



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**May 25 2011**

### **Multi Agency bid to cut smoking deaths in North Somerset**

Three hundred North Somerset residents are dying unnecessarily each year from smoking-related illnesses, it was revealed at yesterday's annual Smokefree Alliance conference hosted in Clevedon by NHS North Somerset.

The event was held on the eve of both World No Tobacco day (May 30) and next week's Smoke Free South West campaign to alert people to the dangers of second hand smoke. It brought together representatives from a wide number of agencies including North Somerset Council, Avon fire & rescue, children's services, trading standards and voluntary groups with the two-fold aim of ensuring communities are protected from tobacco harm & where tobacco use is not the norm and creating an environment where smokers want to stop.

Explained Fiona Miles, NHS North Somerset Health Improvement Development Manager; "There is good evidence that smoking prevalence is significantly declining locally and nationally. Levels of smoking in North Somerset (approximately 18%) are significantly lower than England (22%).

Statistics released at the conference also showed:

- North Somerset still has 31,000 smokers, with the highest concentration (40%) in Weston super Mare South
- Over two thirds of smokers across the county want to quit
- 2008/9 saw more than 1000 hospital admissions attributable to smoking
- 11% of pregnant women in North Somerset still smoke

NHS North Somerset has enjoyed considerable success over the past 12 months with its Quit Smoking initiative, The ASSIST scheme, a school-based fully evaluated peer-led health promotion programme to prevent the uptake of smoking in young people has already been rolled out across 4 schools in North Somerset with plans afoot to extend it across all secondary schools in the county during 2011-2012. Thanks to the PCT's on-going work levels of smoking in North Somerset (approximately 18%) are significantly lower than the rest of England at 22%.

Added Fiona Miles; "A third of people who come to the Stop Smoking Service live in our most deprived areas. There is still a lot of work to be done in North Somerset to reduce these health inequalities and whilst our overall prevalence has reduced there are still areas such as Weston central where smoking prevalence is as high as 40%. the good news, however, is that smokers are four times more likely to quit successfully with our Stop Smoking service than by going it alone" ..

During the past twelve months, North Somerset Council's Trading Standards Service has continued to play an active role in two areas of tobacco control: continued efforts have been made to prevent sales to minors, whilst significant resource was also committed to identify venues where illicit tobacco was being sold and to bring offenders before the courts.

Added NHS North Somerset Director of Public Health Becky Pollard:

“This partnership event seeks to build on the work of our existing Smoke free Alliance, helping us to close the inequalities gap in North Somerset and work towards a Smoke free community which includes beaches and play areas – clearly this is something which we cannot do alone!”

### **New Campaign**

A new campaign launched today is urging smokers across the South West to protect their families by taking their smoke outside. Worrying new research shows that more people are smoking in the home or allowing others to do so with the figure currently standing at over 1 million people (22%) in the South West (YouGov 2011) compared to 20% in 2010. Smokefree South West which is supported by NHS North Somerset, is launching a multi-media campaign as part of an ongoing programme to halve this number by the year 2015.

It focuses on the danger of smoking in the home and the poisonous chemicals left behind, lingering on sofas, carpets and toys long after the smoke has gone. Toxins from cigarette smoke can harm the health of families and in particular children with their developing immune system.

Dr Gabriel Scally, Director of Public Health for the South West said:

It's worrying to see that higher numbers of people are allowing smoking in their home, especially as the number of people smoking in the South West is on the decrease, and, is in fact, now the lowest in the country. We need to make parents and other family members aware of the harmful chemicals in cigarette smoke that linger in the home.

By simply smoking right away from the house, parents can really help protect their children from the immediate and lifelong harm of cigarette smoke. “One simple step will make a huge difference to the health of children in the South West.”

**-ENDS-**

**Notes to Editors**

- NHS North Somerset is the local Primary Care Trust for North Somerset. The trust was established in April 2002 to ensure the provision of the highest quality healthcare services to the residents of North Somerset. It was recently assessed as one of the most improved PCTs in England by the Care Quality Commission.

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