

# Smoke Free Policy - Guidance notes to Staff and Managers

## GENERAL BACKGROUND

It is now recognised that smoking can seriously damage health. Exposure to tobacco smoke can cause physical discomfort, particularly to non-smokers. There is also increasing evidence that "passive" smoking may be harmful to non-smokers, exacerbating conditions such as asthma, heart disease and bronchial conditions.

This policy has been developed using national guidance (1) and a Government requirement that all premises owned by public organisations should be smoke free by the end of 2006. The NHS Trusts in Gloucestershire have agreed to implement this requirement in advance of that deadline, on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2006, National No Smoking Day.

The policy has been developed by a Trust wide project group, including staff side representation and smokers. The Countywide Steering Group has been working to ensure that the policy is the same for all NHS Trusts in Gloucestershire, with a few local differences. GSAS (Gloucestershire Smoking Advice Service) (2) have been represented on both groups to provide additional guidance and expertise.

The Trust recognises that smoking is an addiction. Where possible, support will be provided to staff and patients either via GSAS or through the person's GP.

West Gloucestershire PCT has a responsibility to protect all the people who work in, or visit, its buildings from the effects of smoke, as well as maintaining the continuity of services to patients and to protect its buildings.

The policy has been considered in relation to the laws covering equality, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation and disability.

## KEY POINTS OF THE POLICY

With effect from 8<sup>th</sup> March 2006:-

- Smoking is not permitted anywhere within the buildings or grounds of all PCT owned and leased sites.
- This includes all car parks and vehicles parked on NHS Trust property.
- This policy applies to all members of staff, patients, visitors and contractors.
- Smoking restrictions apply to all PCT owned or leased vehicles.
- Staff using their own vehicles to carry out Trust work will be expected to comply with the policy when this activity takes place during work time.
- Staff may only smoke once they have left the site and during their agreed break times.
- For in-patients Nicotine Replacement Therapy or other support may be made available via the senior sister on the ward.
- Patients receiving treatment in their own home will be asked not to smoke during the visit of the healthcare professional.
- Staff who wish to stop smoking can access support from Gloucestershire Smoking Advice Service, or through their own GP practice.
- Managers are asked to provide support to staff who find compliance difficult.

## IMPLEMENTATION

Information will be made available to staff, patients, visitors and contractors in advance of the policy start day, to advise them of the smoke free status on all NHS sites from 8<sup>th</sup> March 2006. After that date, letters to patients and patient information, signage, staff contracts of employment and other forms of communications will say that all NHS premises are now smoke free sites.

## **STAFF**

As with all Trust policies, staff are expected to comply with the policy during working hours.

Anyone smoking on NHS sites could pose a fire safety risk, especially if the smoking takes place in an enclosed or hidden location. If a member of staff sees someone smoking on NHS premises they should advise them that they should not smoke on the site and ask them to extinguish their cigarette or leave the site. If that does not seem appropriate, then a note should be made of the occasion and reported to the line manager. Contractors smoking on NHS sites should be reported to their employer.

Where a member of staff finds it difficult to cope at work without smoking or without taking additional breaks to smoke, advice should be sought from their line manager, GSAS or their GP. Managers are asked to be as supportive as possible after the smoke free policy has come into effect.

Staff who wish to smoke are expected to behave in a professional manner i.e. covering up uniforms where possible, not dropping litter, including cigarette butts, and being aware of potential fire hazards that discarded cigarettes may cause. When staff leave the premises to smoke they should consider their personal safety and ensure that they have told other members of staff where they are going.

### Community Staff

Some of the patients treated by staff working in the community will be smokers. Information about the policy will be provided to all patients. Patients who receive care in their own home or on other non-NHS sites will be expected not to smoke while the member of staff is with them. This also applies to relatives and carers who are in the same room as the patient.

