A stylized illustration of buildings. On the left is a tall, white skyscraper with a grid of dark squares representing windows. To its right and slightly lower is a shorter, orange building with a triangular roof and a grid of dark squares. Further to the right is a smaller, orange house with a triangular roof and a grid of dark squares.

***Tackling inequality  
is the key to  
improving health***

**ASH Scotland manifesto for the 2016 Scottish Parliament elections**

# **Introduction: Tobacco use is intrinsically linked to inequality**

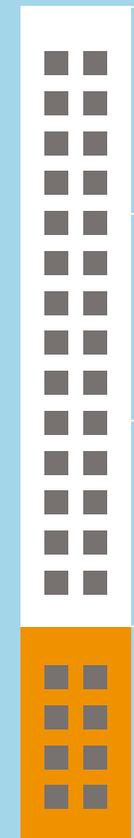
Wealth inequality drives health inequality – and Scotland’s health inequalities are the widest in Western Europe. Health inequality is the greatest health challenge the next Scottish Parliament will have to address.

Tobacco use is highly determined by social and economic pressures and is a significant mechanism by which inequality harms people. Smoking rates in the most deprived communities are four times higher than in the richest. Almost half of adults who are permanently sick or disabled, or who are unemployed and seeking work, smoke tobacco. Smoking rates are particularly high amongst people with mental health issues, the prison population and children in care. In every one of these groups most of those who smoke say that they want to stop.

→ Addressing patterns of tobacco use will play an enormous part in reducing the harm caused by health inequality and improving well-being, particularly for vulnerable groups. Government policy and action should reflect the fact that tobacco use is rarely a simple, freely-made, lifestyle choice. Scotland’s next tobacco strategy must focus on the social and economic factors that lead some groups to smoke and make it more difficult to stop. Concerted action across Government departments is required if we are to protect children and support those wishing to quit, so that the only people who smoke are the small number of informed adults who actively choose to do so.

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People living in deprived areas are

**4X**

more likely to smoke than those living in affluent ones.



# 1. Ensure the next generation grows up free from tobacco

Two-thirds of people who smoke started when they were children and most have gone on to regret it. Tobacco companies present smoking as an adult lifestyle choice, yet few adults take up smoking and almost nobody over the age of 25. If we could ensure that smoking really was a free choice made by adults then very few people would do it.

→ The next Scottish Government should help the next generation grow up free from tobacco by committing to abide by the principles of Scotland's Charter for a Tobacco-free Generation:

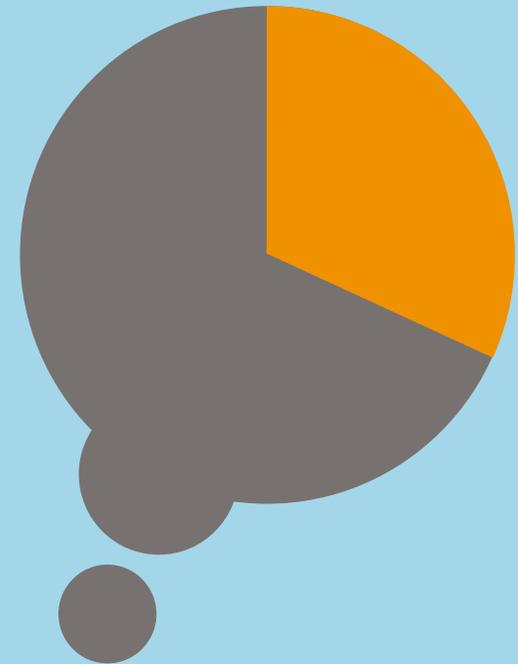
- every baby should be born free from the harmful effects of tobacco;
- children have a particular need for a smoke-free environment;
- all children should play, learn and socialise in places that are free from tobacco;
- every child has the right to effective education that equips them to make informed positive choices on tobacco and health;
- all young people should be protected from commercial interests which profit from recruiting new smokers;
- any young person who smokes should be offered accessible support to help them to become tobacco-free.



## 2. Stop neglecting the physical health of people with mental health issues

A third of tobacco in the UK is consumed by people with mental health issues, who experience physical ill-health and die years earlier than the mainstream population. People with mental health issues are just as motivated to quit as the rest of the population. Yet smoking rates in this group are not declining as they are in the general population, despite the weight of evidence that stopping smoking is associated with improved mental health as well as physical well-being.

- The national strategy on mental health must recognise that tobacco use is causing disproportionate harm to people with mental health issues, and be clear that smoking should not be endorsed as a support or coping mechanism. This requires changes in the culture of mental health support services, and in the approaches and actions of professionals across the sector, so that people are motivated and supported to find positive alternatives for the roles currently played by tobacco.



*A third of tobacco in the UK is consumed by people with mental health issues.*

### ***3. Give preventing dementia the same importance as dementia care or cure***

Dementia cases in Scotland will double over the next 25 years unless risk factors are addressed. We now know that the risk of developing dementia is up to 70% higher amongst those who smoke heavily – so that reducing the smoking rate is an effective means of reducing the future rate of dementia. Yet the link between smoking and dementia is not well known amongst people who smoke.

