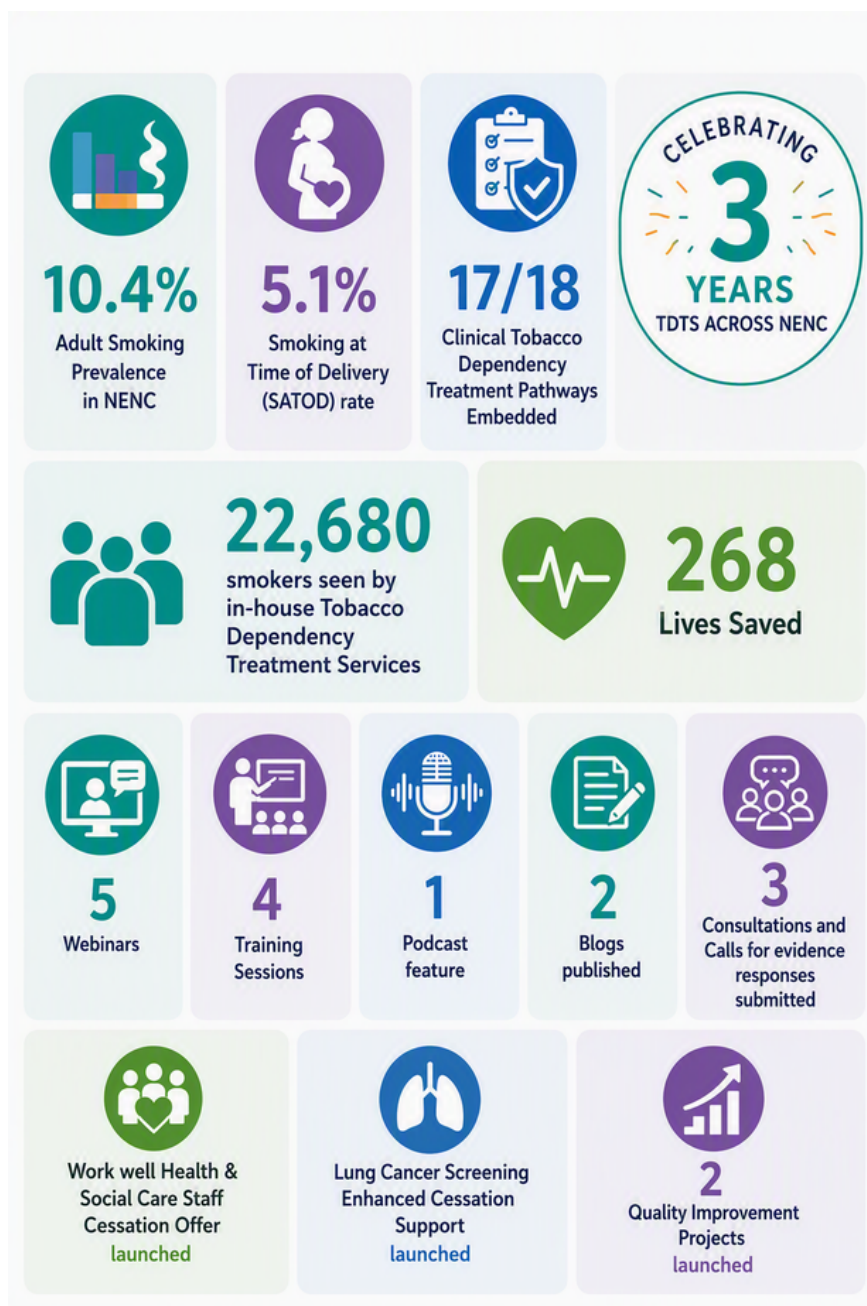


Smokefree NHS Treating Tobacco Dependency Programme Annual Highlight Report 2025/26



2025/26 has been another phenomenal year as a North East North Cumbria (NENC) Smokefree NHS programme. We are delighted to share our annual highlight report showcasing the reach and impact of our tobacco treatment workstreams across NENC.

We are grateful to our many partners in the NHS, local authorities, Fresh and Balance, the voluntary sector, OHID, ASH and NHS England for their collaboration and support, without which we could not have achieved so much over the past year. We also extend our sincere thanks to NENC Integrated Care Board for funding and prioritising this programme, and to County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust for hosting the team.

