

The right to smoke-free Scouting



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Introduction

This factsheet looks at the issues that smoking raises in Scouting, both for adults and young people. It explains how The Scout Association's Safety Policy relates to smoking, provides some facts and offers guidance.

It is one of four factsheets produced to help Leaders and their leadership teams deal with social issues such as smoking and alcohol, within Scouting. The other factsheets look at alcohol and Scouting, the law and how it relates to smoking and drinking and a resource list for further reading on both issues.

Helping you make informed decisions about smoking

Thanks to hard-hitting government advertising and prominent health warnings on cigarette packets there can be few who are not aware of the harmful effects of smoking.

This factsheet is not about the rights and wrongs of smoking, but aims instead to offer guidance and stimulate discussions among leadership teams. It is hoped that this will allow you to make sensible and informed decisions at local level.

Leading by example

As an adult in Scouting, you are a role model for the young people in your care. Young people are impressionable and will inevitably be influenced

by adults' behaviour - especially that of those whom they respect.

One of the most effective ways of helping young people to develop is to allow them to learn by doing. Quite often a Leader will demonstrate a particular skill and in turn will expect a young person to learn the skill. If a young person sees an adult Leader smoking they may copy in their desire to be 'grown up' (*Bates, 2003*).

Clearly Leaders who smoke in full view of young people are not providing a good example.

The Scout Association's Policy

The Scout Association has a key policy which requires Scouting to be provided in a safe manner without risk to health, so far as is reasonably practicable (*Policy, Organisation and Rules, The Scout Association*).

For further details of The Scout Association's Safety Policy please see *Policy, Organisation and Rules* chapter 2, page 3.

Adults and smoking

There are currently about 12 million adult cigarette smokers in the UK and another three million who smoke pipes and/or cigars (*General Household Survey 2001; Great Britain*).

In Scouting, we understand that our adult Leaders and Members have the right to smoke and we recognise that people have a choice. Ideally, we would like them to stop smoking but when you are dealing with people who offer their time on a voluntary basis, we have to be careful what restrictions we impose. We must also acknowledge however, that non-smokers have rights and choices.

Getting the balance between those who do and those who don't is the difficult part.

Discussion point

All Leaders and adult helpers should be actively discouraged from smoking around young people who are involved in Scouting.

Passive smoking

The majority of adults who choose to smoke are aware of the harmful effect of smoking. However how many of the adults and young people we work with are aware of the harmful effect of passive (or second-hand) smoking?

Passive smoking has been proved to present severe risks to health (*Secretary of State for Health, 1998*). If adults don't like smoking, then they can make a decision about the environment they are in and can also choose to talk to the smoker. An eight-year-old Cub Scout however, is much less likely to voice their opinion.

Discussion point

There should be restrictions on smoking in and around Scouting premises and events.

In today's society, there are increasing demands for a healthy environment and clean air (*Secretary of State for Health, 1998*). Already many pubs and restaurants have declared themselves 'smoke free zones'.

In the same way, parents have an expectation that adults in Scouting will provide a safe environment for young people.

How much do young people know about smoking?

Young people are aware of cigarettes at an early age. Three out of four children are aware of cigarettes before they reach the age of five

whether the parents smoke or not (*Teenage Smoking Attitudes in 1996; ONS, 1997*)

By the time a young person becomes a Member of The Scout Association as a Beaver Scout at the age of six, you can almost guarantee that they will be aware of cigarettes. As the young person grows up (regardless of whether they are a Member of The Scout Association) their awareness of cigarettes will have increased and may have even progressed to the stage where they have experimented and now smoke on a regular basis.

Discussion point

Adult Leaders should not allow young people over the age of 16 to smoke cigarettes at an event where younger Members and non-smokers are present?

Coping with young people who smoke

At some time, as an adult in Scouting, you will come across young people who choose to smoke. There are a number of ways in which adults can deal with young people who smoke, but the ultimate aim should be to support and inform the young person of the harmful effect of smoking on themselves and others.

A young person can legally smoke when they are aged 16, but it is illegal to sell any tobacco product to anyone under the age of 16. Sometimes we will come across young people who are under the age of 16 and choose to smoke. We must treat these young people the same as any other young person but must also consider the effect on the rest of the group.

