



## #QUITFORCOVID Ideas for local action

The information below has been taken from the [#QuitforCovid Communications Toolkit](#). For more information please refer to the full Toolkit or email [quit@todayistheday.co.uk](mailto:quit@todayistheday.co.uk)

This document suggests how local authorities (LAs) can utilise social media and digital comms to engage smokers and support them to #QuitforCovid. You can find out more about the actions local authorities are taking to support smokers by viewing the [webinars here](#).

You can find out more about how other stop smoking services are responding to the challenges posed by COVID-19 here: [A rapid survey of local authority stop smoking support response to COVID-19](#)

Other resources for professionals can be found at: <https://smokefreeaction.org.uk/quitforcovid/>

### Suggestions for stop smoking services

Data from YouGov's COVID-19 Tracker shows that smokers are more motivated to quit because of COVID-19, but we know that while some services have seen an increase in interest from smokers, others have not. There is an opportunity to reach out to smokers and ensure they get the best available local support to quit.

#### Contacting smokers directly

It's always a good idea to stay in touch with former clients to see how they are getting on and ensure that they know they can count on you offering support again if their quit hasn't lasted. Many clients who fail to quit assume they can't give it another go, and this is a barrier. In March, Hertfordshire County Council [texted all smokers and recent ex-smokers](#) via their local GP saying:

*If you smoke, you have an increased risk of severe illness with COVID-19. Your doctor would like you to stop smoking as soon as possible. Contact Hertfordshire Health Improvement Service on 0800 389 998 OR text quit4covid to 80818 for telephone support and medication to quit smoking.*

This led to a substantial increase in referrals with [over 600 smokers](#) seeking support to quit after receiving the message. Similarly, Sheffield City Council, which has used its stop smoking service database to contact former clients and offer support, has seen a substantial increase in referrals.

#### Collect local case studies

It can be very motivational for people who smoke to see other people doing so and succeeding – so it is important to highlight that people are quitting smoking right now and that others are trying. Do you have any case studies of local people making a quit attempt, or former smokers who have quit previously who would participate in a press release?



## Engaging local partners

As part of your local strategy, you should have a consistent *call to action* which can be communicated to partners and service users. This will vary depending on what support is available for smokers locally but could be something like 'Get in touch with our stop smoking advisors at [name/contact details of stop smoking service] who can help you Quit for COVID'. There might be key target groups in your local area such as social housing tenants and it's a good idea to think about how the stop smoking service could link in with other providers within the LA. For example, Smokefree Sheffield is printing Quit for COVID stickers and supplying quitting leaflets to their local food bank.

## Using online tools and remote support

It's also important to think about how you can use the internet/ smartphones to engage with clients while you can't see them face to face. Could you hold priority appointments by Facetime or another video conferencing platform? Could you set up a closed Facebook group with you as admin? Could you post regular quitting tips and videos on your website or social media pages? You can also signpost clients to online support tools such as the Smokefree app on the [NHS Smokefree website](#). It is also worth considering how you might promote the service as we emerge from lockdown restrictions.

## Social media

Now is a really important time to be using social media effectively. While Twitter is a great platform for reaching stakeholders and health professionals, Facebook is still the best platform to reach people who smoke. With face to face stop smoking service provision restricted right now, there are opportunities for stop smoking service specialists to use social media to fill that gap and offer quit coaching and behavioural support online. You may need to discuss local policies on social media with your host organisation first.

- Create video clip interviews of spokespeople for social media channels – videos should ideally be short and to-the-point to be able to be hosted organically on Twitter and Facebook.
- Follow #QuitforCovid on Twitter to keep track of latest news stories .
- Facebook and Twitter posts – use the hashtag #QuitforCovid so partners can support.
- People are increasingly using local neighbourhood groups on social media. Can your stop smoking service engage with any of these in order to post content and advice?
- Boosting Facebook posts can be a very cost-effective way to promote relevant content to your audience. A little bit of budget goes a long way and you can target by area, age etc.
- **A social media pack with suggested tweets & Facebook posts is available [here](#).**

## Press releases

- Issuing a press release is a great way of getting messages and information disseminated locally and, by including quotes from a range of local partners, can also help to engage colleagues.
- **You can download a template press release which includes examples from other local authorities [here](#).**