

SMOKING IN THE WORKPLACE

A great amount of research has been carried out on passive smoking and the ill health effects it causes. These effects are widely recognised.

Passive smoking is the term given to the involuntary inhalation of tobacco smoke.

As an employer you have a legal duty to assess the risks to your employees (see *Health and Safety Advice Sheet 2*) and to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, their health, safety and welfare at work.

It is for this reason that we **recommend** that employers introduce a policy on smoking in the workplace. A policy will prioritise the needs of non-smokers who do not wish to inhale tobacco smoke and heed the needs of people with a health condition that may be exacerbated by tobacco smoke.

Why have a Smoking Policy?

- It will help you to ensure you are controlling risks within your workplace.
- It will provide for a healthier workforce.
- It will help you to comply with the law.
- It will improve your corporate image.

Setting up a Smoking Policy

Consultation

Consider the needs of both smokers and non-smokers through consultation. Find out their views, anonymously; on:

- Non-smoking areas in work and rest places
- The acceptability of designated smoking areas.
- How non-smokers are being affected by passive smoking.
- How many employees are smokers and how they would be affected by a smoking policy

Drafting the Policy

Involve smokers and non-smokers when determining the content of the policy. You may need to select a representative group of employees and managers to help with this. Use the results of the survey to draft a policy that best suits the workforce. You

may find it beneficial to introduce the policy in stages, for example limit the times that people can smoke, then allow smoking in designated areas only.

Implementing the Policy

Agree a date for the introduction of the policy and announce this at least 3 months in advance (legally it takes 3 months to make any necessary changes to contractual terms and conditions). Use the time to make practical preparations:

- Order signs and decide on their location
- Allocate and prepare designated smoking areas
- Integrate the policy into the terms and conditions of employment, any staff handbooks, job advertisements, interviews and letters to prospective employees.

Allow time for smokers to adjust to the policy, once it is in place. Provide supportive measures to smokers who wish to quit or for those who find it hard to cope with the restrictions of the policy. You may have your own counselling service or refer staff to an Occupational Health Service.

Monitoring and managing the Policy effectively

- Continue consulting with employees on a regular basis, to assess the success of the policy and discuss any alterations.
- Consider any feedback from the implementation of the policy; what sorts of complaints and compliments have been made; has any disciplinary action been taken.
- Keep staff informed of current information about the effects of smoking, passive smoking and how to give up.

You should link the policy with promoting health issues in the workplace generally.

Further information about this subject, including advice on how you can help smokers to quit, can be obtained from:

Local Contacts

- Health Improvement Service, Moston Lodge, Countess of Chester Health Park, Liverpool Road, Chester, CH2 1UL. Tel: 01244 364819.

National Contacts

- ASH (Action on Smoking and Health), 109 Gloucester Place, London, W1H 3PH. Tel: 0171 314 1360.
- NO SMOKING DAY Campaign Office, Unit 203, 16 Baldwins Gardens, London, EC1N 7RJ. Tel: 0171 916 8070.
- QUIT, 102 Gloucester Place, London, WH1 3DA. Tel: 0800 002200 (Help Line).