



# **THE SMOKING BAN**

## **(HOW WE HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY IT)**

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## **WHAT IS HUG?**

HUG stands for the Highland Users Group, which is a network of people who use, or have used, mental health services in the Highlands.

At present, HUG has 342 members and 13 branches across the Highlands. HUG has been in existence now for 10 years.

HUG wants people with mental health problems to live without discrimination and to be equal partners in their communities. They should be respected for their diversity and who they are.

We should:

- ◆ Be proud of who we are
- ◆ Be valued
- ◆ Not be feared
- ◆ Live lives free from harassment
- ◆ Live the lives we choose
- ◆ Be accepted by friends and loved ones
- ◆ Not be ashamed of what we have experienced

We hope to achieve this by:

- ◆ Speaking out about the services we need and the lives we want to lead.
- ◆ Educating the public, professionals and young people about our lives and experiences.

Between them, members of HUG have experience of nearly all the mental health services in the Highlands.

### **HUG's aims are as follows:**

- ◆ To be the voice of people in Highland who have experienced mental health problems.
- ◆ To promote the interests of people in Highland who use or have used mental health services.
- ◆ To eliminate stigma and discrimination against people with mental health problems.
- ◆ To promote equality of opportunity for people with mental health problems irrespective of creed, sexuality, gender, race or disability.
- ◆ To improve understanding about the lives of people with a mental health problem.
- ◆ To participate in the planning development and management of services for users at a local, Highland and national level.
- ◆ To identify gaps in services and to campaign to have them filled.
- ◆ To find ways of improving the lives, services and treatments of people with mental health problems.
- ◆ To share information and news on mental health issues among mental health service user groups and interested parties.
- ◆ To increase knowledge about resources, treatments and rights for users.
- ◆ To promote cooperation between agencies concerned with mental health.

## **INTRODUCTION**

In 2006 the ban on smoking in enclosed public spaces came into being throughout Scotland. It meant that people were now no longer permitted to smoke in places such as restaurants or pubs or even in places that were partially enclosed such as bus shelters.

Psychiatric Hospitals were one of the few places that were exempt from the ban. This meant that people who were patients were still permitted to use the smoke rooms on the wards that they were staying in.

Prior to the ban coming into effect we discussed it with our members and produced a report (Smoking and Mental Health - April 2006). Although we had mixed feelings about the proposals generally, there was a fairly clear consensus that people were really worried about the effect of the ban in places such as mental health drop-in centres. We worried that it would cause a drop in numbers attending mental health facilities when people had a pressing need for the support they provide. We felt that it was an imposition too far and had the opinion that people using mental health facilities were in a special situation that needed to be respected.

We decided that we would present our report in an effort to retain smoking areas in all mental health facilities and then look at the subject again some months after the implementation of the Act banning smoking in public places had come into effect.

This report is a collection of our feelings about the ban collected in August 2006. It also looks at our views on the possibility of Psychiatric Hospitals becoming smoke free too at some stage in the future.

We held meetings in the 13 branches of HUG and involved 85 people in the discussions.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Many of us have been affected by the ban on smoking in public places. Some of us are angry and frustrated by its provisions, yet others welcome being able to stay in smoke free environments.

The great majority of us have obeyed the ban and many of us have been surprised at how quickly it has been accepted and become a normal part of the environment in which we live.

Some of us feel that the ban has helped us reduce our smoking but equally others feel that it just makes us smoke in different ways and in different places.

We had thought that many people would stop using those mental health facilities that were subject to the ban but this has not really been the case. Reduction in attendance has been in terms of time spent and has not really been very noticeable. This has been helped by centres building canopies and shelters for people to use outside which have been good in good weather, though we do worry about what will happen when the weather turns colder.

We do worry about a ban on smoking in psychiatric hospitals. We believe that many of us feel that being able to smoke at such times is really beneficial and that not being able to smoke may damage us, be hard to enforce and may in some cases infringe our human rights.

Most of us would like psychiatric hospitals to keep their smoke rooms but wish that they could be made into more attractive places in which to smoke.

## **HOW HAVE WE BEEN AFFECTED BY THE BAN GENERALLY?**

We were surprised at just how easily the ban had been implemented across the country but we did have mixed feelings about it.

