

Smokefree NHS Treating Tobacco Dependency Programme Briefing

Q2-Q3 JULY- DEC(25/26)



 Pictured Newcastle Hospitals Smokefree Team & NENC Smokefree NHS Programme team

The Taskforce is a multi-partnership group, involving key strategic partners including the NHS and local authorities. The Taskforce is focused on driving and supporting sustained, system-wide treatment of tobacco dependency in the North East and North Cumbria (NENC). It was set up by Fresh & Prof Eugene Milne in 2017 and it followed on from a summit chaired in March 2017 by Prof Peter Kelly (Public Health England) to energise the NHS to view smoking as a clinical chronic relapsing condition & not lifestyle choice. The two names (Smokefree NHS/Treating Tobacco Dependency) originated from acknowledging the work on smokefree hospital sites/grounds was required & the importance of addressing tobacco dependency treatment.

This is a sub-group of the Integrated Care Board(ICB) Healthier & Fairer Prevention Board and is jointly chaired by the Tobacco Clinical Lead for the ICS, **Dr Ruth Sharrock** (Respiratory Consultant at Gateshead Health NHS FT) and **Chris Woodcock**, Interim Director of Public Health for Hartlepool.

The Taskforce works closely with the Fresh and Balance programme team, and Fresh is jointly funded by all 12 Local Authorities in the North East and the NENC ICB. From September 2025, the Taskforce now has a refreshed remit as an expert advisory group to the Smokefree NHS Programme. It seeks to provide leadership through effective collaboration between national, regional and local agencies and partners and supports the regional interim target to reduce smoking to 5% by 2030 and overall ambition of zero smoking as set out in the North East Declaration for a Smokefree Future.

Highlights

3 Year Anniversary
NENC Tobacco
Dependency
Treatment Services

Cannabis &
Tobacco Co-use
Webinar

Record Low
Annual Smoking
Prevalence Figures

NENC SMI EIS
Evaluation
completed

A message from the Clinical Lead, Dr Ruth Sharrock

The Smokefree NHS team and I are pleased to share our briefing for Q2/Q3 produced to summarise activities across our services and partners. We are delighted that our audience is rapidly increasing across sectors and settings, comprising of colleagues, collaborators and champions, working in the NHS across physical, mental and maternal healthcare teams within secondary care, primary care, local authority tobacco commissioners and their public health teams. Please do feedback on any of the workstreams, projects or themes that are detailed, we are keen to hear from and be informed by all of our wider system partners and colleagues.

We were also delighted to again highlight another annual decline in smoking rates following the publication of the Annual Population Survey (APS) results for 2024 showing NENC adult smoking rates at 10.4% compared to 10.9% the previous year. This is mirrored in the regional SATOD figure of 5.5% (Q1&Q2), an ongoing reduction that really shows the benefit of embedding tobacco dependence treatment into clinical pathways and the transformative impact this can have on the lives of expectant and new mums and their young families – a milestone to be collectively, hugely proud of. However, we know that the highest rates of smoking prevalence are hidden in our poorest communities, in those with long-term mental and physical health conditions, and our inclusion groups. Our Public Health colleagues continue to work with us to advise how we reach those who face the greatest inequalities so that the benefits of a smokefree future are felt by all.

September 2025 marked the 3 Year Anniversary of all Tobacco Dependency Treatment Services (TDTS) across NENC beginning to deliver care to patients who smoke in our acute trusts, mental health inpatient settings and maternity services. This milestone transformed the standard of care that we provide to patients using our services, improved patient outcomes and fostered a passionate community of practitioners committed to continuous quality improvement and achieving greater equity. It was an honour for the team to visit all 10 Hospital Trusts and capture the anniversary celebrations with team photographs featuring frontline staff and service users. We were very proud to see this featured in Sam Allen's, NENC ICB Chief Executive weekly briefing. We pay tribute to the tireless work of all the TDTS teams and trusts in reaching this important milestone.

We are grateful to the ICB for the continued recognition and investment, and we strongly believe the focus must remain on ensuring our TDTS teams are fully embedded within clinical services and governance frameworks. At the same time, we will continue to seek opportunities to collaborate more effectively and enhance the delivery of shared care and seamless handover. In recognition of the work of their own local TDTS teams, NENC Executives and Medical Directors have expressed their pride in the achievements to date:

Sean Fenwick, Acting Chief Exec Gateshead Health NHS Trust; said: "The Tobacco Dependency Treatment Service has demonstrated, not only in Gateshead but regionally a huge impact on smoking cessation that will benefit not only the current generation but for generations to come".

Dr Lucia Pareja-Cebrian, joint Medical Director at The Newcastle Upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, said: "Our Tobacco Dependency Treatment Team plays a crucial role in this — offering expert, compassionate support to anyone who wants to quit. Their work not only helps individuals make life-changing decisions, but also strengthens our commitment to creating a healthier, safer hospital environment for everyone."

Dr Shaz Wahid, Medical Director, South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust, said: "We are proud to support the work of Tobacco Dependency Treatment Services. These services have helped many patients over the past three years to stop smoking and improve their health."

Dr Jeremy Rushmer, Executive Medical Director and Executive Sponsor at Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, said: "The Tobacco Dependency Treatment Service at Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust plays a vital role in helping our patients achieve the best outcome. We know stopping smoking can be difficult, but getting people the right specialist support is hugely significant in their journey to quitting smoking."

Dr Rajesh Nadkarni, Medical Director and Deputy Chief Executive at Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust, said: "The Tobacco Dependent Treatment Service (TDTS) plays a crucial clinical role in helping us achieve this mission. It has made a significant impact in supporting service users and staff in quitting smoking. It is assisting in our mission to embed a culture of smoke free health promoting care across all of our services. I want to thank everyone involved in this work for their commitment and drive in helping us achieve this outcome."

Dr Venkatraghavan Ramaswamy, Consultant Psychiatrist and Associate Medical Director at Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust, said: "I'm really proud of our Tobacco Dependency Treatment Service. The team work hard to help people live healthier lives and never give up on anyone. They meet people, whether in hospital or at home, and support them every step of the way. We've heard some amazing stories from patients who have stopped smoking and feel better than ever. This service is a catalyst for lasting change in people's lives, and our trust is fully supportive of this important work."

Dr Mike Stewart, Group chief medical officer at North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust, said: "With tobacco being the biggest single driver of ill health inequality in our region, we are very pleased to see the service making a positive impact on our health services at University Hospitals Tees. Over the past three years, the team has made great progress in helping inpatients and pregnant smokers to quit smoking, which has led to fewer hospital admissions, lower healthcare costs and improved the wider health of our populations, but we recognise there is more to do and look forward to continuing to promote the importance of this."

