

**CABINET
8 APRIL 2025**

NORTH EAST DECLARATION FOR A SMOKEFREE FUTURE

**Responsible Cabinet Member -
Councillor Matthew Roche, Health and Housing Portfolio**

Responsible Director - James Stroyan, Executive Director of People

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. The report requests that members of Cabinet support and welcome the North East Declaration for a Smoke Free Future **(Appendix 1)**.

Summary

2. Towards the end of 2023, a new North East Declaration for Smoke Free Future was launched by Fresh, the Association of Directors of Public Health North East and the NHS North East and North Cumbria NHS Integrated Care Board.
3. This is a UK first, for any region to have such a clear statement of intent and to demonstrate the scale of commitment and collaboration.

Recommendations

4. It is recommended that :-
 - (a) Members support the progress made in Darlington working towards a Smoke Free Future.
 - (b) Welcome joining the other 11 North East Local Authorities in supporting and endorsing the North East Declaration for a Smoke Free Future.

Reasons

5. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons :-
 - (a) Smoking causes harm throughout people's lives, and is a major cause of preventable ill health, disability and death and is a driver of health inequalities.
 - (b) Recent data shows that almost 7,000 adults in Darlington smoke.

- (c) Making smoking history is a priority in the Darlington Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

**James Stroyan,
Executive Director of People**

Background Papers

<https://ash.org.uk/resources/view/ash-ready-reckoner>

Abbie Kelly: Extension 6458

Council Plan	Living well and staying Healthy
Addressing inequalities	Smoking is the largest driver of Health Inequalities and by supporting a smoke free future, this will reduce the impact of health inequalities of those who smoke.
Tackling Climate Change	By reducing smoking across the borough, there will be positive impacts on climate change.
Efficient and effective use of resources	This report supports efficient and effective use of resources as reducing smoking will reduce the societal costs of smoking.
Health and Wellbeing	Reducing the impact of tobacco use is crucial to improving the health and wellbeing of our communities.
S17 Crime and Disorder	Reducing the demand for cigarettes and tobacco products will impact on the illicit trade and ultimately reduce crime.
Wards Affected	All
Groups Affected	All
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not impact on the budget and policy framework.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not a key decision.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	Supporting a smoke free future reduces the risk of environmental tobacco smoke for looked after children and care leavers through second hand smoke and/or smoking themselves.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

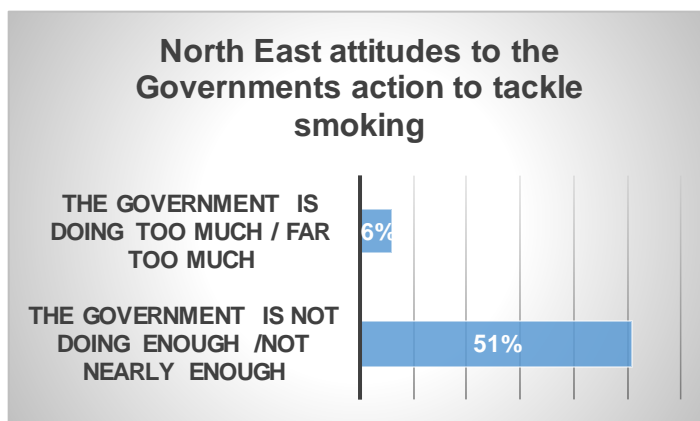
6. Tobacco use is the single most important preventable cause of ill health, disability and death in this country, responsible for 64,000 deaths in England a year. No other consumer product kills up to two-thirds of its users. Smoking causes harm throughout people's lives.
7. It is a major risk factor for poor maternal and infant outcomes, significantly increasing the chance of stillbirth and can trigger asthma in children. It leads to people needing care and support on average a decade earlier than they would have otherwise, often while still of working age. Smokers lose an average of 10 years of life expectancy, or around one year for every four smoking years.
8. Smoking causes around one in four of all UK cancer deaths and is responsible for the great majority of lung cancer cases. Smoking is also a major cause of premature heart disease, stroke and heart failure and increases the risk of dementia in the elderly. Non-smokers are exposed to second-hand smoke (passive smoking) which means that through no choice of their own many come to harm - in particular children, pregnant women, and their babies.
9. As a result, smoking puts significant pressure on the NHS. Almost every minute of every day someone is admitted to hospital because of smoking, and up to 75,000 GP appointments could be attributed to smoking each month - equivalent to over 100 appointments every hour.
10. Those who are unemployed, on low incomes or living in areas of deprivation are far more likely to smoke than the general population. Smoking attributable mortality rates are 2.1 times higher in the most deprived local authorities than in the least deprived.
11. Most smokers know about these risks and, because of them, want to quit - but the addictive nature of cigarettes means they cannot. Three-quarters of current smokers would never have started if they had the choice again and on average it takes around 30 quit attempts to succeed. The majority of smokers start in their youth and are then addicted for life. More than four in five smokers start before the age of 20. In short, it is much easier to prevent people from starting smoking in the first place.
12. The most recent Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) ready reckoner estimated that the cost of smoking in England is £43.7 bn, including £27.6bn loss to productivity, £13.9bn cost to social care and £1.82bn Healthcare costs.
13. ASH estimates that smoking costs the North East region £1.99bn a year.
14. The ASH ready reckoner tool estimates that the total costs of smoking to society in Darlington is £55.6mn per year. **(Appendix 2)**.

Financial Implications

15. The adoption of Smoke Free Future will be within existing budgets.

Public support for more action on smoking is high

16. The Smokefree Great Britain Survey 2023¹ survey showed that there is strong public support for national measures to reduce tobacco harm, which is also reflected in the North East with over half of adults in the North East believing the Government should do more to limit smoking and 78% of the public continuing to support the ambition of Smokefree 2030.



Tobacco and Vapes Bill (2024)

17. The Tobacco and Vapes Bill aims to create a smoke-free generation and tackle youth vaping. The Bill had its third reading in parliament on 26th March 2025.
18. The Bill includes provisions which focus on making vaping less attractive and accessible to children and young people and strengthen smoke-free restrictions and enforcement around the sale of tobacco and vaping products.
19. These measures include a range of new regulation-making powers that would allow for the extension of smoke-free restrictions to a wider range of premises, such as outside schools and hospitals. There are also new regulations to establish requirements for product substances and flavours and require producers or importers to provide information and facilitate studies, product safety and testing in relation to the products.
20. With regards to vaping and nicotine products, the Bill would increase restrictions on the sale of vapes and other vape products to a minimum of 18 years of age. It would be an offence to sell or supply vapes, liquids or refills to anyone under the age of 18 and would include the banning of tobacco vending machines.
21. The Bill is also seeking to introduce a UK-wide ban on the advertising, brand sharing and sponsorship of any vaping and nicotine products. The Bill also seeks to include new regulations on point-of-sale branding and advertising materials including restricting the appearance of packaging of vaping and tobacco products.

¹ YouGov PLC Adult Smokefree England Survey (2023). Total sample size was 10,123 adults in England and the unweighted sample size for the North East was 465, with figures weighted and representative of all adults in England (aged 18+).

22. The Bill proposes strict enforcement measures and tough penalties for those who breach these regulations, with the success of the new legislation being dependent upon the ability to enforce these robustly. Responsibility for the monitoring, investigation and any necessary enforcement action will be with Trading Standards teams and officers in local authorities.
23. It is vital the Government continues to prioritise efforts to help people to stop smoking and stop future generations becoming addicted to lethal tobacco products.
24. Up to two out of three smokers will die early from a smoking related disease. The North East Region has a clear vision for a Smokefree Future and would welcome Darlington's support to achieve this.