

SMOKEFREE PLAY AREAS**Report of the Sunderland Tobacco Alliance****1. Purpose of the Report**

To update the Health and Wellbeing Board on smokefree play areas in Sunderland and present members with the rationale for these proposed changes and feedback from a consultation exercise.

2. Background

Although there has been a legal ban on smoking in all enclosed public places in the UK since July 2007, there is no legal basis to formally ban smoking in open public areas. The Government's Tobacco Control Plan for England published in March 2011 states; "Local communities and organisations may also wish to go further than the requirements of smokefree laws in creating environments free from secondhand smoke, for example in children's play areas." Initiatives such as these can also help to shape positive social norms and discourage the use of tobacco, and reduce the likelihood of them becoming smokers in the future.

2.1 Rationale for Smokefree children's play areas in Sunderland

Smoking is a childhood addiction and most smokers in the North East start aged 15. Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death and disease and is the leading cause of health inequalities. Young people most at risk of becoming smokers themselves grow up in communities where smoking is the norm. Furthermore, exposure to secondhand smoke, particularly amongst children, can also lead to conditions including asthma, wheeze, chest and ear infections and, at its worst, cot death. Appendix one includes the evidence base.

One key action Sunderland City Council could take is to make children's outdoor play areas free from tobacco smoke. It is not intended that the smokefree play areas initiative is perceived as a smoking "ban". The scheme will be promoted as a polite request for adults to voluntarily refrain from smoking in and around children's play areas and would bring about several benefits:

- Decreasing the opportunity for children to see adults smoking around them
- Creating an environment in which smoking is not seen as the norm thus potentially motivating smokers to cut down or to quit
- Protecting the environment and saving local authorities money by reducing tobacco-related litter
- Offering further protection from the harmful effects of secondhand smoke.

2.2 Public opinion in Sunderland

During August 2013 the Locality Public Health team in Sunderland carried out a survey of 347 local people in various parks across the borough to seek local views on whether 'Smoking should be banned in outdoor children's play areas in Sunderland'. 98% said that they agreed or strongly agreed with this statement indicating the very strong support for this position to be considered in Sunderland. (37% of those completing the survey were smokers or ex-smokers). Appendix two includes a detailed breakdown of findings)

2.3 Examples of implementation

There are now many examples of areas where smokefree play areas have been introduced. In this region, Gateshead Council, Durham County Council, Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council, Stockton Borough Council, Newcastle City Council Middlesbrough and Hartlepool Borough Council have all installed signs across each of their parks.

3. Recommendation

The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to support the voluntary code to make Sunderland children's play areas Smokefree

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Appendix One - Evidence Base

Making play areas smokefree decreases the opportunity for children to see adults smoking around them. Children are influenced by what they see, and young people are most at risk of becoming smokers themselves if they grow up in communities where smoking is the norm. The most effective way to prevent young people from becoming smokers is to encourage adult smokers to quit and to remove young people's exposure to smoking behaviours. Increasing the number of smokefree areas can have a positive effect on youth smoking rates: smokefree play areas are associated with lower levels of adolescent smoking¹.

Making tobacco use less acceptable plays a key role in motivating current smokers to cut down or to quit. A key aim of tobacco control is to change the social norms around tobacco use by creating a social and legal climate which challenges the perception that smoking is a normal and acceptable behaviour². Making play areas smokefree will help to change community norms as part of broader tobacco control strategies.

Smokefree play areas will also offer further protection from the harmful effects of secondhand smoke. The effects of secondhand smoke indoors, and the need to protect people from it, are well-known and form the basis of England's smokefree legislation. But there is growing evidence that secondhand smoke outdoors can also cause harm³.

Signs installed in parks to indicate there is a smokefree code in place can help people to challenge someone who lights up in a play area and can point those who want to quit to services that can help them. This is especially important for parents who smoke, as their children are more likely to start smoking than those of non-smoking parents⁴.

If smoking no longer takes place in play areas it follows that there will be a reduction in tobacco-related litter which will not only help to protect the environment but will mean that local authorities will need to spend fewer resources on cleaning up. Cigarette butts are the most common type of litter found in the UK⁵. According to an Environmental Campaigns study, tobacco-related litter was found in 78% of locations investigated, and the cost of clearing cigarette butts is estimated at £342 million each year.

Whilst the number of smokers in the borough is decreasing Sunderland's rate of early deaths caused by smoking remains significantly higher than the national average. Reducing the rates of illness and death caused by smoking remains one of Sunderland's key Public Health priorities. To achieve this objective there is a need to

¹ Wakefield MA Chaloupka FJ, Kaufman NJ, Orleans CT, Barker DC, Ruel EE (2000): "Effect of restrictions on smoking at home, at school and in public places on teenage smoking: cross sectional study", in *British Medical Journal*, 32 (7257): 333-337.