SMOKEFREE NHS PROGRAMME DELIVERY TEAM



Rachel McIlvenna
Smokefree NHS Strategic Manager



Dr Ruth Sharrock
Clinical Lead- Tobacco

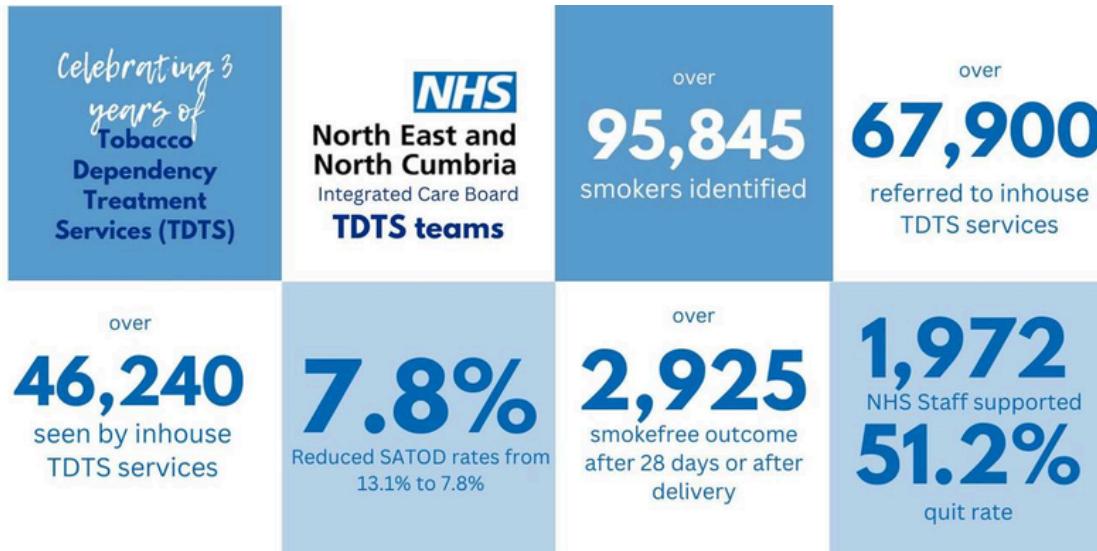


Joojo- Kyei Srpong, Smokefree
NHS Project Manager/Public Health
Practitioner



Becca Scott, Head of
Public Health
& Prevention: Best Start in
Life and Smokefree
Pregnancies Clinical Lead

Celebrating 3 Years of Tobacco Dependency Treatment Services



It is just over three years since all 10 NHS Trusts in NENC started to deliver tobacco dependency treatment across acute & mental health inpatients and maternity pathways.

Throughout the months of October & November, we celebrated this important milestone with a series of localised photocalls, press releases, videos and via social media channels. Read more [here](#)





"There's still so much to do. Those who continue to smoke - especially those most in need of support - often come from our most deprived and hardest-to-reach communities. We must intensify our efforts to deliver services that are accessible, acceptable, and prioritised for them, ensuring no one is left behind."

Dr Ruth Sharrock- NENC Clinical Lead for Tobacco

Blog Spotlight

A Personal Reflection on 3 Years of NHS Tobacco Dependency Treatment Services in NENC



Rachel McIlvenna, Smokefree NHS Strategic Manager shares her personal reflections leading the Smokefree NHS Programme and 3 years of NHS Tobacco Dependency Treatment Services in NENC .

It feels inconceivable now to think that the lifesaving benefits of in-house hospital Tobacco Dependency Treatment Services (TDTs) weren't readily available in the North East and North Cumbria (NENC) as recently as 2021. Reflecting now, as we mark our three-year anniversary since all our ten TDTs began operating and delivering lifesaving and transformational services, feels surreal. That we have managed to make such a significant impact in such a short time - during a period of change and with the backdrop of the newly formed landscape of integrated care systems - is nothing short of remarkable.

When the NHS Long Term Plan was published in 2019, it was a welcome rallying call for the NHS to be a more powerful driving force in the battle against smoking, ensuring that everyone admitted to hospital who smokes or were pregnant would be offered help and support to quit. I remember vividly when I first started my role back in August 2021, the COVID pandemic had hit in 2020, and at its peak many services had been paused, with new services unable to start. Those services who were operational during the pandemic were still in recovery mode. The NHS LTP implementation had been pushed to the back burner and even the national early implementer sites that were meant to test this new approach hadn't been able to mobilise.

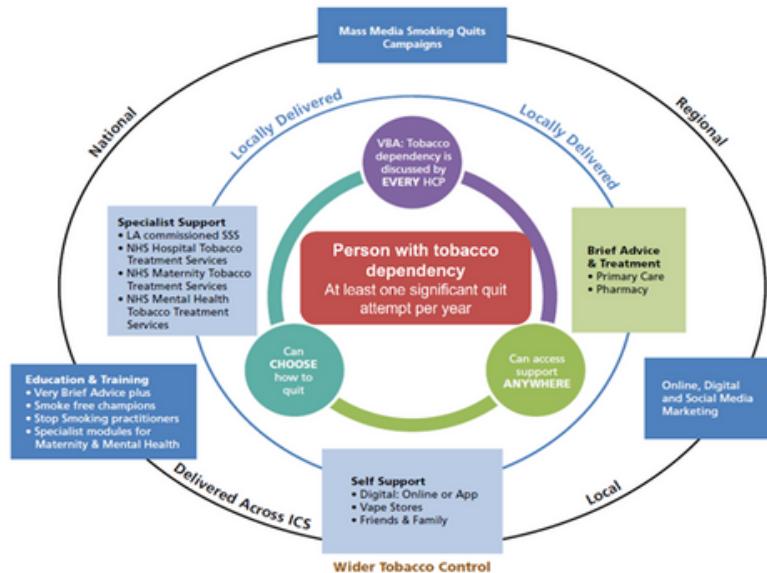
Starting this role, I was acutely aware of the challenges ahead: to provide system leadership and support the NENC to implement the NHS LTP tobacco dependency commitments. For many in the NHS, this was a brand new concept despite evidence from Ottawa in Canada and, closer to home, the CURE Model in Greater Manchester. Routinely screening smokers and providing onsite tobacco dependency treatment support for hospital inpatients or as part of routine maternity care was an unfamiliar model for many despite clinical guidelines from National Institute for Health and Care Excellence ([NICE](#)) and significant evidence on the positive impact of these interventions.

*"Smoking cessation should be incorporated, as a priority, as a systematic and opt-out component of all NHS services as a complement to local authority services, and delivered in smoke-free settings. It is unethical to do otherwise" –
Royal College of Physicians ([RCP](#)), *Hiding in Plain Sight Report (2018)**

[Click here to read the full blog.](#)

NENC Smokefree NHS Delivery Plan

Our Strategic aim remains to 'Achieve a Smokefree Future (NE Declaration) through a whole-system approach that helps smokers quit and stay quit, reduces uptake, and protects against tobacco harm'. This will be done by building a region-wide support system engaging diverse providers and partners (e.g., OHID, ADPHNE) to prompt at least one annual quit attempt.



The vision for holistic support to quit smoking across the North East and North Cumbria ICS

We are pleased to share our **2025-26 plan on a page** which sets out the key objectives and deliverables for the year.

