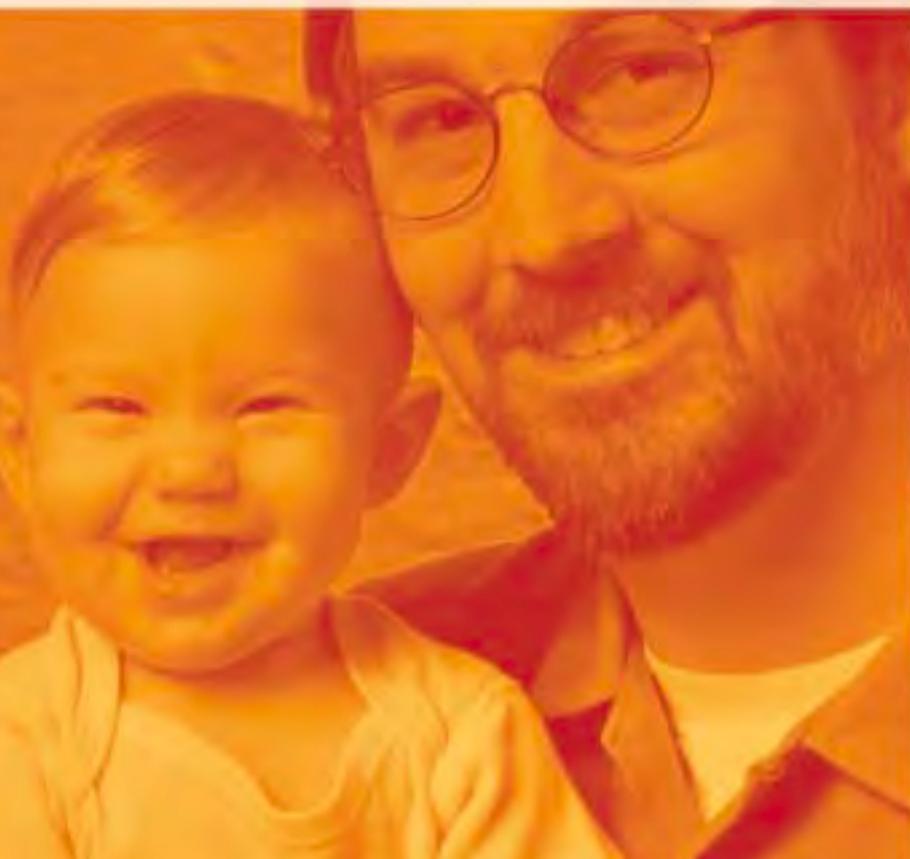




Towards a Tobacco Free Society

Summary of the Report of the Tobacco Free Policy Review Group





500,000 EU citizens
die each year from smoking,
7,000 of them in the Republic of Ireland.

A comprehensive Public Relations programme should be embarked on with the active support of key influencers in society, including local community leaders as well as key figures in politics, business, entertainment and the communications sectors.

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Cigarettes are a scourge on modern society. Highly addictive, they cause serious illnesses which result in many **premature deaths.**

Local community groups should be encouraged to undertake tobacco free initiatives with the help of grants, provided through the health boards, and information programmes for local community leaders.

Introduction

Cigarettes are a scourge on modern society. Highly addictive, they cause serious illnesses which result in many premature deaths. 500,000 EU citizens die each year from smoking, 7,000 of them in the Republic of Ireland. They also cause illness and premature deaths of many people who are simply in the presence of tobacco smoke – so-called ‘passive smokers’.

Even though most smokers recognise these facts, the highly addictive nature of tobacco and its severe withdrawal symptoms consistently frustrate their efforts to break the addiction. Furthermore, the tobacco industry spends vast sums on advertising intended to retain existing smokers and to recruit new ones, especially amongst vulnerable younger age groups.

