

20 October 2016

Professor Alison McCallum
Director of Public Health and Health Policy
Lothian NHS Board
Waverley Gate
2-4 Waterloo Place
EDINBURGH
EH1 3EG

Dear Professor McCallum

Test Purchasing (cigarettes) in Lothian

Thank you for your letter of 5th October 2016 regarding the SALSUS 2013 report in relation to young people and their smoking habits.

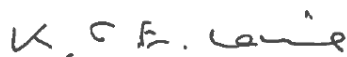
We note your concern about the still relatively high percentage of young people, between the ages of 13 and 15, who are able to buy cigarettes from shops in both Midlothian and East Lothian. We see from the report that the percentages for Midlothian and East Lothian (at 28% and 26% respectively) are less than the overall figure for Lothian, nevertheless these figures do appear to indicate that tobacco retailers in both our areas are still selling to young people in that age-group.

We note also the importance you place in test purchasing as a means of tackling those retailers who sell to such young people. Given the test purchasing that Trading Standards officers along with their young volunteers, have undertaken in both authorities over the years, we know that they also regard it as an important method of checking retailers' selling practises. Circumstances however, have meant that there has been relatively little test purchasing activity in both areas recently and officers realise that this is an issue requiring attention.

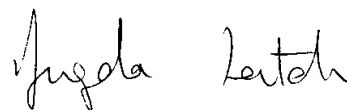
Trading Standards officers in Midlothian and East Lothian are now officially working in partnership and they are currently preparing test purchasing exercises, covering both council areas. These exercises are planned to take place before the end of the calendar year, with further exercises envisaged for 2017/18. As part of their tobacco control work we are aware that officers routinely visit tobacco retailers throughout the year to provide advice on the legislation and to remind them of the seriousness of selling to those under age.

If you require any further information, please contact Stephen Thomson, Trading Standards Partnership Manager on 0131 271 3553 or email stephen.thomson@midlothian.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely



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