

February 2021 No Smoking Day

Communications toolkit

This toolkit is designed to support No Smoking Day 2021. No Smoking Day is 10th March and the theme agreed for this year is: Quitting smoking doesn't have to be stressful.

The toolkit provides areas where the campaign is running with:

- Information about the campaign content
- Campaign aims and key messages
- Links to assets to support local amplification work
- Templates for social media, emails, websites and local PR

This work has been developed collaboratively between ASH and Breathe 2025 with support from PHE Marketing, GM Health and Social Care Partnership and Fresh Smokefree North East.

Contact quit@todayistheday.co.uk if you have any questions.

Version 1: 24th February 2021

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1. The campaign and its aims

1.1 Background to No Smoking Day

For many years activity for No Smoking Day was co-ordinated by the charity of the same name. When they closed in 2011, British Heart Foundation continued to co-ordinate activity after this but more recently there has been no national co-ordination of activity. Breathe 2025 in Yorkshire and Humber launched the Today is the Day platform in 2019 to frame activity across the region for No Smoking Day. This platform has been used over the last 12 months to promote the #QuitForCovid campaigns and is now the platform for a nationally co-ordinated set of messages for No Smoking Day.

No Smoking Day is not about encouraging people to quit for the day... it is also an opportunity to get people thinking more about a more positive smokefree future.

This work has been developed without dedicated investment and we do not have resources for paid for advertising content. This means that the message will only get out there through all of our hard work using the partnerships and channels we have.

Purpose of No Smoking Day resources

- Support all areas to align around a single message for No Smoking Day
- Provide local organisations with assets they can use to promote quitting message and engage with local partners
- Engage media in message around No Smoking Day and raise the visibility of the day with smokers.

1.2 Theme for No Smoking Day 2021

Call to action for No Smoking Day 2021

- Smokers are asked to search smokefree to find support to make a quit attempt.
www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking/

Overarching message: Quitting smoking doesn't have to be stressful

This is a positive message that acknowledges smokers' preconceptions while challenging them and providing hope. The messages will drive smokers towards using aids in their quit attempt and inform smokers that those who have been quit for more than six weeks have seen improvements in their mental health.

Key messages

- Quitting smoking doesn't have to feel painful – stop smoking aids can really help

- Quitting isn't always easy but getting the right stop smoking aids and support can stop you feeling like you need a cigarette all the time
- Today is the Day to put smoking behind you. Smokers who quit for 6 weeks or more are happier and experience less anxiety and depression than those who carry on smoking.
- Research shows that people who have quit smoking for a year are happier than those who continue to smoke.

Quitting during covid

The last year has been difficult for many of us. Stress and concern about our health is on the rise. For smokers this has pulled them in two directions. On the one hand, the chances of smokers successfully quitting are as high as they've ever been. On the other, smokers experiencing stress and mental distress are more likely to be smoking more. This No Smoking Day we want to take the opportunity to inform smokers that quitting can be less stressful than they fear and can ultimately improve their sense of wellbeing. We all of us have less control over our lives than we'd like at the moment, but smokers can take some positive control on No Smoking Day. We can support smokers to cease the moment and look forward to a happier smokefree future.

1.3 Evidence behind the campaign

Getting support can reduce symptoms of withdrawal – Nicotine Replacement Therapy, Varenicline and Bupropion have all been shown to improve a smokers' chance of successfully quitting by reducing the extent to which smokers experience withdrawal. These medications do not completely eliminate the symptoms of withdrawal but behavioural support can help smokers to manage those withdrawal symptoms that remain. Most smokers see their withdrawal symptoms [peak after the first week and pass within 4 weeks](#).

Stopping smoking boosts your mental health – In 2014 a meta-analysis found that stopping smoking is associated with improvements in mental health such as reduced depression and anxiety when compared to continuing to smoke:
<https://www.bmj.com/content/348/bmj.g1151> This analysis has been updated by Cochrane and is due to be published shortly. In summary the findings from over 160,000 people suggest that people who quit smoking are likely to have improved mental wellbeing, in particular:

- Reduced depression
- Reduced anxiety
- Improved mood
- Improved quality of life

The study also looked at people's social contacts and found no evidence that quitting smoking damaged people's social connections (something that some people who smoke worry about). The Cochrane update is due to be published to coincide with No Smoking Day and ASH will be putting out a press release on the findings as will Cochrane.