Some of us feel that having smoke free public buildings and spaces is wrong and might be seen as a gross imposition of our rights:

### **Comments from our members:**

*“it's fascist - more rules - more dictatorship.”*

*“it should never have happened in the first place.”*

*“terrible.”*

*“they are trying to tie us in to so much red tape and forcing it on us. If they get away with this what will they think up next?”*

*“I rarely go out and the few places I went to, I would have a coffee and a cigarette so now I don't go out at all.”*

*“I can understand a non smoker's view – they have a right to smoke free places but for me when I'm with people I want to smoke.”*

*“it's up to the person whether they smoke or not.”*

*“as a non smoker I expect smokers are more scorned upon which isn't good. It's a drug addiction and needs to be seen as such.”*

*“people in Edinburgh bring out these stupid laws, its more like a dictatorship everyday.”*

However many of us are positive about it too. We realise that it is a habit that is unhealthy and wish to stop or reduce it, we realise that it affects other people and we have found it easier to adapt to than we thought. Those of us that don't smoke have found our new smoke free environments much more pleasant.

### **Comments from our members:**

*“I gave up to be healthy - I object to being polluted by other people. I don't mind other people smoking but I do mind the effect on me.”*

*“I became ill and had to stop smoking – giving up made me feel better and for that reason I am now a non smoker and apologise for all the smoke I made other people smoke.”*

*“It's not too bad, you can't smoke in pubs but now you're not damaging anyone else, so that is good.”*

*“it stops kids getting contaminated.”*

*“smoking is a nightmare of a habit.”*

*“it feels more healthy in the pubs as they are not smoky.”*

*“I found the prospect bad – I dreaded it but in reality it just has to be and I accept it and adapt.”*

*“sometimes you sit down to enjoy a meal. There is no smoke which is really good. It's good not to have to smoke in these areas.”*

*“it's been good .It has proved the folly of the idea that you can't go without a fag.”*

*“I liked the ban - I have an allergy to smoke and can now go to places I couldn't get in before.”*

*“good, it has enlightened me to other people. What I was doing before; I didn't think about it. But to be smoking amongst friends and family is not acceptable. I can remove myself without a problem.”*

*“it's a good thing because previously I would like to smoke. The more places I can't smoke in the better - it helps me cut down.”*

*“it's a big step forward in the right direction - now we need to concentrate on the youngsters.”*

*“it was very good as we should all stop smoking.”*

*“the single most important thing we can do for our health is stop smoking.”*

*“generally we just get on with it.”*

*“people have very reluctantly accepted it but are not necessarily happy with it.”*

*“I find it quite comfortable as a non smoker. Being inside it feels much healthier.”*

*“I find it nice to be in a non smoking environment.”*

*“I think its good for the chain smoker – it helps them stop smoking being in a non smoking zone.”*

*“hash is illegal.-fags should be illegal.”*

Many of us did, however, still feel that we needed to cater for the needs of smokers:

#### **Comments from our members :**

*“It's an excellent thing as long as there is provision for the inveterate smokers to have somewhere to smoke – canopies are good - you need a nice facility to smoke in.”*

*“I'm adapting now but it's much nicer when you go somewhere that has created somewhere for you to smoke.”*

*“it's not right – they should have smoke rooms and non smoke rooms.”*

*“stopping smoking is not easy - it can take years to do.”*

*“courtyard canopies are good.”*

and many of us felt that some of the restrictions were an over reaction:

*“the non smoking in places like bus shelters is ridiculous as it is on train platforms.”*

A lot of us disliked the fact that so many people now gather in the streets to smoke. Some of us find it is unpleasant seeing people smoking outside, we object to being exposed to their smoke and having to walk past big groups of people. For others it is an annoyance to have to smoke outside in a very public space. We felt exposed and uncomfortable, both from the looks of other people but also when we are subject to cold or rainy weather.

**Member's comments:**

*“in the pubs people have to stand in the street - this is horrible.”*

*“it's really irritating not being able to smoke with a coffee or being seen smoking outside in the street - which used to be seen as uncouth.”*

*“there should be designated places to smoke – it looks really bad when you see groups of people standing around outside.”*

*“people shouldn't have to go out and stand in the rain - there should be smoking areas.”*

*“it's a complete pain in the .... at times – we used to be able to smoke in comfort and now we have to go outside when we are stressed or its freezing. Where will the limits be - it's so inconvenient.”*

*“I love smoking and love the smoking ban because you go out and meet people -"smirting”*

*“I think it's atrocious to have to stand outside.”*

**HAVE PEOPLE OBEYED THE BAN AND HAS IT BEEN EASY?**

Almost all of us said that we had obeyed the ban even when we disagreed with it and that it had generally been quite easy to do this even if it was frustrating and something we didn't agree with. This was especially so when alternative facilities were provided such as shelters and canopies outside.