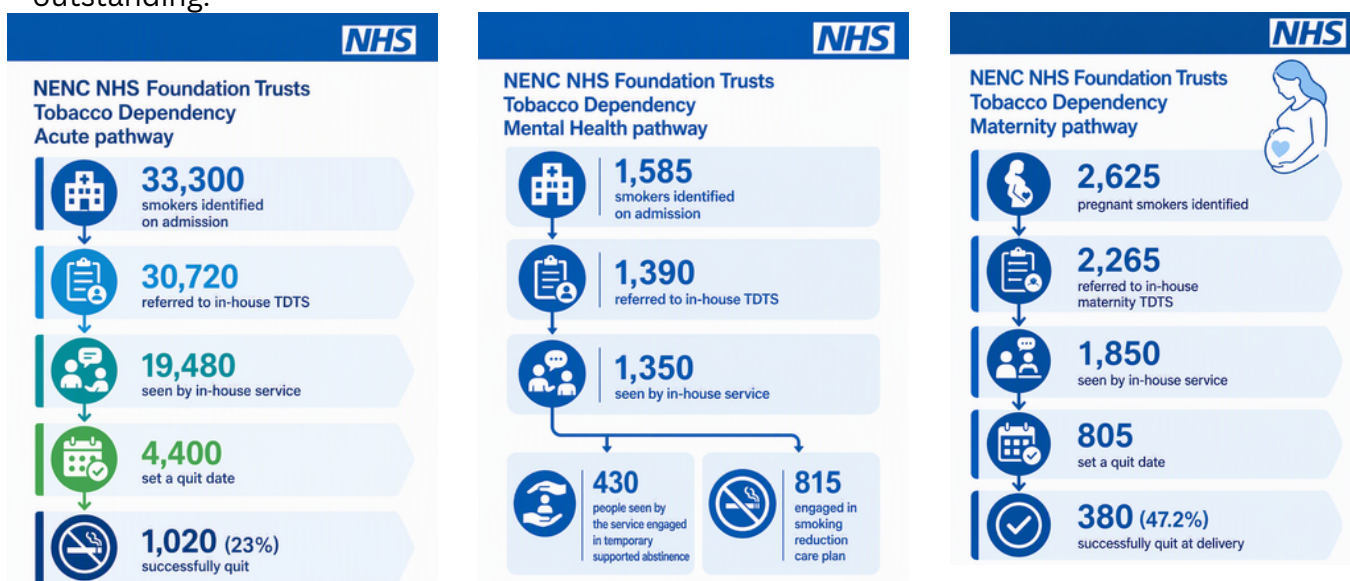
Smokefree NHS Programme Team

Dr Ruth Sharrock, Rachel McIlvenna and Joojo Kyei-Sarpong

NENC Trust Tobacco Dependency Treatment Services Activity April 2025- March 2026

2025/26 has been another busy year and across 3 clinical pathways our teams have identified **37,510** smokers, with **22,680** smokers seen by the in-house teams, over **5,205** quit dates set and over **1,400** people quit at 28days or at delivery. Our analysis on the acute pathway in 2025/26 where **4,400 patients set a quit date** estimates there will have been a **515 reduction in all-cause 1 year re-admissions**, **7.1 bed spaces created per day** and **268 lives saved** as a result of TDTS teams.

We continue to work with all 10 Trusts to encourage them to adopt quality improvement (QI) approaches in service delivery and support embedding tobacco dependency treatment services as part of long term sustainability of the NHS. Out of 18 clinical pathways (10 acute, 8 maternity and 2 mental health), there are now 17 of 18 pathways fully embedded with only South Tyneside & Sunderland FT (Maternity) outstanding.



