



**Healthy Schools Plus**  
**SOUTH WEST**

Healthier behaviour outcome:

# Tobacco Awareness

**This information sheet provides your school with suggestions to support your work on South West Healthy Schools Plus. It includes background information on smoking and children and young people, helps you select actions which will bring about healthier behaviour outcomes, identifies early success indicators and signposts to key resources.**

## Background Information

Smoking is both extremely addictive and bad for your health. It causes nine out of 10 cases of lung cancer and is linked to other cancers including mouth and cervical cancers, as well as other diseases such as heart disease. In Great Britain about 450 children and young people start smoking every day<sup>1</sup>. Most smokers start smoking before they reach adulthood, which is why it is so important to support children and young people to stop smoking or better still not to take it up in the first place. Research also shows that the earlier children and young people become regular smokers the more likely they are to become heavy smokers, which increases the risk of suffering from smoking-related disease.

As well as significantly increasing the chance of suffering from a wide range of diseases later in life, smoking can also affect children and young people as tobacco use:

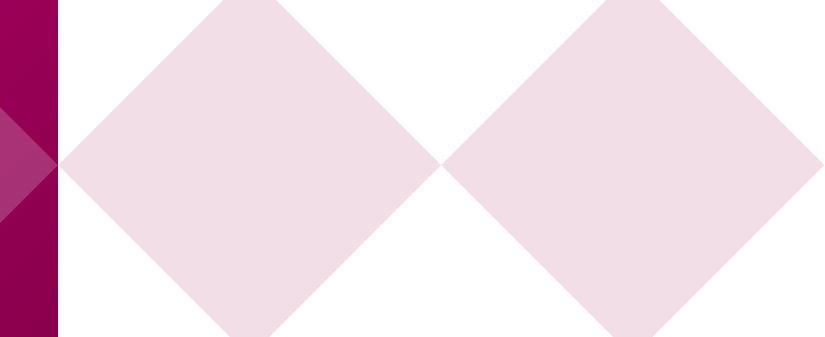
- Reduces the blood flow to the skin, resulting in spots and bad skin
- Changes where the body stores fat, increasing the chance of more fat around the waist
- Increases the development of wrinkles over time due to puckering of the mouth and squinting to avoid the smoke
- Stains the teeth and fingers
- Reduces performance in sport because of less oxygen to the lungs
- Reduces the blood supply to all organs, so impotence is more common in smokers under 35.

A person smoking 10 cigarettes a day will spend nearly £85 a month.

Due to the massive negative impact of smoking on health, the Government has set national targets to reduce the number of young people smoking<sup>2</sup>. The national target is to reduce prevalence among children aged 11-15 from 13% in 1996 to 9% by 2010. We are on course in the South West to meet this target for 11-15 year olds.

<sup>1</sup>P Reuter, Cancer Research UK

<sup>2</sup>Department of Health (1998) Smoking Kills



There is wide variation in the prevalence of smokers across the age range, with less than 5% of young people aged 11 -12 years smoking but 20% of 15 year olds smoking. Some research among young people aged 14-15 years suggests that smoking could be as high as 28% among girls and 25% among boys in the South West<sup>3</sup>, compared to 26% of girls and 16% of boys nationally in the same age group<sup>4</sup>. Estimates suggest 26,200 to 30,600 young people in the South West smoke at least one cigarette a week<sup>5</sup>.

Scientists have found that nicotine (the addictive part of tobacco) is as addictive as heroin. Smokers' brains change and over a very short time a new smoker will start to crave a cigarette. What's worse is that the more someone smokes, the more he or she craves another one. The good news is that when someone stops smoking only 2-6 weeks later the craving linked to the nicotine in tobacco reduces substantially.

## Possible Actions (Evidence Based or Good Practice Principle Led)

South West Healthy Schools Plus can help your school make a useful contribution to tackling issues around tobacco use.

In particular it can help schools:

- Persuade children and young people not to start smoking
- Reduce the number of children and young people who become lifelong smokers
- Protect children and young people from second hand smoke
- Provide support to children and young people who want to stop smoking by signposting them to specialist NHS Stop Smoking services and the national website and phone line.