**Member's comments:**

*“it's been easy, after the first few weeks people knuckled down.”*

*“you just have to.”*

*“people thought it would be difficult but it turned out not.”*

*“it's been difficult for some people”*

*“it has been instilled in to us quite quickly.”*

*“some people are not happy with it.”*



However many of us felt that the ban would be harder to accept in the colder winter months.

## **HAS IT HELPED PEOPLE SMOKE LESS?**

For some of us the ban has helped us smoke less which we are pleased about, but for others it has had little or no effect:

### **Member's comments:**

*“if you are in a bar, in the past you would have had a pint and 3 cigarettes - now you forget about it.”*

*“I only smoke a couple now ‘cos it’s such a hassle.”*

*“you have to make more of an effort to smoke now.”*

*“some people have given up smoking.”*

*“some people have been willing to give up because of the ban.”*

*“I can sit in here now for an hour without a fag.”*

But some of us say that our way of smoking has changed either by smoking more cigarettes at any one time, or by smoking more in those places we are still allowed to smoke:

### **Member's comments:**

*“when I’m out I smoke less but now I smoke more at home.”*

*“people top up with smokes outside.”*

*“the only difference is where people smoke.”*

Some people feel that they smoke more now:

### **Member's comments:**

*“I’m smoking more than I used to – I’m smoking because I’m so conscious that I can’t smoke.”*

*“people take every opportunity to smoke.”*

*“standing outside I smoke more as that is the only thing to do when you are there.”*

*“people are ‘power smoking’ now because they go outside where they smoke lots at once.”*

One thing that has been noticed in some areas is that with people smoking outside and leaving partially smoked cigarettes around, children are sometimes seen gathering these leavings for their own use.

## HOW HAS THE BAN AFFECTED MENTAL HEALTH FACILITIES?

We had mixed feelings about this. In most places our perception was that the use of mental health facilities had changed very little if at all. In some places there was a fall in attendance but it seemed, in most places that that soon picked up again and in a few places we felt that people now came along but stayed for less time:

### Member's comments:

*“there are fewer attendees – what about winter? People will stay at home.”*

*“when I first came here you wouldn't have got me here without a fag.”*

*“it's hard to say if it's decreased numbers – its quieter but I don't know why.”*

*“I haven't come here as often - it's not so bad in good weather but I can't see me coming in winter even though this is the only place I go.”*

*“we maybe thought it would [reduce attendance] but it has not turned out that way”*

A couple of us said that we felt that we could attend mental health facilities now because they have become smoke free and some of us said that they were now more attractive places to visit.

### Member's comments:

*“I can't stand smoke so coming here is now better.”*

*“there's a cleaner atmosphere here.”*

*“there is a very good reason for it - smoking is obnoxious and stupid – at least keep us free of smoke.”*

*“it has not stopped me to the extent of leaving.”*

Despite this there were still a lot of us who felt that 'smoke rooms' should be provided for smokers, especially if we are in distress and need a place to talk in where we can calm down with a cigarette.

There is also a ruling that our houses should be smoke free for at least an hour before a support worker or other professional visits. This rule is often not obeyed. We do not want this form of control imposed on the place where we live and, often, neither do the workers. There are some support workers who are very glad of the ruling though and happy that they are no longer exposed to peoples smoke.

*“I am visited by a support worker and told that I shouldn't smoke - it's my house. I will smoke in my house. If the workers come I will have the windows open and will ask if it's OK for me to have a cigarette. They always say “ yes its OK to have a cigarette, it's your home”. This seems reasonable. If they want to leave because I am smoking this is OK - if we need to talk we can go in the garden.”*

Some places were already smoke free before the ban and the fact has become accepted. Where people not only can't smoke inside but, have to leave the grounds such as in some council premises or NHS premises, there is sometimes some resentment.

