

**Proposal for a consultation to make play parks/area  
in County Durham smoke free**

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**Report of Corporate Management Team**

**Report of Rachael Shimmin, Corporate Director of Children and Adult Services**

**Report of Cllr. Lucy Hovvels, Portfolio Holder for Safer and Healthier Communities**

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**Purpose of the Report**

1. To consider proposals for consultation on a voluntary code to make to make play parks in County Durham smokefree.

**Background**

2. Every year in England more than 80,000 people die from smoking related diseases. This is more than the combined total of the next six causes of preventable deaths, including alcohol and drugs misuse. Smoking accounts for one third of all deaths from respiratory disease, over one quarter of all deaths from cancer, and about one seventh of all deaths from heart disease. On average a smoker loses 10 years of life. The earlier someone quits the less life they lose.
3. Durham County Council (DCC) is already committed to reducing smoking prevalence through the partnership work developed via the 'Smokefree County Durham Tobacco Control Alliance'. The alliance has developed a comprehensive five year tobacco control action plan to address the causes and impacts of tobacco use, and monitors the progress of the plans. The action plan was agreed and signed off by Cabinet in October 2013. The focus of the plan is to protect children, in particular protecting them from becoming future lifelong smokers. The tobacco plan has an ambition to reduce smoking prevalence in County Durham to 5% (currently 20.9%, 2012), and has a bold vision to drive the ambition which states-

***“That a child born now in any part of County Durham will reach adulthood breathing smokefree air, being free from tobacco addiction and living in a community where to smoke is unusual. We owe it to our children to make this happen”***

4. Smoking is often a childhood addiction and most smokers in the North East start at aged 15. Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death and disease and is the leading cause of health inequalities. Young people are most at risk of becoming smokers themselves if they grow up in communities where smoking is the norm. The aim of tobacco control is to change social norms and work to prevent the uptake of smoking. Therefore one of the actions on the alliance plan, of which the tobacco alliance is keen to implement, is to promote children's play facilities/ areas as smokefree areas.

5. Smokefree play parks is just one part of a whole range of local tobacco control measures e.g. provision of stop smoking support, enforcement of smokefree legislation, tobacco regulation, designed to protect children from tobacco-related harm. Smokefree play areas would bring about several benefits:
  - Decreasing the opportunity for children to see adults smoking around them
  - Creating an environment in which smoking is not seen as the norm thus potentially motivating smokers to cut down or to quit
  - Protecting the environment and saving local authorities money by reducing tobacco-related litter
  - Offering further protection from the harmful effects of second-hand smoke

### **The evidence base for the proposal**

6. Making playgrounds smokefree decreases the opportunity for children to see adults smoking around them. Children are influenced by what they see, and young people are most at risk of becoming smokers themselves if they grow up in communities where smoking is the norm. The most effective way to prevent young people from becoming smokers is to encourage adult smokers to quit and to remove young people's exposure to smoking behaviours. Increasing the number of smokefree areas can have a positive effect on youth smoking rates: smokefree playgrounds are associated with lower levels of adolescent smoking. **Wakefield MA Chaloupka FJ, Kaufman NJ, Orleans CT, Barker DC, Ruel EE (2000)**
7. **The Royal College of Physicians (2010) report on Passive Smoking and Children** recognises that all adults have a duty to prevent exposing children to smoking behaviour and states that "a policy of prohibiting smoking in publicly visible places, particularly those frequented by children, and within the vicinity of schools, nurseries, and other areas where children gather in the open air, could have important public health benefits."
8. Making tobacco use less acceptable plays a key role in motivating current smokers to cut down or to quit. A key aim of tobacco control is to change the social norms around tobacco use by creating a social and legal climate which challenges the perception that smoking is a normal and acceptable behaviour **Roeseler A, Burns D (2010)** Making playgrounds smokefree will help to change community norms as part of broader tobacco control strategies.
9. Smokefree playgrounds will also offer further protection from the harmful effects of second-hand smoke. The effects of second-hand smoke indoors, and the need to protect people from it, are well-known and form the basis of England's smokefree legislation. But there is growing evidence that second-hand smoke outdoors can also cause harm. **Lich A, Hyland A, Travers M, Chapman S (2013)**
10. A number of variables can affect the level of exposure, including weather conditions, the number of smokers, their proximity to others and whether any of the outdoor spaces have enclosed areas but the fact remains that there is no safe level of exposure to second-hand smoke. **Surgeon General's report (2006)**

11. Signs installed in parks to indicate there is a smokefree code in place can help people to challenge someone who lights up in a play area and can point those who want to quit to services that can help them. This is especially important for parents who smoke, as their children are more likely to start smoking than those of non-smoking parents. **Leonardi-Bee, J, Lisa Jere, M, Britton, J (2011)**
12. If smoking no longer takes place in playgrounds it follows that there will be a reduction in tobacco-related litter which will not only help to protect the environment but will mean that local authorities will need to spend fewer resources on cleaning up. Cigarette butts are the most common type of litter found in the UK. **Policy Exchange Report (2010)**. According to an Environmental Campaigns study, tobacco-related litter was found in 78% of locations investigated, and the cost of clearing cigarette butts is estimated at £342 million each year.