These facts may be disturbing, but they are not news. Over many years various initiatives have been undertaken with the specific aim of curbing the influence of tobacco advertising and reducing levels of smoking within our society. Lack of sustained momentum has been a key factor in the relatively poor success rates achieved to date, particularly in stemming the tide of new addicts. The Tobacco Free Policy Review Group, therefore, has put considerable effort into designing an approach to the problem which it hopes will ensure that the necessary momentum will be sustained.

The tobacco epidemic can only be beaten with the commitment of society as a whole. The Group’s proposals, therefore, seek the active participation of as many interested parties as possible, at home and abroad. Progress will only be achieved by concerted and sustained effort on a number of fronts. Specifically, we need to:

- raise public awareness of the dangers of smoking
- help more smokers to quit
- protect children by introducing tougher regulation of the tobacco industry’s promotional activities
- provide additional protection for passive smokers, and
- ensure better enforcement of existing smoking laws

It is easy to feel helpless when confronted by a long-established, global industry whose products are highly addictive. But focused, persistent effort, involving partnership with people and organisations at home and abroad, can prevail. There is an obligation on all of us to work towards the creation of a tobacco free society for our own benefit and for that of future generations.

The global problem

Tobacco is highly addictive...

People smoke primarily because tobacco is highly addictive. It contains nicotine, a stimulant which affects many body systems, including the brain, the heart and the nervous system. Its effects are similar to those of other highly dangerous drugs such as heroin and cocaine, but it is actually more addictive than either of these. About 80% of smokers say they want to quit smoking but cannot.

...and highly dangerous to health

Tobacco smoke contains a large number of substances known to cause cancer, including ammonia, benzene, benzo[a]pyrene, cadmium, carbon monoxide, formaldehyde, hydrogen cyanide, lead and mercury. It is also high in carbon dioxide, which causes heart diseases. It has also been clearly established that smoking is associated with eye, bone, teeth and gum diseases.

Cigarette – Ingredients and Emissions

Lead - Benzene - Formaldehyde
Carbon monoxide - Ammonia - Benzopyrene
Mercury - Hydrogen cyanide

Some ingredients
Aluminium phosphate
Ammonia
Nicotine
Tobacco
Reconstituted tobacco
Colorants
Humectants
Sweeteners
Agri chemical residues

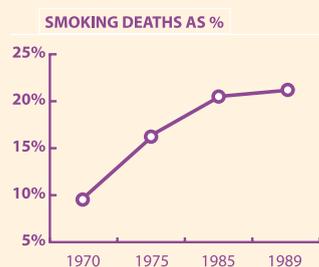
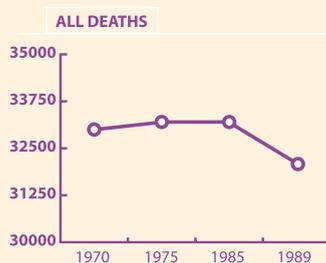
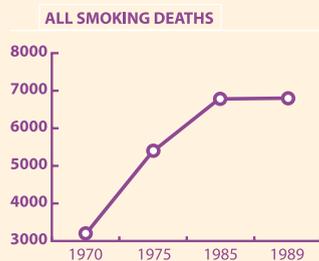
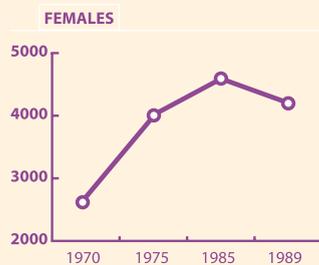
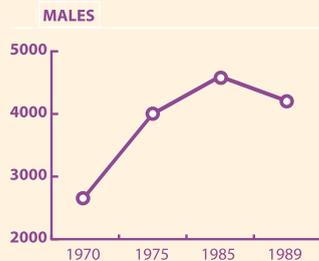
The World Health Organisation estimates that cigarettes are responsible for about 30% of all cancer deaths, 20% of deaths from coronary heart disease and stroke and 80% of cases of chronic obstructive lung disease. Anyone who smokes regularly has a one in two chance of dying prematurely – not great odds. Furthermore, half of these deaths happen to people in their middle age.

