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## Tyneside Cyrenians leads the way with smoke free policy.

From Monday 4th July, in what has been described as a pioneering policy within the sector, Tyneside Cyrenians one of the leading organisations supporting vulnerable and homeless people in the North East of England, is implementing a smoke free policy within all projects and sites.

While smoking rates among the general population have fallen, Tyneside Cyrenians is highlighting the fact that smoking rates among vulnerable and homeless people remain alarmingly high.

Recent research carried out by Tyneside Cyrenians shows that smoking rates amongst people benefiting from their support is very high at 85%. This figure is consistent with national averages for homeless people which range from as high as 90% for rough sleepers to 68% for hostel residents. Furthermore the research revealed that over 56% of Tyneside Cyrenians' staff smoke. These figures are all the more shocking when compared to 27% - the proportion of the general adult population who currently smoke.

The evidence also shows that homeless people are more likely to smoke cigarette brands with a higher tar yield, inhale more deeply and be exposed to cigarette smoke from others. As a consequence, homeless smokers are more nicotine dependant and hence more at risk of developing smoking related disease.

Stephen Bell, Chief Executive of Tyneside Cyrenians, commented;

*'The ill health effects associated with smoking and passive smoking are indisputable and well documented, as are the higher smoking rates among people who are homeless. The high proportion of our staff and service users smoking is really worrying; we believe that the two figures are linked - you could say a 'self-sustaining cycle' exists.*

*'We believe that the environment created – a smoky atmosphere and a cycle of addiction - is unacceptable for both our service users and our staff. Through this policy we are seeking to raise awareness of the dangers of smoking, to promote healthier lifestyles, improved well being to vulnerable people and to create a much improved working and living environment for all – staff and service users alike.*

*'We have consulted widely over a long period with all those affected and we see the introduction of the policy as very positive action - a real step towards adjusting the glaring health inequalities suffered by some of the most vulnerable groups in our society. We very much hope other organisations will follow our lead.'*

The measures being taken have been generally well received by people using Tyneside Cyrenians' support.

Scott Turner a resident of Elliott House, one of Tyneside Cyrenians' projects based in the west end of the City, commented;

*"I think this will be very good for people who want to give up smoking, it will help them a lot if the people around them aren't smoking. At the end of the day smoking is an addiction just like any another and like any other addiction people need help to break the habit and it's really good to know if I need help I can get it."*

The smoke free policy also aims to reduce the exposure of Tyneside Cyrenians' employees to second-hand smoke. Judy Loggie of 'Newcastle Stop Smoking Service' spoke of the positive impact Tyneside Cyrenians smoke free policy will have on the workforce;

*'Second hand smoke causes 600 deaths a year in the workplace; this is considerably higher than most other industrial accidents and incidents. We are delighted that Tyneside Cyrenians is taking positive action to ensure the health safety and welfare of their employees.'*

Tyneside Cyrenians will be providing free help, advice and support for both service users and staff who would like to give up smoking.

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