Celebrating 3 Years of Tobacco Dependency Treatment Services

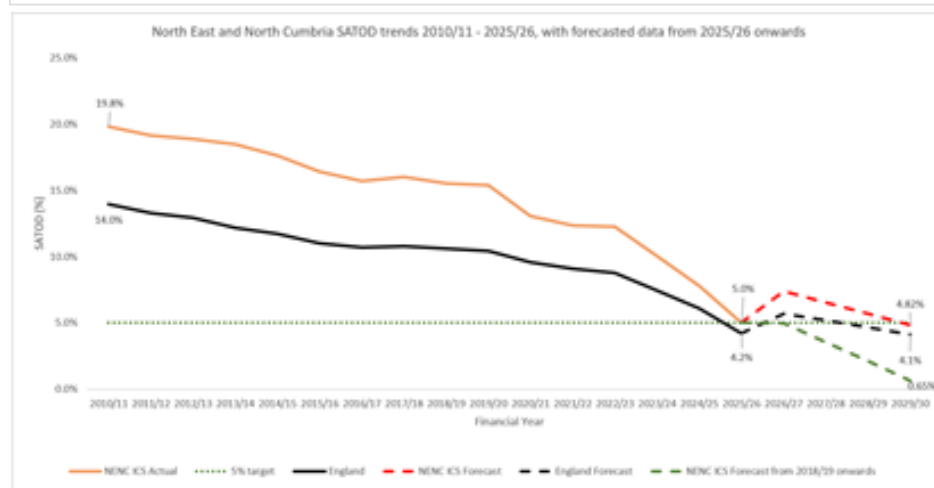
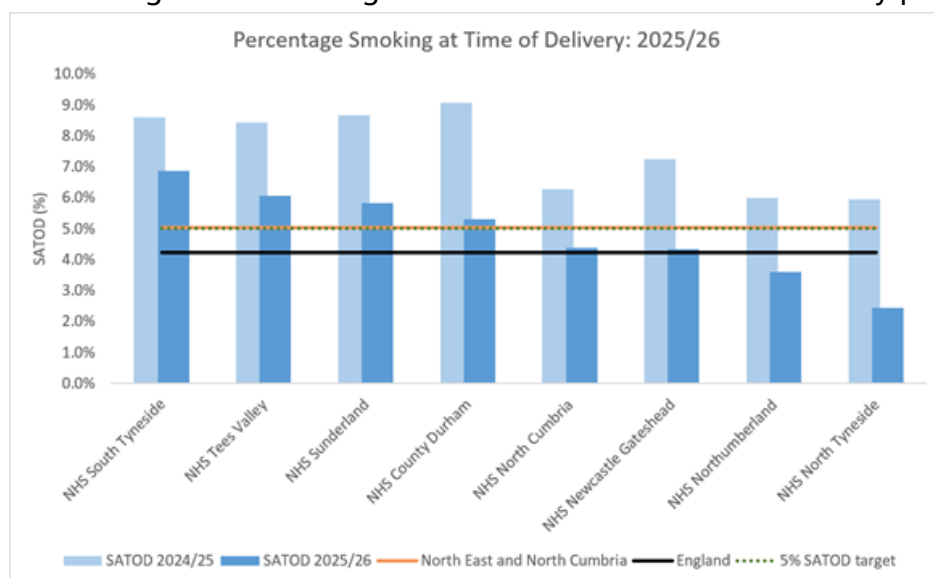


September 2025 marked the 3 Year Anniversary for all 10 NHS Trusts in NENC starting to deliver tobacco dependency treatment across acute & mental health inpatients and maternity pathways. The months of October and November 2025 were used to celebrate this important milestone.

Annual Smoking at Time of Delivery (SATOD)

The latest published SATOD figures for 2025/26 show the rate for NENC ICB is **5.1%**, a decrease of 2.7% in comparison to 2024/25, a **35%** reduction from last year and a **61%** reduction since 2020/21 and lowest SATOD on record for NENC. Four sub-ICBs have values lower than 5% (Newcastle Gateshead, Northumberland, North Tyneside and North Cumbria); of the remaining areas above 5% all are below the 2024/25 SATOD Rate of 7.8% (as per the chart below).

This significant milestone reflects the dedication of every person involved in supporting pregnant women and people who are tobacco dependent, through delivering support, enabling systems, adoption of the pregnancy incentives scheme and the tireless work of trained Maternity Support Workers alongside the strong collaboration with Local Authority partners.



It is important that we maintain this momentum and continue building on the strong culture of partnership and collaboration across North East and North Cumbria to achieve a truly smokefree start for every baby.