North East & North Cumbria Smokefree NHS Programme 2025 - 2026

Where do we want to get to?	Reduce adult smoking prevalence to <5% by 2030 & tobacco related harm and related health inequalities across the North East & North Cumbria population								
	Primary Prevention	Secondary Prevention	Tertiary Prevention						
What will we do?	<p>Support comprehensive tobacco control efforts, working with system partners to increase awareness of tobacco harms, reduce uptake of tobacco & trigger increase in annual quit attempt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute funding to evidence based mass media campaigns via Fresh NE for NENC Support the Tobacco & Vapes Bill Contribute to multi-agency partnership working across the cessation landscape/ system 	<p>Embed Tobacco Dependency Treatment Services in Secondary Care across acute & mental health inpatient & maternity in 10 NHS Trusts and across multiple clinical pathways</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to fund & provide strategic leadership/support TDTS inpatient & maternity Services in NENC Trusts Expand Tobacco Dependency offer in TLHC, & other clinical pathways such as Respiratory, CYP, Asthma, LTC Continue Maternity Incentives Scheme(NENC/National) Continue SMI in CNTW Growth & Accelerator Staff offer. 	<p>Ensure people who experience tobacco related harm and/or dependence are supported</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore opportunities to incorporate smoking cessation advice & support across LTC using learning from Lung Cancer enhanced Pathway(TLHC) Explore with Primary Care on consistent offer 						
How will we do this in 2025-2026?	<p>Cross cutting initiatives</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Workforce</td> <td>Data & Intelligence</td> <td>Engagement</td> </tr> <tr> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme for Tobacco Dependency . Regional bespoke training for TDTS teams NHS Digital Staff Offer/support inc Growth & Accelerator Fund System tobacco webinars Work closer with LDT </td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving data quality and reporting to NHS Digital Tobacco Dependence Dashboard NENC Tobacco Dashboard Robust independent evaluation of interventions Quality Improvement approaches </td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ADPHNE Tobacco Commissioners & Tobacco Community of Interest Networks Lived experience Collaboration with NHS Trust partners, LA DHSC, VCSE, Academic partners, LMNS, NECS, ASH, FPH, NCA </td> </tr> </table>			Workforce	Data & Intelligence	Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme for Tobacco Dependency . Regional bespoke training for TDTS teams NHS Digital Staff Offer/support inc Growth & Accelerator Fund System tobacco webinars Work closer with LDT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving data quality and reporting to NHS Digital Tobacco Dependence Dashboard NENC Tobacco Dashboard Robust independent evaluation of interventions Quality Improvement approaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ADPHNE Tobacco Commissioners & Tobacco Community of Interest Networks Lived experience Collaboration with NHS Trust partners, LA DHSC, VCSE, Academic partners, LMNS, NECS, ASH, FPH, NCA
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Events

Joint Fresh & Smokefree NHS Lunchtime Learning Webinars

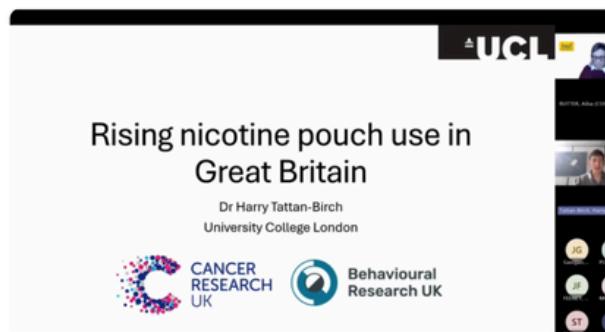
Primary Care Webinar

On 17 July 2025, Dr. Roger Henderson led a lunchtime session on Treating Tobacco Dependency as a Clinical Priority – The Role of Primary Care. This was attended by 47 colleagues across the ICB.

Although smoking rates in the North East have fallen, 11% of adults still smoke, driving health inequalities and premature deaths. Primary care plays a crucial role, as smokers visit GPs more frequently and trust their advice - yet only 13% of quit attempts are GP-prompted.

Interventions such as Very Brief Advice (Ask, Advise, Act), referrals to Stop Smoking Services, and prescribing cessation medications can significantly increase quit success. This presents a major opportunity for primary care teams to improve population health.

Nicotine Pouches



Lunchtime Learning session with Dr Harry Tattan Birch from UCL on Nicotine pouches

On 25th September 2025, Dr. Harry Tattan-Birch led a session on the growing use of nicotine pouches in Great Britain, attended by 66 colleagues from across the ICB.

He explained what nicotine pouches are, who uses them, and why, while highlighting the current regulatory gap and the importance of the Tobacco & Vapes Bill.

Dr. Tattan-Birch, a Senior Research Fellow at UCL, researches how novel nicotine products - such as e-cigarettes, heated tobacco, and pouches - affect smoking behavior and public health at both individual and population levels.

Watch the video recording [here](#), and access the presentation slide deck via [KHUB](#).

Cannabis & Tobacco Co- Use Webinar



On 23 September 2025, the programme hosted a webinar on Cannabis and Tobacco Co-Use, a behavior affecting 1 in 5 adults in England and linked to poorer quit outcomes. Ninety-four participants from NHS TDTs and NENC colleagues joined to develop a consistent regional approach for supporting pregnant individuals who use substances.

The session drew on the latest research and the updated [NCSCT Smoking Cessation & Cannabis Use Briefing](#), offering practical strategies to improve client care. Expert speakers included Dr Hannah Walsh, Becca Scott, Richard Wait, and Shauna Donoghue. The webinar emphasized collaborative action to address co-use challenges. A recording is available on [BOOST](#) and [KHUB](#).

Partnership Working

A recording of importance of Tobacco and Very Brief Advice in Clinical setting has been completed for the Predict COPD programme. We aim to engage more actively with the participating practices in the new year. The programme has also re-engaged with the Respiratory Network Steering Group & the long Terms Condition Steering group to explore better ways of connectivity to programmes.

Local Developments

Growth & Accelerator Health & Social Care

Staff Cessation offer

We are pleased to provide a further update on the Health & Social Care Workforce cessation offer aimed at NENC staff who are tobacco dependent. This will be delivered through an award winning and evidence backed digital smoking cessation tool (the Smokfree App) and eligible staff will have 24/7 access to NCSCT trained advisors, nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) and nicotine vapes all aimed at supporting them to successfully quit. We welcome collaboration with many on this, given the complexity of the social care workforce landscape.



Regional Mapping

The Stop Smoking Interventions Mapping Report is now completed and provides a neutral, descriptive summary of stop smoking interventions across all Local Authorities & NHS Trusts in the region. It was carried out by Joanna Feeney & Tiffany Ghee from the Fresh and was designed to:

1. Describe current delivery and identify opportunities to inform local and regional discussion.
2. Support shared understanding, partnership learning, collaboration and locally led action across systems.
3. Reflect a snapshot in time, validated through stakeholder review, to inform future system development and maximise quitting, contributing to the regional Declaration of a Smokefree future, free from the death and disease from tobacco.

We extend our sincere thanks to everyone who took the time to be involved in the mapping process. Looking ahead, we will support discussions on how the insights from the report can be utilised to inform strategic planning and drive local actions.

Launch of Pharmacy PGD Pharmacy Supply Service

The regional Patient Group Direction (PGD) Pharmacy Supply Service (PSS) to enable the provision of varenicline across Stop Smoking Services in the North East, was launched on 1st August 2025 with the supply of varenicline as Phase 1. This supply service enables community stop smoking services to offer prescription only medications such as varenicline within the support they provide. Stop Smoking Advisors, as part of a structured quit attempt, will make an **e-recommendation** for varenicline to a commissioned pharmacy. The regional cytisinicline PGD is currently in the process of being signed off and we anticipate will be added to the supply service in late Q4.

Participating pharmacies will work under the regional PGD (adapted from the national PGD from Specialist Pharmacy Services for varenicline) to make the final clinical decision to supply. Ongoing behavioural support will be provided by the Stop Smoking Advisor. 11 Local Authorities in the North East are participating, Stockton currently not part of PGD supply service (varenicline is still available from the Community Stop Smoking Service) but shortly will be. Work is currently underway for Cumbria Local Authorities to implement a parallel PGD Pharmacy Supply Service.

NHS Tobacco Dependency Treatment Services are being actively encouraged to include the offer of varenicline and cytisinicline to their in services. These medications are some of the most effective stop smoking aids available, recommended by NICE guidance and included in the [BTS Clinical Management of inpatients with tobacco dependency](#). To support Trusts to embed these medications the Smokefree NHS taskforce has produced a Nicotine Analogue Toolkit including template Standard Operating Procedures and Advisor Checklists.

Local Developments

This year marks a major milestone for public health – the 25th anniversary of Local Authority Stop Smoking Services, a cornerstone in helping millions of people across England quit smoking for good.

