# Smokefree NHS Programme

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**NICE guidance PH48 describes using every opportunity for healthcare professionals to raise the topic of smoking, offer treatment and referral to services routinely. The North East North Cumbria (NENC) ICS Smokefree Taskforce aimed for all trusts to be Smokefree by April 2020 through implementing NICE guidance, including assessing smoking status of people admitted to hospital and providing access to Stop Smoking medication.**

**The COVID-19 pandemic led to hospital Trusts changing their processes and redeployment of staff to manage pandemic response. This meant that the aims and workstreams of the Smokefree programme were affected during the pandemic.**

## Approach/Methodology

Trusts are required to include smoking status as part of the clinical assessments for patients being admitted to hospital; this requires brief non-specialised training (Very Brief Advice) for staff to ensure they can signpost and advise patients when required. Some Trusts have adapted to deliver training virtually via e-learning and MS Teams.

The North East promoted a national ‘Quit for COVID’ campaign, which promoted the benefits of smoking cessation as the COVID-19 virus was known to cause respiratory issues and evidence suggests that Smokers have a greater risk of developing complications if they get COVID-19. The Smokefree NHS Taskforce also launched the ‘Don’t Wait’ campaign, fronted by a local respiratory consultant which whilst not COVID-specific, included general stop smoking messages such as ‘it’s never too late’ and ‘there has never been a better time to quit’.

## Impact

The height of the pandemic led to the smoking status questions being removed in some Trusts to speed up the assessment processes; these have since been reintroduced. This impacted provision and referrals for ongoing support. Provision of medication and support to quit was also impacted by the reduction in footfall across Secondary Care.

The Mental Health Trusts in the region had fewer opportunities for patients to leave the facilities as part of the infection control measures. This led to fewer opportunities for patients to access supplies for e-cigarettes which led to some struggling to manage their withdrawal symptoms.

Feedback from the YouGov survey in July indicates that in the North East region, quit attempts were double that of other regions.

## Next Steps

The e-learning programme ‘Tobacco and Alcohol Brief Interventions’ is being promoted to ensure staff continue to be trained on smoking interventions and providing advice to patients.

Some hospital Trusts have identified champions to support dissemination of information to staff on the wards.

The Smokefree NHS Taskforce have developed a regional dataset for Trusts to report the number of patients smoking status screened, given advice / medication, etc on a quarterly basis to monitor progress across the region as work continues towards implementing the NHS Long Term Plan.

## Key Learning Points

The programme is aiming to change the culture and attitudes towards smokers, promoting the view that smoking is a long-term chronic condition, and we need to work with patients to treat their addiction with nicotine management.

Trust Stop Smoking Leads continue to meet remotely. They feel this works well and across the large region is more time effective so it has been proposed that this continues.