In 2025/26, the latest **Annual Population Survey (APS)** reported a further decline in **adult smoking prevalence** to **10.4%**, the lowest level ever recorded in NENC. This is a significant achievement and reflects the impact of the comprehensive tobacco control work delivered by Fresh, local authority and NHS partners to reduce smoking rates across the region. It is important to note that the APS is one data source, we know smoking rates are not uniformly distributed in the population, with higher rates in key priority groups such as adults with mental illness or those working in routine & manual roles. We must continue to trigger more quit attempts by supporting smokers with the many ways available to quit and maintain our comprehensive regional tobacco control efforts.

Community/Severe Mental Illness Workstream

During 2025/26 we restarted the community mental health tobacco dependency offer delivered by Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear (CNTW) NHS Foundation Trust. This is a pilot for an enhanced pathway for community patients who have a mental illness in Newcastle/North Tyneside area & smoke.

During 2025/26 period around **117** referrals had been received, **26** people set quit date, **14** quit at 4weeks, and **12** quit at 12 weeks

*Without this support I would not stop smoking and
now I feel amazing being smoke free.
I feel much better now, can sleep better, breathe
better and now have more money now to treat
myself*

Mental Health Service User

Lung Cancer Screening Enhanced Cessation Service

Smoking is the biggest cause of lung cancer and lung cancer causes more deaths than any other cancer in England. There are often no signs or symptoms of lung cancer at an early stage and so the lung cancer screening aims to find lung cancer early, sometimes before people have symptoms.

The Lung Cancer Screening programme which has been active across the whole North East and North Cumbria region has helped identify and diagnose hundreds of people earlier helping to save lives by identifying lung cancer at an earlier stage, when it can potentially be cured.



Pictured: Lung Cancer Screening Enhanced
cessation Support Pilot Team

An enhanced Screening Cessation Programme funded by the NENC ICB is being piloted in the Newcastle & Gateshead area and started in January 2026, aiming to support all smokers who have been contacted as part of the screening, to make a successful quit attempt with evidence-based behavioural support, NICE approved pharmacotherapy and nicotine vapes.

This service also provides rapid referral into community services for those smokers who are prepared to access support from the community stop smoking service. The team was mobilised at the end of March and started delivery on the 2nd of April 2026.

Launch of the Work Well (formerly Growth & Accelerator) Health & Social Care Staff Cessation offer



At the end of Quarter 4 -2025/26 we successfully launched the digital Health & Social Care Workforce cessation offer aimed at NENC staff who are tobacco dependent.

The offer includes access to evidence backed digital smoking cessation tool (the Smoke Free App) 24/7, access to NCSCT trained advisors, free nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) and free nicotine vapes aimed at supporting staff to successfully quit. There are 4,000 licences available and engagement with wide range of stakeholders and the steering group set up to foster collaboration & co-production is in place.

A Communications toolkit and promotional resources including digital assets and an [animated video](#) have been developed and widely circulated and 2 roadshows were held in March 2026 with 7 more planned to increase awareness and uptake of the offer. The roadshows in March 2026 led to engagement with **38** staff, patients and visitors.

In the first month (March/Q4) there were:

- **80** registrations via the referral page
- **40** downloads
- **18** quit dates set
- **7** confirmed quits
- **13,734** cigarettes not smoked
- **£8,879** estimated financial savings for service users



 Pictured Work Well Road show team at James Cook Hospital

Thank you so much for all your support, it has been amazing. never thought after 40 something years of smoking I would be nearly 4 weeks of not having a cigarette "
Wendy, Darlington



Pictured Liz Dawson, Dr Ruth Sharrock & Rachel McIlvenna

In the last year we have done:

Communications

- **Blogs:** Published two blogs on reflections of [implementing an SMI EIS across NENC](#) & [3 years of TDTS in NENC blog](#).
- **Podcast:** Dr Ruth Sharrock, Respiratory Consultant and ICB Clinical Lead for Tobacco & Rachel McIlvenna Strategic Manager featured on **Frontline Voices** podcast hosted by Liz Dawson- Director of Communications & Involvement at South Tyneside & Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust discussing smoking, lung health and winter pressures. You can listen to the podcast: [here](#).
- Supported **Regional Fresh Smoking Survivors Campaign** bursts.
- Disseminated **Tobacco Smoking is Poison** resources & **Winter Pressures Toolkits**.
- Celebrated the **25th Anniversary of Stop Smoking Services** with Fresh and Local Authority Stop Smoking Services at the regional Fresh photocall.



