Briefing: Stage 3 debate: Public Health (Wales Bill)

The British Medical Association (BMA) is an independent professional association and trade union representing doctors and medical students from all branches of medicine all over the UK and supporting them to deliver the highest standards of patient care. We have a membership of over 160,000, which continues to grow every year. BMA Cymru Wales represents almost 8,000 members in Wales from every branch of the medical profession.

Public Health (Wales) Bill
This briefing has been prepared ahead of the stage 3 debate on the Public Health (Wales) Bill planned for the 9 May 2017.

BMA Cymru Wales responded to both the green and white paper consultations on the Public Health (Wales) Bill in the last Assembly, and gave comprehensive evidence to that Assembly’s Health and Social Care Committee.

The Association strongly supports broad legislation to protect human health and we welcome the Public Health (Wales) Bill as currently drafted, particularly provisions for mandatory Health Impact Assessments in specified circumstances.

We were grateful for the opportunity to provide written and oral evidence to the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee in 2016. Following this, we welcomed many of the recommendations made in the Committee’s stage 1 report, in particular those relating to obesity. We were disappointed that no amendments on obesity were carried as part of the stage 2 proceedings.

It is pleasing that the Minister has since worked with Rhun ap Iorwerth AM on amendments that provide for a national obesity strategy which have subsequently been tabled by Rhun ap Iorwerth AM.

BMA Cymru Wales would strongly encourage Assembly Members to support the amendments tabled by Rhun ap Iorwerth as follows:

Rhun ap Iorwerth 1
Long title, page 1, line 1, after ‘provision’, insert ‘for a national strategy on tackling obesity;’.

Rhun ap Iorwerth 2
Section 1, page 1, after line 13, insert—
‘( ) Part [Part inserted by amendment 3] makes provision for a national strategy on tackling obesity.’.

Rhun ap Iorwerth 3
Page 2, after line 21, insert a new section—
‘PART [ ]’
Why does tackling obesity need to be prioritised?
Obesity currently represents one of the greatest public health challenges to the Welsh population and is growing in prevalence. Data from the latest Welsh Health Survey shows that 59% of adults in Wales are overweight or obese, including 24% who are classed as obese.

For people who are overweight and physically inactive, their risk of developing serious life threatening and chronic diseases is markedly increased. There are also substantial health and social care costs associated with the treatment of obesity.

Additional information and research
The BMA has a range of policies covering the promotion of a healthy diet, an underlying cause of high levels of obesity.

In our Manifesto for the 2016 Assembly elections What About Health – three steps to a healthier nation we called for politicians to work together to:

- implement interventions to curb the promotion and availability of unhealthy foods;
- ensure sufficient and convenient opportunities for sport and exercise;
- provide a comprehensive strategic approach to nutrition and exercise.
The 2015 report by the BMA’s Board of Science, *Food for thought: promoting a healthy diet among children and young people*, brings together a range of policies focused on children and diet, including policies on obesity.

The 2012 publication by the BMA’s Board of Science, *Healthy transport = Healthy lives*, brings together BMA policy on physical activity and active travel.