

Report to West Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board

8 October 2020

Tackling Smoking in West Sussex Together during the Pandemic

Report by Kate Bailey Public Health Consultant, West Sussex County Council

Summary

This report is a call to action for Health and Wellbeing Board members inviting them to get behind the efforts and actions of the Smoke Free West Sussex Partnership (SFWSP).

It outlines recent achievements within the Tobacco Control Strategy (which was endorsed by the Health and Wellbeing Board at their January 2019 meeting). Examples of these include, ensuring manual workers are engaged with smoking cessation services, the largest ever seizure of illicit tobacco in the county and implementing a pilot service in maternity in Western Sussex Hospitals Foundation Trust.

Smoking is a risk factor for greater impact from Covid on both health and income. Details of how smoke free activity has responded to the requirements and impacts of the pandemic are also described e.g. changing from face to face to phone-based support and focusing on vulnerable groups.

Recent discussions across the integrated care partnership in West Sussex concluded that working together to reduce smoking prevalence could be a jointly shared priority.

Priority actions proposed here include implementing Smoke Free arrangements in local hospitals; in line with commitments in the NHS Long Term Plan. Also, increased communications to generate referrals and self-referrals to smoking cessation services; such as GPs identifying smokers on their lists and contacting them proactively.

Recommendations to the Board

The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to;

- (1) endorse the actions of the Smoke Free West Sussex Partnership which tackle smoking and to recognise the increased priority this needs during pandemic.
 - (2) Then to consider actions each member will take forward in their respective roles and organisations (these could be those proposed here or alternatives).
 - (3) To comment and agree on the proposed priority actions for the rest of 2020/21.
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Relevance to [Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#)

The benefits West Sussex people experience from the Smoke Free West Sussex Partnership's work span the breadth of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Within the starting well priority for example delivering improved mother and baby health and wellbeing. For the living and working well workstream it supports the drive for people to be able to look after their own health. Finally, in ageing well, it is part of supporting older adults to stay healthier, happier and independent for longer.

Increasing the scale and priority given to these activities will yield wide reaching improvements in health and wellbeing and beyond. Smoke free actions deliver benefits to the other three Boards in the Collaborative Working Agreement. For the Safer West Sussex Partnership reducing the impact of the illicit tobacco trade. The Children's Safeguarding Board smoking has highlighted smoking as contributing factor in some cases of infant death. Finally, it is important to recognise that vulnerable adults are at greater risk of smoking-related harm.

1 Background and context

1.1 In January 2019, the Board endorsed the development of a Tobacco Control Strategy. A one year on event to show case the progress on the strategy and refresh the system wide Tobacco Control Action Plan was cancelled in March as lockdown came in. As a reminder, the strategy set out the impact of tobacco in West Sussex including:

- An estimated 87,000 adults in West Sussex are current smokers; costing society approximately £196million.
- 9% of pregnant women are current smokers at the time of delivery.
- 2 in 5 manual workers smoke.
- 7% of 15-year olds regularly smoke (a rate above the England average).
- 7,241 hospital admissions are smoking attributable; a 13% increase from 2006/7-2010/ 2011.
- 1 in 4 smokers fall below the poverty line and returning the cost of smoking to the household would elevate 14,500 West Sussex people out of poverty.

1.2 The Smoke Free West Sussex partnership annual report (currently in draft) includes the following key achievements since the Strategy began in 2019:

- Contracts with over 150 smoking cessation providers including GP surgeries, Community Pharmacies and West Sussex Wellbeing teams with potential to provide strong service coverage across the county. West Sussex Wellbeing teams can focus on deprived areas and hard to reach groups and have flexibility to outreach to other settings such as workplaces.
- Such providers delivered a total of 2,845 interventions in 2019/20 (including March during lockdown) with overall quits of 1,091, giving a quit rate of 38%. Over 35% of those seen were manual workers.
- Piloting a maternal smoking cessation service in Western Sussex Hospitals Trust.

- In August 2020 Trading Standards made their largest ever seizure of illicit tobacco in Worthing.
- The most impactful local Stoptober campaign to date (2019) including targeted social media messaging.
- Sustained delivery of smoking cessation services during Covid restrictions particularly supported by the wellbeing teams.
- Developing arrangements to deliver smoking cessation to housed homeless people and others self-isolating e.g. students.

1.3 For smokers as individuals it is more important than ever to quit during Covid. At a community level smoking is a substantial driver of health inequalities; reducing the spending power of low-income groups. The pandemic is predicted to potentially widen inequalities. With most smokers taking this highly addictive habit up before they are adults, we should consider the extent that this is a personal, lifestyle choice or a consequence of social environment.

Public Health England advice is that if you smoke, you generally have an increased risk of contracting respiratory infection and of more severe symptoms once infected. COVID-19 symptoms may, therefore, be more severe if you smoke stopping smoking will bring **immediate** benefits to your health, including if you have an existing smoking-related disease.

1.4. The work of the SFWSP has adapted to the conditions of the pandemic in the following ways: moving face to face interventions to telephone, ceasing carbon monoxide monitoring and ensuring access to smoking cessation by promoting the services in wellbeing programmes to address areas of the county where other providers have paused. The pandemic has also impacted on other aspects of tobacco control (including efforts to tackle illicit tobacco).

