



**Hartlepool**  
Borough Council

# **Hartlepool Director of Public Health Annual Report 2025**

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# Introduction by Craig Blundred

Director of Public Health for Hartlepool



For my annual report this year I am focusing on the challenges we face from what is still a significant cause of ill health in our communities. Smoking is still a major driver of ill health and health inequalities in Hartlepool. We have made significant progress in the last few decades, but we still have further to go. Many of us still remember what public spaces were like when smoking was allowed and we now have clean air in our pubs, restaurants and on public transport. But this doesn't mean that smoking and the effects of smoking have gone away.

Around 1 in 7 adults still smoke in Hartlepool today and that is too many. Ill health resulting from smoking not only impacts on the person themselves but their families as well. People are still dying from preventable smoking related diseases. There are also huge costs, still, to our health and social care services as well.

So we still have a long way to go – but I am optimistic. As you will see in this report, we have increased the stop smoking support available to Hartlepool residents and we are also cracking down on illicit tobacco which has a damaging effect in terms of encouraging young people to smoke. The report also outlines how we are working in partnership with a range of stakeholders to continue to reduce smoking in Hartlepool.





Reducing exposure to  
tobacco smoke



Supporting smokers to stop



Raise the price and reduce  
illicit trade





## Reducing exposure to tobacco smoke

Second hand smoke (SHS) continues to pose a significant global health risk. It is estimated that 33% of male non-smokers, 35% of female non-smokers, and 40% of children worldwide are regularly exposed to SHS. The immediate health effects of exposure include eye irritation, headaches, coughing, sore throat, dizziness and nausea. Over the long term, SHS is associated with an increased risk of serious conditions such as heart disease, various forms of cancer, stroke, and dementia.

The 2022 independent Khan Review recommended key actions to make smoking obsolete in England. Its main proposal was to gradually raise the legal age for buying tobacco. Other suggestions included expanding smoke-free areas to protect young people and de-normalise smoking, as well as introducing a licensing system for tobacco retailers. While England has already ruled out smoking bans in hospitality settings, future expansions of smoke free environments under the Tobacco and Vapes Bill are expected to include public parks, school grounds, and hospital premises. These measures also aim to reduce second-hand smoke exposure and related health risks.

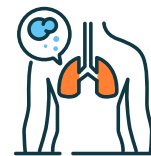
Children are particularly vulnerable to the harmful effects of SHS due to their developing lungs and faster breathing, which increases their intake of harmful substances. Around 85% of second-hand smoke is invisible and odourless, meaning it can linger and remain dangerous even after the smoke disappears.

Each cigarette releases over 5,000 harmful chemicals and exposure during childhood has been linked to a heightened risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), glue ear, asthma, and other chronic respiratory illnesses, including emphysema in later life. This highlights the need to protect young people from exposure in all settings, including homes, cars and public places.

Evidence shows that children living in households where parents or siblings smoke are up to three times more likely to become smokers themselves. Furthermore, a study conducted by Imperial College London found that children whose caregivers smoke are four times more likely to become regular smokers compared to those whose caregivers are non-smokers.

Hartlepool is committed to reducing tobacco smoke exposure in homes and public spaces as reducing SHS exposure is essential for safeguarding the health of current and future generations. A comprehensive approach including public education, smoke-free environments, and support for cessation remains critical in addressing this preventable risk.

The infographic below shows the health impacts of second hand smoke (babies and children)



**20-50%** lower  
respiratory tract  
infections increase



**30-70%** increased  
risk of incidents of  
**wheeze** and **21-85%**  
increased risk of  
**asthma** in children



**60%** increase  
of middle ear  
infections



**x3** fold increased  
risk of bacterial  
meningitis



**x3** fold increased  
sudden infant  
death





## The picture in Hartlepool

### According to the latest Annual Population Survey (APS, 2023)

- Approximately 1 in 7 adults in Hartlepool are current smokers, this compares with roughly 1 in 11 for England and the North East.
- The proportion of adult smokers in Hartlepool has reached its lowest level in 13 years, indicating progress in reducing smoking rates.
- Nearly 1 in 3 adults in Hartlepool are now classified as ex-smokers and just over 1 in 5 workers in routine and manual occupations in Hartlepool, continue to smoke.

### Local Smoking in Pregnancy Data (2023/24)

- Around 15% of pregnant women in Hartlepool were smokers in the early stages of their pregnancy in 2023/2024, but this fell to around 10% at time of delivery, which is worse than the national average of 7.4%, however lower than the North East average of 10.2%.