Established in 1999, Local Authority commissioned Stop Smoking Services have transformed lives and communities by providing expert support to help people quit one of the most harmful habits. Over the past 25 years, these services have supported more than 10 million quit attempts nationally, resulting in over 5.5 million successful quits. Here in the North East, the impact has been equally remarkable, with over 840,000 quit attempts and more than 400,000 people successfully quitting smoking. This achievement reflects the dedication of local teams and the power of tailored support in improving health outcomes across our region. We are grateful for the close partnership working between our hospital tobacco dependency teams and LA stop smoking services.



Local Developments

25 years of Stop Smoking Services



Local Developments

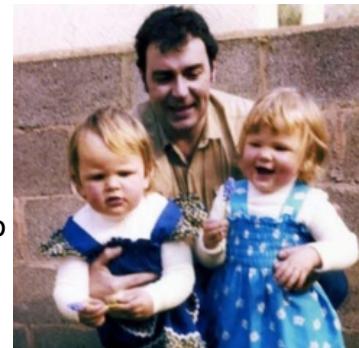
Two Decades on the Frontline: A Personal Reflection on 25 Years of Stop Smoking Services



Joanna Feeney, Stop Smoking System Strategic Manager at Fresh, shares her personal reflections on 25 years of Stop Smoking Services

In nearly 20 years, smoking rates in the North East have seen one of the biggest falls in the country. In that time the landscape around awareness of the risks – and the support available – have been transformed.

Looking back, my first day on the frontline of supporting smokers to stop in January 2007 feels like a world away. My own father had died from lung cancer – a motivation in itself at the waste of life.



As a Pregnancy Specialist Advisor in Easington, I was confronted with a daunting reality: more than one in three pregnant women were smoking at the time of delivery. I was based in some of the first Sure Start centres, delivering weekly clinics alongside midwives and working face-to-face to support expectant parents in some of our most deprived communities. That was the beginning of a remarkable nearly 20-year journey, and a testament to the extraordinary evolution of stop smoking services.

Back then, Stop Smoking Services were commissioned through Primary Care Trusts, and our work focused on large-scale community clinics, drop-ins, and group support. But services – and the world around them – were changing. When County Durham's services merged into a single unified Stop Smoking Service, I was part of that transition, adapting delivery and embracing new guidance that shaped our approach.

One of the most impactful moments in my career was the implementation of NICE PH10 Smoking in Pregnancy guidance, and helping to lead the phase one launch of the regional BabyClear approach. We worked closely with County Durham & Darlington Foundation Trust maternity services, and in 2012, we expanded this work and trained all Maternity Support Workers to deliver stop smoking support directly as part of their roles. This was pioneering at the time – embedding tobacco dependency treatment into maternity care.

This initial work on the ground laid the foundation for bigger, more systemic changes. In 2013, we broke further ground by providing in-reach support to patients at University Hospital North Durham. Whilst this service was specifically aimed at supporting Respiratory, Cardiology and Surgical patients – it wasn't just about offering help; it was about starting a cultural change that would, nearly a decade later, see the full embedding of tobacco dependency treatment in secondary care... [click here to read the full blog](#)

National News Developments

Tobacco & Vapes Bill

The Tobacco and Vapes Bill completed **committee stage** in the Lords on 26 November. This consisted of Peers scrutinising the Bill line-by-line and debating amendments. There are no votes at this stage. The Bill is currently being reviewed under the EU Technical Regulation Information System (TRIS). This is due to the Bill applying in Northern Ireland which is still subject to some EU regulations.

This process gives EU member states a chance to raise objections if they feel the Bill creates barriers in the internal market. Three EU countries (Greece, Romania and Slovakia) objected to the Bill which means that the TRIS review process has been extended to 18th Feb 2026. Therefore, future dates are not confirmed in terms of when it will back in the House of Commons due to this 'standstill'. For reassurance, the Government has said "The Bill is not blocked, it's not delayed, and we expect it to apply to the whole UK." The Fresh team continues to monitor the Bill progress carefully. Several proposals are already on the face of the Bill—meaning they are explicitly written into the primary legislation. These include:

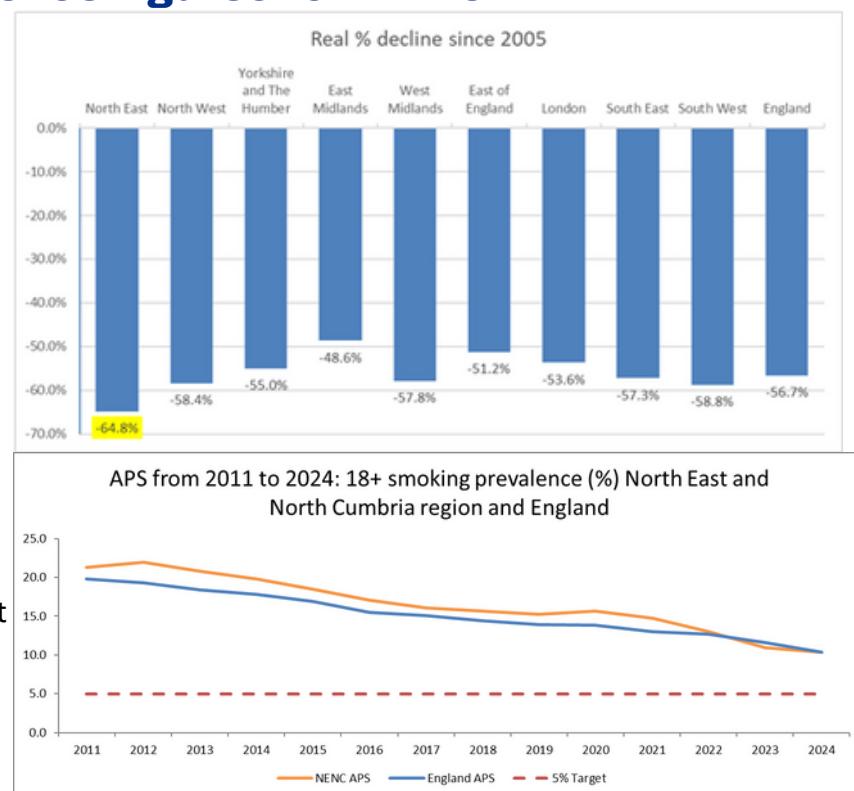
- 1.Raising the age of sale
- 2.Banning sponsorship and advertising of vaping/nicotine products
- 3.Ending free distribution of vaping and nicotine products
- 4.Setting an age of sale for non-medicinal and non-nicotine products
- 5.Banning vending machines for vaping/nicotine products
- 6.Introducing Fixed Penalty Notices for breaches of the new tobacco laws.

Additional proposals are subject to further consultation, offering key opportunities for input. A call for evidence around five areas has recently concluded and Fresh shared working drafts around this and ran a dedicated Tobacco Regulation Forum meeting to discuss this with excellent engagement from across the system. Both Fresh and the Smokefree NHS taskforce submitted detailed responses to this call for evidence ahead of the **3rd December** midnight deadline.

Record Low Smoking Prevalence figures for NENC

The APS (Annual Population Survey) figures for 2024 have been published here, where smoking figures across UK, regions, LAs, ICBs are available.

- NENC smoking prevalence in 2024 is 10.4%, down from 10.9% the previous year, this is the lowest of all the ICBs in the North East & Yorkshire region.
- North East prevalence in 2024 is 10.2%, down from 11.6% the previous year. This is lower than the England prevalence at 10.4%, and is joint third lowest in the country.
- Since 2005, the North East has seen the largest real % decline across all regions at 64.8%, nationally the decline in this period was 56.7%.