To see academics talking about the findings of the 2014 analysis watch [this video](#).

How quickly do smokers see the mental health benefits of stopping? – The immediate impact of quitting for most smokers is a range of withdrawal symptoms that worsen people's sense of mental wellbeing from increased irritability to heightened sense of depression. Research indicates that these symptoms rarely exceed 2 – 4 weeks. The improved mental wellbeing scores are from at least 6 weeks after quitting though people may well feel the benefits sooner.

Why does stopping smoking improve your mental health? – There could be a number of reasons why quitting improves your mental health but one is that it breaks the cycle of nicotine dependence. Every day smokers go through withdrawal symptoms which damage their mental wellbeing, these are alleviated by smoking but quickly return as the effect of the nicotine wears off. Stopping smoking breaks this cycle improving people's sense of wellbeing. To understand more watch [this video](#).

2. Local promotion of No Smoking Day

There are a range of activities which local authorities and NHS organisations can do to extend the reach of the campaign and encourage more smokers into local services. Below are a suite of ideas and links to resources intended to support local organisations.

2.1 Direct communications to smokers

Website branding and information

You can use the [No Smoking Day branded assets](#) on your websites so they visually align with the campaign.

You may also want to update the text to reflect the messages in the campaign

Posters and leaflets

Identifying local places where information could be prominently and cheaply displayed (beyond the usual GP practice) could be an effective way of extending the campaign message.

Templates which can be adapted for local use as either a poster or leaflet:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/i6k4crnm983tnht/AACIs7GACi3KYKT0UjuW7Ucba?dl=0>

Contacting past service users and GP patients

Direct communication to smokers had been shown to significantly increase footfall to services, particularly contact via GPs. Below are some template text and emails which you can adapt locally:

- Suggested text for smokers in touch with service: *Today is the day to stop smoking. Quitting now can improve how you feel both physically and mentally and protect your*



health. Contact [local Stop Smoking Service name and number] or text Today is the Day to [local text number] for telephone support and medication to quit.

- Suggested text for GPs to send smokers: *There has never been a more important time look after your mental and physical health. Your doctor would like you to stop smoking today. Contact [local Stop Smoking Service name and number] or text Today is the Day to [local text number] for telephone support and medication to quit.*
- Suggested email: *There has never been a more important time look after your mental and physical health. Stopping smoking has immediate benefits to your physical health and long term will significantly reduce your chances of developing many illnesses including heart disease, diabetes, COPD, stroke and cancer. While quitting can feel stressful in the short term new research shows that many ex-smokers mental health improves six weeks after quitting. Today is the day to stop smoking. Get in touch to find out how we can help make quitting less stressful. [local contact information]*

2.2 Engaging partners

One of the ways to amplify activity is to further engage local partners to reach smokers within their networks. Actions could include:

- Briefing relevant partners on the campaign and key messages, providing access to the assets.
- Engaging primary care partners to text or email all smokers registered on their systems
- Engaging other stakeholders with direct relationship with sizable populations of smokers to encourage them to reach out to smokers
- Reaching out to target populations locally such as people with mental health conditions, pregnancy women and their families and front line workers.
- Translating relevant materials for high need groups. Please note where local translation takes place please provide us with access to this nationally so we can share with others.
- Making a specific offer to NHS staff that smoke through their employers or other local mechanisms

2.3 Social media

We'll be using the hashtag #TodayIsTheDay and #NoSmokingDay to promote the campaign.

We recommend using a combination of both Twitter and Facebook (and others such as Instagram) as part of your local social media approach. While Twitter is a great platform for reaching stakeholders and health professionals, Facebook is still the best platform to reach people who smoke.