This indicates a continued need for focused smoking cessation support for pregnant women and families with young children across Hartlepool.

🔗 For further data click here - [Living Well | Joint Strategic Needs Assessment | Hartlepool Borough Council](#).

🔗 Link – [Smoking Needs Assessment 2023 | Hartlepool Borough Council](#)







## What are we doing?



Commissioned by Hartlepool Borough Council, FRESH delivers a comprehensive eight-strand programme designed to reduce smoking prevalence by implementing the most effective, evidence-based tobacco control interventions. A key part of the programme is national advocacy, making sure the North East stays strongly and consistently involved in discussions and policies about tobacco issues. This involves making sure the regions needs and experiences are considered when national tobacco policies are discussed.

FRESH leads high-quality public health campaigns and maintains ongoing media engagement throughout the year. These efforts aim to encourage smoking cessation support and keep the issue of tobacco harm prominently on the public and political agenda. One of the Smoking Survivors Campaigns in 2025 featured a Hartlepool family, which highlighted the issues locally for our community.

The programme is underpinned by the latest research and evidence, which informs all activities. FRESH focuses on increasing public awareness of health risks associated with smoking and the benefits of quitting, working closely with the North East population to support behaviour change and promote a smoke free future.

 **Smoking Survivors | Fresh Quit**





### 0-19 Service – Tobacco Control and Infant Health

Hartlepool Borough Council's 0-19 team comprises a range of qualified and experienced professionals, including Health Visitors, School Nurses, Specialist Public Health Nurses, Staff Nurses, Nursery Nurses, Family Support Workers, Family Hubs Staff and Parenting Support Workers.

The multidisciplinary team works closely with local families to deliver key mandated health and development reviews, including antenatal visits, new birth assessments, and child development reviews at 9-12 months and 2-2.5

years. As part of these contacts, carbon monoxide (CO) screening is routinely carried out. This non-invasive test helps identify active smoking or exposure to harmful levels of CO, such as from faulty gas appliances, supporting early intervention.

Team members provide evidence-based advice on the risks of second-hand smoke and offer practical guidance on reducing children's exposure in the home and other environments. Where appropriate, families are supported with referrals to local stop smoking services.



 Family Hubs in Hartlepool





## Supporting smokers to stop and stay stopped and also to reduce harm

Smoking remains the leading cause of early death and preventable illness in the UK. Approximately 50% of smokers will die prematurely as a direct result of smoking-related conditions, with life expectancy reduced by an average of 10 years compared to non-smokers. For every individual who dies due to smoking, it is estimated that around 30 others are living with smoking-related illnesses.

In England during 2019-2020, smoking was associated with approximately 506,100 hospital admissions among adults aged 35 and over. These admissions represented around 4% of all hospital admissions in this age group. The financial cost to the NHS in England is substantial, with smoking related care estimated to cost £1.9 billion per year.

Data from the Global Burden of Disease Study (2021), highlights the scale of smoking's impact, attributing 10.7% of all deaths in the UK to smoking – more than any other preventable cause. By comparison, other major preventable risk factors contributed to a significantly lower proportion of deaths:

- High body mass index: 5.8%
- Alcohol use: 2.9%
- Drug use: 1.0%

The majority of smoking-related deaths are attributed to three primary conditions:

- Lung Cancer
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), including emphysema and chronic bronchitis
- Coronary heart disease (CHD)

These findings underline the need to continue investment in tobacco control, prevention, and cessation services to reduce the health impacts and financial costs of smoking.







## The picture in Hartlepool

Smoking is a major contributor to avoidable health inequalities in Hartlepool. The Government has set a target for a Smokefree England by 2030, defined as reducing adult smoking prevalence to 5% or below.

- An estimated 46% of the Hartlepool population, including both current and ex smokers, are at a greater risk of smoking related harms, compared with 37% for England and 38% for the North East region.
- Smoking attributable mortality in Hartlepool continues to fall, down 16% over a five year period
- Smoking attributable deaths from cancer in Hartlepool also continue to fall, down 19% over the same five year period
- Despite these improvements, both smoking attributable mortality and cancer death rates remain significantly higher than the national average
- Latest 24/25 figures show that 41% of people that engaged with Hartlepool's stop smoking service, successfully quit.
- Based on the current trends, Hartlepool is not projected to meet the 5% smokefree target

While there have been notable improvements in smoking related mortality and cessation support, smoking continues to place a significant burden on health in Hartlepool. Sustained efforts will be essential to close the gap and accelerate progress toward the national Smokefree by 2030 target.

