



# Public Health England

Protecting and improving the nation's health

To: All NHS Trust and FT Chief Executives

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*Duncan Selbie*  
*Chief Executive*  
*Wellington House*  
*133 – 155 Waterloo Road*  
*London SE1 8UG*  
*Tel: 020 7654 8090*  
[www.gov.uk/phe](http://www.gov.uk/phe)

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Dear everyone

## **A tobacco-free NHS: achieving a step change**

You are delivering day in and day out, at a time where the challenges have never been greater and your determination to deliver safe, high quality care is without question.

I am writing, recognising this, to seek your personal commitment to achieving a step change towards a tobacco-free NHS.

By working together I believe we can make the NHS a place which provides a supportive tobacco-free environment for patients, staff and visitors, and in which the treatment of tobacco dependence is fully integrated into clinical pathways.

Despite declines in prevalence over recent decades, over 7 million adults in England still smoke and tobacco use remains the single largest cause of premature death and today accounts for half of the health gap between the poorest and most affluent people. For every death caused by smoking, approximately 20 smokers are suffering from a smoking related disease. Smoking during pregnancy is associated with a range of negative outcomes including miscarriage, premature birth, stillbirth and neonatal complications.

The resulting burden on the NHS is huge: annually around 475,000 hospital admissions in England are attributable to smoking and the total annual cost is estimated at £2bn, with a further £1.1bn in social care costs.

I am asking for your help to reach smokers who are in your hospital waiting rooms, consulting rooms and beds. There is a clear opportunity to achieve significant short-term savings and reduce demand.

NICE guidance (PH48), sets out recommendations for smokefree NHS buildings and grounds accompanied by access to evidence-based quitting support for all patients who smoke. Mental health trusts have led the way in implementing the guidance, however progress is very variable across the NHS and there is a lot more that can be achieved. The British Thoracic Society (BTS) will soon be publishing the first ever comprehensive

audit of smoking cessation activity using both NICE and BTS standards for secondary care. If your organisation participated in the study, your local 'audit lead' will already have access to your own data.

The new national CQUIN indicator 'Preventing ill health from risky behaviours – alcohol and tobacco', asks trusts to identify and record the smoking status of all inpatients and to provide smokers with very brief advice and an offer of medication and referral. The scheme applies to acute trusts in 2018/19 and to community and mental health trusts in both 2017/18 and 2018/19.

Tackling smoking is a key priority for many local Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STPs). PHE's Menu of Preventative Interventions for STPs sets out the following recommendations for securing savings and improving the health of local populations:

- The care plan of all patients who smoke should address their tobacco dependence. Secondary care providers should identify patients who smoke and offer advice and support to stop, including referral to stop smoking services
- NHS acute, maternity and mental health trusts should implement completely smokefree estates, accompanied by access to quitting support
- For smokers who are unable or unwilling to stop smoking in one step, Trusts should provide support to reduce the harm from tobacco, including temporary abstinence, cutting down to quit and long-term nicotine use to prevent relapse
- All pregnant women should be screened for smoking via carbon monoxide monitoring at booking and subsequent prenatal appointments, and referred for support to quit at the earliest opportunity.

The NHS brand is one of the most recognised and trusted in the UK and is a powerful symbol of health and wellbeing. However, we are yet to give tobacco control the overt NHS leadership the scale of the problem warrants and this is my ask of each of you personally.

If your trust is already an exemplar, I thank you for your leadership. If not, I ask you to champion the changes that will bring us closer to a tobacco-free NHS and, ultimately, a tobacco-free generation in England.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Duncan Selbie'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Duncan' being larger and more prominent than the last name 'Selbie'.

Duncan Selbie  
Chief Executive

cc: Simon Stevens, Chief Executive, NHS England  
Jim Mackey, Chief Executive, NHS Improvement