Workforce Development & Training

- Jointly hosted 4 Lunchtime Webinars with **Fresh**. The covered topics included **Nicotine Pouches** by Dr Harry Tattan-Birch; **Economic Impact of Smoking** by Dr Tessa Langley, **Primary Care Webinar** with Dr Roger Henderson and **Filter Fraud** with Dr Katie East.
- Hosted **Tobacco & Cannabis Co-use in Pregnancy** Webinar with 4 key speakers including Dr Hannah Walsh and **94** in attendance.
- Delivered presentations at **2nd North East UKPHR Practitioner Showcase event** themed "Careers in Public Health" & Fresh Local Tobacco Control Network Planning Session in March 2026.
- Supported the quarterly Fresh Smoking Cessation Community of Interest (COI) meeting with dedicated discussions on i) **Maximising impact of Stop Smoking Services** ii) **Varenicline & Cytisineadine adoption** iii) **Brief intervention for Smoking Cessation in ambulance settings**, and iv) **Yorkshire & Humber Collaborative Work**. A dedicated introductory session on Poverty Proofing by Children North East was well attended by NHS partners.
- Maintained the **Programme for Tobacco Dependency** which offers e-learning modules on the **BOOST** platform. **157** people registered/ accessed Modules or Live events via this platform in 2025/26.
- Hosted **SMI Evaluation Dissemination Webinar** in June 2025 delivered by Dr Angela Rodriguez & Colleagues from Northumbria University.
- Commissioned **3** specialist training sessions (New Advisor & Refresher) with **24** staff attending.
- Hosted Varenicline awareness session for TDTS staff in April 2025 delivered by Fresh Stop Smoking Systems Strategic Manager.



Pictured Rachel McIlvenna- presenting at Fresh Tobacco Control Network planning Session

Pregnancy Initiatives

- **NRT regional E-Voucher Scheme:** has been funded for pregnant women (in place since 1st September 2022) and will cease at the end of June 2026. The programme has supported facilitated conversations between NHS Trusts and PSNE for future arrangements.
- The **National Smoking in Pregnancy Incentives Scheme (NSPIS):** launched in November 2024 continues to be supported jointly by the programme and national colleagues with 6 of 8 NHS Trusts transitioned over. As at 31st March 2026, **617** pregnant smokers in NENC have been recruited on to the national scheme and are being supported by Maternity & TDTS teams to be smokefree. In 2025/26 alone there were **497** pregnant smokers recruited on to NSPIS with **304** smokefree at **4 weeks**.

Peer Networks

- Facilitated **12** smokefree NHS Programme Peer networks for colleagues working in tobacco dependency across NENC. These networks allow colleagues working in different Trusts to share best practice and troubleshoot collaboratively. The established peer networks (Smokefree NHS Leads & Service Managers; Data Leads, Tobacco Dependency Advisors) meet on a quarterly basis with two Face2Face meetings held in March 2026 (Q4).
- Supported the quarterly Fresh Stop Smoking Community of Interest (COI) which brings together those involved with delivering or commissioning stop smoking support and who share the vision for a smokefree future. The aim of the COI is to exchange knowledge, share good practice, and to support collaboration between organisations and across localities to maximise the system-wide efforts to increase the number of people in the North East who make a quit attempt and become smokefree.

Pictured : Tobacco Dependency Advisors, Smokefree Leads & Service Managers Peer Network



Evaluation

- Completed the Evaluation of **SMI Early Implementor Sites pilot** by Northumbria University which demonstrated that tailored, integrated approaches can make a real difference not only improving quit rates but also tackling long-standing health inequalities for people with severe mental illness.
- Commenced the formal evaluation of the **community mental health smoking cessation pilot** being delivered by Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust (CNTW) with Northumbria University.
- Secured funding to commence evaluation of **NENC Swap2Stop** offer with Newcastle University .

