

Campaign to reduce effect of smoke on children in the Lothians



NHS Lothian is keen to get the message across about smoking in the home and the effect of that on children. Around 50,000 children are estimated to be at risk of exposure to second-hand smoke in Lothians and health officials say it is up to their parents to go right outside the home if they wish to smoke.

People in the Lothians who think they are doing enough to protect their children from their second-hand smoke are being targeted as part of a new campaign.

With new research showing the harmful chemicals in second-hand smoke linger and travel for up to five hours after the visible smoke has disappeared, the campaign is urging people to take smoking right outside of the home or car for the sake of their children.

Because 85 per cent of second-hand smoke is invisible and odourless, many are unaware that smoking indoors, even at an open window or standing at the back door, isn't enough to protect children, as the harmful chemicals linger and easily drift around the home.

The campaign gives people who smoke the facts, helping them understand how smoking indoors pollutes the air their family breathes and how they can take simple steps to make their home and car smoke-free.

It is estimated that second-hand smoke exposure in UK children each year causes over 20,000 cases of lower respiratory tract

infection, 120,000 cases of middle ear disease, at least 22,000 new cases of wheeze and asthma, 200 cases of bacterial meningitis, and 40 sudden infant deaths – one in five of all cot deaths.

The campaign launched as the Scottish Government announced a new target to reduce the proportion of children in Scotland exposed to second-hand smoke in the home from 12 per cent to six per cent by 2020, equivalent to approximately 50,000 children being protected. ASH Scotland has said that this is the first target of its kind anywhere in the world.

Colin Lumsdaine, Senior health promotion specialist, NHS Lothian, said:-“Everyone wants children to have the best start in life – protecting children from the harmful effects of second-hand smoke makes a huge difference both short-term and long-term to health outcomes for children.

“There is increasing awareness about the harm caused by second-hand smoke. NHS Lothian, in partnership with West Lothian Drug and Alcohol Service and Fast Forward, runs a successful smoke free homes and zones project in local primary schools.

“Children are involved in creating an information leaflet for parents which also invites them to make a pledge to keep their home and car smoke free. To date, around 80 schools have taken part and 2100 households have made the smoke free pledge.”

Minister for Public Health Michael Matheson said: “As we move towards creating a tobacco-free generation, we want to give every child in Scotland the chance to grow-up in a smoke-free environment.

“This campaign isn’t about a person’s choice to smoke, it’s about people who smoke having the facts so they can smoke in a way that doesn’t harm their children.

“The reality is that many think they’re already doing enough,

without realising that the harmful chemicals from second-hand smoke linger, even when there is no smell and it can't be seen. Because children's immune systems aren't fully developed and they breathe quicker than adults, the simple fact is that smoking in the home or car puts children of all ages at risk."

For help and advice on how to take smoking right outside, visit www.rightoutside.org

Information about the NHS Lothian smoke free homes project can be found on their [website](#) – where you can also make an online pledge.