Workforce Development and Training

Stop Smoking COI

The Stop Smoking Community of Interest (COI) brings together those involved with delivering or commissioning stop smoking support and who share the vision for a smokefree future. The aim is to exchange knowledge, share good practice, and to support collaboration between organisations and across localities to maximise the system-wide efforts to increase the number of people in the North East who make a quit attempt and become smokefree. The Q2 COI was held online on the 2nd of September with broad attendance from both NHS, LA and private sector SSS with focus on primary care. Each quarter there are three awards given for recognition of excellent work done across the region to support quitters, these are i) Advisor of the quarter; ii) Service/Team of the Quarter ; & iii) Quitter of the quarter. Congratulations to **Northumbria FT Best Start in Life team** for winning **Team of the Quarter (Q2)**.

The Q3 COI was held on the 18th of November again with good attendance. It featured a presentation from Karl Charlton, Research Paramedic who carried our research on using ambulance service as a setting for Very Brief Advice. The published paper can be found [here](#). Congratulations to the **Advisor of the Quarter (Q3)- Jessica Embleton** from **Cumbria Northumberland Tyne & Wear FT**. Congratulations to all who were also recognised and commended. To nominate an individual or team please click [here](#)

The COI is recorded and the recordings along with all papers and presentations are available on [Khub](#)

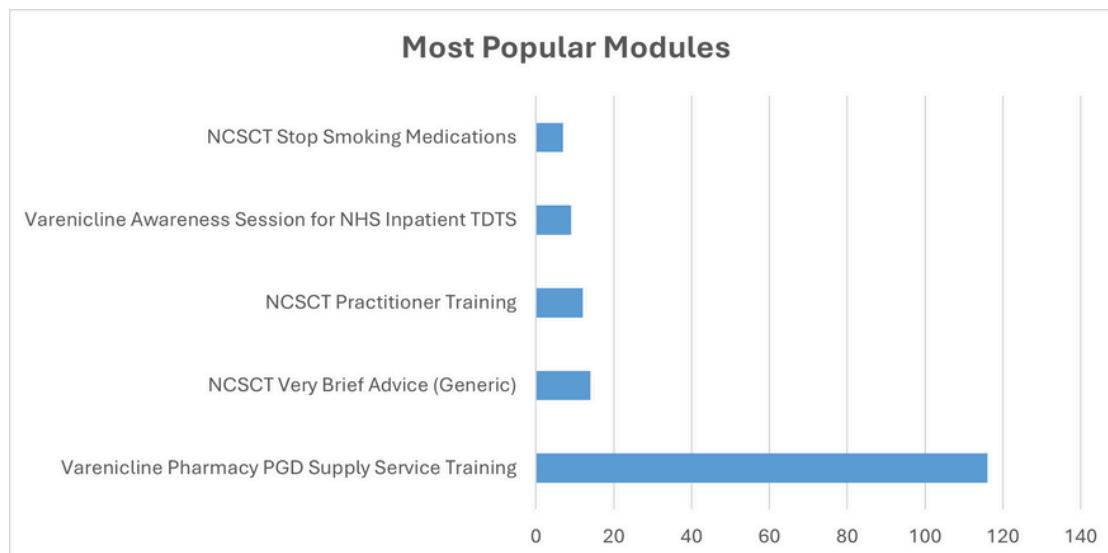
BOOST Platform- Programme for Tobacco Dependency

The Programme for Tobacco Dependency now offers e-learning modules on the BOOST platform. These modules are grouped into three categories.

1. Identifying Tobacco Dependence and Delivering Brief Advice
2. Tobacco Awareness
3. Treating Tobacco Dependence

NB: You will need to register for access to the modules. Click this [link](#) to explore each section

A snapshot of activity as at September 2025, found the programme has attracted approximately 200 participants from a diverse range of organisations across the North East and North Cumbria region, as well as a few from outside the area. All participants registered and completed either an e-learning module or attended an event



NENC IMPLEMENTATION OF NHS LONG TERM PLAN

Strategic Lead: Rachel McIlvenna Project Manager: Joojo Kyei- Sarpong

Future Funding

The programme has completed an initial ICB commissioning intentions template and there are ongoing discussions to ensure relevant contract variation and service specifications are in place for future financial years.

TDTS Implementation

Of 18 clinical pathways (10 acute, 8 maternity and 2 mental health), there are now **17 of 18** pathways fully embedded with South Tyneside & Sunderland FT (Maternity) outstanding. A number of productive meetings have been held to ensure fully established status can be achieved in year. We continue to work with all 10 Trusts to encourage them to adopt quality improvement (QI) approaches to service delivery and embed services for long term sustainability.

Peer Networks

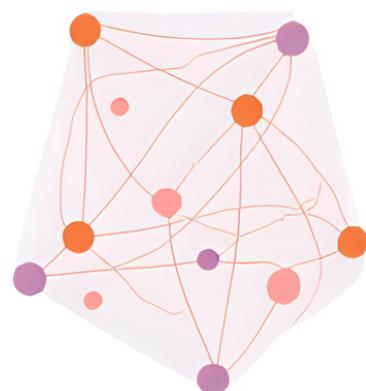
Smokefree NHS programme continue to support regular peer networks for colleagues working in tobacco dependency across NENC. These networks allow the opportunity for colleagues working in different Trusts to share best practice and troubleshoot collaboratively. The established peer networks (**Smokefree NHS Leads & Service Managers; Data Leads, Tobacco Dependency Advisors**) continue to meet on a quarterly basis and in person whenever possible. Meetings have been held throughout Q2 & Q3.

A recent survey of the Smokefree NHS Networks found that in relation to **Overall Value**

- Forums are **highly valued** across groups (most rated 4–5/5 for usefulness).
- Communications seen as **clear and useful** (average ~4.3–4.4).
- Attendance levels are strong (majority attend at least half the sessions).

Strengths identified through the survey included that they :

- Provide **relevant support** and updates.
- Duration and frequency rated as **generally appropriate**.



SMOKEFREE NHS DATA COLLECTION & REPORTING

Data Lead: Rachel Mitchell

NENC Progress

All of Tobacco Dependency Treatment Services in NENC are now consistently submitting data (aggregate and patient level) to the national tobacco data collection across all pathways since January 2025. **61.11%** of pathways have an **A** grading for submissions across NENC ICB trusts, compared to **41.14%** nationally.

Acute

- All 8 NENC ICB trusts have a value greater than England for the percentage of people with their smoking status recorded.
- 6 trusts have values greater than England and NENC for the percentage of smokers referred to the TDTs, with 4 of those referring 100% of identified smokers.
- CDDFT and Northumbria (Q2) & North Cumbria(Q3) have a value greater than England for the percentage of smokers that are provided with supported care plans and smokers seen by a TDTs and provided with care plans to support a quit attempt.
- 3 trusts have values greater than England for both the quit outcome measures. (**CDDFT, Gateshead, North Cumbria**)

Mental Health

- Both local mental health trusts have a value greater than England for the percentage of smokers that are provided with supported care plans.
- With regards to outcome measures CNTW have a value above England for the percentage of smokers provided with supported care plans who are recorded as having quit smoking.

Maternity

- 6 NENC ICB trusts have a value greater than England for the percentage of pregnant people with their smoking status recorded.
- 6 trusts have values greater than England and NENC for the percentage of pregnant smokers referred to the TDTs, 3 of these are 100%
- 5 trusts have a value greater than England for the percentage of smokers that are provided with supported care plans (T.060.020), and 4 trusts have a value greater than England for the percentage of smokers seen by a TDTs and provided with care plans to support a quit attempt. (T.061.032)
- CDDFT and Gateshead have values greater than England for the percentage of smokers who are non-smokers at 36 weeks; CDDFT and North Tees and Hartlepool are greater than England for the percentage of smokers who are non-smokers at time of delivery.

The Smokefree Strategic Manager and team continue to work with Trusts to address gaps in indicator submissions and data quality.