*"you can't smoke out the door - you have to cross the road."*

Some of us worried about standing outside mental health facilities and whether it posed any risk to clients:

*"in dark nights with late opening it could be hard for members and make them very vulnerable."*

and in many places we were grateful that shelters had been erected for smokers which are a great help:

*"if people are driven out to smoke instead of being at the entrance (which looks terrible) why not a seat and a cover..... they should have some form of shelter."*

Whilst some of us are very angry about the effects of the smoke ban on us we do also worry about frail elderly people who go to day centres but still wish to smoke but who, probably, couldn't cope with smoking outside.

Some of us worry that not being allowed to smoke causes people to get more stressed and for tempers to flare more easily.

## **MAKING THE PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL (NEW CRAIGS) SMOKE FREE**

Psychiatric hospitals such as New Craigs are exempt from the ban on smoking in enclosed public spaces but, for some months, we have been aware that this exemption might be removed. We asked our members what they thought of this idea.

Whilst we could see that it would be a good idea to help us stop smoking the great majority of us, smokers and non smokers alike, felt that a smoking ban would be a bad idea.

We felt that a large number of people smoke when they are in hospital (the smoking rooms are usually very crowded and the non smoking rooms sometimes empty) and that to ban smoking would not be helpful.

The reasons we had for this were:

- So many of us smoke - we are not at the same point as the rest of the population to be able to deal with not smoking.
- When we are in hospital we have a great deal on our mind. Getting us to stop smoking would only add to and make our worries harder to bear.
- We use smoking as a way of calming down and relaxing. Even if physiologically it doesn't do this, in our minds cigarettes are a good way of dealing with a stressful environment.
- We worry that the absence of cigarettes will make us tense and nervous and that this will make us more ill and more prone to losing our temper.
- We often have nothing to do - smoking is a sociable way of passing the time.

- Smoking is an addiction - we need to be helped to find ways to give up when we are ready and prepared to do so. This would probably not be at a point in our lives where we are already dealing with a host of other problems.
- Some of us are in hospital involuntarily and cannot leave our wards. Being forced not to smoke would breach our human rights.
- We think that some of us would smoke anyway (but in secret) which would be more of a fire risk.
- Some of us have said we would refuse to be admitted if we couldn't smoke or that if we were admitted we would be more inclined to leave when stopped from smoking.
- The length of stay is an issue - some of us stay far longer than if we were in a hospital for a physical illness and in some ways hospital can feel like home for a time. For some long stay patients it literally is home.
- It would force more of us to gather around hospital entrances which many of us already find intimidating.
- We also felt that as long as non smokers are well catered for then those of us who do smoke shouldn't be a problem to anyone else.
- A lot of us felt that the system in New Craigs (apart from the physical environment of the smoking rooms) worked well anyway and didn't need to be changed.
- We felt that staff expected to implement any ban would be exposed to unnecessary stress.
- We also objected to the idea that we were going to be told to do something and made not to smoke. We felt that the choice should rest with us instead of other people who believe that they know better than us.
- Some of us seriously believed that being prevented from smoking could cause violence.

#### **Member's comments:**

*"it's asking too much - they need to discourage not to ban."*

*"if you stop people who need a cigarette it could make them ill. You need to do it when they are feeling better, not when everything is against them."*

*"if you are going to take the fags off them - who will do this forcibly when nicotine is all that's left to them?"*

*"I'm a non smoker but it can be a solace and a companion to people."*

*"going outside would be totally unfair as I smoke a lot."*

*"if I was on a section it would drive me crazy."*

*"I find comfort with a fag."*

*"solve the biggest problem first, which is not nicotine."*

*"if people are not behaving normally then it would be harder to accept it and would cause trouble."*

*"if there are places that people can go to without harming other people I can't see the harm in smoking."*

*"the whole world would have to stop before New Craigs, it's too early."*

*“it’s a useful tool, it calms people and diffuses tense situations.”*

*“if I was in New Craigs, I don’t think I could last the pace without a cigarette - I need a cigarette in my hand – it helps me through the turmoil.”*

*“New Craigs should be exempt - people living through illness shouldn’t have to cope with this too.”*

*“there are a lot of things going on with us at that time.”*

*“wait ‘till we are back in the community in normal settings.”*

*“deal with mental illness first, don’t add to the problems – you can’t just stop smoking.”*

*“even if they are stimulants they are also relaxing - habits in themselves can be calming.”*

*“I’m a non smoker and I wouldn’t want to stand around outside. I don’t want it imposed on other people.”*

