

SMOKEFREE ST>RTS

DONCASTER

STOPPING SMOKING STARTS HERE

Smokefree Schools Toolkit

Primary Schools
2024/25



City of
Doncaster
Council

About this toolkit

The City of Doncaster Council's Smokefree Toolkit is designed to help schools create smokefree environments and supports the council's goal of a smokefree generation in Doncaster.

The toolkit outlines the context of smoking in Doncaster, what a smokefree school looks like and why smokefree environments are important.

The toolkit provides resources to implement smokefree policies, integrate education into the curriculum, and support staff and pupils in quitting or preventing smoking and vaping. It emphasizes a non-stigmatizing approach to support smokers in their quit journey while fostering a healthy, smokefree environment.

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Our aims

The City of Doncaster Council aims to reduce smoking rates to below 5% by 2030, working towards a smokefree generation. This vision involves making smoking less visible, so children grow up in an environment where it isn't the norm.

A systems-wide approach is needed, with organisations like primary schools adopting a whole-school approach to promoting a smokefree Doncaster, including at school gates, homes, and cars.

By seeing fewer adults smoke, children are less likely to start. Schools play a crucial role in preventing youth smoking, and we encourage all primary schools in Doncaster to become fully smokefree.



Background

Doncaster has the highest smoking rates across Yorkshire and Humber. In 2023, the adult smoking prevalence in Doncaster was 17.8%, meaning 15,564 people in Doncaster currently smoke.¹

Smoking significantly harms a person's long-term health and wellbeing. The earlier someone starts smoking, the more likely they are to become lifelong smokers. It remains the leading cause of preventable illnesses and deaths in both Doncaster and the UK. Between 2016 and 2020, Doncaster saw 2,709 preventable deaths in people under 75, the third highest in the region¹. Deaths from cancer, heart disease, stroke, and respiratory illnesses are all significantly higher than the national average, all linked to smoking.

Smoking also affects non-smokers through second-hand smoke exposure, impacting their health as well.

Annually, £73.3M is spent on tobacco in Doncaster, averaging £2,486 per smoker. Smoking costs the town £233M each year. Eliminating smoking in England could lift approximately 2.6 million adults and 1 million children out of poverty.²

Smoking in Children and Young People

Around 280 children under 16 start smoking every day in England and two thirds of those who try one cigarette go on to become daily smokers and only one in three of whom are likely to quit during their lifetime³.

A variety of factors, including social, economic, and environmental influences, can impact a young person's likelihood of trying smoking or becoming a regular smoker.

2% of 1297 Year 6 pupils said that they have tried smoking once or twice¹⁰

Smoking is a learned and socially mediated behavior⁴ and is highly addictive. Most start before the age of 18, regret ever starting and try to quit multiple times.

SEN and Young Carers are most likely to be exposed to smoking at home, indoors and in the car¹⁰

Adults' and peers' smoking habits can strongly influence children to start smoking. Research shows that children are more likely to try smoking when exposed to adult role models who smoke, especially in environments where smoking is visible and seen as socially normal.

Children are 90% more likely to smoke if they live in a household with a smoker¹⁰

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35% of pupils live in a household where someone smokes, 15% use rooms which are smoked in¹⁰

Despite the 2014 Children and Families Act banning smoking in private cars with children present, a significant number of schoolchildren in Doncaster still report being in cars where smoking occurs.

17%

of children have travelled
in a car whilst someone has
been smoking¹⁰

Why Become a Smokefree School?

Doncaster schools have the backing of residents who support the creation of more smokefree environments, including within schools.

94%

of Doncaster residents are
supportive of smokefree
school gates and school
grounds in Doncaster

De-normalising smoking is key to reducing youth smoking. Evidence shows children are less likely to smoke if they don't see it as part of everyday life. This starts by limiting smoking on school grounds, educating about tobacco's harms, supporting smokers to quit, and encouraging young people to avoid smoking.

Teachers, parents, and other adults play a crucial role in making smoking less visible and socially acceptable, helping to create a smokefree generation.

Second-hand smoke exposure can cause respiratory infections, ear infections, and asthma attacks³.

Children are more vulnerable to second-hand smoke due to their developing airways and immune systems, increasing their risk of asthma and other lung conditions. A smokefree school reduces these risks and makes smoking less socially acceptable. It supports current smoking laws and promotes healthy living.

Schools play a key role in shaping community health, and by adopting a smokefree policy, they set an example for staff, pupils, and families.

This toolkit offers resources to help schools create a smokefree environment.