In recent decades life expectancy has improved throughout Europe. But in Ireland it is well below the European average, particularly for people in middle age. Heart disease and cancers are the major causes of premature death and the rates in Ireland for both illnesses compare unfavourably with Europe as a whole. Smoking is a significant factor in this.

The dangers have been known for many years...

The connection between cancer and tobacco was first made in Germany in the 1930's. In 1964 an official US Government study identified that 95% of lung cancer is caused by smoking. Despite overwhelming scientific proof of the enormous harm tobacco products do, the tobacco industry and its representatives refuse to acknowledge this evidence, at least in public.

Deaths attributable to smoking in Ireland



...but cigarettes are becoming more, not less dangerous

The industry traditionally used just tobacco leaf to make cigarettes. For over 150 years, right up to 1977, it was illegal in Ireland to use anything other than tobacco in its products. Now up to 600 different additives are used in their production, many of which are harmful. Using modern manufacturing techniques, the industry enhances the amount of nicotine that is released through the addition of such chemicals as ammonia.

It is also one of the biggest investors in genetic modification and constantly seeks to produce tobacco crops which have ever higher nicotine to tar ratios. It does this to circumvent legal restrictions in major markets intended to protect consumers against the most harmful effects of smoking – even though low tar or 'light' cigarettes are actually no safer than regular cigarettes.

All tobacco is harmful...

Smoking cigars is just as dangerous as smoking cigarettes. Compared to a cigarette, one cigar has 20 times as much ammonia, and five to 10 times more cadmium. Cigars cause heart disease and a wide variety of cancers of the throat, mouth and lungs, as well as being linked to cancer of the pancreas. Cigar and pipe smokers generally have lower rates of lung cancer than cigarette smokers – but only because on average they consume less tobacco and are less likely to inhale.

...and it's not just smokers who pay the price

Exposure to environmental tobacco smoke causes heart disease and lung cancer, with long term exposure increasing the cancer risk factor by 20-30%. Children exposed to environmental tobacco smoke suffer respiratory illness and asthmatic attacks, as well as middle ear disease. Smoking during pregnancy contributes significantly to miscarriages, reduced birth weights, prenatal death and Sudden Infant Death.

The opponents of a tobacco free society are financially strong...

The tobacco industry is highly profitable and dominated by a handful of global market leaders. The Irish market is controlled by three companies – PJ Carroll, Gallagher and John Player & Sons – all subsidiaries of one of these global players.

...and unscrupulous in their targeting of young people

The European Union, the United States, Canada and Australia, together with many other countries throughout the world, have concluded that the smoking epidemic among children is largely sustained by the marketing practices of the tobacco industry. This view is supported by evidence which has emerged in US court cases that tobacco companies have deliberately targeted children in their advertising campaigns and in the positioning they demand for tobacco products in retail outlets.

The New Zealand Government found that cigarettes sold there in packets of 10 consistently had higher levels of nicotine than those in packets of 20. Although it is more expensive to produce cigarettes with higher levels of nicotine, they accelerate the rate of addiction and packets of 10 packs are more frequently bought by price sensitive young people.



95% of lung cancer is caused by smoking.

Despite overwhelming scientific proof of the enormous harm tobacco products do, the tobacco industry and its representatives refuse to acknowledge this evidence, at least in public.

A Tobacco Information and Resource Centre should be established to develop and maintain a database on all aspects of tobacco and health. Run in association with ASH Ireland, it will also provide assistance to people researching tobacco issues. In addition, the tobacco industry should be required to make public all the information it has about the effects of its products on the health of its customers.

The current situation in Ireland

Sales continue to rise...

Between 1987 and 1997 official cigarette sales in Ireland rose by 11% to 6.3 billion a year. However, the figures are substantially understated – it is thought by up to 15% – because they exclude smuggled goods.

