

Local Government Declaration Case Study: Teignbridge District Council

Teignbridge District Council signed the [Local Government Declaration](#) on 14 September 2014, one of twenty two District Councils in England who have done so to date.

Why did Teignbridge sign the Declaration?

Paul Nicholls, Food, Health and Safety Manager, explains why the Council decided to commit and how the Declaration has made a difference to Tobacco Control work in the authority.

The main driver for wanting to engage in tobacco control came from membership of the Devon Tobacco Alliance, a partnership of organisations that have an interest in reducing tobacco use in Devon. I've represented Teignbridge District Council on the Smokefree Devon Alliance since it began.

Although it's the County Council that has formal responsibility for public health, District Councils are very much in control of the levers – we have face-to-face contact with our communities, manage public spaces and, in Teignbridge's case, health provider Health Promotion Devon has a stop smoking service based on our campus.

The Declaration had come up in discussion at the Alliance that neighbouring authorities, including South Hams and West Devon, had become signatories of the Declaration without too much difficulty and we thought it would be a useful commitment to make, particularly as the transfer of public health from the NHS to local authorities has enhanced our role in improving health outcomes for local residents.¹

How did you secure support from the strategic level of the council?

I know that in some areas getting buy-in from the strategic level of the council can be difficult, but it was relatively easy in Teignbridge because as a council we're actively engaged in improving public health. The council became a smokefree organisation before smokefree legislation came in and we take our public health responsibility and the reduction of health inequalities very seriously. We took the Statement to our Business Lead for Housing and Health, Sue Aggett, and to our portfolio holder for Health and Wellbeing, Councillor Sylvia Russell, who were both supportive, as was our Chief Executive.

While we have strong support for tobacco control in our area, I can also see that the Declaration would be useful for organisations looking to strengthen the commitment of their authority.

What difference has the Declaration made to tobacco control work in Teignbridge?

The main way in which the Declaration has helped in Teignbridge has been to get the conversation started on tobacco at the senior level and make sure that reducing the harm it causes our communities continues to be high on our agenda.

One of the biggest challenges for us as a District Council in signing the Declaration was getting the key people in the same room at the same time. Devon is a two tier local authority area and the Director of Public Health is based at Devon County Council. However, it was worth it to have leaders at all levels, including the elected member with responsibility for Health and Wellbeing, in the room at the same time. Now, when the Director of Public Health asks us as a District Council if we can do something to assist their tobacco control work, it's

¹ For further information please see the District Councils' Network report [District Action on Public Health](#)

easier because our Business Lead and elected member know who is asking and are more willing to act as a result.

The clear commitment contained in the Declaration to protect health policy from the vested interests of the tobacco industry has also been very helpful. As a result, there is an increased awareness of our obligations as a local authority under Article 5.3 of the World Health Organisation's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control at the strategic level of the council and we are able to take strong stance on protecting health policy from the influence of the tobacco industry.

For further information regarding the Declaration, please visit <http://www.smokefreeaction.org.uk/declaration/> or email admin@smokefreeaction.org.uk.