

Briefing: Local Government Declaration on Tobacco Control

June 2024

What is the declaration?

The Local Government Declaration on Tobacco Control was originally launched by Newcastle City Council in 2013. On No Smoking Day 2022 (9th March 2022), the Declaration was relaunched by ASH to bring it into line with the Government's ambition for England to be smokefree by 2030 and commitments made to improve smoking cessation support available in the NHS.

The declaration is a statement of a council's commitment to ensure tobacco control is part of mainstream public health work and commits councils to taking comprehensive action to address the harm from smoking.

Why should I sign the declaration?

Smoking is the biggest cause of cancer and death in the UK and two in three people who smoke will die from a smoking related illness, with countless more left suffering from disability and disease. Smoking is the single largest driver of health inequalities in England, accounting for half of the difference in life expectancy between rich and poor. Smoking also places a significant economic burden on local communities, costing society in England £46 billion every year in lost economic productivity and health and social care costs.

As the stewards of local public health, local councils have a pivotal role to play in alleviating the health and economic burdens smoking places on communities. Not only is the Declaration a way for councils to demonstrate their commitment to tobacco control; it can also be a catalyst for local action and a useful tool for engaging internal and external partners.

What does the declaration acknowledge?

- **Smoking is the leading preventable cause of premature death, disease and disability**
 - [75,000 deaths annually](#) from smoking related disease
 - [500,000 hospital admissions](#) a year in England
 - Find local data about the costs of smoking broken down to local authority and ward level by downloading our ready reckoner [here](#).
- **Reducing smoking reduces poverty and benefits the local economy**
 - The average smoker spends around £2500 a year on tobacco
 - [31% of all households in England fall below the poverty line after smoking expenses are taken into account](#).
 - The total cost to England of smoking annually is £46bn. This includes productivity costs, social and health care costs and fire costs. See these costs broken down for your local authority [here](#).

- **Reducing smoking tackles health inequalities**
 - Smoking is the biggest single driver of health inequalities between the rich and the poor, with smoking rates double amongst routine and manual workers
 - 40% of those with serious mental illness smoke, and smoking is the greatest contributing cause of a [difference in life expectancy of 10 years](#) for those with mental health conditions
 - Children with parents who smoke are at risk from a number of health conditions due to second hand smoke and are [three times more likely to go on to smoke themselves](#). This disproportionately effects children from lower income households.
- **The illicit trade in tobacco funds organised criminal gangs and gives children access to cheap tobacco**
 - Illicit tobacco targets low-income communities, exacerbating health inequalities, especially among children
 - Illicit tobacco accounted for [£2.2 billion in lost taxes](#) in 2021-2
 - Local authorities are key players in tackling the illicit trade, through trading standards departments and through their local partnerships with police, customs, and health professionals.

What does the declaration support?

- **Local government leading local action to tackle smoking and secure the health, welfare, social, economic and environmental benefits that come from reducing smoking prevalence.**
 - Since the transfer of public health responsibilities to local authorities, local government has played a key role in reducing smoking
 - Local government will receive a package of new funding over the next 5 years to lead the way supporting the Tobacco and Vapes bill
- **Government's ambition to make England Smokefree by 2030**
 - Smokefree ambition aims for a smoking prevalence of 5% or less among all groups in society by 2030
 - Achieving this means driving down smoking rates among more disadvantaged groups with higher smoking prevalence
- **Government obligations under the World Health Organisation's framework on tobacco control (FCTC)**
 - The UK has ratified the FCTC which is the world's first public health treaty to tackle tobacco consumption
 - It calls for an end of sales to children and calls for public health policies to be free from the vested interests of the tobacco industry

- o Article 5.3 of the FCTC sets out that public health should be free from industry influence, this covers all activities of local public health. Find a guide on what this means in practical terms [here](#).
- o Read the latest WHO report on tobacco control [here](#).
- **NHS Long Term Plan commitments on smoking cessation support**
 - o The declaration supports the plans commitments to: offer all people admitted to hospital NHS-funded tobacco treatment services,
 - o Offer new smokefree pregnancy pathways for pregnant people and their partners,
 - o Offer stop smoking support to those in inpatient mental health settings

What to do once you have signed

The Declaration does not commit the Council to specific policies but to overarching principles. Local authorities decide their own priorities and can use the Declaration as a tool to support their work or provide a starting point for action. For some authorities, implementing the Declaration will be an acknowledgment of ongoing best practice activities whereas for others there may be areas where further action is needed.

To support local authorities there is a table below with suggested actions linked to the commitments in the declaration.

Commitment Act at a local level to reduce smoking prevalence and health inequalities, to raise the profile of the harm caused by smoking to our communities and in so doing support delivery of the national smokefree 2030 ambition.

Action Local authorities will receive an extra £70 million budgeted for local stop smoking services committed to for the next 5 years. Alongside the Swap to Stop scheme and funding for enforcement and mass media campaigns, this is an unprecedented time of resource for local authorities offering up an opportunity that must not be missed. Read our briefing for councillors on how to maximise these opportunities when using the new funding. Download it [here](#).

Other useful resources:

- o [ASH 10 key high impact actions](#)
- o [Local Alliances Roadmap](#)
- o [Comprehensive tobacco control guidance](#)

Commitment Develop plans with our partners and local communities to address the causes and impacts of tobacco use

- Action**
- Identify opportunities to influence and build working relationships with local ICBs:
 - o Effective tobacco control will require a system-wide approach, it is crucial that local authorities work with and act to ensure smoking remains a priority for ICBs.
 - o You can access a briefing for Health and Wellbeing boards and ICBs [here](#)
 - o You can download a set of resources designed to assist areas aiming to collaborate on tobacco control at a supra-local level [here](#).
 - Identify other community partners or target groups in your community.
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Commitment Participate in local and regional networks for support

Action If there are regional partnerships working towards tobacco control ensure you are signed up and someone regularly attends meetings. If you do not have a regional tobacco alliance and are interested in setting one up please get in touch with us to discuss this further.

Commitment Support the government in taking action at national level to help local authorities reduce smoking prevalence and health inequalities in our communities.

Action Actively show support for national plans to create a smokefree generation and reduce smoking prevalence below 5%, ensuring your local MP is aware of wide support from local public health teams.

Commitment Protect our tobacco control work from the commercial and vested interests of the tobacco industry by not accepting any partnerships, payments, gifts and services, monetary or in kind or research funding offered by the tobacco industry to officials or employees.

Action Use the [ASH article 5.3 toolkit](#) to help ensure your local authority is acting in accordance with the WHO FCTC. For further advice see this LGA guide: [Engagement with the tobacco industry: Guidance for local government](#)

Commitment Monitor the progress of our plans against our commitments and publish the results.

Action The CLear model developed by ASH in partnership with the regional offices of tobacco control, CIEH and the TSI amongst others and now overseen by Department of Health and Social Care provides a structured process for building a local tobacco plan. We recommend that monitoring be done through publicly accessible reports, discussed and agreed in a public forum. Access all CLear guides and resources [here](#).

Commitment Publicly declare our commitment to reducing smoking in our communities by and to joining the Smokefree Action Coalition, the alliance of organisations working to reduce the harm caused by tobacco.

Action The Smokefree Action Coalition is an alliance of over 300 organisations which are all stakeholders in tobacco control. The Coalition has engaged with Government on a wide range of tobacco control issues and provides an opportunity for local authorities to stay updated on and support national tobacco work.

More information about the Coalition and how to join can be found [on the website](#).