Despite increases in the tax on tobacco, the price barrier has fallen significantly in real terms in recent years.

In the mid-70s about 45% of all adults smoked. That fell to about 28% in the early 90s but the figure is now growing again. Nearly a third of all Irish adults smoke cigarettes and a further 7% smoke either a pipe or cigars. Irish consumers are now the third highest spenders on tobacco out of 14 European countries.

...as a growing number of women and children become addicted

The proportion of women who smoke has increased and there is a strong bias towards youth. About 40% of women and 38% of men aged between 18 and 34 now smoke.

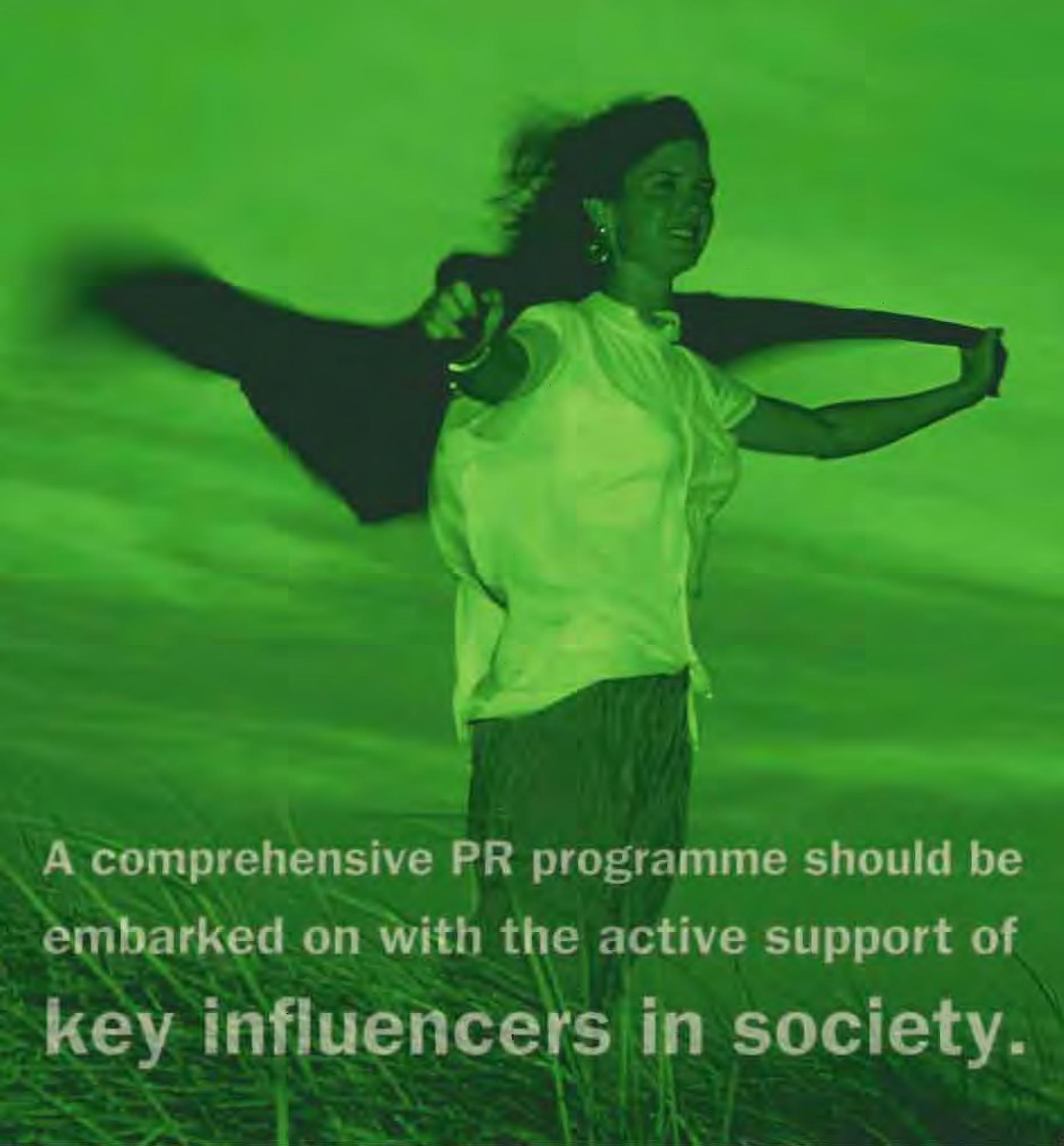
It is particularly worrying that, despite all the efforts to warn them about the dangers of smoking, children start at a young age. Over 8% of boys and 3% of girls between the ages of nine and 11 claim to have experimented with tobacco. By the ages 15 to 17 these percentages have risen to 31% for boys and 36% for girls. About two thirds of all children still experiment with tobacco and over a quarter claim to be habitual smokers.

