

Tobacco Alliance FAQ: Children's Services

What is a Tobacco Control Alliance?

Tobacco control is a co-ordinated, comprehensive approach to reduce smoking prevalence. Tobacco control alliances are local partnerships within local authority boundaries working together to effectively reduce smoking rates and tackle health inequalities.

How does tobacco affect young people?

- Smoking is an addiction of childhood; two-thirds of adult smokers report taking up smoking before the age of 18, and smoking significantly effects outcomes in adult life ([ASH, Young people and smoking](#))
- Children are particularly vulnerable to the effects of SHS exposure, which is linked to an increased risk of a range of illnesses like asthma and sudden infant death syndrome.
- A third of households (31.3%) with a smoker in the UK fall below the poverty line. If the costs of tobacco addiction were returned to the household, 263,000 children would be lifted out of poverty as a direct result ([ASH, 2019](#)).



Young people protest outside the British American Tobacco AGM

The role of Children's Services in tackling tobacco

Under the [Children's Act 2004](#), local authorities have a duty to promote co-operation between each of the authority's relevant partners to improve the five *Every Child Matters* outcomes for children. Reducing smoking rates by playing an active role in the work of a local tobacco alliance can contribute positively towards achieving these outcomes. Additionally, as a statutory member of local health and wellbeing boards, the Director of Children's Services has a role in driving the development of the local joint health and wellbeing strategy.

What can Children's Services gain from being on the alliance?

Tobacco control is complementary to the aims and objectives of Children's Services – by engaging with an Alliance, Children's Services better protect and support children and young people's health both in the short and long-term. Alliance partners can support Children's Services by:

- **Delivering activity to help parents quit** through children's centres and similar locations, reducing secondhand smoke exposure
- **Supporting the development of policies to help foster families and adopters to quit or to keep homes and cars smoke free**
- **Providing input and expertise**, for example smoking cessation services may be able to provide training and information on Very Brief Advice to help parents stop smoking
- **Supporting the development of smokefree parks and play areas**



'Play Smokefree' – Smokefree Coventry

What can Children's Services contribute to the alliance's work?

- The presence of Children's Services on the alliance **strengthens advocacy calls around measures to reduce youth smoking**
- **Contribute to work on reducing youth smoking prevalence** alongside alliance partners by extending referral routes to stop smoking services and promoting smokefree homes and spaces
- Ensuring any **Health Visitors co-ordinated by Children's Services** are trained and able to refer adult smokers to cessation support and provide information and advice on the importance of a smokefree home (See the [Smoking in Pregnancy Challenge Group site](#) for more resources and information)

Children's Services: Alliance Case Study

Smokefree Sheffield: Comprehensively engaging alliance partners in contact with children and young people

As part of a Smokefree Homes campaign, Sheffield City Council's Tobacco Control Alliance, Smokefree Sheffield, ran a competition inviting local children to design a poster to inspire adults to make their home completely smokefree. Education services, Smokefree Sheffield partners, ran the competition through primary schools across Sheffield, and the scheme was successfully utilized as a [positive, proactive media opportunity](#) to further raise awareness of the wider campaign.



Smokefree Sheffield's pledge leaflet

Smokefree Sheffield also [developed a pledge leaflet](#) to educate parents and their families on the risks that secondhand smoke poses in the household, whilst also offering support in going completely smokefree at home. Alliance partners, such as housing and education services, supported the dissemination of these pledges and the campaign continues to be delivered via health visitors, midwifery services, family centers and early years services. Children's hospitals were also targeted as part of the campaign via NHS alliance partners, with posters aimed at staff, parents/carers and children who smoke raising awareness of the dangers of secondhand smoke and smoking, particularly around the time of surgery by including messages on the detrimental impact any form of tobacco smoke can have on recovery.