

Introduction to a Whole Setting Approach in Colleges

Why do colleges need a whole settings approach to smoking?

The smokefree transformation of England began in 2009, when all enclosed workplaces and public spaces became free of tobacco smoke. College buildings went smokefree and many further education settings extended the legislation to most of their sites.

There is not much data on smoking available specifically for college-age students. However, in 2019, it was estimated that smoking prevalence among 18-21 year olds was 16.7% and for 16-17 year olds it was 8.7%*. These figures suggest that the years immediately following secondary school are a key time for young people to make important choices about their health.

There remains a great deal more work that can be done to reduce the prevalence of smoking among further education students. This work is important to build upon the existing education that students receive in school and to ensure that as young people become more independent, making healthy choices becomes the 'norm'.

*Smoking In England [Top Line Findings - Graphs - Smoking in England](#) accessed 15th July 2021

What are the challenges of a whole setting approach for colleges?

Working with young people aged 16-19 offers a number of challenges that are not found in secondary school education. The resource aims to address these issues identified below:

- Students may have been smoking for a number of years and so likely to be more heavily dependent on tobacco than school age children.
- The reasons that college age students smoke are likely to be different from younger school age children.
- Many colleges have a smokefree policy, but have retained 'smoking areas'. These are used by students and staff. Colleges may be hesitant about removing these areas, as it may lead to 'displacement' smoking (going off site), potentially upsetting neighbouring residents.
- Going off-site to smoke can make students late for lessons.
- Removing smoking areas may be interpreted by some as an infringement on rights.
- Colleges are more likely to promote an autonomous approach to health among students. They recognise that students are young adults and need to make their own decisions. They may be less likely to want to enforce a strict policy.
- Some of the students may be over 18 and thus legally able to be sold cigarettes.
- The college site may also be used by other organisations and groups in the evenings.



Benefits of a Whole Settings Approach in Colleges

- It recognises a variety of influences (i.e. family and friends) that are likely to impact a young person's decision to smoke and seeks to address these with targeted interventions.
- It makes clear the role of the college in providing an understandable and consistent message to students.
- It emphasises the staff as role models.
- It makes clear that students are likely to enter into work places where smoking is not the norm and prepares them for this.
- It recognises that some young people may already be addicted to smoking and supports them in going smokefree.
- It can reduce the litter found on site.

