

# Tobacco Alliance FAQ: Police

## What is Tobacco Control?

A co-ordinated and comprehensive approach to reducing the prevalence of smoking. There are six internationally recognised strands of tobacco control which are: stopping the promotion of tobacco; making tobacco less affordable; effective regulation of tobacco products; helping tobacco users to quit; reducing exposure to second-hand smoke; and effective communications for tobacco control.

## What is a Tobacco Control Alliance?

Local partnerships within local authority boundaries working on effective local activity to reduce smoking rates and tackle health inequalities. Alliances typically include a wide range of members, from trading standards and environmental health to fire and rescue, education, health staff, childrens' services, as well as elected members and local NGOs and businesses.

## The role of the police in tackling tobacco

Illicit and counterfeit tobacco sales funds organised crime and exacerbates health inequalities and the police has a key role to play in driving down its availability in local communities. The police also have a role to play in ensuring compliance with smokefree laws.

### *Illegal tobacco funds organised crime*

- Illegal tobacco costs society [almost £2 billion in lost revenue](#) from Duty tax in 2017-18.
- It [is dominated by internationally organised criminal groups and undermines legitimate businesses](#) often involved in other crimes such as drug smuggling and people trafficking.
- In addition, sellers have been often found selling other illegal products.



### *Tobacco smuggling damages health and exacerbates health inequalities*

- Tobacco is often available at cheaper prices, undermining the effectiveness of taxation, making it harder for smokers to quit.
- Cheap tobacco also makes it easier for young people to start and ex-smokers to relapse.
- Illegal tobacco is available from a range of sources within some local communities, making it easier for children to start smoking and enabling them to become hooked at a young age.
- Cheaper, more affordable Illicit tobacco is disproportionately bought by people from low socio-economic groups, exacerbating inequalities ([ASH, 2019](#)).



For more information see: [Tackling Illicit Tobacco for Better Health](#)

## What can the police gain from engaging with an alliance?

Police officers actively engaged with tobacco control partners through a local alliance can play a key role in tackling the illicit trade and enforcing tobacco control legislation. By being members of an alliance police forces can also benefit from:

- **Improved intelligence** as a result of close working with Trading Standards, Environmental Health and HMRC colleagues to tackle illicit tobacco and breaches of law relating to tobacco
- **Leads on wider organised crime** as illicit tobacco sales are often linked to wider organised crime
- **Preventing illegal underage smoking** by reducing the availability of cheaper, affordable tobacco which may also be more readily purchased by minors