Increasing uptake of cessation aids

- Launched the Nicotine Analogues Toolkit with Fresh
- Supported implementation across Trusts.
- Facilitated access of Local Authority Stop Smoking Systems topslice to ICB Swap2Stop Vapes to support regional digital offer implementation.
- Rolled out nicotine vape provision across most NENC NHS Trusts.
- Refreshed the Taskforce Vaping Position Statement .

Wider Advocacy

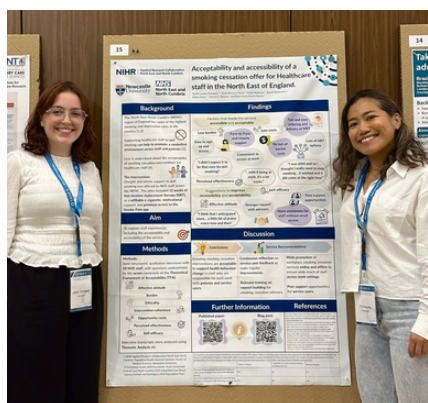
- Supported the Tobacco & Vapes Bill (now Act) alongside other partners.
- Responded to 2 consultations on i) Tobacco & Vapes Bill ii) Pack inserts and calls for evidence for: NHS productivity

National Leadership & Influence

- Featured in ASH Survey of Integrated Care Boards in England as one of the examples demonstrating integrating tobacco control in wider ICB work and proud of the NENC leadership & commitment towards this agenda.
- Contributed to national NHS events and providing extensive support to NHS organisations, LA Tobacco Commissioners and wider organisations.

Quality Improvement

- Worked with the three other Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) in the North East and Yorkshire region: Humber and North Yorkshire (HNY), South Yorkshire (SYB), and West Yorkshire (WY) to pilot digital cessation support during admission and post-discharge, using the Smoke Free app. The aim of this QI project was to test if utilising the Smoke Free app as support during admission and post discharge could improve engagement rates and reduce loss to follow up. At the end of March 2026 there were **205 downloads** and **49 quits at 4weeks**. The project has now concluded with **327 downloads** from NENC participating Trusts and **102 recorded quits at 4 weeks**.
- Co-led a Quality Improvement (QI) project (Transfer of Care) to boost the number of patients who, after receiving inpatient Tobacco Dependency Treatment, successfully engage with Community Stop Smoking Services post-discharge. This collaborative effort brought together **11** organisations across the North East and North Cumbria, including NHS Trusts and LA community Stop Smoking Services, to strengthen continuity of care, reduce relapse risk, and align with national best practice guidance such as NICE NG209 and NCSCT Transfer of Care.
- Conducted an ACT Survey to understand links with Trust TDTS Teams



Pictured : Dr Caitlin Thompson(left) , Reseach Assistant for study presenting at SSM & Dr Ryc Acquino (right) Lead Researcher



Pictured : Rachel McIlvenna presenting at World Conference on Tobacco Control

International Conferences

The programme alongside academic colleagues presented at two international conferences.

- World Conference on Tobacco Control
- Annual Society for Research on Nicotine and Tobacco (SRNT) conference . One of the abstracts by Dr Caitlin Thompson(Newcastle University) scoped the Early Career Research prize. The other was presented by Dr Lauren Holt (Northumbria University)

Smokefree sites Implementation Template & Smokefree Champions Projects

These two projects have evolved from conversations & concerns around smoking on sites and importance of shifting culture.

- Co-produced an implementation template is designed to be adaptable, action-oriented, equity focused and practical and has 7 themes: *1. Staff Support and Training: Building capability and confidence to deliver smokefree care; 2. Engagement and Cultural Change: Fostering a shared commitment to smokefree environments; 3. Policy Adoption and Governance: Ensuring clear accountability and compliance; 4. Communication and Signage: Reinforcing messages through consistent, visible prompts; 5. Support for Patients, Families, and Visitors: Extending care beyond inpatients to all who access NHS services; 6. Infrastructure and Environmental Adjustments: Creating spaces that discourage tobacco use; 7. Collaboration and Research: Driving innovation and continuous improvement through partnerships.*
- A Smokefree champions project is expected to launch late Autumn (26/27) aimed at establishing a network of clinical and non-clinical advocates to promote and champion the Trusts smokefree policies to patients, staff and visitors



"The NENC Smokefree NHS programme is simply outstanding. It is the top performing region in England with treatment services running in all eligible providers and working highly effectively to provide life saving treatment and reduce inequality. This has not happened by accident, it has required diligent, pro-active, iterative implementation and management, working with multiple stakeholders to deliver a shared vision. Fortunately the team at NENC have been generous with spreading their great practice to other regions across the country, my only wish is that we could clone them and their services for the whole of England".

