

Press release: 40,000 healthcare professionals trained to help smokers quit

Public Health England (PHE) today (3 November 2017) confirmed that nearly 40,000 healthcare professionals have been trained to offer quit smoking advice as part of a drive to make the NHS smoke-free by 2019. An event today in Birmingham, held by PHE, will promote the new [government tobacco control plan](#) to stop-smoking workers across the country, with a keynote address from the [Public Health and Primary Care Minister, Steve Brine MP](#).

In support of the plan, PHE is urging all NHS frontline staff to take advantage of free online training to help them give 'very brief advice on smoking' (VBA). The evidence shows that giving VBA to patients makes them 68% more likely to quit if they're offered stop smoking medication. So far, 39,447 healthcare professionals have been trained to deliver effective stop smoking advice.

The burden to the NHS in England from smoking is £2.6 billion. Last year over half a million people ended up in hospital due to a smoking attributable condition. There is an urgent need across all parts of the NHS to support people to quit to improve the health of local populations and help secure the sustainability of the NHS.

The savings to the NHS for each patient referred to stop smoking services and prescribed nicotine replacement therapy is £13.00 each year for 4 years.

NHS England is investing almost £600 million in commissioning for quality and innovation (CQUIN) schemes, including one which focuses on identifying and supporting people who smoke or who drink alcohol at higher risk levels. Under the scheme, additional funding is being made available to hospitals that help their patients to quit smoking.

PHE is encouraging all healthcare staff to undertake a 30-minute online course, provided by the National Centre for Smoking Cessation and Training, based around short film clips providing examples of how very brief advice can be delivered to patients; including key facts, figures and messages.

Professor John Newton, Director of Health Improvement at PHE, said:

Every year smoking costs the NHS a staggering £2.6 billion, with over half a million people ending up in hospital due to a smoking attributable condition.

Smokers respond particularly well to our advice, so as health professionals we have a duty to take every opportunity to prevent the misery and suffering we know is caused by smoking.

A smoke-free NHS is about helping smokers to quit while in the care of the NHS. It means all healthcare professionals doing what they can to encourage patients to stop, including offering on the spot support to fight cravings and banning smoking on NHS grounds.

The good news is that training for NHS staff is easily accessible and effective. Quit rates generally are also better than they have ever been. Most smokers want to quit and all healthcare staff should feel confident in having that crucial brief chat with a patient about smoking. Patients who smoke should expect to be asked whether they'd like to quit.

Public Health Minister, Steve Brine said:

Smoking rates are at their lowest ever levels but it is still our biggest preventable killer.

We now have strong laws helping people to quit and we need the NHS and its incredible staff to commit to a smokefree NHS. By making this powerful statement, the NHS can lead the way, drive down smoking rates even further and provide the best support to the 1 in 4 patients who are smokers. Our new Tobacco Control Plan is aiming for the first ever smokefree generation and the NHS has a huge role to play in that.

There has never been a better time for people to quit and for healthcare professionals to discuss quitting with their patients. The ban on attractive branding on packs, together with better and more quitting options including e-cigarettes, stricter controls on smoking in public and supportive campaigns like PHE's [Stoptober](#) have all contributed to successful quit attempts in the first 6 months of this year being at a record high, with almost 20% remaining smokefree a year after quitting.

1. Total smoking-related burden to the NHS is estimated at £2.6 billion: GP visits – £794 million; practice nurse visits – £111.7 million; prescriptions – £144.8 million; outpatient visits – £696.6 million; hospital admissions – £851.6 million
2. VBA: PHE has commissioned online training on delivering brief advice on smoking from the National Centre for Smoking Cessation and Training and this is available free of charge for all health care professionals.
3. Smoking prevalence figures: In 2016, 15.5% of adults in England aged 18+ smoke, down from 19.9% in 2010; In 2000, 26.8% of adults aged 16+ were smokers. Prevalence since 2010 has fallen most in younger age groups:[see the data](#).
4. PHE's Tobacco Control Profiles: See [local smoking prevalence figures and additional local data](#).
5. The national CQUIN scheme 2017 to 2019: No.9 Preventing ill health by risky behaviours – alcohol and tobacco The risky behaviours CQUIN

focuses on identifying and influencing inpatients who are increasing or higher risk drinkers by providing brief advice; and to identify and influence inpatients who smoke to make a quit attempt. It applies to community and mental health trusts in 2017 to 2018 and extends to acute trusts in 2018 to 2019.

6. A smokefree NHS: The [NHS next steps on the five year forward view](#) states that all NHS estates will become smoke-free by 2019 to 2020.
7. Standardised tobacco packaging Cochrane Review:
 - one national study of Australian adult smoker cohorts (5441 participants) found that quit attempts increased from 20.2% prior to the introduction of standardised packaging to 26.6% one year post-implementation
 - there was also evidence that standardised packs were less attractive to those who did not smoke, making it less likely that they would start
 - second study of calls to quitlines provides indirect support for this finding, with a 78% increase observed in the number of calls to the New South Wales online service after the implementation of standardised packaging
 - tobacco in standardised packs was also generally perceived as worse-tasting and lower quality than tobacco in branded packs; standardised packaging also appeared to reduce misperceptions that some cigarettes are less harmful than others, but only when dark colours were used for the uniform colour of the pack