What makes a school Smokefree - An Overview

1. Whole school approach

- Implement a comprehensive smokefree policy across the entire school.
- Ensure a consistent smokefree approach is adopted by staff, pupils, and stakeholders.
- Promote smokefree environments in all areas of a young person's life, including schools, homes, cars.

2. Education

- Integrate tobacco control education into PHSE lessons.
- Adopt a Social Norms Approach to challenge perceptions of smoking.
- Offer diverse learning opportunities and link to broader health and wellbeing topics.

3. Environment

- Create a smokefree and vape free school environment.
- Include clear and visible signage indicating that all areas are smokefree.
- Remove any items that may promote smoking including smoking areas, ashtrays and bins on school grounds.

4. Knowledge and Skills

- Ensure staff are trained in Very Brief Advice in smoking.
- Stay informed and promote national and local campaigns supporting a smokefree Doncaster.
- Stay up to date with smoking cessation services and referral pathways in Doncaster.
- Understand the illicit tobacco and vaping trade and know how to report concerns.



Whole School Approach to a Smokefree School

It is recommended that a coordinated whole school approach to smoking and vaping is adopted and considers the following points:

- Develop a clear, consistent smoke-free approach for all pupils, staff, parents, and visitors, focused on supporting smoking cessation and promoting a smoke-free generation. Ensure regular communication of key messages to staff, pupils, parents, and visitors.
- The approach should be mindful of all off-school premises activities and extracurricular activities where pupils, staff and parents/carers will be in attendance, for example smokefree school vehicles, daytrips, sports days, school plays, school gates.
- Collaborate with the entire school community to establish a comprehensive smokefree policy. This policy should ban smoking and vaping on school premises, in school vehicles, and in areas surrounding the school (e.g., car parks, entrances, sports fields, crossing zones). It should apply to staff, students, parents, and all other individuals using the school. While the policy is voluntary, its success relies on the commitment and support of all school stakeholders to ensure full adherence to the guidelines.

- Focus on supporting smokers to quit and preventing children and young people from starting by removing all designated smoking areas and encouraging staff not to smoke in view of pupils or whilst wearing uniform. Staff and visitors who do smoke and are not ready to quit will need to do so off school premises and not in view of pupils.
- Create a protocol for managing smoking and vaping incidences by staff, pupils, parents, and visitors. This should include keeping up to date with the latest smokefree services in Doncaster and providing a clear referral pathway into these services.
- Ensure that resources, information, and guidance are available on school grounds to help staff and pupils access Doncaster's smoke-free services. It is important to support smokers in their journey to quit without stigmatizing them.
- Ensure staff are trained in Very Brief Advice (VBA) for smoking. VBA is an evidence-based intervention aimed at identifying smokers and offering support to assist with quit attempts.
- Support parents and carers to be actively involved in their child's tobacco education through school activities and the home.

Smokefree in the Curriculum

School programs aimed at preventing tobacco use can be highly effective in reducing smoking uptake among young people. This section provides resources to help school staff and professionals deliver key messages about the risks of tobacco use and vaping.

Since September 2020, teaching about tobacco use has been included in the mandatory Relationships, Sex, and Health Education (RSHE) curriculum. Pupils should learn about the facts and risks associated with legal and harmful substances, including smoking, alcohol, and drugs. Tobacco education also aligns with other areas of the curriculum, such as science and healthy lifestyles, so it's beneficial to make thematic connections across subjects.

The Public Health Healthy Learning, Healthy Lives (HLHL) team, in collaboration with the Learning Opportunities team at City of Doncaster Council, has provided a Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) (5-16) Scheme of Work. This ensures that schools in Doncaster have access to high-quality, evidence-based resources to teach these topics, in line with Department for Education statutory guidance. The curriculum can be accessed [here](#)

All additional smoking and vaping teaching materials can be found [here](#)

Staff and Parents Education

In addition to teaching pupils about tobacco and vape use, it is important to education staff, parents, and carers about maintaining a smokefree environment and to ensure full cooperation with the policy:

- Offer training for teachers and staff on the school smokefree policy.
- Ensure staff know how to deal with smoking incidences on site.
- Provide stop smoking resources and support for pupils, staff and parents and ensure they know how to refer to the local stop smoking service.
- Raise awareness amongst staff, parents and carers about the illicit tobacco and vape industry and how to report concerns.

The Social Norms Approach

The social norms approach is an evidence-based method of supporting behaviour and attitude change. The approach looks to correct misperceptions

of smoking behaviours by sharing information about the actual norms in a population.