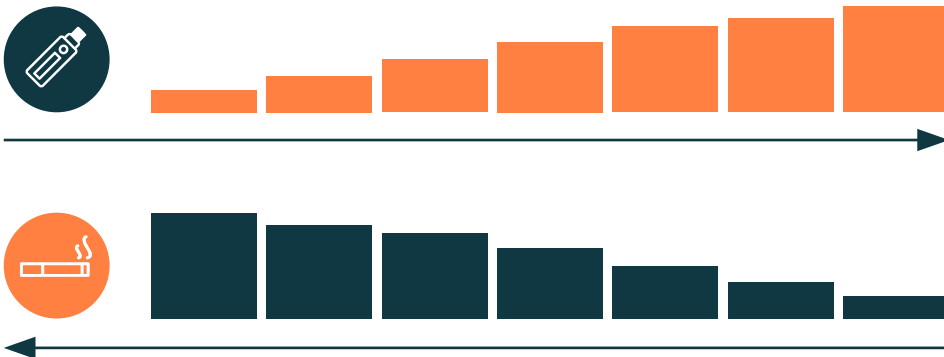




## Vaping trends

Due to the absence of local-level data on vaping in Hartlepool, national survey findings are used to provide estimates. Nationally, approximately 5.9% of people aged 16 and over report daily e-cigarette use. Based on this, it is estimated that around 4,500 adults in Hartlepool may be daily users of e-cigarettes. In addition, around 3.9% of adults (approximately 27,000 people nationally) use e-cigarettes occasionally. For Hartlepool this proportion would be around 3,000 people using e-cigarettes occasionally.

Evidence continues to show that while smoking rates are declining, e-cigarette use is increasing, particularly among certain groups. However, disposable vape use peaked in 2023 and is now in decline. Current smokers and ex-smokers are the most likely to vape, although usage is also rising among those who have never smoked, currently estimated at 2.8% of the adult population. Extrapolated to local populations, this would suggest that a proportion of Hartlepool residents who have never smoked, may now be using e-cigarettes.



## Youth Vaping

The 2025 ASH Smokefree Youth Survey provides an updated overview of vaping and smoking behaviours among 11-17 year olds in Great Britain. Key findings include:

- 20% of 11-17 year olds have tried vaping (an estimated 1.1 million young people), consistent with 2023 levels
- 7% currently vape (approximately 400,000), with 40% of current users vaping daily
- Ever smoking among young people has increased significantly, rising from 14% in 2023 to 21% in 2025
- 63% of young people believe vaping is as harmful or more harmful than smoking, indicating an increase in perceived risk

While vaping is substantially less harmful than smoking, it still exposes users to toxins that can affect lung health. This is particularly concerning for young people, whose lungs are still developing. Furthermore, nicotine – the addictive substance found in most vapes – can negatively impact brain development, concentration and learning in school-aged children.

Although there is currently no strong evidence that vaping leads directly to smoking, the likelihood of trying vapes increases with age and is higher among young people who already smoke. In the UK, vapes containing nicotine are regulated, and it is illegal to sell them to anyone under the age of 18 or for adults to purchase them on behalf of minors.

**For further data click here - [Living Well | Joint Strategic Needs Assessment | Hartlepool Borough Council](#).**

**Smoking Needs Assessment 2023 | Hartlepool Borough Council**





## What are we doing?

### Local Support in Hartlepool: Swap to Stop Initiative

In Hartlepool, residents can access support to stop smoking through the Swap to Stop initiative, delivered by the Community Navigators, Start, Housing, Thirteen Group and a Primary Care Network (PCN), in partnership with the specialist smoking service.

The Swap to Stop programme offers:

- 12 weeks of tailored behavioural support, provided by trained staff within the community.
- A free 12-week vape bundle, designed to support a switch from tobacco to e-cigarettes as a harm reduction approach.
- Flexible support options including face to face, telephone, or blended appointments, depending on individual needs.

The programme is delivered in collaboration with key partners and staff within these organisations have been trained to deliver the offer, helping to broaden access to smoking cessation support across different community settings.







