

Cancer Research UK's Local Tobacco Control Policy Recommendations

This document provides local authorities in England with practical recommendations to support the implementation of comprehensive tobacco control activity. This will help reduce the impact of tobacco in communities and improve the health and wellbeing of residents.

Given smoking is the biggest preventable cause of cancer in the UK and a leading cause of health inequalities in England, taking steps to reduce it is the best way to help reduce cancer risk and have more equitable health outcomes among local populations. While we are mindful of the financial challenges facing councils, local government has an important role to play in supporting whole system approaches to tobacco control and encourage integration with other public services.

What should local authorities do?

- Consider and embed tobacco control policy in all public policies to promote the health of its residents and staff and tackle smoking-related health inequalities.
- Consider completing a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment specific for tobacco to better understand the local needs and to inform the development of a comprehensive and meaningful local tobacco control plan.
- Regularly audit local tobacco control plans using the [CleaR self-assessment tool](#).
- Never under any circumstances engage or partner with the tobacco industry, in line with the [WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control](#).

Local governance

Local government is well-placed to support whole system approaches to tobacco control and encourage integration with other public services, including the wider health and social care system. Local authorities should:

- Develop and maintain a Tobacco Control Alliance to facilitate collaboration and partnership-working across tobacco control priorities.
- Ensure the Alliance reports in to, and back to, other council committees, such as the Health and Wellbeing Board or the Health Scrutiny Committee.
- Demonstrate your support to tobacco control by signing the [Local Government Declaration on Tobacco Control](#).

Preventing uptake of smoking and tobacco use

The earlier a person takes up smoking, the greater the harm to their health. It is important to prevent young people from taking up smoking. Local authorities should:

- Develop local media campaigns to prevent uptake of smoking, especially among under 18s.
- Ensure retailers are aware of legislation prohibiting underage tobacco sales and make it as difficult as possible for young people to obtain cigarettes and other tobacco products.

- Ensure smoking prevention interventions in schools form part of the local tobacco control plan.

Encouraging and supporting people to stop using tobacco

Locally commissioned stop smoking services, which provide a combination of behavioural support and prescription medication, offer people who smoke the best chance of stopping successfully. As part of this, local authorities should:

- Demonstrate a tangible commitment to prioritising tobacco control by protecting the council's budget to commission stop smoking services wherever possible.
- Commission specialist stop smoking services, available to everyone who smokes. These services should be commissioned to meet the specifications set out in National Institute for Health and Care Excellence [NG209 guidance](#) and support local and national efforts to reduce health inequalities.
- Repeal any restrictions placed on the availability of pharmacotherapy for smoking cessation through local stop smoking services.
- Ensure that stop smoking advisers are trained to [National Centre for Smoking Cessation and Training](#) standards and undertake refresher training annually.
- E-cigarette regulation must be balanced and evidenced-based to maximise their potential for cessation whilst minimising the risk of uptake by people who have never smoked and young people. This is because e-cigarettes are a relatively new smoking cessation tool, they are not risk free and their long-term effects are unknown. However, the long-term harms of tobacco are indisputable and e-cigarettes represent an opportunity for harm reduction. Evidence to date indicates that e-cigarettes are not only far less harmful than tobacco smoking but can also help people to stop smoking and avoid relapse. Local authorities should develop a position statement which can form the basis of an evidence-based local approach to e-cigarettes and ensure that stop smoking services are supportive of e-cigarette use for smoking cessation.
- Fund local media and health promotion activity to promote smoking cessation and discourage tobacco uptake. Given local public health budgets are under increasing pressure, councils may wish to pool resources across larger geographical footprints to increase impact by helping messages reach larger populations.

Illicit tobacco control and trading standards

Illicit tobacco - tobacco that is illegally manufactured (or counterfeit) or smuggled into the UK without the payment of relevant customs excise duties or tax - undermines local tobacco control interventions. Local authorities should:

- Address illicit tobacco issues on a local and regional level by working with health and enforcement partners who can collaborate to reduce the supply of, and demand for, illicit tobacco.
- Educate the public on how to make a report and how to do so in confidence.
- Run social marketing and public campaigns to counter misinformation on illicit tobacco locally.

If you would like further information on any of the areas covered above, please get in contact with Kedesha.Vassell@cancer.org.uk.