**Local smokers urged to quit this No Smoking Month with our help!**

**Last week of Feb date TBC**

No Smoking Month is fast approaching, and the Public Health Agency (PHA) and Cancer Focus Northern Ireland are encouraging smokers to ‘Make March Your Month to Quit’.

Smoking is the single most entirely preventable cause of ill-health, disability and death, in Northern Ireland, responsible for approximately 35,000 hospital admissions and 2,200 deaths each year.

Colette Rogers, Strategic Lead for Tobacco Control, with the PHA, said: “March is No Smoking Month and a fantastic opportunity to make the commitment to stop smoking and improve your health.

“Stopping smoking is one of the best things you can do to improve your health and protect people around you from harmful second-hand smoke. Quitting will also save you money which is significant as people face tough times with the increased cost-of-living. You might have tried quitting before, but this March, try again and get support on your journey to healthier you with the help of a PHA-funded Stop Smoking service as it really will make a difference ”

There is lots of support available throughout Northern Ireland for those who want to quit. A range of services are funded by the PHA and free to use, these services help and support people to quit every year and are offered through many community pharmacies, GP practices, HSC Trust premises, community and voluntary organisations, and by Cancer Focus NI.

Naomi Thompson, Health Improvement Manager at Cancer Focus NI, is urging those who want to stop smoking to seek help and highlighted that support is available across the country to help make people’s quit journey as easy as possible:

“Studies have shown that people are four times more likely to quit with help. We would encourage any smoker who is ready to quit, or even curious about giving it a go, to make March their month. Across Northern Ireland specialists are available to provide free tried and tested tips to make quitting as easy as possible. You will be supported to cope with cravings, managing stress, avoiding weight gain and developing a healthy lifestyle. You don’t have to do this on your own.”

<Name>, <Job Title and Organisation> is encouraging those in their local community to quit smoking this month:

“Insert quote here specific to your organisation.”

**Top tips for quitting smoking**

* Make a date to give up – and stick to it!
* Make a plan. Think about what could help you stop smoking, such as using a nicotine replacement product, and have it ready before the date you plan to stop.
* Get support from your local Stop Smoking Service. Also, let your family and friends know that you're quitting. Some people find that talking to friends and relatives who have stopped can be helpful.
* Keep busy to help take your mind off cigarettes. Try to change your routine, (and plan alternative activities for places you associate with smoking) and avoid the shop where you normally buy cigarettes.
* Remind yourself that the money saved now from not smoking can be used for other things you or your family want or need.

No Smoking Month is coordinated in Northern Ireland by Cancer Focus NI and includes a partnership with the PHA, the Healthy Living Centres Alliance, Health and Social Care Trusts, local councils, and community champions in Health Living Centres.

For more information on the services available and useful tips to stop smoking, visit [www.cancerfocusni.org/stopsmoking](http://www.cancerfocusni.org/stopsmoking) or [www.stopsmokingni.info](http://www.stopsmokingni.info)

**ENDS**