Schools are encouraged to use a social norms approach to address smoking when teaching about tobacco and vaping to reduce the uptake of smoking in children and young people and prevent smoking habits developing into long-term use.

Key features of a social norms approach to consider:

- Do not use scare tactics or stigmatize smoking behaviours to try and change behaviours.
- Avoid creating moralistic messages about how young people “should” behave. Instead, present the healthy norms that already exist.
- Build on the assets already in the community, through participation by community members, and by highlighting those who make healthy choices.





Smoking could be seen as an attractive thing to do for children and young people, leading to a belief that it is the norm amongst the most socially successful people. However, evidence shows that young people tend to overvalue the number of peers who value and make unhealthy lifestyle choices and underestimate those who make healthy choices. By taking a social norms approach to smoking, we can reduce this misperception and further encourage healthy choices.

Perception vs. Reality

Below are some statistics that may help to embed a social norms approach when educating about smoking and vaping in Doncaster:

- 52% of year 8 pupils believe that at least some of their peers have smoked a cigarette in the last 7 days. However, 92% of year 8s say they have never smoked at all.
- 77% of year 10s believe that at least some of their peers have smoked a cigarette in the last 7 day. However, 80% say they have never smoked at all.
- Although 90% of pupils think their peers are using e-cigarettes, 34% of secondary pupils use them and most pupils (93%) are aware of e-cigarettes.
- In 2022/23, 1865 smokers set a quit date with the smoking cessation service.
- 14% of children have travelled in a car whilst someone has been smoking. In 2015, the law changed which means it is now illegal to smoke in a car with anyone under 18.
- Smokers that quit can save on average £4673.76 per year.
- 60% of residents are in support of all public spaces in Doncaster becoming designated smoke-free spaces.

Benefits to stopping smoking, or not smoking at all:



Excess risk of heart attack is reduced by half within a year⁵



Protecting loved ones from exposure to second hand smoke⁷



You won't be contributing to the environmental impact of tobacco⁵



You could save on average £4673.76 per year⁶



Your senses of taste and smell can improve in a matter of days or weeks⁸



Your complexion will improve, and you will avoid premature wrinkles⁵



If smokers quit before the age of 30, they can avoid more than 90% of the smoking-attributable risk of lung cancer⁶

Environment

Smoking harms both health and the environment. The tobacco industry contributes to deforestation, water depletion, and pesticide use, whilst also increasing greenhouse gas emissions.

- Cigarette butts are the most littered item in the world, littering our streets, green spaces, and other public areas⁹
- Cigarettes are the biggest source of microplastic pollution.
- E-cigarettes contain a lithium battery that must be disposed of correctly. Throwing vapes into household waste/bins can cause fires.
- Smoking releases a cocktail of toxins and substances causing the air to become polluted. This can remain in the air for 2-3 hours after smoking, meaning the environment around someone smoking is harmful when breathed in. This is also known as secondhand smoke⁹.

Schools can reduce these environmental risks by implementing simple changes to create a smoke-free environment and prevent further harm:

- Ensure clear smokefree signage is visible in and around the school grounds.
- Remove designated smoking areas to discourage pupils, parents and staff to smoke.
- Locate your nearest waste and recycling center to ensure proper disposal of vapes found on school grounds. For more details, visit the household waste and recycling page

Having a smokefree school contributes to creating an overall more pleasant, healthier and cleaner environment.

Single-use disposable vapes harm the environment by:

- Being made of plastic and containing non-biodegradable nicotine and other chemicals.
- Contributing to significant waste.
- Being hard to recycle.
- Wasting valuable resources.



Knowledge & Skills

Those who smoke are up to four times more likely to stop smoking with support.

Schools should recognise that all staff have a key role to play in reducing smoking uptake in under 18s and to do this there are some training, services and messages that should be shared with all staff.

Very Brief Advice Training

Schools should be encouraged to have all, or designated staff, trained in Very Brief Advice (VBA) for Smoking. VBA is a 30-second intervention which involves asking a person if they smoke, advising them on the best methods to stop smoking and supporting them to access the best available support locally.

To complete the training visit NCSCT e-learning [here](#) or if you have any questions or queries contact smokefree@doncaster.gov.uk

Stop smoking Services

To find out about Doncaster's stop smoking services, please visit [Your Life Doncaster](#)

National and local campaigns

Did you know? People are 5 times more likely to quit if they can make it to at least 28 days smoke free.