Section 5 below includes template tweets and Facebook posts which you can adapt for local use. You can access the visual assets [here](#). Here are some additional tips for using social media to support the campaign:

- Create video clip interviews of spokespeople for social media channels – videos should ideally be short and to-the-point to be able to be hosted organically on Twitter and Facebook. Be sure to use the campaign hashtag #TodayIsTheDay.
- Facebook and Twitter posts – use the hashtag #TodayIsTheDay so all partners following can see this and support
- People are increasingly using local neighbourhood groups on social media. Can your stop smoking service engage with any of these in order to post content and advice?
- Boosting Facebook posts can be a very cost-effective way to promote to your audience the type of content you think that will benefit them. A little bit of budget goes a long way and you can target by area, age etc. If you would like further advice on paid for Facebook advertising please get in touch quit@todayistheday.co.uk

2.4 News media

We will be putting out regional press releases based on data from the APS survey. This data shows the numbers of people in each region who have low mental wellbeing scores and smoke. This illustrates that people with low mental wellbeing are more likely to smoke than those who don't. We will provide an embargoed press release to the Smokefree Action Coalition list ahead of publication so this can be adapted locally. If you are not signed up for SFAC updated please email admin@smokefreeaction.org.uk

Below are some further tips on local PR work to support the campaign:

- Develop a press release for your organisation for local print and online news outlets to back the campaign and to encourage people to quit smoking – use quotes from your Director of Public Health/ elected lead for health / respiratory clinician/ GP.
- It can be very motivational for people who smoke to see other people doing so and succeeding – so it is important to highlight that people are quitting smoking right now and that others are trying. Do you have any case studies of local people making a quit attempt, or former smokers who have quit previously who would participate in a press release?
- What publications do you have access to internally or via partners which could carry stories about the campaign e.g. council publications and emails, local NHS Trust publications etc

2.5 Key local statistics

This section provides you with links to the data which can be used to localise PR.

- Find your local smoking prevalence including the number of smokers in your local authority here: <https://bit.ly/31RnjUn>
- Find the difference in prevalence between socioeconomic groups in your local authority here: <https://bit.ly/31SBEzZ> (you may need to refresh this to make the data load).
- Smoking related mortality in your local authority can be found here: <https://bit.ly/3f6yfrD> - divide the 'count' column by three to get your annual figure.

Find your local figure on the number of smoking attributable hospital admissions each year here: <https://bit.ly/2NZoTLG>

- Potential years of life lost due to smoking related illness can also be found here: <https://bit.ly/3f6yfrD> - divide the 'count' by three to get the number of years of life lost to smoking related illness each year.
- £8.9 billion on potential wealth is lost from the national economy in England each year as a result of lost productivity due to smoking. Reducing smoking will help support economic recovery from COVID-19, reducing impacts like smoking related sick days and economic inactivity.
- Find the cost of lost productivity due to smoking in your local area in the ASH Ready Reckoner here: <https://ash.org.uk/ash-ready-reckoner/>
- Each year hundreds more children take up smoking, [download your local authority figures here.](#)

3. Social media

Below are assets you can use organically on social media but you can also use them in paid for advertising through boosted posts. We're happy to provide further advice where your organisation wants to invest additional resource in further paid for advertising using social media. ASH will not be advertising through the campaign on Facebook or Twitter but locally this can be a good way to amplify activity, particularly where you have an established social media presence.

Please feel free to adapt the template posts below to include local information and links as appropriate.

3.1 Downloadable social media assets

You can download ready-to-use social media assets from the No Smoking Day DropBox folder online here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/fa3xl432mqffn3w/AAAiM4D2atrmrRqipzxdOQcOa?dl=0>



The folder contains

- Twitter graphics
- Facebook graphics
- Twitter banners
- A selection of videos – please note that only the short tip-style videos will be compatible with direct upload to Twitter. If you would like to include the two longer videos on Twitter, these will be shareable from the [ASH YouTube channel](#).
- Posters (both full and empty with an editable Word version).



3.2 Suggested tweets

[INSERT] is supporting #TodayIsTheDay as part of #NoSmokingDay. Make today the day for taking that first step on your quit journey, visit www.nhs.uk/smokefree

Prof Robert West gives expert advice on reducing the stress of quitting #TodayIsTheDay [link to video]

For #NoSmokingDay 2021 we're celebrating the mental health benefits of quitting. Withdrawal can be stressful but ultimately ex-smokers are happier and healthier. For advice on make quitting easier visit www.nhs.uk/smokefree

Smokers who quit often say they've never felt better. #TodayIsTheDay [use case study social media assets] you can quit on #NoSmokingDay 2021 www.nhs.uk/smokefree