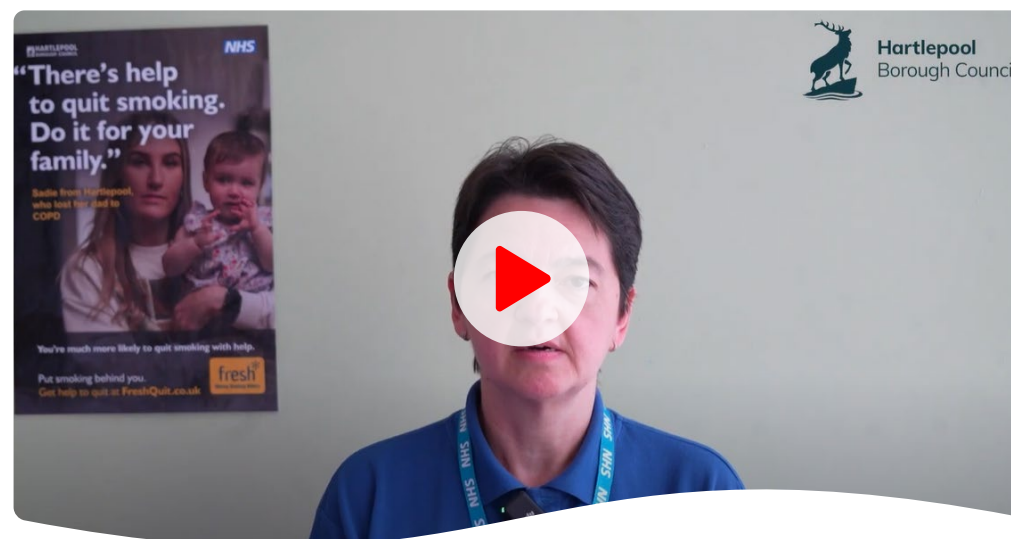
### Specialist Stop Smoking Service

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) highlights the significant health benefits associated with quitting smoking at any age. Evidence shows that cessation leads to substantial reductions in the risk of premature death and smoking related disease, particularly when individuals quit earlier in life. Individuals who access stop smoking services in England are three times more likely to quit than those who attempt to stop unaided.

Local data has been used to identify several priority groups who would benefit most from targeted smoking cessation support. These include:

- Routine and manual workers
- Individuals with a diagnosed mental health condition
- Pregnant women and new mothers
- People with a diagnosed long-term health conditions
- Individuals who use drugs and/or alcohol
- People with a planned hospital admission
- Those identified through NHS Health Checks
- Individuals accessing housing or homelessness support services

These groups are at increased risk of tobacco-related harm and often face additional barriers to quitting. Tailored, accessible interventions are essential to reducing smoking prevalence and associated health inequalities within these populations.





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Hartlepool's Specialist Stop Smoking Service provides a comprehensive and flexible 12-week programme to support individuals in their quit attempts. The offer includes:

- Access to nicotine replacement therapies (NRT), pharmacotherapy, and/or e-cigarettes
- Face to face clinics held at various community locations
- Telephone-based consultations for convenience and accessibility
- Home visits for housebound individuals
- Workplace clinics to engage working populations

Both the specialist service and the wider community-based offer encourage individuals to return for additional quit attempts, recognising that successful cessation often requires multiple efforts.

This approach ensures that support is inclusive, evidence-based, and responsive to the needs of Hartlepool's diverse population.



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**North Tees and Hartlepool**  
NHS Foundation Trust





## Local Support and Prevention Services

In Hartlepool, the School Nursing Team works in partnership with the Young Persons Team within Start (Substance Misuse Service) to provide comprehensive support for young people in relation to smoking and vaping.

Their work includes:

- Preventative education delivered in school settings, focused on discouraging the uptake of smoking and vaping
- Tailored one to one interventions, offering evidence-based advice on the health risks associated with tobacco and vape use
- Cessation support, assisting young people who wish to quit smoking or vaping through structured, youth-appropriate interventions

These services aim to reduce harm, raise awareness, and build resilience among young people to prevent nicotine dependence and long-term health consequences.







## Raise price and reduce illicit trade

Illegal tobacco refers to tobacco products that are smuggled into the UK without duty being paid, sold under the guise of duty-free, or counterfeit. While illegal tobacco remains prevalent in communities across the North of England, public sentiment is strongly against its presence – 79% of the public support tougher enforcement and crackdowns on its sale and distribution.

The availability and use of illicit tobacco present serious threats to public health and community safety. As the price of legal tobacco products continues to rise through taxation, the black market becomes increasingly attractive to smokers seeking cheaper alternatives. This demand sustains and fuels the illegal tobacco trade.



