

## Briefing for Member Champions

# Mental Health and Smoking

Smoking disproportionately affects the health and wellbeing of people with a mental health condition, many of whom endure years of physical ill health and disability as a result of smoking. People living with a severe mental illness have a far shorter life expectancy than the general population, dying on average between 15-20 years prematurely.<sup>1</sup> Smoking is the single largest cause of this gap in life expectancy.<sup>2</sup> Smoking can also exacerbate existing symptoms of depression,<sup>3</sup> anxiety<sup>4</sup> and dementia.<sup>5</sup>

Whilst smoking rates in the general population in England have declined, the rate of smoking amongst individuals with a mental health condition has remained consistently high at approximately 40%.<sup>6</sup>

The Health Survey for England found that 66% of smokers with a mental health condition want to quit.<sup>7</sup> However, these individuals face greater barriers to stop smoking, which often include: a higher addiction to nicotine,<sup>2</sup> lower expectations to quit by healthcare professionals<sup>8</sup> and being surrounded by others who smoke.<sup>9</sup> Smokers are four times more likely to quit if they receive support from stop smoking services.<sup>10</sup> However, people with a mental health condition may require longer periods of expert support from stop smoking services.

**Member Champions can play a key role in driving change - making sure that no one with a mental health condition experiences disadvantage as a result of smoking.**

## Why this is important to local authorities?

### Smoking reinforces social inequalities

People with a mental health condition who also have an experience of homelessness or drug and alcohol abuse have higher rates of smoking.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore smoking reinforces economic disadvantage amongst people with mental health conditions; approximately 135,000 individuals are pushed into poverty if their spending on tobacco is considered.<sup>13</sup>

### Smoking exacerbates an already pressured social care system

Current smokers, and, to a lesser extent, former smokers are more likely to need domiciliary care as they age faster than those who have never smoked.<sup>14</sup> The social care costs of smoking to local authorities are approximately £760 million per year for local councils in England. There are further costs to individuals from self-funded care and unpaid caring.<sup>14</sup>

### Children with a parent who smokes are more likely to take it up

Smoking is an addiction that commences in childhood, with very few people taking up smoking as an adult.<sup>15</sup> Children whose parents or siblings smoke are around three times more likely to smoke than children living in non-smoking households.<sup>16</sup>

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## The Mental Health Challenge

Local councils championing mental health

### What can elected members do?

#### 1. Support a clear strategy

Ask your county or borough public health service if they have developed a tailored tobacco control strategy which meets local needs and incorporates specific support for people with a mental health condition. They can also use the Public Health England's mental health 'deep dive' self-assessment tool<sup>17</sup> to measure how well they're doing and improve their tobacco control work.

#### 2. Call for the protection of stop smoking services

Advocate for the continued funding of stop smoking services within your local area. Some local authorities have partly or fully decommissioned specific stop smoking support services. Elected members can advocate for people with mental health conditions to have equal access to services that will give them a better chance of quitting.

Member champions can also encourage stop smoking services to get freely available mental health training for their staff from the National Centre for Smoking Cessation and Training (NCST).<sup>18</sup>

#### 3. Work with NHS partners

Your local NHS mental health trusts should be taking a leading role in improving the physical health of people with mental health conditions and Mental Health Champions can work with Health and Wellbeing Boards, to ask how their local NHS trust is progressing in reducing smoking levels and supporting service users to quit. Your local Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP) National Centre for Smoking Cessation and Training (NCST) <http://www.ncsct.co.uk/> may also include tobacco control as part of its prevention plan.

#### 4. Require consistent, evidence-based advice on e-cigarettes

Ensure information is provided across all services and community organisations about the relative safety of nicotine replacement options such as e-cigarettes, for those who struggle to quit. Make sure that local stop smoking services are providing support to people using e-cigarettes.

#### 5. Ensure appropriate data is collected

Ask your local stop smoking service and NHS trust what data is collected on the number of people with a mental health condition who smoke and encourage them to engage in rigorous data analysis in order to regularly review the quality and effectiveness of the support available to people with a mental health condition.



### To find out more about the Mental Health Challenge:

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