

## Stop Smoking London: Context specific smoking cessation and COVID-19 response.

Dear Colleagues,

I hope that you, your family and friends are all safe and well.

I wanted to send you this email about how Stop Smoking London are working with you to continue to support all our residents to stop smoking at this time. Thank you to everybody across London for your help, support, feedback and the great ideas that you have shared with us.

There is no doubt that these truly are extraordinary times, as the effects of the coronavirus outbreak are felt more acutely across the UK and we are all changing the way we live our lives and work.

We are now seeing some evidence that smokers are more likely to contract coronavirus and to develop severe respiratory disease should they suffer from it – but this research is in its early days and reveals inconsistencies.

However, what we do know is that smoking tobacco damages the lungs and airways causing a range of severe respiratory problems and that smoking also harms the immune system. Expert advice remains that the best thing a smoker can do for their current and future health is to quit, and to quit now.

We also know from our insight work with London smokers, that the majority plan to quit smoking in the future.

To help support more quit attempts across London at this time and in response to some of the challenges we are all facing, I wanted to let you know about the existing remote Stop Smoking London services and also about some new developments that we have just launched.

## Existing Remote Stop Smoking London services:

### Stop Smoking London Helpline

The Stop Smoking London helpline is fully operational – 0300 123 1044 -with helpline advisers available seven days a week at the following times:

- Monday to Fridays - 9am to 8pm
- Saturday and Sunday - 11am - 4pm

A briefing document for the Stop Smoking London helpline team has been developed providing them with a context specific COVID-19 and smoking cessation protocol for all calls received. A [document for local stop smoking services](#) detailing this protocol is also available.

The helpline team are continuing to discuss all options available with callers, including the offer of support on the use of NRT. The team are also actively encouraging all callers to either contact their local stop smoking service for support to quit, or to sign up to the existing Stop Smoking London helpline behavioural support programme.

Once signed up to the Stop Smoking London helpline support, they are called back by a specialist advisor offering them regular one-to-one stop smoking support and encouragement over the phone at regular and agreed intervals during their quit journey. Initially this is for 28 days, however longer support is available if needed.

This offer is available for all eligible residents of participating boroughs, including pregnant smokers.

### Stop Smoking London Website

The Stop Smoking London website, [www.stopsmokinglondon.com](http://www.stopsmokinglondon.com), has a new homepage that provides context specific information on smoking and COVID-19. The website lets smokers know that it doesn't matter how long they've been smoking for, or how many cigarettes they smoke a day, if they stop smoking now they will see immediate health benefits.

This page also highlights and signposts visitor into the range of remote help that is available in London. In line with government guidance to "stay home" the website advises that some stop smoking products such as NRT and e-cigarettes can be purchased online and delivered to your home.

The website also includes the call back request option, where smokers are called back by their local service or the team on the Stop Smoking London helpline. If in your borough, the local stop smoking team currently receives call back requests from Stop Smoking London but would like to change this for the current time to be managed by the Stop Smoking London helpline team, please email [Carla.Naidoo@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:Carla.Naidoo@towerhamlets.gov.uk).

### **Time to Quit campaign**

Today marks the launch of our new “Time to Quit” digital advertising campaign to encourage all London smokers to visit the Stop Smoking London website and call the helpline to start their stop smoking journey. Retargeting of known smokers who have clicked on previous Stop Smoking London campaigns will be part of this campaign strategy.

[A campaign pack](#) is now available for use locally, this includes social media posts as well as a copy of a new Stop Smoking London “Time to Quit” poster and leaflet. These will shortly be posted to all pharmacies within the M25 with information on how best to use these resources at this time when we are all being asked to “Stay home, Protect the NHS, Save lives”.

In addition to the above, the following are now live for residents of participating boroughs:

### **Motivational text message support.**

Receiving [motivational text messages](#) may help to keep smokers on track as they quit. Stop Smoking London has a tailored package of text messages to provide the information, support, motivation, and reminders that can help Londoners to successfully stop smoking for good.

This new remote service is available in English, Polish, Turkish, Romanian and Urdu.

### **Stop Smoking London website.**

The Stop Smoking London website is now available in [Polish](#), [Turkish](#), [Romanian](#) and [Urdu](#) to support residents whose first language is not English. These websites are also available with the accessible “Read Aloud” option.

I do hope that you have found this information helpful. The Stop Smoking London workstream for the context specific smoking COVID-19 response will be in touch regularly to keep you updated on our activity and services. If there is anything more that we can do to help you at this time, please email [carla.naidoo@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:carla.naidoo@towerhamlets.gov.uk).

Please if you have any questions or feedback about our approach or the campaign materials please email [stopsmokinglondon@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:stopsmokinglondon@towerhamlets.gov.uk).

Finally, thank you for your continued partnership as we work together to support Londoners to quit smoking.

Yours faithfully,

**Dr Somen Banerjee**

Vice Chair of the ADPH London Network | London Smoking Cessation and Tobacco Control Lead