidence of health harms to bystanders from e-cigarette vapour which would justify such measures. I understand some organisations would like to see these types of restrictions added to the Bill but I do not agree with that view. Should the committee wish, I can speak to the evidence on ‘second hand’ vapour at the meeting if useful.

On a second point, to supplement the CRUK submission I attach a short article which has been accepted for publication in the journal Nicotine and Tobacco Research and provides a concise overview of the current situation with use of e-cigarettes amongst young people in the UK, including Scotland. Although regular use is rare, I believe the findings support the need for age of sale, proxy purchase and vending machine legislation as the Bill proposes.

Professor Linda Bauld
## E-cigarette uptake amongst UK youth: experimentation, but little or no regular use in non smokers

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E-cigarette uptake amongst UK youth: experimentation, but little or no regular use in non smokers

Electronic cigarette use is now common in many countries, particularly in the developed world. Even in countries that don’t permit the sale of nicotine containing e-cigarettes, use has risen in recent years\(^1\). Along with this has come a rise in concern about uptake amongst young people, particularly in jurisdictions where youth tobacco smoking rates have fallen to low levels. The reasons for this concern are many and varied, but some of this relates to a perception that e-cigarettes may result in a new generation of adults who are dependent on nicotine\(^2\). To date we have identified at least twenty four published, peer reviewed journal articles on e-cigarette use in youth, with at least as many again published survey reports. The majority of these only describe recent or ever use of these products and don’t differentiate experimentation from regular use\(^3\). An exception is in studies from the countries of the United Kingdom, where four recent surveys conducted in a 12 month period from 2013 to 2014 shed some light on ever and regular use amongst smoking and non-smoking young people. Figure 1 summarises results from these four surveys, each of which has yielded very similar findings.

INSERT FIGURE 1

What these surveys show is that a significant proportion of teenagers have tried e-cigarettes – 8% in one survey across Great Britain\(^4\), and 12% in a representative UK-wide survey and national surveys in Wales\(^5\) and Scotland\(^6\). A very small proportion (ranging from 0.4% in Scotland to 2% in the UK survey) report use more than monthly and even fewer (1% in the UK and 0.7% in Great Britain respectively) more than weekly. On closer examination, however, this more regular use is found only in young people who have also smoked tobacco. Three of these surveys found no evidence at all of never smoking young people regularly using e-cigarettes. The fourth, a large survey in Wales of 9,055 11-16 year olds, identified 54 never smoking young people who reported using e-cigarettes at least monthly. Rates of experimentation (or ever use) in never smoking young people were also low in all surveys, from 2-5%.

What do these data tell us? They suggest that at the moment, regular use of e-cigarettes is almost entirely concentrated in young people who already smoke. Never smokers are trying these devices (which may or may not contain nicotine – the surveys did not ask this) but not progressing to habitual use. Given the size, representativeness and similar time period in which these studies were conducted, we can be relatively confident that they accurately capture the situation in a country that has at least 2.6 million adults who use e-cigarettes, and 10 million who smoke\(^7\). It is imperative that future studies of e-cigarettes and young people differentiate different patterns of consumption and do not use evidence of ever use as a proxy for continued use. Teenagers experiment, and for some smoking teenagers, e-cigarettes may well be a route out of tobacco. Surveillance of the kind reported here is important in order to capture new and emerging trends and inform policy and practice.

References
Figure 1: Prevalence of e-cigarette use in teenagers, UK surveys

(1) Youth Tobacco Policy Survey, UK, n=1205
(2) ASH/YouGov survey n=1731 children who had heard of e-cigarettes
(3) Health Behaviour in School Children in Wales, n= 9,055
(4) Scottish Schools Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey, n=33,685