

Proxy Purchase of Tobacco Awareness Campaign

A Scottish Government SALSUS report in 2015 revealed that 53% of 15 year olds in Scotland who smoke get someone else to buy their cigarettes for them from shops.

Trading standards services have struggled with how to deal with problem, referred to as “Proxy Purchases”, for many years. Traditional techniques such as test purchasing or surveillance have been found to be ineffective, disproportionate or too resource intensive.

Feedback from officers and traders indicated that adults buying cigarettes for children did not seem to consider the harm this may cause children and appeared unaware of the criminal penalties that they could face if caught supplying to underage persons.

South Ayrshire Council’s Trading Standards Service in partnership with NHS Ayrshire & Arran with funding from the Pan Ayrshire Tobacco Control Group undertook a campaign to highlight this issue.

The campaign had 3 strands:

- a publicity campaign targeting potential Proxy Purchasers
- advisory visits to traders to deliver point of sale materials
- production of video clips as a free training resource for traders

Publicity Campaign



The message that “Buying Tobacco Products for Under 18s is an Offence” was displayed on traditional and high impact digital billboards whilst the same message was carried on buses operating on routes throughout South Ayrshire



Trader Point of Sale Materials

Posters and stickers carrying the key message were distributed throughout South Ayrshire by trading standards officers to support tobacco retailers. The stickers were designed to fit on the flaps of tobacco displays where they would be visible to every customer buying cigarettes.



“Alarm Bells” Training



Six short training film clips entitled “Alarm Bells” were produced for traders and their staff. The clips were designed to give a brief overview of their responsibilities with regards to the sale of tobacco and the health risks that young people face if they use it. Search: **YouTube South Ayrshire Alarm Bells**

With the assistance of the Scottish Chief Officers of Trading Standards Services the campaign was promoted on Twitter receiving 25,000 impressions



The aim of the campaign was to create publicity, raise the harm and legality issues with adults tempted to buy for under age persons as well as to produce a set of tools that traders could use to train their staff and raise awareness with their customers. It is early days with this campaign but initial feedback from traders and their staff is very positive.