



National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence

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PRESS RELEASE

Give quit smoking help at work, says NICE

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) has today (25 April) issued advice on the support that smokers should be offered in their workplace to help them quit smoking. The new advice comes as workplaces in England prepare to go smokefree from 1 July, creating an additional opportunity to help improve health by supporting those smokers who want to give up.

Smoking costs the NHS an estimated £1.5 billion each year, and costs industry an estimated £5 billion in lost productivity, absenteeism and fire damage. The new laws banning smoking in workplaces are expected to motivate smokers who want to quit, to finally give up. Aimed mainly at employers, but also at employees and those responsible for ensuring workplaces go smokefree and for providing stop smoking support, the NICE guidance recommends the most effective ways to encourage and support employees to stop smoking. These include providing information on local stop smoking services, and allowing smokers to attend stop smoking clinics during working hours without loss of pay.

Providing stop smoking support in the workplace will not only help employees who smoke to quit, but will also help employers and employees stay the right side of the new laws. As a healthier, smokefree workforce means increased productivity, providing stop smoking support makes good business sense for employers.

Andrew Dillon, Chief Executive of NICE and Executive Lead for this guidance, said: "Smoking causes an estimated 86,500 deaths in England each year, and is responsible for a wide range of disease and conditions including cancers, coronary heart disease, impotence and infertility. Going smokefree is a win-win situation for both employers and employees, and our advice sets out the best approach to making it happen. Our advice is based on the best evidence of which workplace approaches are

effective for smokers and make business sense for employers. Both the health and financial benefits to employees and businesses of providing stop smoking support in the workplace are clear, and this guidance can help organisations to become smoke free successfully.”

Dr Catherine Law, Chair of the Public Health Interventions Advisory Committee (PHIAC) at NICE said: Smoking is a public health priority as well as the principal cause of inequalities in life expectancy between rich and poor in this country. The new legislation on smoke free workplaces will prevent exposure to second-hand smoke in the workplace but it also provides the opportunity to create an environment which makes it easier to quit for those who want to. Providing support at work will reach people who may not usually seek help to stop smoking, such as young men.”

Dr David Sloan, PHIAC member at NICE, public health specialist and former GP, said: “We know that overall around 3 out of 4 smokers want to quit. It’s important for employees and their representatives to work with employers on what support they need to give up smoking, and to encourage their employers to make that support available. Along with the health benefits of stopping smoking, employees who quit will give themselves an instant ‘pay rise’ – a 20-a-day smoker will save nearly £2000 a year by stopping smoking.”

Dale Robinson, PHIAC member at NICE and environmental health specialist said: “Environmental Health staff will be responsible for working with businesses on how to comply with the smokefree legislation. The guidance advises what support employers should provide to help employees who smoke to quit - fewer smokers could reduce the chance of employers finding themselves in breach of the legislation. The guidance makes it easier for employers to understand why this is an important issue, and the online calculator can help employers see roughly how much their business will benefit overall by providing stop smoking support.”

Mary Boughton, the Federation of Small Businesses Health and Safety Chairman, said: "Small businesses recognise the need to support their staff in the workplace. Given the forthcoming ban on smoking in enclosed workplaces this support can now extend to helping employees who wish to stop smoking. This situation works out well for employers and employees. It will improve the health of staff and the productivity of businesses. It will also ensure that the new smoking laws are not broken. This advice from NICE has come at just the right time and we at the FSB are pleased to recommend it to our members."

Ends

Notes to Editors

About the guidance

1. The workplace smoking guidance is at <http://www.nice.org.uk/phi005> .
2. Other recommendations include:
 - Employers should develop a policy with employees to on what support will be provided, and how it will work in practice
 - All those offering stop smoking services, including the NHS and independent organisations, should tailor the support to the employee's needs, offering locations and schedules to suit them
 - NHS stop smoking services should offer support to employers who want to help their employees stop smoking, if appropriate offering to provide support on the employers premises, prioritising small and medium sized enterprises, enterprises where a high proportion of employees are heavy smokers and those with a high proportion of employees from disadvantaged backgrounds.

About NICE

3. NICE is the independent organisation responsible for providing national guidance on the promotion of good health and the prevention and treatment of ill health.
4. NICE produces guidance in three areas of health:
 - **public health** – guidance on the promotion of good health and the prevention of ill health for those working in the NHS, local authorities and the wider public and voluntary sector
 - **health technologies** – guidance on the use of new and existing medicines, treatments and procedures within the NHS
 - **clinical practice** – guidance on the appropriate treatment and care of people with specific diseases and conditions within the NHS.

Further information

5. The Federation of Small Businesses is Britain's biggest business organisation with over 205,000 members. It exists to protect and promote the interests of the self-employed, and all those who run their own business. More information is available at www.fsb.org.uk. Contact Matthew Knowles, matthew.knowles@fsb.org.uk , 020 7592 8113.