

# Fresh Public Opinion



NEWCASTLE 2011



## Smoking is an addiction

Cigarettes are as addictive as drugs such as heroin or cocaine.

- **57%** of smokers in North of Tyne admit they are “dependent” on cigarettes.

## Tackling smoking

- Only **8%** of people in the North East say they trust the tobacco industry to tell the truth
- **56%** of people in the North East agree with removing tobacco displays in shops, with just **11%** strongly opposing
- **57%** of people in the North East support increasing tax on tobacco faster than the rate of inflation
- **75%** of people in the North East think smoking should be banned in outdoor children’s play areas
- **71%** of people in the North East think government health policy should be protected from the influence of the tobacco industry and its representatives.

## If smokers could just stop, most would

- **79%** of smokers in North of Tyne say they regret they ever started smoking
- **64%** of smokers in North of Tyne say they would prefer not to smoke
- **58%** of smokers in North of Tyne say they smoke less than they used to.

## Protecting children

- **88%** of smokers in North of Tyne area say the North East needs to do more to prevent children from starting smoking
- Smoking is a childhood addiction long before it becomes an adult choice. The average age current smokers started in North of Tyne was just 15
- Cancer Research UK estimates that children are three times more likely to become a smoker if their parents smoke.

## Smoking around others

- **82%** of people in the North East say they agree that smokefree law is good for the health of the general public, with only **11%** disagreeing
- **94%** of smokers in North of Tyne say they worry about smoking around children
- **78%** of people in the North East say they support laws to ban smoking in cars carrying children.

## Illegal Tobacco

- **82%** of smokers in Newcastle say they do not buy illegal tobacco
- **83%** of smokers who buy illegal tobacco in Newcastle agree it enables them to smoke when they could not afford to do so otherwise
- **92%** of people in Newcastle say illegal cigarettes are a danger to children as they can buy them cheaply and easily.

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Smoke Free Newcastle

**In the last five years the North East has seen the biggest drop in England in smoking. Changing attitudes has played a crucial part in this.**

Once upon a time, smoking was perceived as a normal thing to do. But now the desire to quit (or not to start in the first place) is becoming the new social norm in many communities, and in many families.

It's vital to maintain this momentum by keeping the dangers of smoking, and benefits of quitting, in the news. Year on year, more and more people in the North East have seen, heard, read and clicked on tobacco-related media coverage. Figures show that there have been 129 million opportunities to see and hear these messages across the North East in 2010/11.

It is because smoking is such a burning media issue that the North East also has some of the highest levels of public support to tackle smoking in England.

Surveys tracked year on year show high support among the general public to reduce smoking in the future. Most smokers themselves express a high desire to quit, want more education and media campaigns, regret starting in the first place and demand action to stop their children making the same mistake.

The aim of this briefing is to provide evidence to Directors of Public Health, Elected Members and senior managers that tobacco control is not only needed and workable, it is also wanted by the vast majority of people in our communities to make smoking history.

Some facts about smokers' views towards smoking from a number of surveys carried out in the North East, in the NHS North of Tyne cluster area (Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland) and specifically in Newcastle:



## Sources

North East data from 2011 Smokefree Survey by YouGov

North of Tyne data from independent survey by 2cv for Take 7 Steps Out campaign

Newcastle data on illegal tobacco from *Illicit Tobacco North of England Study 2011* from NEMS

Royal College of Physicians - Nicotine Addiction in Britain 2000

For more information on smoking and tobacco control, contact the Fresh team

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