Tobacco products remain widely available to everyone...

Tobacco products are readily available throughout the country in over 12,000 pubs and some 50,000 retail outlets. Despite the ban on the sale of cigarettes to people under 16 years of age, it is estimated that around £10 million worth are sold illegally to children each year.

...and demand is still stimulated by strong marketing efforts

Although direct advertising of tobacco products in newspapers and magazines has been restricted for a number of years, “spill over” advertising is widespread in imported publications, particularly from the UK. Direct advertising is totally banned on radio and television but the industry still engages in high profile sponsorships to circumvent this.



A comprehensive PR programme should be embarked on with the active support of **key influencers in society.**

All forms of advertising of tobacco products should be banned immediately. In addition an immediate ban should be placed on the sponsoring of events and activities by the tobacco industry. The Minister for Health and Children has announced that he intends introducing these bans with effect from July 2000.

The way forward

The mission of the Tobacco Free Policy Review Group is to promote a tobacco free society. An outright ban on tobacco is not an option at present. A large proportion of the population is addicted to it and it is readily available in neighbouring countries. A complete ban, therefore, in addition to being politically unacceptable would be limited in its effect and almost certainly lead to substantial black market and associated criminal activity.

Against this background the top priority must be to break the cycle by preventing young people becoming addicted in the first place. To do this we need to reduce children's exposure to the negative role model of adults smoking and to persuade children who are already smoking to quit. Creation of a tobacco free environment for children requires rigorous and sustained multiple actions that focus on reducing the prevalence of tobacco use.

The Review Group has proposed four key strategic objectives and a number of specific actions designed to help achieve them. These objectives are to:

- radically change society's ambivalent attitudes towards smoking
- significantly increase the number of people who stop smoking each year
- provide additional protections to reduce the level of passive smoking
- establish a clear focus on the needs of children in respect of smoking

For this plan to succeed it is vital that effective management systems be put in place to ensure sustained momentum, to provide independent monitoring of progress against objectives and to enable appropriate adjustments to be made to the plan in the light of experience and changes in the overall environment. An Office of Tobacco Control should be set up to co-ordinate and monitor the implementation of the plan.



An ongoing campaign to improve public knowledge of
**the tobacco control laws
should be started.**

The Ministerial Code of Practice regulating public broadcasting should be reviewed to ensure that all forms of indirect advertising be excluded from the airwaves, including product placement in sporting events as well as films. As a result of an EU Directive further legal measures will also have to be introduced.