Guidance

Please note that the following is guidance only. It should be used as a basis for your own local

rules. Leaders can also use the guidance as further points of discussion, between a leadership team.

- Ensure that all Scouting premises are smoke free. This includes premises which are rented on Section nights and also buildings on campsites.
- Make people aware that your premises are smoke free. Pin up no smoking signs, so that all visitors are aware.
- It is important that no Leader smokes around young people. Not only does smoking around young people subject them to passive smoking, but it also increases the fire risk.
- If you do smoke, try to refrain from smoking during a Sectional meeting. The majority of Sectional meetings run for two hours or less and any adult should be able to refrain from smoking for such a short period of time.
- No Leader who smokes should be expected to refrain from smoking for events that last longer than a couple of hours. They should however be expected to deal with this in a sensible manner. The smoker should make sure that they do not subject any adult or young person to their smoke, i.e. on a weekend camp a Leader who smokes should arrange a place which is out of sight and away from young people.
- Great care should be taken on camp, especially around tents and in wooded areas. Remember Leaders lead by example.
- Any young person over the age of 16 who smokes should be expected to follow the same rules as adults. Smoking around their peers is not acceptable.
- When dealing with a young person under the age of 16, great care should be taken. It is important that you help the young person, to deal with their smoking. Sometimes you may need to consider communicating with the parents.
- As a Leader it is unacceptable to allow young people to smoke while in your care.

The key to these guidance points is common sense! We all have a responsibility to make sure we offer Scouting to young people in a safe environment. The well-being of the young people in Scouting is paramount and we must ensure that no young person is subjected to tobacco smoke. This also applies to anyone who does not wish to be subjected to tobacco smoke.

Some common sense advice

- Don't offer cigarettes to young people
- Don't smoke in buildings used by young people
- Don't smoke around young people
- Try and give up - your leadership team will support you!

Smoking: the facts

Use the following to facilitate your leadership team's discussions on smoking and to educate young people about the dangers.

- Addiction to nicotine can be measured in a number of ways. One method is to note how soon after waking a person smokes their first cigarette of the day. In 2001, 15% of smokers had their first cigarette within five minutes of waking.
- Among smokers of 20 or more cigarettes a day, 32% smoked their first cigarette of the day within five minutes of waking
- Half of all teenagers who are currently smoking will die from diseases caused by tobacco if they continue to smoke. One quarter will die after 70 years of age and one quarter before, with those dying before 70 losing on average 23 years of life (*Peto R. Mortality in relation to smoking*).
- One in two long-term smokers will die prematurely as a result of smoking – half of these in middle age. Every year in the UK, about 120,000 people in the UK are killed by smoking, accounting for

one fifth of all UK deaths (*The UK Smoking Epidemic; Health Education Authority*).

- Children are three times as likely to smoke if both parents smoke. Parents' approval or disapproval of the habit is also a significant factor (*Teenage Smoking attitudes in 1996; ONS, 1997*).
- In 1995 there were 46,000 cancer deaths in the UK attributable to smoking: approximately a third of all cancer deaths (*The UK smoking Epidemic; Health Education Authority*).
- Non-smokers are at risk of contracting lung cancer from exposure to other people's smoke. The UK's scientific Committee on Tobacco and Health found that the research findings were consistent with an increased risk of lung cancer in non-smokers of between 20% and 30% (*Report of Scientific Committee on Tobacco and Health, Department of Health, 1998*).
- Almost half of all children in the UK are exposed to tobacco smoke in the home (*General Household Survey 1998, ONS, 1999*)
- Passive smoking causes a reduction in lung function and increased severity in the symptoms of asthma in children, it is also a risk factor for new cases of asthma in children (*United States Environment protection Agency, 1992*).

The facts that have been produced are courtesy of ASH. ASH stands for 'Action on Smoking and Health'. If you would like further information, please visit www.ash.co.uk

Get help to stop smoking

There are many reasons for giving up smoking, not least the cost to your pocket and your health.

To get help to stop smoking and to read about people who have managed it, visit

<http://www.givingupsmoking.co.uk/>

Don't give up giving up. 