

# Local Government Declaration on Tobacco Control & the NHS Statement of Support for Tobacco Control

## Briefing your Councillor

This document has been developed to support you in providing information to new councillors about the Local Government Declaration on Tobacco Control and the NHS Statement of Support for Tobacco Control.

### What is the Declaration?

The [Local Government Declaration](#) is a public commitment to prioritising tobacco control and reducing the harm caused by tobacco use in the local community.

It is a response to the enormous and ongoing damage smoking does to our communities, a commitment to take action and a statement about a local authority's dedication to protecting their local community from the harm caused by tobacco.

The Declaration has now been signed by nearly half of all top tier authorities in England and, including District Councils, by over 90 councils.

The Declaration commits councils to:

- Reduce smoking prevalence and health inequalities;
- Develop plans with partners and local communities;
- Participate in local and regional networks;
- Support Government action at national level;
- Protect tobacco control work from the commercial and vested interests of the tobacco industry;
- Monitor the progress of tobacco control plans;
- Join the [Smokefree Action Coalition](#).

### The NHS Statement of Support

As NHS England's strategy, the [NHS 5 Year Forward View](#), highlights, although public health is now situated within local government, the NHS has a key role to play in reducing smoking prevalence and the harm caused by smoking.

Accordingly, a sister document for the Local Government Declaration, the [NHS Statement of Support for Tobacco Control](#) has also been developed. This commits NHS organisations to actively support colleagues in local government in their tobacco control work.

### Why have we made this commitment?

Every year, nearly 80,000 people a year in England die prematurely from smoking related illnesses. Smoking is the largest single cause of premature death in the UK. Not only does smoking cut lives short, it damages local communities and economies. It takes money out of the pockets of those who cannot afford it and is responsible for half the difference in life expectancy between the richest and the poorest.



## How are we using the Declaration?

The Declaration doesn't commit the Council to specific policies but to overarching principles. Local authorities decide their own priorities and can use the Declaration as a tool to support their work or provide a starting point for action.

Accordingly, how the Declaration is implemented will depend on local practice. For some authorities, implementing the Declaration will be an acknowledgment of ongoing best practice activities whereas for others there may be areas where further action is needed.

However, key functions of the Declaration include:

- To demonstrate council commitments to the [World Health Organisation Framework Convention on Tobacco Control](#) and the [Tobacco Control Plan for England](#)

Under the World Health Organisation Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, to which the UK is a party, countries have pledged to protect health policy from the commercial interests of the tobacco industry. Local authorities are also subject to this treaty. However, not all councils have policies to ensure local compliance. By signing the Declaration, councils are reinforcing their existing obligations and demonstrating their commitment to a comprehensive local approach.

- To protect local health policy from the tobacco industry

Tobacco companies have a long record of attempting to influence council policies. For example, in England they have sponsored schools and museums, paid for industry branded smoking shelters on council property and used subsidiaries to arrange meetings with members and officers on local harm reduction policies.

Signing the Declaration allows the council to send a clear signal to the public, health professionals and the industry itself that local health policy will not be influenced by the vested interests of the industry.

- To provide strong leadership on tobacco issues within the council

The Declaration is signed at the most senior level of the council by the Chief Executive and the Council Leader in order to demonstrate a strong corporate and political commitment by the council as a whole to make tackling the harm from smoking a priority. This is particularly important as tobacco remains the biggest cause of premature death and contributes to half the difference in life expectancy between the rich and poor.

For more information on implementing the Declaration, please visit:

<http://www.smokefreeaction.org.uk/declaration/files/ImplementationGuide.pdf>