South West Healthy Schools Plus focuses on bringing about actual changes in behaviour through increased knowledge, skill development and, in some cases, attitudinal change. Actions that address these three elements could feature in your school's plans and should result in healthier behaviour outcomes relating to tobacco use.

<sup>3</sup> Mullis R, Andrews F, Brown P and Cross T (2007) Children in the South West Series: Bulletin 4: Too much, too young: Smoking and young people in the South West Public Health Observatory

<sup>4</sup> National Centre for Social Research (2004)

<sup>5</sup> Mullis R, Andrews F, Brown P and Cross T (2007) Children in the South West Series: Bulletin 4: Too much, too young: Smoking and young people in the South West Public Health Observatory

## Evidence based practice

Where possible, your school should follow activities which have been proven to work.

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) is currently reviewing the evidence on peer-led and school-based youth focused initiatives and guidance is due to be published shortly<sup>6</sup>.

One promising schools-based peer-led approach is the ASSIST programme, which is being rolled out across all secondary schools in Bristol. This programme is aimed at year 8 and increases the knowledge and understanding of tobacco and tobacco related issues with the 15% most influential young people. These are young people that their peers identify as 'opinion leaders' in their year group. For example these are young people who are respected perhaps as good leaders in sports and group activities, or who other young people look up to. The programme also involves training peer supporters who offer advice and information.

In the South West region, a full time ASSIST co-ordinator has recently been appointed through Smokefree South West to support other localities with an interest in rolling out this evidenced-based programme in their local schools. Development is underway in collaboration with Bristol and Cardiff universities. The aim is to offer support to schools from the Spring term of 2010, with delivery of the programme starting in September 2010. Secondary schools interested in participating in this programme should approach their local tobacco control lead or director of public health for their area, or contact Smokefree South West, [www.smokefreesouthwest.org.uk](http://www.smokefreesouthwest.org.uk) for further information.

NICE have also published a review of the impact on children and young people of mass media and advertising<sup>7</sup>.

## Supportive measures from the NICE guidance

**Tobacco education within the curriculum** – It is recommended that this includes at least two tobacco-based lessons delivered in every academic year group and four additional booster sessions delivered over the course of secondary school education. This can be across different subject areas such as science (looking at the effect of tobacco on the body), humanities (the role of tobacco production on maintaining deprivation and poverty in developing countries and the impact of tobacco plants on the fertility of soil) and PSHE education (use of tobacco and peer pressure).

**Age-restricted sales** - Proof of age cards distributed within the school and promoted to nearby retailers to raise their awareness of the importance of ensuring effective measures are in place to avoid the risk of sales of tobacco to children and young people and to engage them in asking for proof of age before selling tobacco and other age-restricted products.

**Internal communications** - Using children and young people to help communicate the messages via school website, newsletters and school intranet, that tobacco is a deadly product, not just a substance for adults. This can also highlight the detrimental effects of smoking on children and young people such as poor skin, yellow teeth and impotence.

**Advice** - Provide training for all those working in schools to prevent the uptake of smoking by children and young people. Work with key partners (for example, the school nursing service, voluntary sector organisations and universities) to design and deliver smoking prevention interventions and training.

<sup>6</sup> NICE (2009) Public Health Interventions School Based Interventions to Prevent Smoking Draft consultation

<sup>7</sup> NICE (2008) Public Health Guidance 14, Mass-media and point-of-sales measures to prevent the uptake of smoking by children and young people

## Follow good practice led principles

As explained in the information sheet *Selecting Actions and Carrying Out Baseline Surveys*, schools will sometimes develop their own actions where evidence based actions do not exist. If your school does this, it is essential that you develop a rationale which clearly shows the steps from action to behaviour change, leading to a healthier behaviour outcome.

### Example

#### Healthier Behaviour Outcome:

Fewer children and young people experiment with tobacco, start smoking or use tobacco products.

#### Action:

Engage with year 8 children and provide an evidenced-based peer-led education programme, such as ASSIST. The most influential children and young people will be provided with intensive education and support around tobacco issues. Those selected will then interact with their peers, families and friends to talk about smoking and why they should not start smoking.