Tobacco Dependence Services Dashboard



Data Quality

View ICB	Reporting Period August 2025	Region North East and Yorkshire	ICB NHS NORTH EAST AND NORTH...	Organisation	Setting Type All	Data Quality Checks	
						Data Quality Key	Data Quality Checks
							<- Hover for detailed information on data quality assessment
ICB Name	Setting Type		Reported Coverage		DQ Score		
NHS NORTH EAST AND NORTH CUMBRIA INTEGRATED CARE BOARD	Adult Mental Health	Settings submitting 10 or more records with referrals		A		B9	
	Maternity	1 / 2 (50%)		1		1	
	Physical Acute	8 / 8 (100%)		6		2	
		8 / 8 (100%)		6		2	

DATA QUALITY TABLE REPORTING PERIOD AUGUST 2025

ASH Survey of Integrated Board in England

A recent survey conducted by ASH and published in August 2025 reported full implementation of tobacco dependence treatment services in 80% in secondary care, 71% in mental health and 91% in maternity care. We were delighted to have been one of the ICB's examples cited as demonstrating integrating tobacco control in wider ICB work and proud of the NENC leadership & commitment towards this agenda. You can read the full survey report [here](#)

Tobacco Dependence Treatment Services Impact Calculator

ASH recently relaunched their [Tobacco Dependence Treatment Service Impact Calculator](#). This tool estimates the impact to Trusts of implementing NHS Inpatient Tobacco Dependence Treatment Services (TDTs) in acute inpatient settings, specifically in relation to demand reduction and the associated cost savings. The calculator allows Trusts to estimate the reduction in:

- All cause 30-day readmissions
- All cause 1-year readmissions
- All cause 2-year readmissions
- All cause 30-day A&E presentations
- Reductions in all cause deaths at 1 year

Quality Improvement Projects

There are two quality improvement projects in the pipeline aimed at improving data quality that started in Q2.

- The North East and North Cumbria (NENC) ICB is working with the three other Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) in the North East and Yorkshire region—Humber and North Yorkshire (HNY), South Yorkshire (SYB), and West Yorkshire (WY)—to pilot digital cessation support during admission and post-discharge, using the Smokefree app. Read press release [here](#).
- The NENC Tobacco Programme is leading a Quality Improvement (QI) project to boost the number of patients who, after receiving inpatient Tobacco Dependency Treatment, successfully engage with Community Stop Smoking Services post-discharge. This collaborative effort brings together 18 organisations across the North East and North Cumbria, including NHS Trusts and community Stop Smoking Services, to strengthen continuity of care, reduce relapse risk, and align with national best practice guidance such as NICE NG209 and NCSCT Transfer of Care.

Peak Quality Mark

Tobacco Peak Quality Mark Scheme

Guidance for Evaluation



The scheme introduces a stepped approach to quality improvement where each “rung” of the ladder represents progression towards a goal of service excellence. The ladder rungs are:

- A Foot on the Ladder (Stage 1)
- Stepping up (Stage 2)
- Climbing High (Stage 3)
- Peak Quality (Stage 4)

We are actively encouraging all NENC Trusts to sign up to this

Alcohol Care Team (ACT) Survey

- **75%** response rate from 8 Acute Trusts with overall 16 responses.
- **75%** (12) of respondents stated their TDTs teams did not do any type of Alcohol Brief Intervention (BI) at any point during assessment or treatment.
- **19%** (3) stated yes, and that they did &
- **6%** (1) said they were unsure.

3. Does your TDTs team do any type of Alcohol brief intervention at any point during assessment or treatment?

● Yes	3
● No	12
● Unsure	1



We are looking at opportunities for TDTs teams to identify and appropriately refer those patients who are at high risk to ACT teams & vice versa so that ACT's could be identifying patients who are still tobacco dependent following admission.

TOBACCO DEPENDENCY IN PREGNANCY

Strategic Lead: Rachel McIlvenna **Pregnancy Clinical Lead:** Becca Scott **Public Health Practitioner:** Joojo Kyei Sarpong

Pregnancy Incentive Schemes

The NENC ICB Smokefree Tobacco in Pregnancy Incentive scheme remains in place until Q4, two Trusts (North Tees & Hartlepool and South Tyneside & Sunderland) remain only ones utilising this. It is also available for 'significant others' of pregnant women & people who are currently enrolled on scheme.

The National Smoking in Pregnancy Incentives Scheme (NSPIS) is in place and the Smokefree NHS program continues to work with the remaining Trusts to support the transition over from the NENC scheme before the end of Q4. We remain grateful to the ICB for their leadership in funding the NENC scheme which has helped support to over 2768 pregnant women & people until Nov 2024.

Since launch of the national scheme in November 2024, over 275 pregnant women in NENC have been recruited on to the national scheme and are being supported by Maternity & TDTS teams to be smokefree.

NRT E-Voucher Scheme & NRT Availability

PSNE, are continuing to support all NENC pharmacies signed up to offer the NRT E-voucher system for pregnant women which has been in place since 1st September 2022.

7 out of 8 NHS Trusts have PGD's and protocols in place to make the issuing of NRT to women and pregnant people whilst in an acute setting readily available. Northumbria FT has chosen not to utilise this scheme and have their own local arrangements.

In anticipation of the cessation of the regional funded maternity NRT Voucher Scheme contract with PSNE in June 2026, the ICB NHS SmokeFree Strategic Manager facilitated discussions with PSNE and NHS Trusts around future arrangements on the 8th of October. A further meeting is planned for Q4.

Regional Maternity Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) E-Voucher

What You Need to Know

What is the Maternity NRT E-Voucher?

In the North East and North Cumbria a Maternity NRT E-voucher scheme has been launched as a supply only pathway. This is to ensure pregnant smokers can access tobacco dependency treatment regardless of where they live in the region. It is part of the NHS Long Term Plan (LTP) to ensure pregnant smokers have access to treatment for the health of their baby.

How is this different from what we have been doing?

This region wide Maternity NRT E-voucher is different from any local authority stop smoking service your pharmacy might be part of or from the National NHSE Advanced Pharmacy Smoking Cessation Service. It has been funded by the NENC Smokefree NHS / Treating Tobacco Dependency Taskforce and Pharmacy Services North East (PSNE) is the commissioned administrator on behalf of all eight acute Trusts. All pharmacies are encouraged to sign up to ensure region wide coverage.

What do you need to do as a pharmacy?

STEP 1: REGISTER	Register your pharmacy to take part by emailing your PSNE.
STEP 2: COMMUNICATE	Ensure all staff (including locums) are aware that this Scheme is in place.
STEP 3: DISPENSE	If a pregnant woman presents at your pharmacy indicating she has been assigned from her local Trust, please check for a referral on PharmOutcomes. The pregnant woman (or her representative) will not bring a physical voucher.

Invoices are automatically generated through the PharmOutcomes system and will be billed through PSNE to the relevant Trust where the pregnant woman is receiving care.