- If a patient smokes while the member of staff is providing treatment, they should be asked to extinguish their cigarette until the member of staff has left.
- If a relative or carer smokes while the member of staff is providing treatment, they should be asked to either extinguish their cigarette or smoke in another room.
- If the patient, relative or carer refuses to stop smoking the member of staff may choose to stop the treatment and leave.
- When the member of staff believes they could be putting either themselves or the patient at risk from violence or aggression if they requested no smoking in the room where they are providing treatment, they should complete the visit as quickly as possible and leave the premises.
- Where either of the above two situations have occurred a written report should be made to the line manager, providing details of the visit including the patient's details and the date and time of the visit. The member of staff should complete an adverse incident form.
- The manager will be expected to take action to prevent the situation from recurring. (Details of this action are included under section "Managers")

### PCT premises

With effect from 8<sup>th</sup> March 2006 all NHS owned and leased premises will become smoke-free sites. This will apply to all premises in the county. For NHS staff working or visiting the PCT premises at Highnam Business Park, the entire site has also been designated as smoke-free, in agreement with the owner of the site. Staff who wish to smoke are requested to leave the NHS site they are working on.

#### Smoking in Cars

The proposed policy wording in the national guidance includes not permitting smoking in any NHS owned or leased cars. The NHS has a duty of care to all its employees to reduce the risk to health from smoking and from second hand smoke. The Countywide and PCT groups have, therefore, decided to follow this guidance, whilst accepting it may be difficult to enforce.

Staff may smoke in their own cars during approved breaks, so long as the vehicle is not parked on a NHS site.

#### Staff Working in HM Prison Gloucestershire

The policy applies to all NHS staff working in Gloucester prison. The Prison Health Centre has been designated a smoke free site by the Prison Authorities. Where possible, all efforts will be made to treat prisoners in the Health Centre rather than in their cells. Where this is not possible, the following points should be noted:-

- Employees who are pregnant are not permitted to enter the main prison area.
- A senior staff member should be informed if you are pregnant.
- A senior staff member should be informed if you suffer from a medical condition which may be affected by smoking i.e. asthma or bronchitis.

Staff may only smoke in an allocated outdoor smoking area during their official break times.

### **MANAGERS**

Managers have a responsibility to provide a safe working environment for their staff. They should understand the needs of smokers, whilst ensuring the policy is adhered to in all circumstance.

It is up to the Manager to ensure that appropriate arrangements are made for staff and patients who wish to smoke.

For staff this would include, taking account of circumstances, under which staff can leave the NHS premises to take breaks to smoke.

Managers should not ask staff to help patients to leave the site to smoke. Patients should be advised that if they do leave the site to smoke should tell a member of the nursing staff where they are going.

Managers should deal sympathetically with staff who wish to give up smoking, providing support and assistance where practicable and appropriate.

All Managers have a responsibility to take action against any individual who does not observe the policy. It is important that the policy is implemented in a consistent and effective manner.

The initial action to take if a member of staff does not comply with the policy is:-

1. Talk to the person, reminding them of the need to comply with all Trust policies.
2. Offer relevant support whilst at work to ensure they are able to take their approved breaks.
3. Suggest they look for support through their own GP or through GSAS.
4. Encourage agreement to comply with the policy.
5. Advise them that a further breach of the policy will result in further action.

In the unlikely event that a member of staff persistently fails to comply either by taking additional breaks to smoke, or by smoking on NHS premises, then guidance should be sought from HR. If necessary, the Trust disciplinary policy should be used. Disciplinary action would be the last resort when the member of staff refuses to make use of the support available to help them cope with being unable to smoke during working hours.

When a member of staff reports a problem with smoking during a home visit, or has completed an adverse incident form, the Manager should write to the patient and/or carer advising them of the Trust policy. If the situation persists, the Manager may decide that it is only possible to provide treatment in a health care setting away from the patient's home.

### **REVIEW**

The policy will be reviewed in March 2007 and will be amended to reflect any changes in legislation.

### References

1. NHS Health Development Agency "Guidance for smoke free hospital Trusts"
2. GSAS – Contact telephone number – 01452 429345