

Report to the Tyne and Wear Trading Standards Joint Committee

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Keep it Out Campaign 2020 and Illegal Tobacco Enforcement Work

**Anneliese Hutchinson, Service Director, Economy, Innovation and Growth,
Gateshead Council**

Purpose of the report

To update the Committee on the recent launch of the Keep It Out Campaign and illegal tobacco enforcement activity undertaken by Trading Standards services in Tyne and Wear.

Summary

1. 'Keep it Out' is a campaign that has ran for several years as a tool designed to target illegal tobacco supplies. It is developed and led by Fresh, an organisation based in County Durham whose remit is to deliver a variety of workstreams that seek to combat the high smoking related illness and death rate that is prevalent throughout the North East. All five Tyne and Wear authorities fund and support this work.
2. The latest wave of 'Keep it Out' was launched across the region on 20th January and is set to be the biggest yet. A widespread publicity campaign is currently being delivered, in conjunction with Trading Standards and other Council /public services that are engaged in local smoke-free partnerships.
3. The 2020 campaign is predominantly centred around the impact that illegal tobacco availability has on young people. The main headlines are that;
 - Illegal tobacco helps children to get hooked on smoking and thus continues the cycle of health-related issues currently seen.
 - Children find out through their peer group who is selling it in their locality and that it's sold at prices they can afford. The regulatory controls in place for legitimate tobacco are rendered ineffective.
 - Illegal sellers are unconcerned about who their market are. People wrongly believe that local sellers won't sell to children. The facts are that they often do.
 - The illegal tobacco trade is linked to criminals. Local suppliers are often involved in drugs and loan sharking. Buying it means supporting crime and can put children in contact with criminals.
4. Promotional materials for 'Keep it Out' take the form of drink mats, posters, retailer guides, public facing leaflets and a wallet guide for frontline professionals. Two versions of a radio advert will be heard for four weeks on three local stations – Hits North East (formerly Metro), Sun FM and Smooth. In all instances, a key concept is to educate and raise awareness of the negative

effect this trade has on children. The rationale is that by reducing people's comfort levels around sales and challenging any perception it is a victimless crime, more smokers will think twice about buying illicit tobacco and there is an increased chance that they will inform on local sales.

5. All publicity material features the contact details for how the general public can anonymously report illegal tobacco sources. Either an online reporting form at www.keep-it-out.co.uk or the illegal tobacco hotline (0300 999 0000) can be used.
6. Information received through the campaign is collated by Fresh and an intelligence package is distributed to the relevant Trading Standards services for appropriate action.
7. The success of 'Keep It Out' relies heavily upon the cooperation of all partners engaged in smoke-free alliances for the distribution of publicity materials. As Trading Standards have a critical role in enforcement of illegal tobacco sales, an active role must be taken with promotion of the campaign to enable intelligence led working.
8. In Tyne and Wear, Trading Standards services have used a number of approaches to achieve this. Common to all services is to work in partnership with colleagues in Public Health and Communications teams so as to maximise impact of coverage.
9. All authorities have given a localised angle to the mainstream press releases developed by Fresh. This has been delivered along with digital variants of the 'keep it out' material through social media pages, websites, staff/residential newsletters and on plasma screens in Council buildings and GP surgeries. A short video has been filmed in the Metrology Laboratory highlighting the 'Keep It Out' message. Whilst this has been led by Gateshead Trading Standards it was funded by Fresh and is being used across the whole of the campaign area.
10. Leaflets and posters have been delivered to retail premises, community centres, GP surgeries and Council buildings. Drink mats have also been given to licenced pubs and clubs across the area. In some areas, Keep It Out posters are displayed in transport interchange stations, including Metro Stations in Gateshead and Sunderland.
11. This has always been a very successful campaign that has enabled Trading Standards in Tyne and Wear to lead targeted enforcement exercises. In the last year, intelligence received has led to the seizure of more than 100,000 illegal cigarettes and over 15kg of hand rolling tobacco in Newcastle. The street value of this has been around £15,000 and a true retail value is £55,000. In Gateshead more than 60,000 'cheap whites' have recently been seized and just under 5 kg of hand rolling tobacco. Sunderland, North Tyneside and South Tyneside have also seized sizeable quantities.
12. Some of the work that has been carried out in the latter part of 2019 has been with the aid of BWY Canine Illegal Tobacco Unit Roadshow. This is a sniffer dog service that has enabled tobacco in retail premises in Sunderland, Gateshead and Newcastle to be found in coat pockets and in concealed areas, such as toilet units or specially constructed compartments within existing shelving. In

South Tyneside, use of the dogs also led to the discovery of more than £1200 worth of illegal tobacco in a vehicle parked in proximity to the retail premises. Further work with the Roadshow is planned for February 2020.

13. Recommendation

14. The Committee is asked to note the information as contained within the report and actively support the Keep it Out campaign.

Contact: Laura Brooks, Sunderland City Council on (0191) 561 1607 or email laura.brooks@sunderland.gov.uk
