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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

**Subject:**

**ENCOURAGING A SMOKE-FREE ENVIRONMENT IN  
YOUTH ORGANISATIONS**

**Circular Number:  
2005/4**

**Date of Issue:  
8 April 2005**

**Target Audience:**

- Education and Library Boards;
- Youth Council for Northern Ireland;
- YouthNet;
- YouthAction;
- Youth Forum;
- Youth Organisations;
- Unions.

**Summary of Contents:**

The purpose of this circular is to encourage those responsible for youth organisation premises to implement policies which will ensure that such are smoke-free environments.

**Enquiries:**

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**Status of Contents:**  
Advice  
Guidance for Youth  
Organisations

**Related Documents:**  
Circular 2004/01

**Expiry Date:**  
Not applicable

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## **ENCOURAGING A SMOKE-FREE ENVIRONMENT IN THE YOUTH SERVICE**

One of the actions emanating from the Investing for Health strategy, which is supported by all Government Departments, was the publication in July 2003 of a five year Tobacco Action Plan 2003-2008 (the full text of the plan can be accessed at [www.dhsspsni.gov.uk](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk)). One of the actions contained in the plan is that the Youth Service should be encouraged to implement no smoking policies.

Tobacco is the largest single cause of premature death in the developed world and there is substantial evidence to show that exposure to other people's smoke is dangerous to health as well as being unpleasant and causing discomfort. Tobacco smoke contains five regulated hazardous air pollutants, 47 regulated hazardous wastes, more than 50 cancer causing agents and more than 100 chemical poisons. For many of the carcinogenic constituents, there is no safe level of exposure. Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) has calculated that in the UK each year there are about 600 deaths from lung cancer and up to 12,000 cases of heart disease in non-smokers attributable to second-hand tobacco smoke – these deaths are preventable.

Following distribution to schools by the Ulster Cancer Foundation of 1993 "Guidelines on Developing and Implementing a School Policy on Smoking" (available at [www.ulstercancer.org](http://www.ulstercancer.org)) a number of schools have developed a policy on smoking. In some schools, the entire premises may already be designated a smoke-free zone. However, other schools may operate policies permitting staff or visitors to smoke in designated areas. The purpose of this circular is to encourage all youth organisations to put in place a policy similar to that in schools with the aim of youth facilities being completely smoke-free.

There are increasing calls for the banning of smoking in all public places including workplaces, one of the latest being from the Royal College of Physicians. Their publication "Tobacco Smoke Pollution: the hard facts" can be viewed at [www.rcplondon.ac.uk/pubs/books/smokefree/index.htm](http://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/pubs/books/smokefree/index.htm). Indeed, on 21 December 2004, the Minister with responsibility for health, social services and public safety, announced a three month consultation exercise on measures to strengthen existing controls on tobacco use in public places and in workplaces. Generally, the main reason for having an enclosed environment which is totally smoke-free is to protect non-smokers from the

damaging effects of “passive” or “second-hand” smoking. However in the youth environment, where one of the aims is to educate young people about healthy lifestyles, it is especially important that the facilities should be smoke-free.

Children and young people are taught about the dangers of smoking as part of the school curriculum and it is very important that the environment in which they receive their formal and non-formal education should be as healthy as those responsible for their development can make it. They are more likely to become smokers themselves if parents or friends smoke, or if they are exposed to role models who smoke. In order to set an appropriate example for our young people (as well as adults), it is therefore important that the Youth Service aims to promote a completely smoke-free environment. The Department therefore encourages Youth Leaders and Management Committees of youth organisations to take a lead role by ensuring that young people within their care are educated and developed within a smoke-free environment.

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