² <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20382647>

³ <http://tobaccocontrol.bmj.com/content/22/3/172.abstract>

⁴ Leonardi-Bee, J, Lisa Jere, M, Britton, J (2011), "Exposure to parental and sibling smoking and the risk of smoking uptake in childhood and adolescence: a systematic review and meta-analysis", in *Thorax International Journal of Respiratory Medicine*, thorax.bmj.com/content/66/10/847.abstract

⁵ <http://www.policyexchange.org.uk/images/publications/cough%20up%20-%20march%2010.pdf>

reduce the number of people who smoke. It can be notoriously difficult for existing smokers to stop, so it is critical that we help to reduce the numbers of people who start to smoke. This includes initiatives that help prevent children in Sunderland from becoming the next generation of smokers.

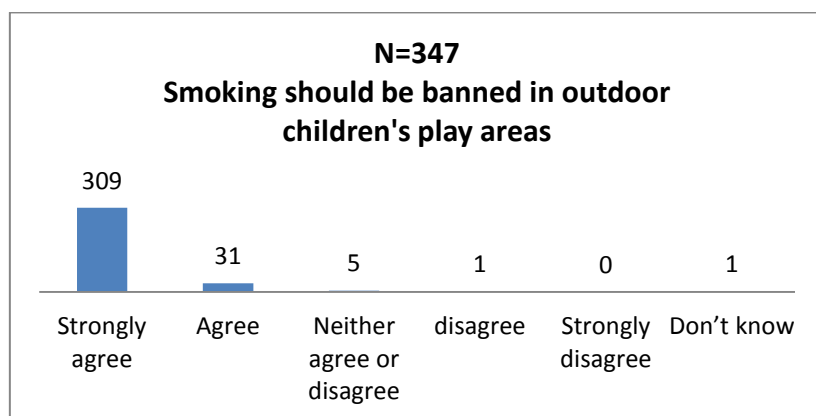
According to the Health Related Behaviour Survey in 2012, 98% of 8 to 10 year olds said they had never smoked at all, but 13% said they would smoke or maybe smoke when they are older, this rises to 19% in 12 to 15 year olds.

Appendix Two – Consultation

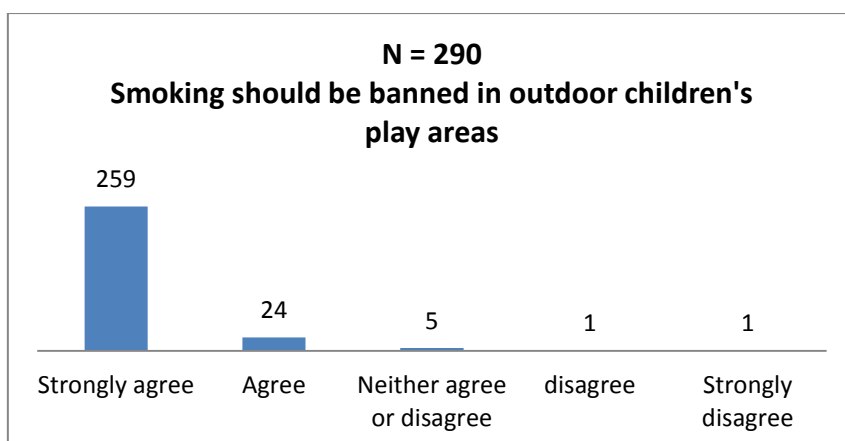
Smokefree Play Areas – Sunderland

During August 2013 the Locality Public Health team in Sunderland carried out a survey in various parks across the City to seek local views on whether ‘Smoking should be banned in outdoor children’s play areas in Sunderland’.

All Responses - Of the 347 responses collected 290 (84%) of them were residents of Sunderland. 98% said that they strongly agreed or agreed with the following statement ‘**Smoking should be banned in outdoor children's play areas in Sunderland**’ indicating the very strong support. (37% of those completing the survey were either smokers or ex-smokers). Only 53% of these people had heard about either the smokefree homes or smokefree cars campaign.



Sunderland only responses - Of the 290 responses collected from Sunderland residents, 98% said that they strongly agreed or agreed with the following statement ‘**Smoking should be banned in outdoor children's play areas in Sunderland**’ indicating the very strong support in Sunderland. (39% of those completing the survey were either smokers or ex-smokers). Only 54% of these people had heard about either the smokefree homes or smokefree cars campaign.



Summary

Our experience in Sunderland of talking to smokers on this issue suggests most smokers are very keen for their children not to start, and support initiatives such as smokefree play areas and smokefree cars. During August 2013 the locality Public

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