#### Rationale:

The majority of smokers begin their addiction by the time they are 15-years-old<sup>8</sup>, making the school setting the ideal place to prevent the uptake of smoking. Within a week of regularly experimenting with tobacco, children and young people can become addicted to nicotine. Action to prevent this in schools is vital to save lives and prevent smoking-related illnesses.

#### Note:

When following an action that follows good practice led principles, it is important that it is evaluated carefully. If successful, the action will be added to the evidence base of what works. ASSIST, the peer education programme to prevent the up-take of smoking in school-aged children and young people, has been shown to reduce the prevalence of smoking in schools.

## Baseline Survey

Before taking any action, your school will carry out a baseline survey to establish current levels of behaviours. This will be the starting point from which you will plot progress. After an action has been completed, a follow-up survey will take place to show how well actions have worked. This will enable your school to build up its own evidence base. Over a period of time, this approach will provide your school with a clearer picture of what actions are most successful.

The baseline may be provided by questionnaires, structured interviews or by observation of current practices.

<sup>8</sup> White H, Bray B, Fleming C and Catalano R. (2009) Transitions into and out of light and intermittent smoking during emerging adulthood. *Nicotine & Tobacco Research Advance Access published online on February 20, 2009*

## Healthier Behaviour Outcomes and Early Success Indicators

Your school may need time to bring about healthier behaviour. It is important that you monitor how your actions are working. You will do this by focusing on early success indicators, which will help you gather data to show progress. The first early success indicators are likely to be process indicators, such as new policies, curriculum innovations and staff training. Process indicators are necessary to bring about healthier behaviour but do not themselves bring about healthier behaviour – hence they are ‘process’ indicators. Later there will be impact indicators, such as changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviour, all of which lead, in time, to healthier behaviour outcomes.

## Examples of Healthier Behaviour Outcomes

Your work around tobacco use by children and young people could focus on:

- Increasing the number of children and young people who understand how smoking and tobacco use can lead to life threatening diseases
- Reducing the number of children and young people smoking in every year group
- Increasing the number of children and young people who understand where to access effective stop-smoking support.

The precise number (the outcome target) will be set by the school and agreed by the Local Programme.

## Examples of Early Success Indicators

### Process indicators of early success

Increase the number of teachers:

- Able to develop lesson plans and teach tobacco-focused education relevant to the age group
- Confident to teach tobacco education across the whole curriculum
- Able to signpost to NHS stop-smoking specialist support in the local area and national websites/helplines
- Review school policies relating to tobacco use to ensure the school is kept smoke free.

### Impact indicators of early success

- Increase the number of children and young people who understand how smoking and tobacco use can lead to life threatening diseases, year on year until outcome target is achieved
- Increase the number of children and young people who make an informed choice about smoking behaviour year on year until outcome target is achieved
- Reduce the number of children and young people smoking in every year group year on year until outcome target is achieved
- Increase the number of children and young people who understand where to access effective stop-smoking support year on year until outcome target is achieved.



## Resources

There are experts on tobacco control working in primary care trusts and local authorities throughout the South West. In many areas they have developed school-based resources on smoking and tobacco use. These include an interactive computer programme to show the physical effects of smoking on the appearance; theatre productions and a course of six tobacco control lessons. You can access local resources through Smokefree South West - [www.smokefreesouthwest.org.uk](http://www.smokefreesouthwest.org.uk)

[www.ash.org.uk](http://www.ash.org.uk) - fact sheets on a range of tobacco and smoking related issues some focusing on children and young people.

[www.gasp.org.uk](http://www.gasp.org.uk) - source of innovative and interesting materials and resources to support tobacco education and smokefree lifestyle.

[www.nosmokingday.org.uk](http://www.nosmokingday.org.uk) - specifically developed resources for teachers.

[www.smokefree.nhs.uk](http://www.smokefree.nhs.uk) – national support from the NHS about stopping smoking and staying smokefree. The website and telephone helpline 0800 022 4 332 will also be able to signpost to local stop-smoking services.

[www.smokefreesouthwest.org.uk](http://www.smokefreesouthwest.org.uk) - regional website with information and resources about a wide range of tobacco control and stop-smoking support.