The 2009 Breath of Fresh Air Campaign

A report prepared by Joe Patton, Occupational Health Practitioner, on a joint Health & Safety Service/Students’ Union Health promotion campaign to protect the health of non-smokers from health risks arising from second hand smoke

23rd March 2009
BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Legislation to stop smoking in the workplace was introduced to protect non-smokers from health risks caused by second hand smoke. Second hand smoke comes from the tip of a cigarette and from smoke that is breathed out by a smoker. This is sometimes referred to as passive smoking.

The University ‘5 meter rule’ goes beyond compliance to secure the health of smokers based in offices next to doorways and windows.

INNOVATION

The ‘2009 Breath of Fresh Air’ campaign raised awareness amongst smokers of the risks that second hand smoke is having on the health of non-smokers.

This campaign was a joint venture between the University Health & Safety Service (HSS) and the Students’ Union (SU).

The campaign aimed to protect the health of non-smokers by supporting the University policy to distance smokers 5 meters away from buildings. This campaign lasted for a week leading up to and including ‘National No Smoking Day’ on March 11th 2009.

RATIONALE

People who smoke have made an informed decision to place their own health at risk. They are less aware of the health risks and annoyance that their smoking can have on other people. Those who do not smoke have a right to be protected from risks to health in the workplace.

According to the Health Protection Agency, just 30 minutes of passive smoking reduces the coronary blood supply of non smokers to the same level as those who smoke. Those whose health is at greatest risk are people in offices next to windows or in an area close to doorways where large numbers of people congregate to smoke.

We know from medical evidence that second hand smoke increases the risk of lung cancer by between 15 and 24% and increases the risk of heart disease by 25%. For people who suffer from asthma, passive smoke results in an immediate 20% deterioration in lung function.

TEAMWORK

The nature of joint working included:

- Lunchtime visits to the doorways and windows on Main Arts
- Discussions with smokers and non-smokers
- A local radio interview to promote the campaign
- The production of this report on the outcome of the campaign

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4 Asthma UK (2009) Smoking is Bad News www.asthma.org.uk
LEADERSHIP

Project management came from the Health Practitioner, whose focus of the campaign delivered activities that sought to engage with smokers and secure their longer term co-operation, offering those that wished to stop access to services that would help them to do so. The campaign was not designed to ‘police’ the smoking ban.

A standardized approach to people who were smoking close to the building consisted of three set questions:

1. Did you know there was a rule about smoking a certain distance away from University buildings?
2. Why do you think the rule is important?
3. Do you know what 5m looks like?

General Information

• All staff received an email directing the reader to the HSS webpage’s⁵ that contain information about the health risks of second hand smoke and support available to help people stop smoking. This webpage is also accessible by students.
• On the eve of National No Smoking Day the Health Practitioner and Deputy President of the Students’ Union gave an interview on the local Storm FM radio programme. This heightened awareness of health risks arising from second hand smoke, asking smokers to avoid damaging the health of non-smokers.

Targeted activity

• The Main Arts building was targeted for this initiative.
• Bilingual posters were displayed at the entrances and exits. These were informative rather than prohibitive (appendix).
• Observations of smoking habits revealed that most smokers congregated outside Main Arts at lunchtime, therefore visits to smoking areas around Main Arts was timed from 11:50am to 2pm.
• To attract attention to the campaign a cigarette costume was worn.
• To raise awareness of the 5 meter rule, the distance from buildings was measured and chalk marked on the ground.
• Smokers who wanted help to stop smoking were issued with a business card that detailed the Stop Smoking Wales free phone telephone number.
• Those in the quiz would need to visit the National No Smoking website for answers that would raise their awareness of smoking issues. The quiz consisted of 10 multi-choice questions about the history of smoking, the harmful chemicals inhaled and common serious illnesses caused by smoking and second hand smoke.
• A local health spa was contacted. They agreed to support the event by offering 3 months free membership to two people (worth £150) entering the quiz. The quiz was won by Cerys Gadd (Library & Archives) and Catherine Hughes (HR).

IMPACT OF THE CAMPAIGN

“I was approached by both non-smokers and smokers who were keen to give me their opinions, the non-smokers congratulated us on erecting the signs and felt they now had more confidence to approach smokers and ask them to move further away. Whilst smokers complained that in bad weather there was nowhere for them to smoke but the overhangs of buildings near doorways to

⁵ www.hss.bangor.ac.uk/wellness/nosmokingday2009
stop them from getting cold and wet, a number said smoking shelters were a good idea and would ensure cigarette ends were not littered around doorways and also keep them dry too.

A number of people approached were not aware of the policy and when explained what their effect on non-smokers was they kindly moved further away, although some people disregarded us sometimes. I also received calls from other departments asking where to get signs as they were having lots of problems with smoking around exits too. Overall I felt as the week went on there were more people smoking away from doors and windows, this was also felt to be true by reception staff in Main Arts.”

Emma

“Over the course of the week it was evident that less people were smoking within the protected 5m zone from day to day. It was also interesting to note that apart from a few repeat offenders, the numbers of smokers in general was quite low.

Those that were approached to talk about second hand smoking took the comments on board and more often than not allowed for a more detailed discussion. What became apparent however was that smokers, no matter how much in agreement about the harm of passive smoking, felt that their welfare too should be looked after. It is a person's right to choose to smoke and they felt that forcing them out into wet and windy conditions were unfair.

Smokers were asked whether or not they would be more willing to move away from buildings if designated smoking areas, that included a shelter, were provided for them. Nearly all smokers questioned on this topic responded positively to the idea.

It was also noted that although the University's implementation of the 5m ban was deemed a positive step, its implementation left a lot to be desired. Poor signage and mixed messages about the ban were clear. In some areas, cigarette bins were still attached to walls right next to the entrances of University buildings.

This campaign has been a positive step in highlighting the risks associated with passive smoking. I believe the campaign has also highlighted the need for a 5m ban. However, the campaign has also highlighted several flaws in the implementation of the ban which urgently need addressing”

Spencer

“Issues surrounding smoking have been extensively debated with smokers feeling their human rights are being curtailed by smoking restrictions and non-smokers reacting to unsocial byproducts – particularly the unpleasant sight of smokers congregating around entrances to buildings, cigarette smoke air pollution and debris from used cigarettes littering pathways”

Joe
**CONCLUSION**

During the week, discussions with smokers secured their cooperation and acknowledged that one reason for smoking next to buildings was simply to seek shelter from the elements.

During the following week, posters were still displayed. Many smokers were continuing to cooperate with the ‘5 meter rule’, others had relapsed.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Signage is needed and the temporary informative posters (see appendix) need to be made permanent
2. Signage needs to be supported by verbal encouragement from all staff when smokers are seen who are not following the University policy. ‘Pester Power’ is seen to be essential if the policy is to be a success
3. The provision of smoking shelters needs further debate

Joe Patton
Occupational Health Practitioner
23rd March 2009
Ymgyrch 2009 Anadlu Awyr Iach

I ddiogelu rhai sydd ddim yn smygu oddi wrth beryglon iechyd a achosir gan fwg ail-law, plîs peidiwch â smygu o fewn 5 metr o ddrysau a ffenestri

Breath of Fresh Air Campaign 2009

To protect non-smokers from the risks of health caused by second-hand smoke, please do not smoke within 5 metres of doorways and windows

Y Gwasanaethau Iechyd a Diogelwch mewn cysylltiad ag Undeb y Myfyrwyr

Health and Safety Services in association with Students’ Union