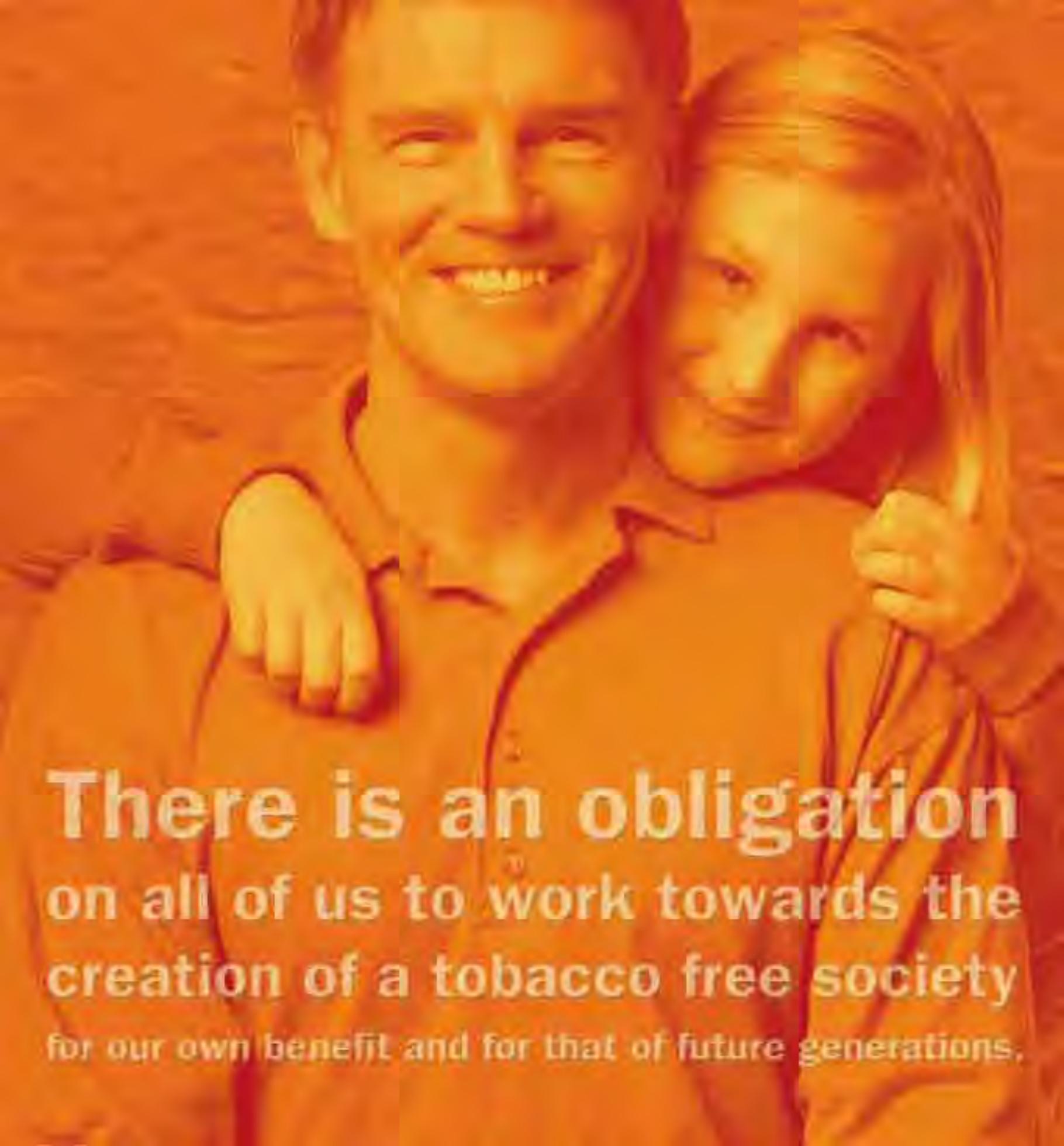
Changing ambivalent attitudes

Because smoking is so widespread there are mixed views about its acceptability, even amongst non-smokers. This ambivalence towards tobacco use is fostered by the tobacco industry. People's attitudes towards where and when smoking is acceptable – if at all – will only change when people throughout society are better informed about the harm that tobacco wreaks.

Consistent programmes are required to deliver the facts about smoking and the activities of the tobacco industry as well as to challenge false and misleading propaganda issued by proponents of tobacco use. At the same time, it is important that promotional activities by the tobacco industry should be further curbed.