### Harms of illicit tobacco

Illicit tobacco has wide-ranging negative impacts on individuals, communities, and public services:

- Undermines legitimate businesses by offering tobacco at significantly reduced prices.
- Supports wider criminal activity, including the sale of drugs and counterfeit goods.
- Facilitates youth smoking initiation, with unregulated products often more accessible to underage individuals.
- Discourages cessation efforts, making quitting tobacco use less likely.
- Increases the risk of house fires, as illegal cigarettes do not meet UK fire safety standards.
- Places a financial burden on the NHS, which spends billions annually treating smoking-related illnesses.
- Funds organised crime, contributing to broader issues of lawlessness and violence in local areas.





## The Picture in Hartlepool

Since 2013 there have been 17 complaints for underage cigarette sales. In the same period there have been 28 complaints for underage vape sales, these complaints have resulted in 4 closure orders.

### Tobacco and Vapes Bill

The Tobacco and Vapes Bill is a proposed piece of legislation in the UK aimed at supporting the path to a smokefree generation. It includes the following proposals:

- **Phased ban on tobacco sales to future generations:** The sale of tobacco products would be prohibited to individuals born on or after 1 January 2009, effectively phasing out tobacco use over time.
- **Comprehensive regulatory powers:** Authorities would be granted enhanced powers to regulate all tobacco and nicotine-containing products, including vapes and nicotine pouches, ensuring consistent standards across all forms of nicotine delivery
- **Ban on vape advertising and vending machines:** To reduce youth appeal and accessibility, a complete ban on advertising for vapes and the use of vending machines for vape products would be introduced
- **Retail licensing powers:** New powers would allow for the introduction of a tobacco and vape retail licensing system, providing greater oversight and control over where and how nicotine products are sold
- **Fixed penalty notices:** The legislation would include new fixed penalties for breaches of tobacco and nicotine regulations, enabling swift enforcement action
- **Extension of smokefree legislation:** Additional powers would allow for the extension of existing smokefree laws to further protect the public from exposure to second hand smoke in a wider range of settings

These proposed measures form part of a broader strategy to reduce tobacco-related harm, prevent youth uptake, and protect future generations from the health risks of nicotine addiction.

For further data click here - [Living Well | Joint Strategic Needs Assessment | Hartlepool Borough Council](#).

Link – [Smoking Needs Assessment 2023 | Hartlepool Borough Council](#)





## What are we doing?

Hartlepool Borough Council and partners continue to drive forward efforts to reduce smoking prevalence and address the emerging challenges associated with vaping through the implementation of the Hartlepool Tobacco Control Strategy and Action Plan. This work is coordinated by the Hartlepool Smoking Alliance, which brings together local stakeholders to take a whole-system approach to tobacco harm reduction.

Key areas of focus:

- Training frontline staff: local organisations are being supported to train staff to have effective health conversations, including evidence-based techniques to support smoking cessation
- Promotion of vaping as a quit aid: Public Health will continue to run media campaigns promoting switching from smoking to vaping as a harm reduction strategy
- Youth-focused Engagement: Public Health will work with education settings to promote responsible messaging on smoking and vaping. This includes developing insight-led interventions to respond to rising vaping use amongst never-smokers
- Illicit Tobacco and Vapes and retailer engagement: Trading Standards and Public Health will continue enforcement against illegal vape sales, raise awareness of associated risks
- Development of a digital offer: Public Health will look to provide a digital smoking cessation offer to support those who do not want to access a smoking cessation service

## Enforcement and reporting

Trading Standards actively investigate reports relating to the manufacture, importation, distribution, or sale of illegal tobacco products. Legal action, including prosecution, will be pursued against individuals and businesses found to be operating unlawfully.

Members of the public can report suspicions or information anonymously via:

- Illegal Tobacco Helpline: 0300 999 0000
- Online: **Illegal Tobacco: Keep it out website.**

Ongoing community vigilance and partnership working are essential in tackling the illegal tobacco trade and protecting public health.







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## Conclusion



My report has outlined how we are working to reduce the harm caused by tobacco in Hartlepool. We are committed to working towards the goal of a smoke free generation and to make smoking history in Hartlepool and we all have a role to play in making Hartlepool smoke free. This is my final annual report for Hartlepool and I would like to thank all of the Public Health team, council staff, partners and stakeholders for working together over the last few years to tackle the health related challenges Hartlepool has faced.





## Acknowledgements

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