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Smoking costs society - Investing now in prevention and early years will pay long-term benefits

Two key presentations at a conference on smoking, lifestyle and cultural change will today [Thursday 24 June] focus on the need to ensure that a time when public spending is to be cut, the right decisions are made to invest in long term health. Speaking at the Scottish Tobacco Control Alliance's Annual Meeting in Stirling, ASH Scotland Chief Executive **Sheila Duffy** commented:

"Smoking costs society. A quarter of all deaths in Scotland are due to smoking and there is a cost to bear in terms of the impact on the NHS, the economy, and to families losing loved ones or coping with long-term illness or disability.

"Tobacco use costs the Scottish economy £837 million a year and the NHS an annual £403 million. Reducing smoking delivers not just long term health benefits to our society but economic savings too.

"There is no doubt that we are about to face major public service cuts over the next few years, but I would hope the decisions that are to be made are taken carefully. Focusing on innovative and practical initiatives and support that will reduce the numbers of adults smoking and children taking up smoking will make really positive changes to the public health of Scotland.

"Prevention measures that reduce youth smoking uptake and stop smoking support services that help smokers to quit, deliver long-term dividends and these must be maintained."

Sarah Burton, policy development manager at Children in Scotland also told the conference that investing in support in the early years of children's lives was the only way to end the cycle of ill health and poverty. In a presentation at today's meeting on the exposure to tobacco, alcohol, and drugs in children's early development, Ms Burton said:

"Local authorities and health boards across Scotland are under pressure to start making cuts, or at least decide where the axe might fall soon. However that should not be done at the expense of investing in the health of our children's early years which then provides long term benefits to society and the economy.

Most people understand that investing in support for women and their families during pregnancy and in the early days, months and years of their children's lives is the only way to end cycles of poverty and ill health. It is also cost effective. The effects of smoking, alcohol, poor nutrition, poverty and stress on the developing foetus, baby and

young child have life-long, permanent consequences that put immediate and long-term strains on families and public services.

"The Scottish Government and Cosla (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities) have signed up to transform the way we invest in the early years. Now is the time to be focusing on what was set out in the early years framework and to provide holistic support for those who need it most. We should also keep in mind that the effects of smoking, alcohol and stress on the developing foetus are not limited to those women living in poverty, nor is the health of babies and young children the sole responsibility of pregnant women and new mothers. Fathers, friends, grandparents, and communities share the task of changing attitudes and behaviour to affect the health and wellbeing of all our babies and young children, who have a right to the healthy and happy start to life."

Sheila Duffy is available for pre-recorded interviews via ISDN on Wednesday 23 June. Sheila Duffy and Sarah Burton are both available for interview at the STCA meeting in Stirling on Thursday 24 June.

For further information from ASH Scotland please contact Jeanette Campbell on 0131 220 9466.

For further information from Children in Scotland please contact Tracey Francis at tfrancis@childreninscotland.org.uk or 0131 222 2419.

ENDS

Notes for Editors

1. Action on Smoking & Health (Scotland) (ASH Scotland) is an independent Scottish charity working in partnership to protect people from the harm caused by tobacco. Registered Scottish charity number SC 010412.

2. **Children in Scotland** is the longstanding national agency for the whole of the children's sector, reaching over 250,000 individuals through our extensive membership of more than 450 statutory agencies, voluntary sector organisations, professional associations and community groups. For further information visit www.childreninscotland.org.uk.