

Fresh tack on smoking

The campaign to help people stop smoking is making more use of the web. Support is now just a few clicks away



Much has been done to stub out smoking. A national network of cessation services has helped many to quit; historic smoke-free legislation has been introduced; and the age for the sale of tobacco has been increased. But many challenges remain and NHS Health Scotland's innovative plans showcase a fresh approach.

"We're bringing Smokeline into the 21st century," says Communications Manager Katherine Beattie. NHS Health Scotland's Stop Smoking marketing campaign was launched in September and, as well as the successful television adverts, there is new online activity on popular websites such as STV.com, MSN Hotmail and the *Daily Record* website. "Our TV adverts have been well received but we're always looking at new ways to communicate with potential quitters," says Katherine. "By promoting our website – canstopsmoking.com – we're potentially tapping into a wider audience, particularly young people."

And reaching young people is vital. Research suggests that 30% of 16-24 year olds in Scotland are smokers and it's a statistic that the Scottish Government and health agencies take seriously. Reducing this rate to 22.9% by 2012 is a

key target for the Government, outlined in this year's Smoking Prevention Action Plan.

It isn't just the way the 'Stop Smoking' message is delivered that's changing. A Smokeline webchat service has been launched to enhance the existing telephone-based service. It's available between 6pm and 8pm seven days a week and can be accessed through canstopsmoking.com. A text messaging service will also be introduced at a later point. The new services will be staffed by the same knowledgeable staff as the original Smokeline and will signpost smokers to their local stop smoking services, as well as offering advice and answering questions.

The revamped website will also include a 'tell a friend' feature allowing people to send a message to friends, family or colleagues telling them about the website and local services available. "It's all about making services as accessible as possible," says Katherine. "For example, for young people particularly, texting is part of everyday life, so it makes sense for us to incorporate this. It's also a very practical step – from our experience, not everyone who wants to stop smoking is comfortable discussing it over the phone. For some, a text or web chat may feel like a more approachable option."

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Existing services haven't been forgotten either. A new chapter on smokefree homes and zones has been filmed for the Stop Smoking DVD that's currently distributed to people who call Smokeline. Also, as part of this year's stop smoking social marketing campaign, the distribution of all stop smoking resources – *Aspire* magazine, the DVD and passive smoking leaflets – will all be provided to GP surgeries, community pharmacies, health promotion departments in NHS Boards, and other community settings. The aim is to make these resources more accessible to potential quitters and offer more opportunities for them to find out about the cessation services available to them.

The technology may be new, but the message remains the same. "Every year, 13,000 Scots die from smoking-related illnesses," says Katherine. "We hope these enhancements will generate more referrals to local cessation services and help more people make the connection between having the desire to quit and taking steps to make it a reality. Going forward, we'll also be looking at how we can work towards the targets outlined in the Scottish Government's Smoking Prevention Action Plan and stop more people from starting smoking in the first place."