

## PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **UKNSCC calls for safeguarding of NHS Stop Smoking Services**

The UK National Smoking Cessation Conference (UKNSCC) is the largest conference in the world dedicated to smoking cessation treatment. This year in London on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of June, 600 delegates attended from the UK, Europe and the USA, New Zealand, Canada and Australia.

The UK has a world-leading national smoking cessation service that is freely available to any smoker who wants help in stopping. It provides some of the best treatment in the world and it is estimated that for every twenty people seen by the NHS Stop Smoking Service, one premature death is prevented. However, the funding crisis in the NHS has prompted some Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) to cut funding and in some cases, threaten to close services altogether. The UKNSCC is particularly concerned that the Maudsley Smokers' Clinic, the oldest of its kind in the UK and the model upon which NHS Stop Smoking Services were founded, is currently threatened with closure.

There is a real danger that smokers in some parts of the UK will retain access to top quality treatment, whilst in other areas, this will not be the case. The UKNSCC calls on PCTs not to view NHS Stop Smoking Services as low hanging fruit that can be plucked to meet financial deficits; these short term gains will have long term costs. Rather, NHS Stop Smoking Services should be viewed as providing essential cost-effective treatments that save lives and reduce inequalities in health.

From July 1<sup>st</sup> England will have caught up with the rest of the UK and enacted its smoke free public places policy. The smoke free legislation is a great step forward but it does not signify the end of the road for tobacco control and smoking cessation. The new policy will prompt many smokers to stop, but such is the nature of tobacco dependence that some will last only a matter of a few days. Medications such as nicotine replacement therapy (NRT), bupropion (Zyban), and the recent addition of varenicline (Champix) combined with support provided by NHS Stop Smoking Services increase the chances of stopping smoking for good (roughly quadrupling a smoker's chances compared with quitting cold turkey).

However, still too few people use these services and the UKNSCC calls for increased, not decreased, funding for NHS Stop Smoking Services so that smokers can access the medicines and support that they need. Illogically it is easier for people to purchase cigarettes than it is for them to access smoking cessation treatments and the UKNSCC calls for a review of the regulation and pricing of NRT.

**END**

**Editors notes:**

For further information on any aspect of smoking cessation, tobacco control or smoke free legislation, please contact Andy McEwen on 07951 758 168