

Key messages from the 17th Annual Public Health Report

Smoking

- A fifth of adults in Stockport are still smoking
- Deprivation is a key risk factor for smoking across both sexes and all ages.
- A quarter of young adults are still smoking. There is some evidence that they will be less likely to give up in the future.
- 1 in 4 smokers will die of a smoking related disease so the only difference between smoking and playing Russian roulette is the delayed effect.
- Smoking related diseases are an important contributor to health inequalities. Although smoking is declining in most social groups this is not true of women in the most deprived quintiles.
- Tobacco is the only lawful product which kills such a high proportion of those who use it in the way the supplier intended.
- Tobacco is the only drug of addiction that can lawfully be purchased without a prescription. There are other lawful products to which addiction does occur, such as alcohol or glue, but the term “drug of addiction” is used here to imply a drug in which addiction would be the normal consequence of using the drug in the way intended by the supplier. Most smokers are introduced to tobacco in their youth and often become addicted before they fully realise the risk they are running.
- The new legislation, introduced in July 2007, banning smoking in enclosed workplaces and public places, is therefore very welcome. The enforcement of this legislation constitutes an important contribution by Stockport MBC to dealing with the scourge of smoking related diseases.
- Social marketing and smoking cessation advice and support constitutes an important contribution by the PCT.
- Most young people know the risks of smoking by the end of primary school. However a large proportion of them still experiment with tobacco in their early teens and many of these become addicted in the process. This happens partly out of rebellion, partly out of curiosity, partly out of a sense that tobacco is an adult habit, partly from following the examples of parents, partly out of a desire to demonstrate style and partly in response to peer pressure. We have yet to find an effective way of intervening in

these cultural factors and we need to do so. There is some American evidence which suggests that peer education focussed on the question of how young people are manipulated by the tobacco industry can be effective. We should introduce such a scheme in Stockport.

- Locally we are achieving higher access rates to smoking cessation services in deprived quintiles but this achievement is undermined by the fact that success rates are lower. We need to tackle these lower success rates by considering what additional support we can give, including social and cultural measures delivered by community development.