

**\*\*EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01 ON WEDNESDAY 9<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2005\*\***

## **London makes Smoke(-free) signals for a healthier NHS**

*Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2005* – The five London Strategic Health Authorities are marking this year's No Smoking Day with a commitment to see a smoke-free NHS in the capital by the end of 2005.

"It is entirely fitting for the NHS in London to take the lead in protecting the health of its staff and those for whom they care with a smoke-free working environment" said Carolyn Regan, Chief Executive of North East London Strategic Health Authority.

"More than any other organisation, the NHS deals on a daily basis with the direct effects of smoking on Londoners' health and well-being."

"The goal of seeing a smoke-free NHS in London is matched by a commitment to help those people – staff and patients alike - who want to stop smoking. Last year – with the help of their local stop smoking services – more than 22,000 Londoners successfully gave up smoking."

Recent studies have suggested that secondhand smoke in the workplace is responsible for two deaths per day.<sup>1</sup> A smoke-free NHS in London would help to safeguard the health of more than 250,000 staff, as well as the millions of patients it treats. This decision will lead to the largest single creation of smoke-free workplaces in the UK and speeds up progress towards the commitment in the Government's *Choosing Health* White Paper to create a smoke-free NHS by December 2006.<sup>2</sup>

Staff that smoke will be given any required support to help with the transition, including access to smoking cessation counsellors. There are 29 local NHS Stop Smoking Services throughout London and further information is available from the NHS Smoking Helpline (0800 169 0 169) or [www.smokefreelondon.org](http://www.smokefreelondon.org).

"Smoking is a major cause of ill-health and nowhere more than London" said Prof Sue Atkinson CBE, Director of Public Health for London "It is responsible for more than one death every hour in London. Secondhand smoke in the workplace is known to contribute significantly to smoking-related diseases and death. We wholeheartedly support this decision and would urge other employers to follow the lead of the NHS in London."

Implementation of the policy will follow the process outlined by the Health Development Agency<sup>3</sup> and support has already been given by the Royal College of Nursing, British Medical Association, Southern and Eastern Region TUC and GMB. The announcement is particularly timely given the private bill to give London Boroughs the authority to make their public places smoke-free currently in the House of Lords.

- ENDS -

**For further information or interviews, please contact:**

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## References:

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2. Department of Health. *Choosing Health – Making healthier choices*. November 2004.
3. Health Development Agency. *Guidance for smoke-free hospital trusts*. January 2005. ([http://www.had.nhs.uk/Documents/smokefree\\_guidance.pdf](http://www.had.nhs.uk/Documents/smokefree_guidance.pdf))

## Notes to editors:

1. **Smoke-Free London** is an alliance of agencies working together to improve the health of all Londoners by eliminating or reducing their exposure to tobacco. Its website at [www.smokefreelondon.org](http://www.smokefreelondon.org) provides access to information on quitting smoking and creating smoke-free venues, and includes a postcode search facility to identify local services.
2. **The NHS Smoking Helpline (0800 169 0 169)** provides expert, free, and friendly advice to smokers and their families. The helpline is open between 7am and 11pm every day for information requests and referrals, with unlimited access to trained advisors giving one-to-one advice and support from 10am. Since its launch it has received over 1 million calls. A year after first calling the NHS Smoking Helpline, nearly a quarter of callers said they had successfully given up and were still not smoking.
3. NHS Smoking Helpline advisors can refer callers to a **local NHS Stop Smoking Service** offering ongoing free face-to-face support and advice near their own home. There are 170 throughout the country, offering a range of services including one-to-one meetings and group discussions with trained stop smoking advisors. Over 200,000 smokers kicked the habit after receiving help from NHS Stop Smoking Services in the last year. Of the 359,000 smokers in England who set a quit date between April 2003 and March 2004 over half said they had successfully given up 4 weeks later. Government research shows that smokers are up to 4 times more likely to give up successfully if they use their local NHS Stop Smoking Service together with Nicotine Replacement Therapy than relying on willpower alone.
4. Local NHS Stop Smoking Advisors meet smokers individually or as part of a group for an hour or two a week for six or seven weeks. Quitters usually spend the first two sessions planning and preparing to give up and then quit in the third week. NHS Stop Smoking Advisors inform each quitter about Nicotine Replacement Therapy and Zyban, and can provide relevant treatments on prescription, which are free to people who are exempt from prescription charges. Many services have carbon monoxide monitors, so quitters are able to measure how quickly their bodies return to normal once they have stopped smoking. Many areas also run monthly relapse prevention meetings, or regular drop-in sessions for smokers who need ongoing help and assistance.