

# A breath of fresh air

Managing a smoke-free environment



Smoking is banned in workplaces and enclosed public spaces across the UK. Employers, managers and those in control of premises must display no-smoking notices and take reasonable steps to make sure that staff, customers and visitors are aware of the ban and don't smoke in buildings or other defined spaces.

We have produced this guide to help you create, manage and maintain a smoke-free workplace.

## Why should I have a no-smoking policy at work?

Before the workplace smoking ban in the UK, passive smoking at work was estimated to cause the deaths of as many as 617 people each year. While most people in the UK are now aware of the ban, as an employer you must still provide information to your employees and others who may use your workplace to make sure that they know smoking isn't allowed. You can provide information in leaflets and notices, or give out verbal instructions. You should periodically reinforce the message that smoking is banned.

Although it's generally straightforward to introduce a smoke-free workplace, there are policy issues that need to be resolved, such as:

- whether employees should be allowed time off for smoking breaks in designated areas outside the workplace
- how to deal with the negative image of employees and others who gather in doorways to smoke
- how to manage employees who visit or work in other places where smoking is allowed or which have a different policy

- how to deal with employees who smoke in vehicles – both company and privately owned.

Developing a no-smoking policy will help you clearly outline your approach to these issues and give support, information and rules to back up the ban, including assigning responsibilities for implementing the policy and guidance for everyone who'll be affected.

## Deciding what to put in your policy

It's important to involve your staff (smokers and non-smokers) when producing the policy and guidance, so that they can discuss and agree any options, influence others, and

help to raise local issues. Here, you might find it useful to get help from a health and safety professional and/or a human resources officer.

You need to consider the detail of the regulations banning smoking in the workplace and take them into account. For more guidance, visit the following country-specific websites:

- [www.smokefreeengland.co.uk](http://www.smokefreeengland.co.uk) (England)
- [www.clearingtheairscotland.com](http://www.clearingtheairscotland.com) (Scotland)
- [www.smokingbanwales.co.uk](http://www.smokingbanwales.co.uk) (Wales)
- [www.spacetobreathe.org.uk](http://www.spacetobreathe.org.uk) (Northern Ireland).

You also need to:

- decide who's responsible for enforcing the policy
- emphasise how you'll deal with employees who don't comply with the policy, such as through disciplinary procedures
- review how well the smoking ban is working in your workplace
- decide how you'll use smoking rooms that were previously provided for employees or others

- consider whether to build external 'smoking' shelters, if these can be safely positioned and smoke can't escape into buildings
- canvass the opinions of everyone affected, perhaps through questionnaires
- outline how the policy will affect visitors or customers
- decide if and how you're going to help smokers comply with the policy
- present senior managers with various agreed options and their associated advantages and disadvantages, so that they can decide a way forward and make sure smokers comply with the policy.

The guidance contained in the policy should cover:

- how the ban will affect different workers, such as those visiting people in their own homes or working in prisons or residential homes; contractors working in your workplace; and workers travelling by car on company business – in privately owned, hired or company vehicles
- what will happen if someone breaks the rules, for example a verbal or written warning
- what advice, support and free help is available from local councils and the NHS for those who want to quit smoking (councils are also the enforcing agents and offer free advice on compliance).

## Communicating your policy

Once you've agreed your policy, you need to communicate it efficiently and positively to everyone it will affect. In clear, simple language, it should:

- explain that it's been developed to help create a healthy, safe and comfortable environment
- acknowledge the right of employees to work in a smoke-free environment
- say who it applies to – for example employees only, or visitors and customers too

- say where it applies – for example in enclosed spaces, or on the whole of your site
- identify the managers who are responsible for implementing and monitoring it
- say what will happen if someone doesn't obey it
- give the name of someone who can deal with questions or problems.

To help you communicate your policy, you'll need to put up 'no

smoking' signs in prominent places, especially in areas where people relax at break times and where visitors and customers can see them clearly.

Some smokers may see the smoking ban as a way to help them quit the habit. You should support them in this – offer them help from within your organisation and give them information on the resources they can get in their local communities or on the internet.

## Monitoring and improving how your policy works

It's important to keep an eye on how effective your smoking ban is. If people are still smoking in restricted areas, find out if they're being challenged, sanctioned or offered help, or if managers are 'turning a blind eye'. If the ban isn't working, you might need to offer more support and training and, if necessary, use disciplinary measures.

Other ways of finding if the ban is working include:

- walking around your premises with supervisors to identify problem areas
- encouraging employees to 'blow the whistle' on those who aren't following the policy.

Helping smokers to cut down or give up can help identify those who may

be experiencing difficulties and bring problems into the open. You can also support employees, positively influence their attitudes and help them comply with the policy by:

- giving out NHS and government information
- showing relevant videos
- allowing them time off for counselling, or talks with an appropriate professional.

## Some useful links

**ACAS** *Health and employment* (pp 9–10, 'Smoking at work'), [www.acas.org.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=257&p=0](http://www.acas.org.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=257&p=0).

**Action on Smoking and Health** ([www.ash.org.uk](http://www.ash.org.uk)) – see *Workplace smoking policies: why employers should act*, and the 2005 report, *Smoking in the workplace*, [old.ash.org.uk/html/workplace/pdfs/workplace.pdf](http://old.ash.org.uk/html/workplace/pdfs/workplace.pdf).

**Health and Safety Executive** ([www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)) – see the 'smoking' page, [www.hse.gov.uk/contact/faqs/smoking.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/contact/faqs/smoking.htm).

**National Health Service** Free stop smoking service at [gosmokefree.nhs.uk/what-suits-me/local-nhs-services](http://gosmokefree.nhs.uk/what-suits-me/local-nhs-services), and free 'go smokefree' support material at [data.gosmokefree.co.uk/IndividualOrder.aspx](http://data.gosmokefree.co.uk/IndividualOrder.aspx).

**Scottish Executive** 'Healthier Scotland' programme, [www.clearingtheairscotland.com/faqs/guidance.html](http://www.clearingtheairscotland.com/faqs/guidance.html) (includes guidance on no-smoking policies for the NHS, local authorities and care service providers).

**Smokefree England** [www.smokefreeengland.co.uk/what-do-i-do/business.html](http://www.smokefreeengland.co.uk/what-do-i-do/business.html).

**TUC** *Negotiating smoke-free workplaces: visiting clients in their own home*, [www.smokefreeengland.co.uk/files/guidance-for-people-working-in-the-home.pdf](http://www.smokefreeengland.co.uk/files/guidance-for-people-working-in-the-home.pdf).

## Workplace smoking – facts and figures for England

- 98% of businesses say they are fully compliant
- 81% of businesses think that the smokefree law is 'a good idea'
- 87% of businesses say implementation has gone well or very well
- 91% of businesses think the new law is being obeyed
- 91% of workers say their employer is enforcing the law
- 70% of people think the ban has had a positive effect on health
- Air quality in pubs is now comparable with outdoor air

Source: 'Smokefree England – one year on'. London: Department of Health, 2008. [www.dh.gov.uk/tobacco](http://www.dh.gov.uk/tobacco).

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The Institution was founded in 1945 and is an independent, not-for-profit organisation that sets professional standards, supports and develops members and provides authoritative advice and guidance on health and safety issues. IOSH is formally recognised by the ILO as an international non-governmental organisation.