After quitting ex-smokers are happier than smokers. Right now we all need a bit more joy #TodayIsTheDay. Start your quit attempt on #NoSmokingDay www.nhs.uk/smokefree

Now is an important time to quit smoking – it can make you healthier, wealthier and happier – for more information and for help to quit smoking visit www.nhs.uk/smokefree

Even if you've smoked for many years it's never too late to quit #TodayIsTheDay - quitting brings mental and physical benefits at any age – for tips, tools and support to stop visit www.nhs.uk/smokefree

Want to know why ex-smokers are happier than smokers? Watch this [link to drawing video] Visit www.nhs.uk/smokefree and start your quit attempt. #TodayIsTheDay

Are you ready to say goodbye to smoking? The health benefits from quitting smoking start from the moment you stop. Find out how and make #NoSmokingDay the day that you give quitting a go <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/for-your-body/quit-smoking/what-happens-when-you-quit-smoking/> #TodayIsTheDay

Even if you've tried before, don't give up on quitting smoking. There's plenty support and advice which can reduce the stress. Visit www.nhs.uk/smokefree and start your quitting journey #TodayIsTheDay

There has never been a more important time to quit smoking. Even if you've tried before – give it another go – you can do it!! The benefits to your health, bank balance and family will be worth it www.nhs.uk/smokefree #TodayIsTheDay



3.3 Suggested Facebook posts

[INSERT] is supporting #TodayIsTheDay as part of #NoSmokingDay. Make today the day for taking that first step on your quit journey, visit www.nhs.uk/smokefree

Prof Robert West is an expert on addiction and has spent years studying how smokers can quit more easily and with less stress. Listen to his expert advice and make this the first day of your new quit attempt #TodayIsTheDay #NoSmokingDay [link to video]

For #NoSmokingDay 2021 we're celebrating the mental health benefits of quitting. Withdrawal can be stressful but ultimately ex-smokers are happier and healthier. For advice on make quitting easier visit www.nhs.uk/smokefree

Research shows that smokers who quit might experience short term stress but smokers who quit for 6 weeks or more show signs of improved mental as well as physical health. Start your quit attempt today and join the millions who have quit for good. #TodayIsTheDay. You can get help managing withdrawal visit www.nhs.uk/smokefree

Right now we all need a bit more joy in our lives. If you smoke, quitting can bring you some. Research shows ex-smokers who have quit for at least 6 weeks are happier than those who keep smoking. Quitting also protects your health and improves your bank balance. What have you got to lose? #TodayIsTheDay. Make #NoSmokingDay the first day of your last quit attempt. Get help with withdrawal from www.nhs.uk/smokefree

Are you ready to say goodbye to smoking? The health benefits from quitting smoking start from the moment you stop. Find out how and make today the day that you give quitting a go <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/for-your-body/quit-smoking/what-happens-when-you-quit-smoking/> #TodayIsTheDay

Even if you've tried before – don't give up on quitting. There's plenty of support and advice which can help improve your chances of successfully stopping smoking. Visit <https://www.nhs.uk/smokefree> and start your quitting journey #TodayIsTheDay

It's a stressful time for everyone. Some smokers believe that smoking helps you to relax, when actually smoking increases anxiety and tension. Quitting not only improves your physical health –it boosts your mental health and wellbeing too. Ex-smokers have:

- * Improved mood
- * Less anxiety and depression
- * Feel better about their lives

For support visit <https://www.nhs.uk/smokefree>

There has never been a more important time to quit smoking. Even if you've tried before – give it another go – you can do it. The benefits to your health, bank balance and family will make such a difference.

- * Clear out old ashtrays, lighters and cigarettes
- * Get support – visit <https://www.nhs.uk/smokefree> for remote advice
- * Think of your reasons for quitting – and keep them front of mind
- * Use stop smoking aids to help you manage cravings
- * Try new routines and remember you CAN do it #TodayIsTheDay

For many people, finances are tighter than ever right now. If you smoke 10 cigarettes a day, did you know that by stopping, you could save over £120 a month? How much could you save <https://www.nhs.uk/smokefree/why-quit/cost-calculator>

Looking for ways to save money at the moment? Have you considered quitting smoking? People who smoke can save over £1,600 a year simply by quitting! How much could you save? <https://www.nhs.uk/smokefree/why-quit/cost-calculator>