- ➔ There has been great progress in research into dementia cures and in standards for dementia care. Learning from the experience of cancer prevention, heart health and stroke awareness campaigns, we now need a complementary strategy for dementia prevention which addresses the various factors which increase dementia risk, including smoking.

*The risk of developing dementia is up to*

**70%**

*higher amongst those who smoke heavily.*

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## 4. Put tobacco out of sight, out of mind and out of fashion

There are around 10,000 retailers selling tobacco in Scotland – one for every 90 people who smoke. With 8 times more tobacco outlets than pharmacies, poison is sold more widely in our communities than medicine. Deprived communities have a particularly high concentration of tobacco outlets, presenting a deadly, addictive substance as an everyday consumer item. Every 100 packs of twenty cigarettes a shop sells removes 15 days of life from the community it serves.

- The Government should commit to helping retailers shift their business model away from reliance on a harmful product in long-term decline. A programme of Government support is needed to assist retailers in diversifying to healthier products which are better placed to sustain their businesses into the future.



There are around

**10,000**

places to buy tobacco in Scotland.

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## 5. Focus e-cigarette debates on the goal of reducing tobacco use

Electronic cigarettes have the potential to help people stop using tobacco, but concerns have also been raised over recruiting new markets for nicotine and the limited health benefit to the over 100,000 people in Scotland who continue to use tobacco alongside e-cigarettes (“dual use”). We are confident that e-cigarettes are much less harmful than tobacco, whilst not being completely safe.

- As the most harmful product, tobacco should be subject to the strongest regulation. Regulatory approaches should support those who smoke to quit tobacco completely, to shift to e-cigarettes only or quit nicotine use entirely. The suggestion that e-cigarettes could help groups in particular situations, such as prisoners, patients in psychiatric hospitals or parents wishing to make their homes smoke-free, should be tested. Marketing of e-cigarettes must be regulated so that it is tightly focused on people who smoke, while the growing involvement of tobacco companies in the e-cigarette market must be closely monitored.

*The growing involvement of tobacco companies in the e-cigarette market must be closely monitored.*

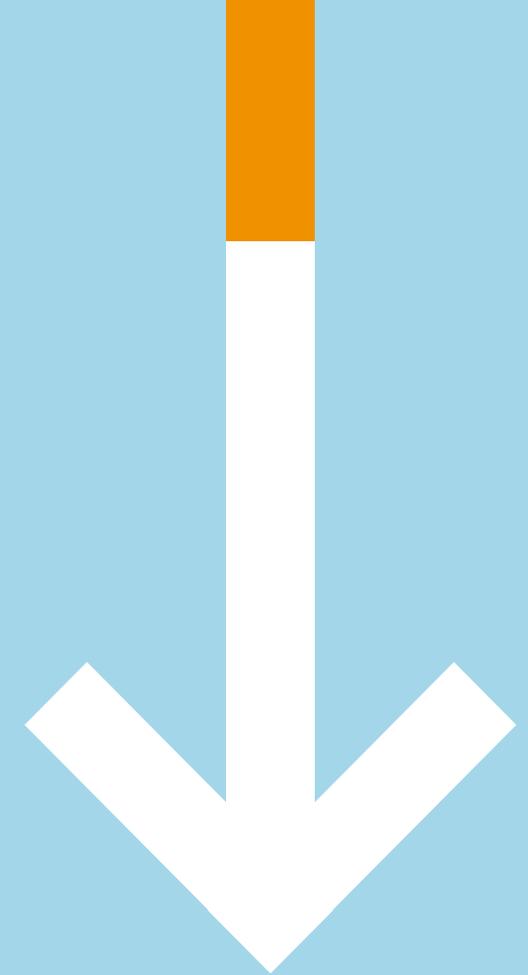
## 6. Defend the historically low levels of illicit tobacco

Illicit tobacco is a real problem in that it undermines health regulations we have fought long and hard to achieve, brings organised crime into communities and deprives the public purse of much needed income. It is also a manufactured problem, with tobacco companies scaremongering over illicit products in order to oppose public health measures. Yet figures from Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs indicate the number of illicit cigarettes used in the UK has decreased by 76% since 2001 and the volume of illicit hand-rolling tobacco has decreased by 33%.

- The reduction in illicit tobacco has been achieved at a time when regulation and prices have increased and stems from improved enforcement measures. To maintain the downward pressure on the illicit market, enforcement work by trading standards, police and others must be sufficiently resourced and robustly pursued. Any trader caught selling illicit tobacco should receive an immediate long-term ban from selling tobacco of any kind.

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*The number of illicit cigarettes used in the UK has decreased by*

**76%**  
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ASH Scotland is the national charity working to reduce the harm and inequality caused by tobacco.

Further information and discussion of the six calls, alongside background evidence and references, can be found at [www.ashscotland.org.uk/election](http://www.ashscotland.org.uk/election)