### **Public Opinion already in existence from other areas**

13. Increased measures to protect children from tobacco-related harm are popular with the public. In the North East, 77% of people think smoking should not be allowed in children's outdoor play areas and 89% of people would like smoking to become a thing of the past for children. **YouGov survey on tobacco (2010)**.
14. In June 2013, Fresh (Smoke Free North East) spoke to parents – smokers, ex-smokers and non-smokers – in parks across the North East to find out what they thought about smoking. Most people, including smoking parents and grandparents, feel strongly about smoking in parks; those who do it admit they feel guilty about it. A common response among this group was that *"I smoke, but not in front of him/her and it's terrible doing it in parks."*

Other comments included:

*"We need to keep children separate from smoking"*  
- Ex-smoker

*"Smoking shouldn't take place in parks. A clear sign would be needed to say that smoking shouldn't take place here"*  
- Ex-smoker

*"I smoke, but I wouldn't smoke around other people's children or my own. If smokers see that no one else is smoking, then they'd be less likely to light up." see that no one else is smoking, then they'd be less likely to light up."*  
- Smoker

*"If there were signs up, it would help to keep the park smokefree."*  
- Ex-smoker

### **Examples from other Local Authority areas**

15. There are now many examples of areas where smokefree playgrounds have been introduced.

In this region, Gateshead Council's Cabinet passed a motion in February 2013 to make all 20 of its playgrounds smokefree. Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council have installed signs across each of their parks and Middlesbrough Council are also revisiting the issue, having made their playgrounds smokefree ahead of the introduction of smokefree legislation in 2007.

16. In the North West, parks in Blackpool, Sefton and the Wirral amongst others have become smokefree zones while in Wales, at July 2013, 18 out of 22 local authorities have taken action to implement voluntary smokefree codes in their playgrounds. Several parks across Scotland and the South West of England are now also covered by a voluntary code.

### **The Proposal in County Durham**

17. There are 307 play parks in County Durham, of which 178 are owned by DCC. The remainder are owned between Town and Parish Council and community associations.
18. Discussion with heads of departments within DCC has already been carried out to ascertain if smokefree play areas is something that would be supported. There is an overwhelming support for a voluntary code basis with consultation with local communities.
19. The proposal therefore for smokefree play parks in County Durham would be on a voluntary basis. It would not be enforceable, but through the consultation process and use of polite notices asking people to respect it.
20. To implement this policy a high level plan would be developed to ensure all relevant DCC departments, organisation and communities are involved. The plan would involve:-
- Steering group to oversee implementation plan
  - Development of a communications strategy which includes a public relations strategy to start letting the public know that the issue is being discussed
  - Seek views of local communities
  - Decision on artwork to use on PR and signage
  - The signage required and costing (see signage and costings)
  - Launch date to implement the policy and press releases to support
  - Review of policy e.g. six months or one year after implementation. Visit the parks again to gather views and see if any positive impacts have been made
21. The consultation will commence in June 2014 and will involve the public/communities and partners e.g. AAPs, Health Networks, Town and Parish Councils, Children and young people partnership, Citizens panel, Investors in Children. The consultation will seek opinion in relation to support for the principle of smokefree play parks and the support to implement the code in their respective play park areas.

## Proposed Timetable

Action	Possible Date
Commence 6 month consultation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a steering group</li> <li>• Involve Consultation Officer Group (COG)</li> <li>• Develop communications strategy</li> <li>• Consultation Involvement with:--               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Town and Parish Councils</li> <li>• Children and Young People partnership</li> <li>• Citizens panel</li> <li>• Investors in children</li> <li>• Visits to play parks for public opinion and conduct questionnaire</li> <li>• AAPs</li> <li>• Health Networks</li> <li>• Health &amp; Wellbeing Board</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<b>June 2014</b>
Implement policy	<b>February 2015</b>
Review policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re visit play parks to gather views and ascertain if any positive impacts</li> </ul>	<b>February 2016</b>

## Signage and Costings

22. Appropriate signage should be considered to support the code. This ranges from £6 for stickers to £350 per full replacement static sign. It would be costly to replace all 178 signs concurrently. Therefore consideration should be given to placing signage at selective sites initially to provide signage as part of the media activity during implementation phase. Other local authorities did this to address the cost issue. The issue of cost, responsibility and types of signage will need to form part of the consultation process.

23. The tobacco alliance will make a contribution to the initial costs of production of signage to support coverage of DCC parks.

24. Example signage artwork is already available which can be localised (local authority logo and tobacco alliance), however the consultation process would also involve agreement on signage wording.



## Recommendations

25. Cabinet is requested to:

- Support the proposal for a consultation to implement a voluntary code to make play parks/area in County Durham smokefree

## Background Papers

Smokefree County Durham Tobacco Control Alliance Action Plan 2013-2017

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## Appendix 1: Implications

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**Finance:** In the future all appropriate new or replacement council signage will carry a message requesting people not to smoke in children's play area. This will not change the cost of production of future signs and will be a part of ongoing repair and replacement budget for signage.

**Staffing:** There is no intention to actively enforce No Smoking in play areas as there is no legal basis to do so. The Smokefree Alliance will arrange for the briefing / training of community based staff so that they are fully briefed to answer any questions from the public about the voluntary code.

**Risk:** Failure to implement identified actions relating to Smokefree Play areas could delay Durham County Council and its partners in achieving the ambition for 2030 to reduce smoking prevalence to 5% and achieving our Vision statement.

**Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty:** There is not considered to be any equality or diversity issues associated with this voluntary code. Smokers are being asked to modify their behaviour to accommodate this request.

**Accommodation:** This is an external issue and therefore

**Crime and Disorder:** The initiative potentially reduces the amount of smoking related litter dropped in children's play areas.

**Human Rights:** The Strategy seeks to ensure that everyone in County Durham can achieve their full potential in fair and inclusive communities, supporting the rights of children to the best possible health and development. The rights of people wishing to continue smoking are not impaired, as this is a voluntary measure.

**Consultation:** This will form a key part of the process and initial actions will be directed through DCC Consultation Officer Group.

**Procurement:** This would be relevant to signage and would be dealt with internally

**Disability Issues:** There is not considered to be any issues associated.

**Legal Implications:** There is not considered to be any legal issues due to this being implemented on a voluntary basis