For more information, visit www.northeastandnorthcumbriaics.nhs.uk or email [PSNE helpdesk@psne.co.uk](mailto:PSNE_helpdesk@psne.co.uk)

Produced by the Treating Tobacco Dependency Taskforce on behalf of the North East and North Cumbria ICS

TOBACCO DEPENDENCY IN PREGNANCY

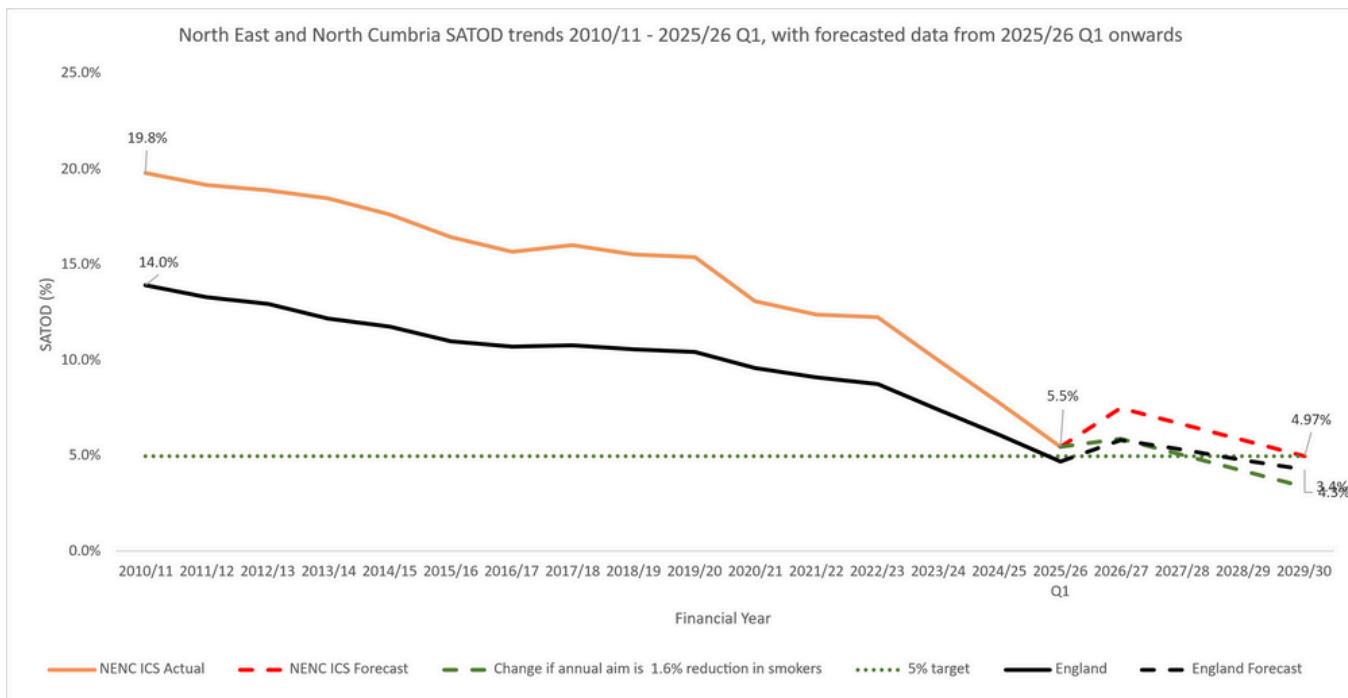
Strategic Lead: Rachel McIlvenna **Pregnancy Clinical Lead:** Becca Scott **Public Health Practitioner:** Joojo Kyei- Sarpong

Q1 Smoking at Time of Delivery (SATOD) Reduction

We are pleased to share that the Q1 & Q2 data for 2025/26 was released on the 18th of September & 18th of December respectively showed that our collective NENC rate is 5.5% which is just 1.0% above the England rate of 4.5%. These rates show maintained progress across the first half of the year, but remind us that we must continue our focus until we end tobacco smoking.

SATOD Key Data

1. For both quarters (Q1 & Q2) 25/26 NENC achieved a rate of 5.5%.
 - a. The NENC rate for Q1 & Q2 25/26 is 2.3% lower than the 24/25 NENC rate of 7.8%
 - b. All areas have improved from their 24/25 rates with North Tyneside sub-ICB achieving an impressive rate of 2.1% in Q2
2. Based on previous data from 2010/11 onwards it is forecast that NENC will have a rate of 4.97% by 2030.
3. Smoking status is now reported through MSDS rather than the quarterly SATOD return but this has led to a rise in records coded as unknown smoking status both nationally(7.3%) and in almost all NENC(8.5%) Trusts . We are working with relevant maternity teams to address this issue.



SEVERE MENTAL ILLNESS WORKSTREAM

Strategic Lead: Rachel McIlvenna Project Manager: Joojo Kyei-Sarpong

CNTW SMI Community Offer

The recently restarted community mental health tobacco dependency offer being delivered by Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS FT (CNTW) continues to pilot an enhanced pathway for community patients who have a serious mental illness in Newcastle/North Tyneside area. To date as at November 2025, 117 referrals had been received into this enhanced support, 26 people set quit date, 14 quit at 4 weeks, and 12 quit at 12 weeks.



Case Study- Mental Health Service User

I started smoking when I was 13 years old. I enjoyed smoking so much I never imagined ever quitting. Vaping has made a big difference to my health and I don't think I will ever go back to cigarettes. I want to be healthy for my daughters.

Evaluation

Evaluation of SMI EIS Implementation

Strategic Lead: Rachel McIlvenna

The SMI Early Implementer Site was a pioneering pilot in the North East and North Cumbria, designed to offer an enhanced smoking cessation service for adults living with Severe Mental Illness (SMI). People with conditions such as schizophrenia, psychosis, and bipolar disorder smoke at significantly higher rates than the general population, contributing to stark health inequalities and reduced life expectancy.

Under the NHS Long Term Plan, the pilot delivered intensive, tailored support over 20 weeks, combining behavioural interventions, medication-assisted treatment, and flexible referral pathways. The goal was to improve quit outcomes and strengthen collaboration between mental health services and stop smoking support.

An independent evaluation by Northumbria University, now published as a [Fuse research briefing](#), adopted a mixed-methods approach—analysing quit rates and gathering insights from service providers and users. Findings highlighted that personalised support, access to medication options, and strong engagement from advisors were critical to success. Service users reported improved physical health, financial benefits, and fewer side effects than anticipated. Importantly, many valued the non-judgemental, consistent support offered throughout their quit journey.

However, the evaluation also identified challenges. These included data recording issues, fragmented referral systems, and weak links with primary care, which sometimes hindered continuity of care. Addressing these barriers will be essential for scaling up the model.

Reflections from the Strategic Manager, [published in the NENC blog](#), reinforced these lessons: clear referral pathways, robust data systems, enhanced staff training, and flexible delivery models are vital for sustainability. Collaboration between mental health and tobacco dependency teams remains a cornerstone of success, ensuring that people with SMI receive the right support at the right time.

Looking ahead, Northumbria University has begun a formal evaluation of the community mental health smoking cessation pilot being delivered by Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust (CNTW). Further findings will be shared in future briefings, helping shape best practice and inform national rollout.

This pilot demonstrates that tailored, integrated approaches can make a real difference—not only improving quit rates but also tackling long-standing health inequalities for people with severe mental illness

Evaluation

Evaluation of NHS Staff Tobacco Dependency Offer

Strategic Lead: Rachel McIlvenna

High smoking rates and deprivation in the North East of England prompted a pilot tobacco dependency treatment offer for NHS staff, aiming to support quit attempts and improve health outcomes. The service provided up to 12 weeks of free nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) and/or a refillable e-cigarette, motivational support, and premium access to the Smoke-Free app.

Researchers used a mixed-methods design, combining the Theoretical Framework of Acceptability (TFA) questionnaire with semi-structured interviews. 68 survey responses and 18 interviews revealed high overall acceptability. Staff reported the service was easy to access, convenient, and effective in supporting quit attempts. Key themes included familiarity and ease of access, suitability of NRT/e-liquid ordering, quality of vape kits, and behavioural support.

