

Youth Consultation Results: Barking and Dagenham Young People and Smoking

Consultation

Consultation took place amongst Barking and Dagenham young people between August and October 2009. 19 questionnaires were completed during the consultation period. 13 questionnaires were completed by 15 and 18 year olds. Participant age was not recorded for six questionnaires.

Three focus groups were also run. For the first focus group, participants' ages ranged from 11 to 16, and for the second and third focus groups, from 11 to 19. In total, at least 34 young people took part in these focus groups.

Young people were consulted using the following methods:

- Shadow Children's Trust Board 4th September 2009
- Streetbase Launch 13th September 2009
- Young People's Safety Group 24th September 2009
- VIBE Youth Group 2nd October 2009
- Online at <http://www.lbbd.gov.uk/children/questionnaire03.aspx>

Aims

1. To ascertain the views of Barking and Dagenham young people about smoking, including the main reasons that young people smoke, why young people try or start smoking, and conversely, reasons why smoking isn't appealing to young people.
2. To get Barking and Dagenham young people's ideas on what a campaign aimed at preventing smoking amongst young people should look like, including key messages, designs and images, and methods used.

Results

Question 1

What do you think are some of the main reasons young people smoke?

Many participants provided more than one answer to this question.

Peer pressure / friends / to fit in	14
Stress / helps you to relax	11
It's 'cool'	8
Depressed	3
Parents	3
Because it's fun	2
Other	6

Responses in the 'other' category are listed as follows:

(Young people) have problems at home / lack parental care / problems / find it enjoyable / to make them look 'hard' / tastes nice

Comments included:

- 'Because they see their parents doing it then friends copy their parents; eventually they are all smoking. In a way I think they think it makes them look good if they do.'
- 'Pressure from friends to smoke and to fit in with the crowd'

Question 2

Why do you think some young people think smoking is cool?

What do you think makes young people want to try smoking or start smoking?

Many participants provided more than one answer to this question.

Others do it (friends / family) or to fit in	22
To rebel / make them feel 'cool'	8
Stress	3
Media	2
Weight loss	1
Addiction	1
Other	5

Responses in the 'other' category are listed as follows:

To see what it's like / because they're bored / to make them look 'hard' / some children have hard lives / look older

Comments included:

- 'I think young people think it's cool to smoke because they think it makes them look 'hard' – also some people do it because they're bored; they do it to look part of their crowd; don't want to feel left out – 'a wimp''
- 'Because everyone smokes around them'
- 'They might see their parents smoke and think it's alright to smoke.'

Question 3

What are the things about smoking that make it uncool?

Examples provided included appearance, giving in to peer pressure, health, how much it costs, and seeing the effect it has on your parents or family.

Health ('Lung cancer')	23 (3)
Appearance ('Yellow teeth')	13 (8)
Smell	8
Cost	5
Bad breath	4
Addiction	2
Skin	1
Other	5

Responses in the 'other' category are listed as follows:

It makes you seem like you are giving in to peer pressure / it can affect people in your house / don't be a social smoker / use money for other things / anger

Comments included:

- 'It smells – so to be around someone who (doesn't) smoke and you do – it's not nice to notice what your clothes and that smelt like.'
- 'You can really get ill from smoking, breath stinks, yellow teeth, red eyes, personally I don't think people should smoke because of many issues.'

Question 4

What could make young people stop smoking or not want to do it?

There were a range of responses to this message, which may reflect the different ways the question was interpreted. Five themes could be identified from participants' responses, which are described in detail below.

Key Themes

Effects of Smoking

The majority of comments focused on the various effects of smoking; on health, family and appearance. There were several general comments suggesting young people should be shown the health effects of smoking, for example 'if they see the harsh effects hands on', and 'being told life cut short'.

Other comments highlighted the effects of smoking on family, for example 'people in your family or friends suffering because of smoking', and 'seeing the effects of it on their families in later life'. One comment suggested the effects of smoking on 'their appearance' could make young people stop or not want to smoke.

The impact of smoking on health and appearance was summarised by one young person as follows: 'Show them a very human like dummy and show all of the consequences it (smoking) has, e.g. appearance: yellow stained teeth and fingers, bad skin, bad hair. Also show the health effects like: inside like the organs; heart, lungs, arteries etc. Show the statistics of smoking related deaths.'

Marketing and Advertising

One group suggested using 'better anti-smoking marketing and adverts' to make young people stop smoking or not want to smoke. Other comments suggested a 'creative way of promoting anti-smoking message' and 'more advertisement campaigns aimed at (young people)' were needed.

Three suggestions were made relating to the content of a campaign targeting young people; including 'making smoking seem NOT cool', using 'positive shock tactic' and helping young people 'realis(e) what a mistake they are making'.

Cigarettes

Another theme focused on cigarettes themselves. Four comments revolved around cigarette alternatives, including 'tablets', 'hav(ing) substitute cigarettes', 'electric fags' and 'patches'. One group suggested 'stop smoking equipment (should be) provided for free or really cheap' with an 'advertisement so people know it's out there'. The same group also made the suggestion: 'recreate a cigarette that has the same taste as a normal one except it has no bad stuff. It should be much cheaper so it will be noticed. It should be sold where normal cigarettes are sold and promoted by the shopkeepers'.

Three comments surrounded the legality and availability of cigarettes, including 'mak(ing) cigarettes ILLEGAL and stop making them altogether'; 'don't sell them' and a suggestion to 'make use of legal powers - take cigarettes off young people'. 'Publicising the contents of a cigarette' was a further suggestion.

