

CORE CITIES HEALTH IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVE

TOPIC – TOBACCO

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE



Newcastle upon Tyne – Demographics and local tobacco control issues

Newcastle upon Tyne has a population of 273,600, of whom 6.9% are from BME groups. The health of the people in the city is improving, but is still worse than the England average, with higher levels of deprivation than the England average and lower life expectancy. There are inequalities within Newcastle with large differences in life expectancy between populations living within relatively short distances of each other. For example, life expectancy for men living in the most deprived areas is 12 years lower than for men living in the least deprived areas. For women it is 9 years lower. Over the last ten years, the death rates from all causes, and the early death rates from heart disease, stroke and cancer have continued to improve. In 2009, 28.6% of the population smoked regularly (www.healthprofiles.info).

Smoke Free Newcastle is a long established multi agency partnership which works at a local level to deliver the regional FRESH; Smoke Free North East tobacco strategy. It aims to plan and deliver a range of evidence based individual, family and community interventions to enable people of all ages and backgrounds to enjoy a smoke free life, improving their health and contributing to a reduction in health inequalities. It uses an 8 strand evidence based approach to do this, namely;

1. Building infrastructure, skills and capacity in tobacco control.
2. Reducing exposure to second hand smoke
3. Providing free and accessible NHS stop smoking support to people wishing to quit.
4. Supporting and developing public education and media campaigns and delivering youth interventions to prevent uptake of smoking.
5. Reducing the availability and supply of tobacco products
6. Monitoring compliance and enforcing tobacco regulations.
7. Reducing tobacco promotion.
8. Undertaking research, monitoring and evaluation.

Tackling illicit tobacco is a key priority for Smoke Free Newcastle. Local research and intelligence has shown that smokers of illicit products obtain these from a number of sources including under the counter in various retail premises, from known 'tab houses' (cigarette houses), and also retailers providing late night refreshment.

The Role of Fresh - Smoke Free North East

FRESH is the North East office for tobacco control delivering a comprehensive regional programme to make smoking history for people in the North East. FRESH works with every local authority and primary care trust across the region to deliver tobacco control at the local level. FRESH supports multi-agency local tobacco control alliances, like Smoke Free Newcastle, to

deliver clear and consistent messages about the need to reduce the burden of tobacco on people living in the North East through regional programmes that can be amplified by local partners.



Illegal Tobacco – Not a Victimless Crime

Summary of Programme

The North of England Tackling Illicit Tobacco for Better Health programme aims to reduce the supply of and the demand for illegal tobacco across the North East, North West and Yorkshire and the Humber. It launched in July 2009 and is a partnership between FRESH- Smoke Free North East, Smokefree North West, Smokefree Yorkshire and the Humber, Trading Standards, HMRC, the police and the UK Border Agency across the three regions. It operates around eight key objectives which centre on the development of partnerships, intelligence and enforcement, and marketing and communications.



An illegal cigarette factory

The trade in illegal tobacco is not a victimless crime. The results of a major public opinion survey tell us that people are concerned about children getting hold of cigarettes easily and that the trade brings crime into the local community. Smokers also told us that cheap tobacco keeps them hooked. A key milestone in the programme has been the launch of Get Some Answers, a social marketing campaign that seeks to target members of the public who feel uncomfortable – or have the potential to feel uncomfortable – about the illicit tobacco trade. A range of resources have been produced to encourage the public to share intelligence anonymously through Crimestoppers. Stakeholders, such as those working in enforcement roles or in community settings, have also been given resources to find out more about the trade and their role in tackling it.



Action Taken in Newcastle

Smoke Free Newcastle agreed a local implementation programme for the campaign which included;

- Wide distribution of resource materials to Local Authority, NHS and community premises to increase public awareness of the key messages. This included the distribution of retailer packs to targeted newsagents and Licensed Premises and campaign materials to libraries, customer care centres, Surestart centres, GP surgeries and health centres.

- Briefings to key staff groups to engage key influencers in the campaign such as Councillors, law enforcers, neighbourhood teams, youth offending teams.
- Increasing the profile of the campaign through its inclusion on local NHS and Local Authority websites, newsletters and publicity.
- Presentations to Smoke Free Newcastle and the Stop Smoking Service.
- Increased enforcement activity as described below.



Smuggled tobacco hidden in the soles of trainers

Enforcement Activity

Enforcement activity involved the adoption of a three tier approach:

1. Pack scanning: Officers visited 177 retail premises across the city selling cigarettes, checking 3,500 packs of 20 cigarettes (70,000 individual cigarettes) using a hand held scanner provided by HMRC. Positively, none of the packs of cigarettes scanned were found to be illicit products. An opportunity was used during the visits to check all other tobacco enforcement related issues such as advertising and display of statutory warning notices. All retailers visited were provided with campaign advice packs, containing posters and background material.

2. Operation Vienetta: 39 mobile vendors including burger vans and ice cream vans were visited by officers. It is pleasing to note that only one mobile vendor was selling cigarettes and these were found not to be illicit. At the end of these retail visits, campaign advice packs containing posters and background material were left with a number of these mobile vendors.

3. Operation Raleigh: Following information received from legitimate traders, it emerged that some food premises, primarily serving the BME communities, were engaged in the supply of illicit cigarettes and niche tobacco products. Officers worked in full co-operation and assistance with the Specialist Investigation team at HMRC to follow up intelligence, visiting 22 retail premises across the city. In summary the joint operations resulted in seizure of 11,326 illicit cigarettes, 17 packets of "Black Snuff" and 9kg of niche tobacco. Further joint operations with colleagues from the Specialist Investigation team at HMRC are planned.

4. Niche Tobacco products: a Business Advice sheet has been developed which has been distributed to various retail businesses in the city and is included on Newcastle City Council's website.



Illegal cigarettes hidden under a mattress

Learning and results

FRESH works with its partners in Smokefree North West and Smokefree Yorkshire and the Humber to 'take the pulse of' stakeholders and the public on the subject of tackling illicit tobacco. A wide-ranging stakeholder survey, carried out before the programme launched, indicated that while illicit tobacco was moving up the priority agendas of partners, more resources were needed to help tackle the problem. The public told us in a major opinion survey that illicit tobacco was a real concern to them given its links to criminal activity, its availability to children and its ability to keep smokers hooked.

Both of these surveys are being repeated in 2010 and the results will feed into a broader evaluation framework of the North of England programme being carried out by the UK Centre for Tobacco Control Studies who will be reporting back their findings in 2011.

Intelligence received via Crimestoppers has identified two residential addresses in Newcastle city where the allegations have been made that the individual householders are engaged in the illicit supply of cigarettes. Both of these premises are now subject to criminal investigations by the various enforcement agencies.

A full report on the response of Newcastle to the campaign is to be prepared and submitted to the next meeting of Smoke Free Newcastle.

Contacts for Further Information

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