Now as a possible second wave of Covid approaches and preparations for winter advance, tackling smoking alongside these pressures seems challenging and relevant in equal measure. The proposals below are intended to guide Board members to act individually and collectively in West Sussex to drive smoking prevalence down further during the pandemic saving lives and reducing inequalities. Though it may take time to achieve large scale population impact individual benefits to stopping smoking are immediate.

2 Proposal details

2.1. Each member of the Board is asked to consider what actions they can commit to across the levels in the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy – individual, community and place.

As **individuals** this could include: if you are a smoker make a quit attempt and blogging or otherwise sharing how it went. If you are a non-smoker, consider completing the Making Every Contact Counts e-learning so that you can prompt the smokers you meet to think about quitting and to self-refer for support.

Please ensure you have up to date information about the services in West Sussex via the wellbeing website <https://www.westsussexwellbeing.org.uk/>. The Stoptober campaign 2020, is underway as this report is presented. In addition to campaigns,

consistent, regular reminders about smoking cessation services across the system matter to prevent awareness dropping.

Within your organisations please consider what is being done to support **employees or contractors** who are smokers to quit. What are your Human Resource policies? Are your sites smoke free? Could return to buildings be a point when smoke free can be brought in as part of resetting? Should we be promoting smoking cessation alongside staff flu vaccination as part of winter pressures interventions?

Also, consider the **functions** within your organisations e.g. the role of licensing or planning. What **networks** or contact you have particularly where the people involved are low income or vulnerable?

2.2. Review the West Sussex Tobacco Control action plan for any actions which are outstanding for your organisation <https://sfws-action-plan.netlify.app/> (you can filter the plan to find them quickly). Can you help progress these, add to them or do you think they need to change? Feed this back to the SFWSP (contact the author).

2.3. Priority actions to progress in West Sussex in the next 12 months

The Tobacco Control Action plan is extensive; to increase focus a short list of high priority actions are proposed for the second half of this financial year as follows:

Maternal smoking cessation – ensure pathways to support are established, informed by the evaluation of the pilot in Western Sussex Hospitals Trust (underway). These should commence in 2021 in line with an NHS Long Term Plan commitment.

That the Board members support the **Making Every Contact Count** (MECC) programme (presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board in October 2018) which trains front line staff to Ask Advise, Assist West Sussex smoker to roll it out across all public facing services within their influence. Implementation of this is more likely to have impact if staff are also supported to stop smoking through Human Resources policies and staff benefit schemes.

Ensuring it is easy for front line workers to refer smokers from to smoking cessation –with multiple providers (at times pausing due to pandemic pressures) arrangements need to be developed to ensuring to refer a smokers is easy and that barriers to reaching that service are kept to a minimum. This will allow follow through from MECC conversations. It will facilitate a shift in front line practice beyond simple recording of smoking status through to individual action to tackle smoking. Public health invites commissioners and providers of services to coproduce these arrangements putting the smokers who they see at the centre.

Embedding smoking cessation in healthcare – This is an NHS Long Term Plan commitment. The aspiration is to fill gaps in provision where in-patients are not offered and given smoking cessation support during their in-patient stay for completion in the community after discharge from hospital. Public health invites West Sussex Clinical Commissioning Group and local hospital trusts to work with them to coproduce these arrangements.

Similarly, to develop proposals to include smoking cessation in **drug and alcohol recovery services** would provide more complete support to a high need group. This complements the recent vape initiative with the housed homeless community which the wellbeing programme supports.

Many **practices and pharmacies** ceased delivering smoking cessation around lockdown in line with NHS England guidance to cease non-essential services. We ask for them to recommence this activity (adapted to Covid restrictions) as soon as feasible (if they have not already done so). Those opting not to deliver are asked to identify where their patients should be referred by co-operating with neighbouring providers (which could include the wellbeing teams in Districts and Boroughs).

A system wide plan of **communications** should be supported to raise awareness of the Tobacco Control Strategy, the system-wide action plan and the smoking cessation support available. As a key part of this we ask GPs to consider identifying the smokers on their lists and contacting them proactively (via letter or text message) to encourage them to self-refer to smoking cessation services.

3 Consultation, engagement and advice

3.1 The SWSP includes representation from West Sussex County Council Communities, Fire service, District and Borough Wellbeing Programme, Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust, Western Sussex Hospitals Foundation Trust, maternity services, primary care, the Local Maternity System, Health4Families, Prisons, public health, and Trading Standards. The cancellation of the one year on engagement event means consultation on the proposed priorities has been more limited than intended. Smoking cessation services seek user feedback, to inform future commissioning plans. We continue to explore ways of hearing the views and advice of smokers not engaged in services (particularly young people). Suggestions from Board members and their organisations on how to obtain this insight are welcomed.

Contact: Kate Bailey, Public Health Consultant West Sussex County Council, 03302228688 kate.bailey@westsussex.gov.uk

Appendices PowerPoint presentation (to follow)

Background papers

[West Sussex Tobacco Control Strategy 2019-2022](#)

[West Sussex Tobacco Control Action Plan.](#)