Non-Communicable Diseases: Progress Report on Health Harming Product Action

We know that non-communicable diseases (NCDs), such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes, stroke, liver disease and lung disease are the leading cause of death and disability in Scotland. In 2020, these NCDs were responsible for more than 40,000 deaths, more than 62% of all deaths.

In September 2021 we, a group of 10 of Scotland's leading health charities, published a report calling for urgent and bold policy action on health harming products such as tobacco, alcohol, and unhealthy food and drink. It is paramount that the Scottish Parliament and Government act on the consumption of health harming products to tackle rates of non-communicable diseases and prioritise public health in the Covid-19 recovery.

Now, 6 months on from the publication of our report, we are here to assess the progress on the recommendations we made. We called for action in four key areas regarding health harming products: availability, marketing, treatment services and price and promotion.

We are encouraged that the Scottish Government has made commitments to meet 5 out of the 6 recommendations, but only 1 has been met after 6 months. Action is needed now. It is therefore welcome that the Minister for Public Health, Women's Health and Sport has committed to a Public Health Bill to tackle health harming products. It is crucial that this bill is introduced as soon as possible.

On the next page, we have provided a green-amber-red colour scheme to reflect the progress made thus far on our recommendations. Green means completed, amber represents that progress has been made, and red signifies either that action has not started or that it falls outwith the timelines we called for.

Firstly, we were pleased to see that the Out of Home Strategy for food outlets was published in September 2021, however, there wasn't the level of detail we expected and there was a lack of commitment to a clear timetable for it. Secondly, the latest noted commitment to the consultation on the domestic advertising of e-cigarettes was to launch the consultation by the end of 2021. It is disappointing that this consultation launch has been delayed with no updated timeline. Furthermore, the Scottish Government committed to consult on alcohol marketing in the Alcohol Framework 2018, this commitment has been reaffirmed in the Programme for Government 2021–22 and needs to be delivered.

We are disappointed that as yet there is no date for the review of the level of the minimum unit price of alcohol, despite the Scottish Government originally committing to review the price two years after introduction, i.e., in May 2020. Despite action on price promotion of unhealthy foods having been promised for a number of years it has now been confirmed that a forthcoming Public Health Bill will be the vehicle to deliver this, for which the timetable is unknown.

To ensure meaningful progress, we must continue to take bold and consistent steps to tackle the social determinants of health and the societal factors that drive the use of health harming products. It is crucial that the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government continue to provide leadership on this issue and remain committed to evidence-based action.

Performance Report

Health harming product policy recommendation progress

6 months on: January 2022

Recommendation	Status
Introduce regulations to Parliament on the domestic advertising of e-cigarettes following a public consultation on the measures.	🔴 **Consultation launch commitment for November 2021 missed**
Consult on restricting the advertising and promotion of alcohol as was committed to in the 2020–2021 Programme for Government.	🟠 **Committed to for 2022**
Review the minimum unit price for alcohol and uprate the minimum unit price for alcohol to at least 65p per unit.	🔴 **Review underway but no timescale identified**
Introduce a bill to restrict promotion of high fat, sugar and salt food and drink.	🔴 **Committed to in the Public Health Bill**
Publish an Out of Home (healthy food choices when eating out) Strategy with clear actions.	🟢 **Published in September 2021**
Improve weight management, alcohol treatment, and smoking cessation services ensuring they become core services.	🔴 **No data available**