The following specific measures are advocated:

- A comprehensive Public Relations programme should be embarked on with the active support of key influencers in society, including local community leaders as well as key figures in politics, business, entertainment and the communications sectors.
- Local community groups should be encouraged to undertake tobacco free initiatives with the help of grants, provided through the health boards, and information programmes for local community leaders.
- A Tobacco Information and Resource Centre should be established to develop and maintain a database on all aspects of tobacco and health. Run in association with ASH Ireland, it will also provide assistance to people researching tobacco issues. In addition, the tobacco industry should be required to make public all the information it has about the effects of its products on the health of its customers.
- All forms of advertising of tobacco products should be banned immediately. In addition an immediate ban should be placed on the sponsoring of events and activities by the tobacco industry. The Minister for Health and Children has announced that he intends introducing these bans with effect from July 2000.
- The Ministerial Code of Practice regulating public broadcasting should be reviewed to ensure that all forms of indirect advertising be excluded from the airwaves, including product placement in sporting events as well as films. As a result of an EU Directive further legal measures will also have to be introduced.
- A diploma course in Tobacco and Health Studies should be established for health care administrators, teachers and health care professionals. It should be recognised for career purposes.
- Ireland should continue to work with the European Union and the World Health Organisation to develop global responses to a global problem.

A photograph of a man and a woman smiling together. The woman has her arm around the man's shoulder. The image has a warm, orange-toned filter.

There is an obligation
on all of us to work towards the
creation of a tobacco free society
for our own benefit and for that of future generations.

A diploma course in Tobacco and Health Studies should be established for health care administrators, teachers and health care professionals. It should be recognised for career purposes.

Increase the number of smokers who quit

Because tobacco is highly addictive smokers who want to quit need all the help they can get. Programmes to assist smokers who want to quit are valuable in a number of ways, even if their success rates are still relatively low. They help to reaffirm the message that smoking is addictive and to ensure that smokers will actively discourage their children from smoking.

The following specific measures are advocated:

- Aspects of the proposed overall PR programme should be targeted to inform smokers of the benefits of stopping and the dangers of continuing to smoke.
- There should be increased availability of nicotine patches and other aids to increase the chances of success for smokers trying to quit. These nearly double the chances of success.
- There should be systematic evaluation of the various counselling and personal support services provided by the health boards with a view to promoting best practice. These should include maternity services and support for patients with tobacco related diseases.

Additional protection for passive smokers

At present the primary freedom of choice is afforded to smokers. Except in a limited number of legally specified places they are permitted to smoke wherever they choose, without regard for the wishes of others or the harm it does to them. This position needs to be reversed over time, so that the primary right is for non-smokers to breathe air free of tobacco smoke wherever they go, except in places where smoking is specifically permitted.

As a further step towards this position, it is necessary to extend the range of existing legislation to cover many more locations frequented by non-smokers, either by choice or of necessity. Furthermore, better enforcement of existing legislation is needed in many locations, including on essential services such as public transport.

The following specific measures are advocated:

- An ongoing campaign to improve public knowledge of the tobacco control laws should be started.
- Smoking bans should be extended to cover all enclosed workplaces, places where essential routine commercial transactions are done, public transport, places of entertainment open to people under 18 years of age and all health and education establishments.
- Proactive programmes of inspection by Health Boards of premises subject to tobacco control legislation should be introduced.

A clear focus on the needs of children

Children are the most vulnerable members of our society because they are highly impressionable. It is a normal part of growing up to adopt practices which are associated with adulthood and afford status amongst peers. Smoking cigarettes currently delivers these perceived benefits to many young people, who have little true awareness of or interest in the longer term harm it does. That smoking is physiologically as well as psychologically addictive is an additional problem.

Despite these particular difficulties, it is common sense that any effort designed to achieve a tobacco free society should put strong emphasis on preventing children from starting to smoke in the first place and on helping young people who have begun smoking to quit as soon as possible.

