

Smoke-free cultures: A guide for employers of young adults

Do your employees arrive into a culture where smoking breaks are the norm? Where doorways and entrances are visible gathering points for smoking and where smoking is part of the culture? Or do your employees arrive into a smoke-free culture where tobacco is out of sight, out of mind and out of fashion?



WHAT IS A SMOKE-FREE CULTURE?

A smoke-free culture in the workplace is about having a commitment to creating a health-promoting environment, that supports employees not to take up smoking and supports those who smoke to quit. It is about reducing the visibility of smoking and increasing smoke-free spaces for everyone. A smoke-free culture is important to consider in all workplaces, but in particular for those who employ young adults (16-24 year olds).

Smoke-free workplaces should be positive and inclusive with an emphasis not on banning smoking but instead:



- Focusing on taking the time to bring about a culture change, rather than seeking immediate change



- Putting smoking out of sight and out of fashion, rather than prohibiting it altogether



- Ensuring smokers are involved as part of the change, in order to avoid alienating particular groups. It's not about the smoker, it's about the tobacco and the smoke.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR YOUR WORKPLACE AND EMPLOYEES?

In order to help young adults to identify with the benefits of being smoke-free, the environments they spend most time in need to promote positive health messages and wellbeing. The late teens are the peak time for smoking uptake, and almost nobody starts smoking after they are 21. Creating a smoke-free culture in the workplace plays an important part in preventing young adults from taking up the habit or supporting them to quit.



The health risks of smoking and exposure to second-hand smoke are well established.



Smoking is the biggest preventable cause of ill-health and death – more than alcohol, drugs, suicide and road accidents combined.



In Scotland, tobacco costs for absenteeism, smoking breaks and lost output due to premature death total £962 million per year.



Promoting a smoke-free culture highlights commitment to a safe and healthy workplace and is likely to reduce absenteeism and increase productivity.

We know that two thirds of current smokers would like to quit. Having a supportive, smoke-free culture in place at work, can help them to do so.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF PROMOTING A SMOKE-FREE CULTURE?

There are clear benefits to a smoke-free culture:

- Cleaner, safer, healthier working environments
- Increased smoke-free spaces for everyone
- The creation of an environment that discourages the uptake of smoking
- A supportive environment for people wanting to quit smoking
- A significant impact on employee wellbeing
- A reduction in cigarette related litter
- A reduction in absenteeism and an increase in productivity



HOW TO IMPLEMENT A SMOKE-FREE CULTURE IN THE WORKPLACE

Creating a smoke-free culture takes time. One of the best ways to do this is by developing a smoke-free policy. This can be much more than simply stating the law around smoking at a place of work.



Update your tobacco policy to include a smoke-free element in consultation with your workforce to ensure it takes into account employee wellbeing.



A planned approach is required to make practical, realistic changes.



It is essential to involve employees from the start and ensure that clear, consistent and positive messages that focus on improving health and wellbeing for all are put in place.



Engaging with employees in this process will help them to prepare for any changes and encourage compliance.



Once finalised, make sure that your policy is known about, accessible to all and is reviewed on a regular basis.

WHAT TO INCLUDE IN YOUR SMOKE-FREE POLICY

As a starting point, all policies should clearly state the following:

1. Where and when smoking is allowed (if at all)
2. How the policy will be enforced
3. The support that will be offered to employees who wish to stop smoking
4. The measures that you will be taking to avoid non-smokers from taking up the habit

In order to ensure your smoke-free policy is health promoting, we would also recommend including the following:



Create smoke-free grounds. This will not only help to remove visibility of smoking at doorways and buildings but creates a pleasant environment for any guests or visitors to your workplace. This also promotes positive role modelling, by ensuring that smoking is out of sight and others are less likely to see smoking as a social norm within your organisation.



Refrain from offering additional smoke breaks for workers as this can be divisive and make non-smokers feel they are missing out, potentially encouraging them to smoke. Instead encourage healthy, alternative breaks for all employees.



The Smoking, Health and Social Care (Scotland) Act 2005 prohibits smoking in any enclosed workplace, public building or work-related vehicle in Scotland. While e-cigarettes are not covered by this legislation it is important that you consider their inclusion within your smoke-free policy. Taking a coherent approach and including e-cigarettes within your policy creates an environment that discourages experimentation with vaping devices, particularly amongst non-smokers. Using nicotine containing products (NCPs) is one way for smokers who wish to cut down or stop, however there are concerns that e-cigarettes and vaping devices may attract non-smokers, including young adults and those under the age of 18. Including e-cigarettes within your smoke-free policy follows advice from Public Health Scotland that access to e-cigarettes needs to be controlled carefully; they are not products for children or non-smokers.



Work with employees who wish to give up smoking by offering information, guidance and support. This may include posters, leaflets and signposting to free Quit Your Way Scotland services. Equally, those who do not wish to stop smoking should be helped to cope with the restrictions imposed by the policy.

MORE INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

ASH Scotland: Guidance and further information on smoking and tobacco issues. www.ashscotland.org.uk

Healthy Working Lives: For employers in Scotland looking for workplace health, safety and wellbeing information. www.healthylives.scot

Quit Your Way Scotland: Scotland's free and friendly stop smoking services can hugely increase chances of successfully quitting and staying stopped for good. www.quityourway.scot

#BeFree Achieve More: This ASH Scotland campaign highlights how not smoking can leave young adults happier, better off and achieving more. www.befree.scot