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Trust's appeal for smoke free support

South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust is renewing its call for the public's support in providing a smoke free environment for all patients, staff and visitors.

Under the Trust's Smoking Policy, smoking, including e-cigarettes, is not allowed anywhere on its grounds, such as South Tyneside District Hospital, with the exception of designated shelters. Campaigners say that reducing smoking would save thousands of lives in the region over the next decade, move more families out of poverty, help the regional economy and save the region's NHS and local authorities millions of pounds.

The North East has the worst rates of smoking in pregnancy in England. For example, recent figures from the Health and Social Care Information Centre show that 25% of mums-to-be in South Tyneside – more than twice the national average – are still smoking at the time they give birth, putting it in the top five areas in the country for women taking such health risks. To help combat this, the Trust has arranged stop smoking sessions in its Maternity Department for mums and dads-to-be and their wider families.

Ian Frame, Executive Director, Personnel and Development, said: "As an NHS organisation, we have to lead by example so we want to remind everyone of the harmful effects of smoking and appeal to them to help us to protect both staff and those who use our services. Because we understand the difficulties many people experience around quitting, we have restricted areas that allow smoking and, at the same time, protect the majority of people who choose not to smoke, particularly those who are higher risk from smoking, such as pregnant women. Our emphasis, however, is on doing all we can to support those who wish to give up.

"All of our staff have a responsibility to promote awareness of the benefits of stopping smoking and the support available for those who want to stop and they are encouraged to signpost patients to information relating to this. Staff who are smokers themselves can access support and guidance from our Wellbeing Team's stop smoking service."

The Trust provides community services in South Tyneside, Gateshead and Sunderland, as well as hospital services in South Tyneside. In order to protect staff who make home visits, patients are asked to provide a smoke free environment for a minimum of one hour prior to, and during, the visit.

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Issued on behalf of South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust by Kay Jordan

For press enquiries on this release, contact 0191 404 1128 or email kay.jordan@stft.nhs.uk