

## **New stop smoking service launched for Hartlepool**

Smokers in Hartlepool looking to quit can now get improved specialist support to help them stub it out for good.

Hartlepool Borough Council has commissioned North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust and Hartlepool & Stockton Health to deliver the new Hartlepool Stop Smoking Service.

The new service, which complements existing schemes including specialist support for pregnant women, hospital inpatient advice, and community navigators at Hartlepool's Community Hubs, will provide:

**12-week support programme (including nicotine replacement therapies and/or an e-cigarette)**

**Face-to-face clinics across the community**

**Telephone consultations, Home visits for housebound patients, Workplace clinics**

The team, which can take self-referrals from people looking to quit as well as from health staff, will also offer training and support for other community professionals.

Although based at the University Hospital of Hartlepool, the team will be active in the local community, delivering the support where it is most needed.

**Councillor Brenda Harrison, Leader of Hartlepool Borough Council and Chair of the Hartlepool Health and Wellbeing Board**, said: "We're delighted to launch this service which will build on the support already available - including the excellent work being done by our Community Navigators - to provide a much more extensive and accessible service. Not only do many people die each year from smoking-related diseases such as lung cancer, many more are living with debilitating illnesses such as COPD. You can stop smoking, and now there's even more support to help you achieve that, so please take the first step and give the Hartlepool Stop Smoking Service a call.

"Do it for yourself and for your family – you can do it."

**Esther Mireku, North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust public health consultant**, commented: "There are no positives to smoking. Smoking only brings negative health effects.

"Quitting smoking reduces risks of cancer, lung disease, heart disease and stroke. After just one year, the risk of heart attack halves compared to that of a smoker. As well as the longer-term benefits, within days and weeks the sense of taste and smell improves, and breathing gets easier. The benefits literally begin from that first cigarette you choose not to smoke."

The service will also be active in the community using Hartlepool & Stockton Health's mobile Research and Learning, Primary Health unit, nicknamed the RALPH bus.

**Fran Gibson, nurse lead for Hartlepool & Stockton Health**, said: "Getting out into the community, with our health bus RALPH, is not only a privilege, but also a vital step in reducing health inequalities. "We hope this service will help people in Hartlepool go from thinking about quitting smoking to living a smoke-free, healthy life."

**The Hartlepool Stop Smoking Service can be contacted on 01642 383819.**

**Healthwatch Hartlepool**

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## **1 in 7 NHS staff (14.38%) experienced physical violence from patients, their relatives or other members of the public in 2024, according to the latest annual NHS staff survey.**

The report reveals attacks on staff has increased since 2023 (13.88%) – though numbers are below the record levels seen between 2020 to 2022 during and following the pandemic.

Staff experiencing discrimination at work reached its highest level in 5 years (9.25%), with more than half (54.09%) saying the discrimination they received from patients and the public was based on their ethnic background.

1 in 12 (8.82%) NHS workers experienced unwanted sexual behaviour – including offensive comments, touching and assault. The proportion of staff affected remains similar to the level reported in 2023 (8.79%) when the question was first asked.

The national education and training survey, which has also been published, found that 13% of learners experienced or witnessed unwanted, harmful or inappropriate sexual behaviour by patients.

The NHS launched a new national sexual misconduct policy framework in October to ensure NHS trusts had robust policies in place to allow NHS staff to report incidents of sexual misconduct anonymously.

Every integrated care board and NHS trust in England has signed up to the NHS sexual safety charter, which commits them to a zero-tolerance approach to letting unwanted behaviours go unaddressed within the workplace.

**Dr Navina Evans, Chief Workforce, Training and Education Officer for NHS England said:** “It’s totally unacceptable that NHS staff are facing physical violence, sexual assault and discrimination from patients and the public while at work – and I’d urge anyone affected to report incidents to their employer and the police.

“We know that the most important way to stamp out incidents of unacceptable behaviour is to give people the confidence to report it, and it is important that the voice of every member of NHS staff is heard through these surveys and acted upon.

“The NHS sexual safety charter has also now been adopted by every integrated care board and NHS trust in England to enforce a zero-tolerance approach to letting unwanted behaviours go unaddressed”.

Nearly three quarters of a million people (744,358) took part in the 2024 NHS staff survey – the highest ever level in staff in its 20-year history, and over 43,500 took part in the national education and training survey.

The surveys give a snapshot of what it’s like to work in the NHS, right from the beginning of our colleagues’ careers, throughout their working lives, and into retirement, and are used by NHS organisations to make things better for staff and patients. The annual staff survey also found that the number of NHS workers satisfied with flexible working options is at its highest level in 5 years (57.65%) while those achieving a good home and work life balance is at its highest since the question was first asked in 2021 (56.61%). Staff satisfaction with levels of pay has risen from 25.48% in 2022 to 32.05% in the latest survey, and satisfaction with line managers has also continued to rise with 7 in 10 workers (72.72%) saying they feel valued at work.

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