*“can you imagine it on the wards? If you are on a section, can’t leave the ward and want a smoke, the nurse would have to come out with you ..... it could also add to the stress of staff.”*

*“good grief that’s ridiculous.”*

*“it will never work.”*

*“fags are a part of our medication.”*

*“people need to be willing to give up not forced, especially at this time.”*

*“people could lose their temper, there may be violence.”*

*“psychology overtakes biology - it is a symbol of calm.”*

*“I need to smoke in New Craigs. When I am feeling awful I use it as a crutch to keep me going.”*

*“you’re going to take everything away. When you are stressed and ill you smoke. When you are ill it would be cruel, almost abusive, to stop you smoking there.”*

*“it’s lunacy.”*

*“we would feel marked out having to go outside.”*

*“that’s really really mean.”*

*“that’s just punishment.”*

However some of us disagreed with these views and thought that a smoke free hospital could be a good idea. Some of us think that the absence of a ban would give the wrong message and could even encourage us to keep on smoking. We believe that that would be wrong.

Some of us also thought that we can surprise ourselves at how easy it is to give up when necessary. After all people never thought that they could go on long haul flights without smoking, yet now it is a routine we are all used to.

Some of us are fundamentally opposed to smoking and just want it to stop.

*“It may help people stop smoking because of the enforced smoking ban.”*

*“smoking is the most absurd thing to do.”*

Some of us think that the smoke rooms provided are unpleasant places to socialise in and that alternatives need to be provided which are welcoming, light and airy.

*“smoke rooms are atrocious and have a horrible effect on your mental health - we need attractive areas with good ventilation.”*

Some of us feel that what feels like a coercive approach is wrong. We need to discourage smoking and help people give up in a compassionate and understanding manner rather than by imposing bans on smoking in certain places.

We think that the courtyards in the middle of the wards should remain as good alternatives to smoking rooms if these stop being an option.

Some of us, as non smokers, can get very lonely in hospital and feel that if the hospital became non smoking we might be able to see fellow patients more often as they would no longer use the smoke room.

*“when I was in hospital I was totally isolated as everyone was in the smoke room - I would be glad if it became non smoking because then I might get some company.”*

Some of us have the opinion that we are far better at accepting change than we think and that once the ban was imposed we would come to terms with it:

*“if you were physically ill and in Raigmore you would actually accept it as it has been smoke free for so long.”*

Some of us just feel that a ban is inevitable and that we have to get used to the idea.

Some of us feel that a hospital is about health and that unhealthy activity shouldn't be encouraged.

*“ they don't allow alcohol so what is the problem with banning cigarettes.”*

*“how can a doctor allow someone to smoke if it damages them?”*

We also have a feeling that if we are voluntary patients then a smoking ban may be justified as we are still able to get to areas where we can smoke.

For some of us there would be a feeling of relief if we could be away from cigarettes. We also feel that work should be done to help patients stop smoking but that this should be done slowly, compassionately and gently and that this approach should be aimed at improving all aspects of health.

Some of us also feel that non smokers have rights that outweigh smokers and that they have the right to expect that all parts of the hospital should be smoke free.

We did think that we need to know what works and what doesn't - stopping smoking within New Craigs is not necessarily a good idea if it just makes people smoke elsewhere or if people start smoking again as soon as they are able to. However if there are hospitals who have successfully imposed smoke bans anyway then maybe we could learn from them.

Some of us feel that as many of us are refusing to stop smoking when we know it is so bad for us that society has a responsibility to help us stop whether we like it or not and a few of us think that hospitals may be an ideal place to stimulate us into considering a halt to smoking.

*"I first went to Raigmore and it was smoking but by the fourth admission I couldn't smoke inside - my cigarettes went down from 40 a day to 4 so it was quite good."*

Some of us also made the point that evidence that passive smoking kills is well known and can't be ignored even if we want to smoke.

Some of us don't like the idea at all but have a feeling that it may be a final straw that helps us to finally stop smoking.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With thanks to all the members of HUG, and other mental health service users, who contributed to this report.

*Please feel free to photocopy this report. The report can be supplied in large print or on tape.*

*However if you use this report or quote from it or use it to inform your practice or planning please tell us about this first. This helps us know what is being done on our behalf and helps us inform our members of the effect their voice is having.*

For more information on HUG, or an Information Pack, call:

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