



Category: Internal Communications Campaign

Company: Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

Entry title: We share clean air - a smokefree Northumbria

Brief and objectives:

- Smoking is the single largest cause of health inequalities and premature death in England, responsible for 17% of all deaths in people aged 35+.
- The annual cost of smoking to the public in England is estimated to be in the region of £13.8bn of which £2bn are direct costs to the NHS.
- It is estimated that smoking kills 80,000 people per year in England and it is the primary reason for the gap in life expectancy between those from the richest and poorest backgrounds.
- Smokers are more likely to suffer respiratory disease, heart disease and some cancers than non-smokers
- Smoking in pregnancy carries substantial risks for mother and baby – up to 2200 premature births, 5000 miscarriages and 300 perinatal deaths every year in the UK
- Almost three out of 10 hospital bed days are estimated to be related to smoking-attributable illnesses with smokers tending to have longer lengths of stay, higher incidence of wound infections and readmissions than non-smokers.

As an NHS organisation, we have a duty to protect and care for the health and well-being of our patients, staff and visitors. Many of the people who access our services are particularly vulnerable to the harmful effects of second-hand smoke, such as pregnant women, babies, children and those with medical conditions.

We have a responsibility to provide a safe environment that promotes health and reduces harm from exposure to second-hand smoke and therefore we took the decision to become a completely smoke-free trust from 31 March 2018, removing all designated smoking areas.

A 12 month campaign to achieve a truly smoke-free status was launched in March 2017, the objectives of which were:

- To ensure all – over 10,000 – of our staff were informed of our smoke-free ‘date’

- Engaging with staff to ensure their concerns were identified, listened to and acted upon
- Work to change the culture around smoking with a view to establishing ambassadors for a smoke-free trust
- Offer training to staff to ensure they had the skills and confidence to support the smoke-free objective
- Raise awareness of the support to quit smoking

As one of the largest employers in the region this represented a significant effort!

Rationale behind campaign, including research and planning:

Prior to starting the project there was no systematic approach in place to monitor the number of patients being asked about smoking status or about the support offered. However a national audit undertaken by British Thoracic Society, which we participated in, suggested from the small number of notes that were reviewed that we were not undertaking brief interventions as we should.

This confirmed the need for a systematic approach. Therefore – in order to make this work – first there needed to be clear and considered engagement with frontline staff to ensure any system was practical.

Focus groups were carried out with various staff groups to gain insight into how staff felt about becoming a smoke-free trust, their suggestions to help us achieve this and what support was needed. For instance, market stalls were used outside of staff canteens at busy times to gain a broader insight into staff feeling and postcards were given out to gain feedback.

Strategy and tactics, including creativity and innovation:

It was quickly identified that staff:

- Had concerns regarding the challenge of breaches
 - This informed messaging we used in comms throughout the campaign and we worked to ameliorate them
- Would like more training in discussing smoking status with patients
 - This helped us to develop and promote a programme of training
- Found accessing stop smoking support difficult
 - New collateral was developed to enable easier access

- Wanted more support in general
 - Roadshows were promoted and took place and comms raised awareness of the smoke-free project team who could attend wards and departments as well as meetings to support individuals and teams
- Said the standard national 'no smoking' signage had been used over the years and did not create enough of an impact
 - This formed the campaign brand, imagery and signage which promotes the positives of a smoke-free environment – fresh, clean air. The pre-smokefree date we promoted 'change is in the air' with information on what was to come, the post-smokefree date we now promote that 'we share clean air'.

Implementation of tactics:

An intranet site was also introduced which included all of the information staff needed in one place. Roadshows and smoke-free plans and information were also included in staff magazines and weekly newsletters (see supporting information).

In order to create positivity around the removal of designated smoking shelters, we also promoted 'ash trees, not ashtrays' which had a countdown to the shelters being removed and an ash tree being planted in its place.

Measurement and evaluation:

Prior to starting the project:

- 70% of notes had smoking status recorded
- 15% of smokers got brief advice
- 6% of smokers got offered NRT/referral for support

Upon completion: since the trust promoted and implemented smoke-free:

- 90% of notes had smoking status recorded (provisional)
- The proportion of smokers prescribed NRT/referred - 244 referrals in just the first 10 weeks
- 494 staff trained to date
- Recruited 12 smoke free champions since 31 March 2018
- Outpatients have increased the number of monthly referrals six fold

Budget and cost effectiveness:

An initial budget of only £2000 was allocated to the smoke-free project; however, as this was an on-going campaign that contributed to a change in culture, funding was provided which took the budget to £15,000.

The on-going upward trend of stop smoking referrals will contribute to reducing smoking prevalence to just 5% by 2025 bringing substantial health benefits to the local population and contribute towards a saving of almost £18million in the NHS.

As the first acute trust in the region to become truly smoke-free and with all other trusts required to become smoke-free by March 2019, our work has been recognised regionally and nationally. Our work has been highlighted by the Royal College of Physicians and has led to us speaking at various conferences. We are hosting a national conference of our own on June 26th to share learning and experience. As part of this, real value for money will be achieved as the campaign will be adopted by other NHS organisations across the country, saving unnecessary costs in the NHS and a recognisable identity for patients no matter where they access treatment in the NHS.