

PRESS RELEASE

Fingal leads by example with Smoke Free Playground

Mayor of Fingal, Cllr Ken Farrell today, (Friday, 27th May, 2011 at 1.30 pm) launched a Tobacco Free Playground at Millennium Park, Blanchardstown, as part of an initiative between Fingal County Council and the Health Service Executive in association with the Tobacco Free Research Institute. The launch coincides with World No Tobacco Day which is celebrated internationally on 31st May each year.

Millennium Park Playground was specifically chosen as the site for this initiative because of its size, its proximity to the local schools, the large use of the playground by the local schools and the community in general but also because of the previous and on-going support given by the Dublin 15 community to the development of a 'Tobacco Free Campus' at Connolly Hospital in Blanchardstown, the second hospital in Ireland to become a smoke free campus.

Professor Luke Clancy, Director General, Tobacco Free Research Institute speaking at the launch said "we were delighted to have been invited to participate in the planning and implementation of this ground breaking initiative and congratulate Fingal County Council for their vision in supporting this link between their amenities and Smokefree. Our research confirmed that the people who use the playground including smokers, are hugely in favour of protecting their children from Secondhand Smoke in the playground."

Cllr. Ken Farrell, Mayor of Fingal launching the initiative said "It's really encouraging to see how our best public amenities can also play a role in supporting and promoting a strong positive health message to children and their parents. The fact that the playground at Millennium is becoming tobacco free is in line with Fingal County Council's aim to provide the highest quality active recreational activities in Millennium Park and indeed throughout the County."

Dr. Fenton Howell, Public Health Specialist with the HSE in welcoming this initiative said "Smoking is incredibly harmful to your health, causing a wide range of debilitating and fatal conditions. The introduction of this tobacco free playground will send a strong signal that smoking around children is something we all should avoid, what children see children do, we need to discourage people from smoking in children's environments, reduce role modeling by peers and make another small step in de-normalizing tobacco use. Congratulations to all those involved in this important initiative, to the local community and in particular to the children from the local schools who created posters with powerful, clear and positive messages to demonstrate to their peers that they want to live in an environment that is smoke free."

Earlier this year local primary schools were invited to become involved in this project by designing a poster for the playground. 5th and 6th year students from local primary schools participated in the competition and the winning poster is now on permanent display at the playground. Some of the children who took part in the competition will be at the official launch wearing t-shirts with the universal smoke-free logo and a slogan chosen from the posters - '**Smoke Free – Happy Me!**'.

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Note to editors:

The partnership that has been developed between Health Promotion and Environmental Health Units of the HSE, Connolly Hospital, Fingal County Council and TFRI (TobaccoFree Research Institute) to progress this initiative aims to:

- Demonstrate positive smoke free role modeling for children and young people
- Denormalise smoking for children & young adults
- Reduce smoking prevalence
- Reduce the environmental impact of tobacco litter
- Empower non-smokers to speak up and be more vocal about not wanting to be around smokers

Smoke free playgrounds are by no means a new phenomenon and are established now in many countries worldwide. Research shows that most people who use tobacco begin as children, too young to understand the consequences of their actions. Children are greatly influenced by the environment in which they grow up in and if that environment promotes smoking as a normal everyday activity, they are much more likely to smoke. Once children start they quickly become addicted to nicotine and so begins a lifelong smoking habit.

The HSE provides a comprehensive smoking cessation support service to local smokers who want to quit with daytime services available in Connolly Hospital and regular 6-week evening groups run in the local library. Services are available by calling 01 8823406/7.