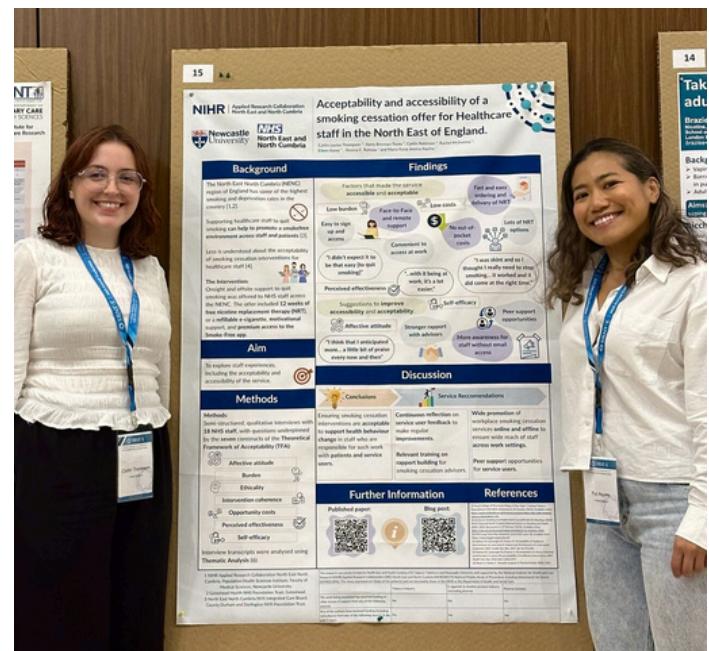
Participants valued the flexibility of accessing support through work and appreciated the combination of pharmacological and behavioural interventions. Challenges included technical issues with vape kits, variable awareness of the service among staff, and mixed preferences for behavioural support modalities. Recommendations for future delivery include improving communication, expanding advisor training, and ensuring equitable access across staff groups.

This evaluation is the first known application of the TFA to a smoking cessation intervention for NHS staff, contributing valuable insights for scaling up tobacco dependency services in healthcare settings.

The evaluation was accepted & presented as abstract poster for the Annual Society for Research on Nicotine and Tobacco (SRNT) conference that took place in Q2 (Sept) in Romania.

Congratulations to Dr Caitlin Thompson who scooped up the Early Career Research (ECR) Poster prize at the SRNT-E conference.

Read the published research [here](#).



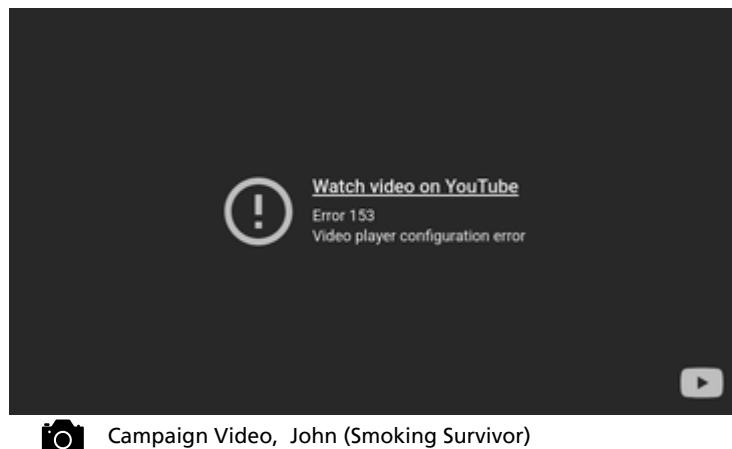
 Pictured : Dr Caitlin Thompson(left) , Reseach Assistant for study presenting at SSM & Dr Ryc Aquino (right) Lead Researcher

Comms & Media

Fresh Smoking Survivors Campaign

Fresh launched the next phase of "Smoking Survivors" campaign across the North East and North Cumbria from September 15 and throughout October. This phase ran throughout Stoptober across TV, outdoor, radio and online and ties in with the national DHSC campaign.

A range of resources were produced for partners to support Smoking Survivors, including Stoptober versions and versions were made available of some resources localised insert of local Stop Smoking Services



 Campaign Video, John (Smoking Survivor)



Tobacco Smoke is Poison

Fresh and Smokefree NHS programme have worked together to refresh a suite of health promotion resources for partners working in health and in local communities on the Tobacco Smoke is Poison platform. It is aimed at raising awareness about the risks of secondhand tobacco smoke for children and adults, with a particular focus on parents, families and carers. These resources are free to download for partners working in the North East and North Cumbria and include training resources for staff. [Resource link](#)

Winter Pressures Resources

Smoking worsens winter pressures on the NHS. Tobacco smoking not only causes cancer, heart disease, stroke, COPD and dementia – but during the winter when demand on the NHS is at its highest, smokers suffer more severely from respiratory viruses such as flu and conditions such as COPD.

Partners across the NHS and public health are proactively involved in front-line work and communications to minimise harm and risk from cold weather and seasonal respiratory illness.

This toolkit is aimed at helping partners to raise the topic of smoking and support the work of the Tobacco Dependency Treatment Services within Trusts. [Resource link](#)



In the Media



[Karen's Story](#)



[Charlie Story](#)

RESOURCE AREA, USEFUL LINKS AND CONTACTS

Past events/Video recordings

- Video recordings from all the sessions of the Smoking Cessation & Health (SCAH) Conference held in March 2025 are available to view [here](#)
- SMI Evaluation Dissemination Webinar June 2025 recording is available to view [here](#)
- SMI Workshop held in February 2025, recording is available to view [here](#).
- 'Delivering on the Shift to Prevention in the NHS' webinar June 2025 is available to view [here](#)

Resources

- Clinical Leads [briefing](#) to make the case for NHS organisation to appoint a clinical lead for tobacco.
- Saving Babies Lives: Tracking the progress in reducing maternal smoking in England , report [here](#)

Published Papers

- A recent study published in the Thorax reveals that smokers are significantly more likely to be hospitalised than non-smokers, with smoking rates remaining highest in deprived communities.The study can be accessed [here](#).
- A paper published in the BMJ has looked at the 'Implementation and impact of NHS-funded tobacco dependence services in England: a mixed-method evaluation protocol. You can access the study [here](#)

RESOURCE AREA, USEFUL LINKS AND CONTACTS

Supporting Quitting



www.FreshQuit.co.uk- this is the key regional 'one stop' website on all things for smokers relating to quitting including quit tips, local Stop Smoking Service information, cost calculator, vaping and much more. We would encourage partners to link to this and maximise opportunities to amplify any campaign activities.



The free version of the Smokefree App remains available to anyone who lives in NENC. The key features of the Smokefree App are automated self-help, a digital stop smoking programme (daily missions & Chat bot) and one-to-one support from stop smoking experts available 24/7

Resources in Practice



Knowledge Hub

Key documents and resources are made available through the [Taskforce's online Knowledge Hub \(KHub\) group](#) so it is strongly recommended that all colleagues and partners involved in the treating tobacco dependency/Smokefree NHS agenda are registered to access this. This is in addition to the national resources within NHS futures.

Data

The National Tobacco Dependency Service Data Dashboard can be [accessed here](#) and is available to all colleagues working on the agenda. The Smoking in England toolkit study provides findings of smoking prevalence and patterns in England. More details can be found [here](#)



NHS Future

The Future NHS platform has a host of information on all of the [national prevention programme](#) (obesity, tobacco and alcohol) that you may find useful. This platform is updated regularly with relevant resources. Please ensure your colleagues have access to this resource. There is also a [North East and Yorkshire Prevention workspace](#) which colleagues may find useful.



A wealth of helpful resources can be found [here](#). To learn more about the work of ASH or to get involved in any of the challenge groups , you can find more [here](#).

Contact

If you have any queries or want to know more about the content in this briefing, please contact Smokefree NHS Strategic Manager Rachel McIlvenna
(rachel.mcilvenna@nhs.net)