School should promote and keep up to date with national and local smokefree campaigns:

- 1. Stoptober:** a national campaign that launches every year to encourage thousands of smokers to quit the habit in October.
- 2. Smokefree Starts:** a partnership between all four local authorities in South Yorkshire and NHS South Yorkshire. The partnership launched their first smokefree starts campaign in May 2024 as part of mental health awareness week. The aim of the campaign was to increase awareness of the impact of smoking on mental health and encourage smokers to quit.
- 3. Smokefree Doncaster:** a localised media campaign that looks to promote smokefree services in Doncaster and encourage smokers to quit or to try again. The first Doncaster campaign began in October 2024 and can be seen across buses in Doncaster, local newsletters and on electronic screens across the city centre and gp's.

There is also lots of information and support available on the NHS better health website.

Vaping & E-cigarettes

E-cigarettes, also known as vapes, are battery-powered devices that deliver nicotine through vapor, not smoke. In the UK, they have become a popular smoking cessation tool, with evidence suggesting they are less harmful than traditional cigarettes and can aid in quitting.

However, there is growing concern about the use of e-cigarettes by children and young people, both in and out of school.

Schools can find the latest data on smoking and vaping in children and young people in Doncaster via the [Pupil Lifestyle Survey](#)

E-cigarettes contain nicotine, solvents, and flavourings, and their full risks remain unclear. While vaping is less harmful than smoking, it is not risk-free. Children, young people, and non-smokers should not take up vaping. It should be recognized as a less harmful alternative for adult smokers to quit. The table below summarises the key messages.

	Advice	Level of risk
Current smoker	Vapes are a tool to quit smoking	In the short and medium term, vaping poses a fraction of the risks of smoking
Non-smoker	Should not start vaping or smoking	Not risk free, but difficult to quantify the level of risk

We recommend that your smokefree school policy also prohibits e-cigarette use, whilst being mindful that staff, parents, and carers who are quitting, may use e-cigarettes. Communication should be sensitive to avoid alienating those trying to quit smoking.

For educational materials on vaping, including bitesize sessions, downloadable posters and classroom sessions, click [here](#).



Illicit Tobacco and E-cigarettes

It is illegal to sell cigarettes or nicotine containing vapes to under 18s, or to purchase on behalf of someone under the age of 18, but it is not illegal to smoke or vape underage. The main source of supply of cigarettes and vapes is shops.

Underage vapers mainly buy from shops (47%), but 43% have been given them; 18% have bought them from friends or other informal sources, 11% buy from street markets; and 10% have bought on the internet.³

If a pupil is found to have been vaping or smoking, pupils should not be excluded for vaping or smoking, but instead they should be asked where they got their cigarette or vape from and be supported to quit tobacco or e-cigarettes.

Pupils who are entitled to free school meals, SEN and ethnic minority pupils are more likely to have tried vaping than any other group¹⁰

False advertisement

Children and young people are increasingly exposed to vape promotion, particularly amongst shops and online (ASH).

You can submit a complaint about any inappropriate advertising and promotion of vaping to under-18s to the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) [here](#)

Reporting It

If the school become aware of retailers, or individuals, who are selling vapes or tobacco to anyone under the age of 18, you should report them through the [Citizens Advice Portal](#) or to Doncaster's trading standards via email TobaccoandAlcohol@doncaster.gov.uk

Contaminated Vapes

There are growing concerns about unregulated vapes, some of which are tampered with THC or synthetic cannabinoids, causing serious illness in children.

Vaping products claiming to have cannabis or THC in, are controlled as Class B drugs under the Misuse of Drugs Act. Because they are illegal, they unregulated meaning that it is impossible to know what they contain.

If you suspect a contaminated vape:

1. Call 999 if immediate medical attention is needed.
2. Retain the device, if possible.
3. Report to the police via 101 or Crimestoppers at 0800 555 111. Also, report to LDIS via PHEnquiries@doncaster.gov.uk and DrugIntelligence@southyorks.pnn.police.uk

Disposing of Vapes

Any confiscated vapes should be disposed of correctly at your local recycling centre.

Disposable vapes contain batteries that should not be put in general waste. They should be disposed of separately. Batteries can start fires.

For more information visit your local household waste and recycling [website](#).

Additional Resources

Digital Resources

In addition to the smokefree Doncaster resources available, there are some additional resources to support the implementation of a smokefree school. These resources are available to download from the Healthy Learning, Healthy Lives [website](#).

- Example Letter to parent
- Example Email to staff
- Policy checklist
- Smokefree School Policy template

Signage

Signage packs containing smokefree zone stickers, flyers and posters with information and guidance on smoking cessation services are available to order for free.

Please email smokefree@doncaster.gov.uk to request a pack, for additional signage or specific smokefree resources requests.

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