



GORDONSTOUN
Plus Est En Vous

Sheila Duffy

Hopeman, 1980

Recognised for services to public health, driving change on issues relating to tobacco use.

Sheila Duffy is Chief Executive of ASH Scotland and has dedicated her career to leading transformation of tobacco use and health.

Born in Kirkcaldy she moved from the Scottish school system at Cults Academy in Aberdeen to the English system in 1978, skipping an academic year and taking an A Level Wolfson Scholarship place at Gordonstoun after her mother had seen the scholarships advertised and encouraged her to apply.

Having achieved her A levels, Sheila was offered a place at Cambridge – an opportunity she would have otherwise been unable to access, as the university did not accept students with Scottish qualifications at that time.

With a degree in English Literature and Education and, after a year of volunteering, Sheila began her career in the world of corporate video before moving into broadcast TV making schools programmes for Channel 4 at Yorkshire and Grampian TV. In 1995 Sheila accepted a joint contract role, working with ASH Scotland and HEBS to explore Scottish alliances on tobacco and health. By 2008, she was Chief Executive, representing the organisation on Scottish Government governance and strategy groups, at the European Smoke-free Partnership, and in the Global Alliance for Tobacco Control.

As an impactful health campaigner on tobacco issues, Sheila's work has been recognised by the Royal Environmental Health Institute for Scotland, the Faculty of Public Health, and the Scottish Cancer Foundation.

My greatest achievement has been helping establish smoke-free legislation in Scotland.

When I started working in this field the harms of tobacco were hardly recognised. It took six years of hard work to raise awareness that tobacco smoke is a health hazard. The harms were clear from a growing body of research and when the Scottish Parliament was established, the public debates began. The tobacco industry was complacent until a late stage. By the time they realised Scotland's Parliament could legislate on health, a cross-party consensus for tackling tobacco smoke was embedded. In 2005, Scotland followed Ireland as global leaders in legislating to clear enclosed public places of tobacco smoke, and again in 2013 we set a goal for minimal population tobacco smoking by 2034, and a target to halve children's exposure to smoke in domestic settings.

Gordonstoun taught me resilience, determination and open mindedness - which has been key to successful campaigning.

Going from a teenage life at home to boarding school was a shock but it made me grow up and develop my independence. I found the diversity of students at Gordonstoun helped me appreciate other cultures and viewpoints and that's been valuable in my work, to listen and to advocate for change. There was also a strong community focused ethos at school which I took with me into my career - the thought that we all have a duty to our communities, especially to people less advantaged.

People think the work has been done but now there's a new generation of problems.

The tobacco industry continues to evade restrictions on its profits. E-cigarettes and other nicotine products are the new challenge and I want to see smoke-free places expanded to include vapes and heated tobacco/herbal products. I'm proud of how we navigated the campaign for smoke free legislation using evidence-based advocacy, and that's how we are tackling these new challenges. Kurt Hahn focused on whole person education, an ethos that prepared me to step out into the world and engage with thoughtfulness, care and resilience. Truly, 'Plus est en vous' – there is more within you. Let's make it count!

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