

Press Release

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National No Smoking Day - RUH staff are serious about stopping

Staff at the Royal United Hospital will be encouraging smokers to make a fresh start, free from tobacco, on this year's National No Smoking Day on Wednesday 14 March.

Since the hospital became smoke free in November 2006, many staff have given up smoking with the help of the hospital's 'support to stop' programme. The trust's smoking action co-ordinator Liz Carvell is delighted with the programme's success.

Liz says: "Since the programme started, 56 staff have signed up to it and we expect this number to increase. The RUH is committed to promoting a healthier lifestyle for staff and patients and people have been incredibly supportive of the smoking ban."

"The physical environment is already much improved thanks to the hard work of staff in maintaining the external areas of the hospital, everything looks so much cleaner. We continue to walk around the site twice a day to help enforce the smoke free message. There have been very few problems and most people when approached are willing to comply and often apologetic.

"During National No Smoking Day we'll be reminding staff and patients that there are trained 'support to stop' advisers available to help anyone who wants to quit smoking. They can find out what other advice and support is available to them by visiting an information stand in the hospital's atrium."

Two staff who have been successful in giving up smoking with the help of Liz and her team are receptionist Jane Campey and healthcare assistant Kay Toogood, who both work in the emergency department.

Jane says: "The hospital going smoke-free was my kick start to give up smoking. I took tablets every day for about a month, which work by reducing the urge to smoke. They worked brilliantly for me, I woke up one morning and I just didn't want a cigarette. The occupational health team have been great and so have my colleagues. Quite a few of us have given up together, so we have all supported one another. I feel so much better for it."

Kay says: "I used to smoke over 20 a day and I gave up with the help of the occupational health team and patches and lozenges. It's taken a while to reap the benefits and now people tell me that my skin looks great, which is really nice. My two boys are proud of their mum for giving up."

Consultant occupational physician Colin Payton says: "The project is proving far more successful than we had dared to hope and we are very proud of the new smoke-free RUH site.

"Hospital staff have been tremendous and with one or two exceptions, staff are not now smoking on site. Many of those who were smokers have taken the opportunity to stop, using the 'support to stop' programme, provided by the occupational health department. Unfortunately we are still finding very small numbers of visitors and occasionally patients smoking on the site. We always challenge them and make it clear that smoking is no longer tolerated anywhere on the smoke-free RUH site."

The RUH became 'smoke free' in November 2006, bringing the hospital in line with other NHS trusts and pre-empting the national ban on smoking in public places which comes into force in the summer of 2007.

Ends

No Smoking Day offers these top tips for anyone wanting to quit in 2007:

- A 20-a-day smoker stopping at New Year will have saved £350 by No Smoking Day on March 14 and nearly £900 by the time England goes smoke free on 1 July!
- Why wait until July to make a quit attempt. By stopping at New Year, or on No Smoking Day you can be totally smoke free well in advance of the ban.
- Smoking can create hormonal imbalances which decrease libido – giving up smoking will improve your sex life!
- Feel fitter within two weeks of stopping - finally run for the bus without a coughing fit
- Using an NHS stop smoking service is four times more likely to work than going cold turkey.

For more information about stopping smoking and the help available log onto www.nosmokingday.org.uk or call the NHS stop smoking helpline on 0800 169 0169.