The following specific measures are advocated:

- Taxes on cigarettes should be substantially increased each year above the rate of inflation. The World Bank has found that price increases are highly effective in reducing demand for cigarettes in both rich and poor countries, inducing some smokers to quit and preventing others from becoming addicted. Significantly, children and adolescents are more responsive to price rises.
- The legal age at which cigarettes can be bought should be raised to 18 years, with the responsibility for determining legal age placed on the retailer.
- Registration of tobacco wholesalers and retailers should be introduced, with sales of tobacco products only permitted through registered premises. The tobacco industry should be required to maintain this register. Registration fees should be charged and used to fund the costs of the initiative. Penalties for breaches of sales regulations, particularly selling to minors, would include initial warnings and withdrawal of registration for persistent offenders.

Ireland should continue to work with the European Union and the World Health Organisation to develop global responses to a global problem.

- The tobacco industry's access to children should be further restricted. Cigarette vending machines should only be permitted in registered premises which are used wholly or for the time being by people over 18 years old. All forms of tobacco advertising should be prohibited at the point of sale, including on vending machines.
- Cigarettes should only be sold in packages of 20 or more. Increasing the minimum number of units which may be bought, raises the price barrier for children at the experimental stage.
- Smoking should be banned in all places usually frequented by children.
- Enhanced health education programmes, with a clear focus on educating children about the advantages of a tobacco free lifestyle, should be developed to augment existing ones.
- With the assistance of the Institute of Public Health, The Tobacco Free initiative should be integrated into third level curricula.
- Specific remedial programmes for child smokers should be developed.
- Research into the clinical aspects of childhood addiction to tobacco should be commissioned from The Health Research Board.
- A sponsorship programme should be developed to support national children's events in return for positive exposure for the Tobacco Free Society initiative.
- Each Health Board should establish a subcommittee to deal solely with tobacco. Comprising board and non-board members, it should help young people to take ownership of the tobacco free mission through the direct employment of transition year secondary students and other young people as 'interns'.

Can we really hope to win?

For decades powerful forces have been at work to ensure that the tobacco industry maintains its grip on generations of smokers. Even today, the tobacco industry continues to recruit new addicts amongst our children and in developing countries throughout the world.

But across the globe there is a growing awareness of the enormous problems associated with tobacco addiction and a growing conviction that the time to shout stop is overdue.

For The World Health Organisation action against smoking is now a top priority. In the US more and more people are taking legal actions against the tobacco industry, seeking compensation for the harm it has done to them. In Europe, as in most parts of the developed world, there is a consensus for the introduction of a comprehensive ban on the advertising of all tobacco products.

In Ireland, the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Health and Children has recommended the adoption of a national anti-tobacco strategy and commencement of legal action against the industry by the State. Here, too, the fight against tobacco addiction has the support of many strong allies in both the public and voluntary sectors. These include such organisations as Ash Ireland, the Irish Cancer Society, the Irish Heart Foundation, the Irish Medical Organisation, the Environmental Health Officers Association and the Irish Nurses Organisation.

So the tide is turning, both at home and abroad and there is every reason to be positive about the future. The fight towards a tobacco free society will not be easy, but it will be won. The real challenge is to ensure that, through focused actions and maintained momentum, we achieve our objectives sooner rather than later.

This document is a summary of

Towards a Tobacco Free Society, Ireland – a Smoke Free Zone

The Report of the Tobacco Free Policy Review Group, Dublin: Stationery Office, 2000.

The Tobacco Free Policy Review Group was set up to carry out a fundamental review of health and tobacco and make recommendations to the Minister for Health and Children. Their report was published in March 2000 and subsequently adopted as Government policy.

The full report is available from the Government Publications Sale Office, Sun Alliance House, Molesworth Street, Dublin 2, through any bookseller, the Office of Tobacco Control or on the web at <http://www.doh.ie/publications/tobacco.html>

<http://www.otc.ie>



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ISBN: 0-9541491-0-6

<http://www.otc.ie>