The Cost of Smoking

Three comments related to the cost of smoking, suggesting 'tell(ing) them how much money they can save if they stop smok(ing)' could make young people stop or not want to smoke.

Family Influence

A further two comments suggested that family was important in getting young people to stop smoking or not start. One said 'family members telling them to stop' may help, whereas another focused on parents' role-modelling: 'parents should be more caring to their children, and also stop smoking because if they smoke they become a mentor'.

Other ideas

Other suggestions to make young people not want to smoke or stop smoking were to 'mak(e) the right choice of friends', 'give them advice', and to have 'more talks in schools and youth clubs'.

Question 5

What is your opinion of other young people who smoke?

There were a wide range of responses to this question. Responses have been generally categorised as reflecting a negative attitude towards other young people who smoke, or a neutral or positive attitude. Further detail on the responses follows below.

Negative (Smokers themselves)	16 (2)
Neutral/Positive (Smokers themselves)	5 (1)

Negative attitudes towards other young people who smoke

One participant summarised their opinion as follows: '(young people) shouldn't start (or) do it in the first place. It doesn't achieve anything or get you nowhere. All it does is damage your body, health and appearance. Also it isn't nice for others around you as they suffer as well from the smell.'

Three participants commented on the 'smell' of smokers, whilst three others suggested young people who smoke should try to stop, summarised by the following comment: 'I think it's dumb and they should stop because I think you can use your money to do better things than to be using it to buy cigarettes.'

Other responses varied greatly, including the opinion that young people who smoke are 'really ignorant', 'have to do it so they think they fit in' and 'have nothing better to do'. Still others thought it was 'really annoying when someone smokes around you', and it's 'damaging'. One participant said it 'only bothers me when they have been told not to smoke by doctors and they still smoke'.

One participant who was also a smoker said 'it don't look good, makes me want to quit'; suggesting that young people who smoke do not always like or approve of smoking themselves.

Neutral or positive attitudes towards other young people who smoke

Responses included 'don't mind', 'it's not their fault', and 'it's their problem'. One participant who was also a smoker said he or she 'can't really say much cos I smoke too'.

Question 6

If you were running a campaign to try and stop other young people from starting smoking, what kind of things would you focus on, and what kind of messages would you use?

Examples provided included peer pressure, making smoking seem less cool, health effects, and effects on appearance.

Health	7
Appearance	4
Peer pressure / fitting in with the crowd	2
Cost / money you could save	2
Effects (general)	2
Other	5

Participants suggested focusing on wrinkles and losing teeth as part of a campaign about the effects of smoking on appearance. One participant suggested it would be useful to focus on 'not being able to get a girl (or) boyfriend because of bad breath and the constant smell.'

Those that suggested a campaign should focus on health effects listed cancer and 'dying young' as potential areas to focus on. One participant stated that a campaign should 'show some real life facts about people who have smoked and how they suffer from it.'

Other suggestions included using 'real life cases', 'making smoking less cool', and focusing on 'how hard it is to try to quit' and 'how (smoking) disturbs other people around you'. One participant said they would 'just tell them about the health risks and let them decide what they'd rather do'.

In one focus group, two particular campaigns were discussed:
(*participants also drew their campaign ideas*)

1. Produce a cigarette packet which opens out with information inside. Colours – red/black and white in line with impacts on health e.g. tar.
2. Stub It! – Campaign aimed at education of young people around anti-smoking messages. Also, on 'it is illegal to buy alcohol notices' why not include cigarettes? Set up Facebook / Bebo / Twitter sites linked to the campaign. Use ex-smoker with related health problems to give talks in schools.

In a second focus group, three further campaigns were discussed:

1. The Government is stealing your money and killing your health! (focus on the amount of money from a pack of cigarettes that goes towards tax)
2. Don't get high on nicotine – picture of a smoker's and a non-smoker's lung
3. Why don't top athletes smoke?

Question 7

What kind of designs and images would you use in this campaign to draw young people's attention?

Participants were encouraged to think about whether they would use:

- **Particular people or characters – for example family, friends, role models, young people themselves**
- **Particular pictures or images**

Participants and group responses are listed as follows:

1. 'Make leaflets, posters and websites using pictures of people who do smoke and then pictures of those who don't. Show their appearance and comment on their health; also show images of their internal organs, i.e. lungs and heart.' (*Individual response*)
2. 'Create a short play of two families; one who do smoke and the others who don't. Show their lifestyle, health, appearance and then use elderly people to show what they might look like 20 years down the line and predict their death ages.' (*Individual response*)
3. 'A film of someone being rejected' (due to their smoking) (*Individual response*)
4. Pictures of a smokers lungs, people who suffered from smoking or are 'very ill', the pictures that are on fag boxes; use smokers to talk to people; use young people, role models, family; use videos (*Group response*)

Question 8

**What methods would you use to reach young people with your campaign?
(Participants were asked to tick up to five options)**

Schools / colleges	16
Promotion at events and festivals young people go to	14
Shopping malls	12

GP's and health clinics	11
Bus / bus shelter advertising	11
Street banners	10
Youth health services / youth information centres	8
Existing youth websites, e.g. BAD health (www.badhealth.nhs.uk)	8
Billboards	8
Radio advertising	5
Street lampposts	5

Other ideas:

'Showing them in person'.