Dr Sanjay Agrawal, National Speciality Advisor for Tobacco Dependency (NHS England), Chair RCP Tobacco Special Advisory Group

"The dedication and support from the NENC Smokefree team has been unwavering since the the Tobacco Dependent Treatment Services programme started in 2021. All their support, and drive to lead the programme across the NENC ICB has led to a successful programme, which continues to be delivered across the region. This has supported continued reduced smoking prevalence and reductions in maternal smoking at time of delivery and improved health outcomes for the population of NENC. The team have worked in collaboration with colleges across the region to deliver wider scale projects, share good practice and worked together to identify practical solutions to addressing health inequalities".

Ann Burrows & Alison Courtney, Clinical Programmes Managers-Prevention, NHS England (NEY Region)

"The NENC Smokefree NHS Programme has been invaluable in helping us progress our tobacco dependency work in the Trust. I am especially grateful to Rachel and Joojo, whose support, advocacy and encouragement have been instrumental in driving the smokefree agenda here at Northumbria. Their practical advice and collaborative approach have helped us maintain momentum, overcome challenges and continue improving support for patients who are tobacco dependent".

Carla Anderson, Public Health Matron, Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust Team

"The support provided by your NENC Smokefree strategic team has been invaluable across University Hospital Tees. This regional support has been a crucial enabler from inception of our services in March 2022 and onwards. Special thanks to Rachel and colleagues, who have enabled our teams with a forum to benefit from learning opportunities, navigate incremental localised challenges, appreciate and share best practices, all leading to more successful quit smoking outcomes as our tobacco dependency pathways have become embedded and evolved. Sincerest thanks from us all at UHT."

University Hospital Tees Team (North Tees and Hartlepool & South Tees Hospital NHS Foundation Trusts)

"The support provided by the NENC Smokefree Strategic Team has been invaluable in strengthening tobacco dependence treatment across CNTW. Rachel and the team have created excellent opportunities for collaboration, shared learning, and the exchange of best practice, helping us embed and develop our services while improving outcomes for patients. We are particularly grateful for the opportunities to implement the regional Swap to Stop and NENC staff offers, which have enhanced the support available to our workforce, the opportunity to pilot tobacco dependence support for community patients, which has delivered positive outcomes and demonstrated the value of extending support beyond traditional healthcare settings.

We sincerely appreciate the ongoing support, leadership, and partnership provided by the NENC Smokefree Strategic Team."

Cumbria Northumberland Tyne & Wear NHS Foundation Trust Team

"The support we receive as Smoke Free and TDTs leads in Trusts (Both inpatient and Maternity) from the NENC Smoke Free Management Team has been invaluable. It has allowed us to keep up-to-date with policy and practice through a regular newsletter and organising useful webinar; facilitated useful networking with colleagues regionally and nationally; enabled timely communication campaigns; supported registrars and trainees working with us and answered in a timely manner questions relevant to the delivery of our Tobacco Dependency Treatment Services. The training provided to TDTs teams has enabled them to provide the services in a clinical setting where many had no previous experience. Adapting a previously community provision to be delivered inhouse has unique challenges and the training provided the teams with expert skills and knowledge. The support for maternity services during the creation and development of in-house services has been immeasurable. Examples of this are practical help and support with the TDTs, data aspects (which are plentiful), and networking across the NENC all contribute to the success of our services and plummeting SATOD rates. This is why in the NENC region we have gone faster and further compared to any region in England and the outcomes for our region are a testimony to the impact of this collaboration and Fresh Leadership. Thank you to the NHS Smoke Free Team at Fresh. Your support is much appreciated".

Dr Balsalm Ahmad, Public Health Consultant on behalf of Newcastle Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust