

Promoting Smoke-Free Housing: Creating safer and healthier homes for your tenants



1. Introduction

As landlords, property managers and housing associations, you have the unique opportunity to aid your residents in quitting smoking, thereby contributing to their overall health and wellbeing. Given the substantial costs associated with smoking in the social housing sector, addressing this issue can yield tremendous benefits for individuals, housing providers, and the broader community.

Luton Council Public Health and Total Wellbeing Luton have assembled this smoke-free housing toolkit to support owners and management agents of social and private rental housing. Our aim is to help you create safer, healthier living environments for your tenants.

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2. The Luton Scenario: an opportunity for positive change

Consider this, landlords and managers: in Luton, a staggering 27.8% of your social housing tenants are smokers. In fact, the prevalence of smoking among these individuals is 1.8 times higher than the general population and a whopping 3.4 times higher than those who own homes or hold a mortgage.

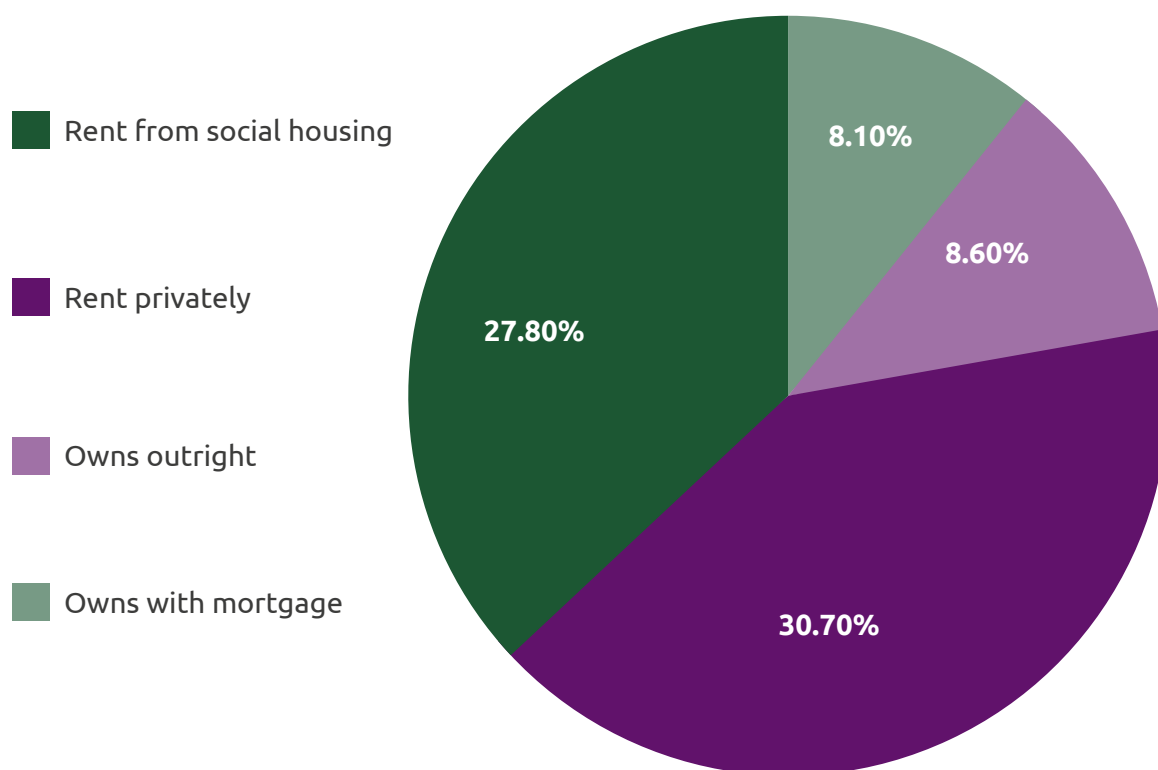
The implications of this are vast. On one hand, it's a significant health concern. On the other, it's a socio-economic issue. Tobacco addiction is eating into an eighth (12.4%) of the disposable income of your residents, pushing about one in seven of them into poverty. Smoking-related expenses contribute to an additional 31.7% of social renters living in poverty.

As landlords and managers, you are positioned to make a real difference. Studies indicate that housing tenure is the most potent independent predictor of smoking in England. This underscores the importance of implementing clear strategies to reduce smoking in homes - a responsibility that rests heavily on your shoulders.

As of the latest data from 2021, approximately 14.1% of adults in Luton are smokers. However, within the world of social and private renting, the numbers rise alarmingly. This is an issue that cannot be ignored, given that Luton is home to approximately 11,800 social housing units, 4000 of which are under private landlords.

This situation presents a unique opportunity for you to step up and lead the way in creating healthier living conditions for your residents, while at the same time making your properties more attractive and desirable. Together, we can make a positive difference for the people of Luton.

% of Luton population who are smokers by type of housing



Luton Council have adopted a Luton Tobacco Control Strategy 2023-2028, with social housing tenants are identified as high priority population for action.

3. Understanding smoke-free Legislation: FAQ for landlords and managers

The smoke-free legislation, which took effect on 1 July 2007 in England, comes with obligations for landlords like yourself. This FAQ breaks down what you need to know and how to meet your legal duties.

Does smoke-free legislation apply to private dwellings?

Private dwellings are not required to be smoke-free unless they fall under one of these categories:

- They are open to the public.
- They serve as a place of work [s2 Health Act 2006].

Private dwellings must be smoke-free only if they include areas “used in common in relation to more than one set of premises” [r3 The Smoke-free (Exemptions and Vehicles) Regulations 2007] in England.

What are my responsibilities as a landlord?

Understanding your responsibilities under the smoke-free legislation is essential for running a safe, healthy, and legal housing business.

No-smoking signs: what they should look like and where to place them

As a landlord or manager, you must ensure that all common areas in your premises are smoke-free. You are required to display no-smoking signs that comply with the specifications outlined in section 6 of the Health Act 2006.

The Smoke-free (Signs) Regulations 2007 provides guidelines for the no-smoking signs:

- Each entrance to smoke-free premises must have at least one prominently displayed sign of at least A5 size.
- The sign should feature the no-smoking symbol, which is a graphic of a single burning cigarette encased in a red circle with a red bar across it, with a diameter of at least 70 millimetres.
- The sign should clearly state, “No smoking. It is against the law to smoke in these premises.” You can customise this to specify the premises.

[You can download a sign that says “it is against the law to smoke in the communal area” from here.](#)

Do I need to monitor the common areas?

No, you are not required to constantly monitor the smoke-free areas in your premises.

What If I see a tenant smoking?

If you see a tenant smoking in a smoke-free area, you are legally obliged to ask them to stop smoking. However, if you fail to do so, you may defend yourself on the grounds that:

- You took reasonable steps to cause the person to stop smoking.
- You did not know, and could not reasonably have been expected to know, that the person was smoking.
- Other reasonable grounds for not complying with the duty.

What are the enforcement and penalties around smoke-free legislation?

The enforcement bodies are local authority environmental health officers.

The penalties are:

- Failure to display a sign – up to £1,000 or a fixed penalty notice of £200 for the landlord, resident management company or their agent.
- Smoking in the smoke-free place – up to £200 or a fixed penalty of £50 discounted to £30 for early payment on a resident smoking in the internal common parts.
- Failure to prevent smoking in a smoke-free place - Level 4 fine up to £2,500 on the resident management company, landlord or their agent.

Does the legislation apply to e-cigarettes?

While e-cigarettes may be less harmful and more accepted in some areas, there should still be guidelines for use within shared or communal spaces to respect all residents. There is no current law to prohibit vaping inside rental properties, meaning this decision is solely down to the landlord.

Choosing whether to allow your tenants to vape is a personal choice, however, unlike smoking it is likely to be very tricky to detect if they are doing so in your property unless they admit to it in the first place. If your tenant is honest and open about their vaping habit, you could choose to include a banning clause in the tenancy agreement– although this is likely to be near impossible to enforce should you have reason to believe they were still vaping despite your request for them not to. Alternatively, you could allow vaping, but refer to the 'no smoking' clause in the tenancy agreement, and reiterate that vaping is ok, but smoking is not. However, this is a personal choice, entirely at your discretion.

If you manage a multiple properties containing smokers, non-smokers and vapers, if the smokers are not allowed to pursue their preferred habit they may take offence at seeing using an e-cigarette, and the non-smokers may not be sure of the difference. You run the risk of upsetting a number of your tenants, whilst only pleasing one. In this instance, it might be better to ask your vaping tenant to abstain from vaping in the property, or only partake in their own space, keeping common areas 'vape free' and displaying appropriate signage. Landlords can include a clause in your tenant's agreement to say that vaping is strictly forbidden and most tenants will abide by this, however, you cannot be present in the property 24/7 to make sure that vaping does not take place.



4. Reasons to consider smoke-free housing

Financial, health and safety benefits

Adopting smoke-free housing can offer a multitude of benefits, such as reduced damage not just for your tenants but also for you as a housing provider: Encouraging no smoking will help you save money by reducing damage to your property, preventing fires and avoiding liability.

Health and Safety	Cost savings
Decreased fire risk: Cigarettes are a leading cause of household fires. By prohibiting smoking in your properties, you can significantly reduce the risk of fire, potentially saving lives and protecting your investment	Fewer instances of burned counter tops, floors and carpets
Second-hand smoke is extremely hazardous, especially to children and the elderly	Reduced cleaning and maintenance/repair labour and materials costs needed to maintain a property after smoking occupants move out
	Increased appeal to non-smoking tenants: The majority of people do not smoke, and many prefer to live in smoke-free housing. Implementing a smoke-free policy can make your properties more appealing to a larger group of potential tenants

Smoke Drift

Smoke drift, the movement of second-hand smoke from one unit to another, can be a significant issue in multi-unit housing. By implementing a smoke-free policy, you can reduce the risk of smoke drift, creating a healthier living environment for all residents.

The Extent of Smoke Drift Problem

The problem of smoke drift is more widespread than you might think. When one tenant smokes, the smoke doesn't stay confined to their unit. It can seep through ventilation systems, cracks, and gaps, reaching units even several floors away.

How Does Tobacco Smoke Enter Homes?

Tobacco smoke can infiltrate other areas of a building through various means: shared ventilation systems, gaps in walls or floors, plumbing, electrical outlets, and even through doors and windows. Smoke-free housing can drastically reduce these instances, ensuring a cleaner living environment for all residents.

What can I do as a Landlord?

As a landlord, you have the power to create a healthier living environment by implementing and enforcing a smoke-free policy in your properties. This can be included in your tenancy agreements, ensuring all residents are aware of the policy before moving in.

Health Consequences of Exposure to Second-Hand Smoke

Second-hand smoke is not just an unpleasant smell; it's a serious health hazard. It's categorised as a 'toxic air contaminant', aligning it with harmful substances such as asbestos, lead, and vehicle exhaust.

Exposure to second-hand smoke can have serious health consequences, including an increased risk of heart disease, stroke, and lung cancer.

Children are particularly at risk to the dangers of second-hand smoke due to their smaller airways and faster breathing rates. Exposure in childhood can lead to a number of serious health conditions.

Smoke can linger in homes for up to 3 hours after a cigarette has been put out, and smoke particles can adhere to people, household surfaces, and even pets, further prolonging exposure.

The only guaranteed way to protect others second-hand smoke is to maintain a smoke-free environment, especially at home.

By providing smoke-free housing, you're playing a significant role in protecting the health of your residents.

While e-cigarettes are not completely risk-free, they are generally considered less harmful than traditional cigarettes. Smoking e-cigarettes doesn't produce tobacco smoke so the risks of passive smoking with conventional cigarettes don't apply to e-cigarettes.

5. Recommendations for social housing providers

A significant number of smokers in social housing express a desire to quit. Approximately 1 in 7 current smokers living in social housing plan to stop within 3 months. However, these residents often face greater challenges in quitting, including higher average levels of addiction and a smoking-prevalent environment.

As a social housing provider, you can play a vital role in supporting these residents on their journey to quit smoking. Here are some steps you can take:

5.1 Promoting professional support to quit

Total Wellbeing Luton offer free expert advice and free stop smoking treatment, including Nicotine Replacement Therapy or E-cigarette support, to provide residents with the best chances of quitting smoking for good. The team can help people choose the right treatment and make sure residents feel confident in dealing with the challenges that may present themselves in achieving a smoke-free life.

5.1.1 Nicotine Replacement Therapy

Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) gives your body nicotine without the harmful effects of smoking or chewing tobacco. The idea is to gradually reduce addiction by using a low nicotine dose to take the edge off the cravings. There are many options available in addition to nicotine patches and gum, including microtabs (small tablets), lozenges, nasal sprays and inhalators.

5.1.2 E-cigarettes

Currently e-cigarettes are seen as 95% safer than smoking conventional tobacco-based products. E-cigarettes have also been shown to be an effective aid for quitting, in clinical trials and at population level, with some evidence suggesting they are even more effective than traditional forms of nicotine replacement therapy, like patches and gum.

They also appear to have been particularly valuable among groups who face higher levels of addiction and more barriers to quitting, for example among people experiencing homelessness and people with mental health conditions.

E-cigarettes therefore present a real opportunity to substantially benefit people who smoke and live in social housing. However, misperceptions about the safety of e-cigarettes may be having a disproportionate impact on the willingness of people living in social housing who smoke to try e-cigarettes compared to those in other housing types. One in 6 people who smoke and live in social housing (17%) report that safety concerns are the main reason they have not tried e-cigarettes, compared to 1 in 10 private renters who smoke (10%) and around 1 in 14 home-owners who smoke (7%).

Providing information to improving residents' understanding of the relative harms of vaping compared to smoking and its use as an aid to quitting could have a big impact on people's willingness to switch.

Residents can drop into Cloudies Vape Shop in High Town and ask about signing up to the Stop smoking programme.

Residents can seek support from Total Wellbeing Luton:

Text '2SAVE' to 60066

Tel: 0300 555 4152

Email: info@totalwellbeingluton.org

5.2 Train staff to understand the impact of smoking on tenants and equip them to deliver 'Very Brief Advice' on Smoking to tenants who smoke

This could initially involve sharing this toolkit and the key messages with senior leadership, and ensuring staff at all levels are aware of the motivation and relevance of stop smoking support, embedding this within the wider support they offer to residents.

The Making Every Contact Count (MECC) approach encourages you to use the many interactions landlord and housing officer have with tenants, to help them make healthier choices.

This doesn't mean you need to become an expert in healthcare, but rather become proficient in guiding your tenants towards the right professional help.

Referrals to smoking cessation programs or resources can be quite straightforward. We recommend that landlords, managers and housing officer consider completing free 'Very Brief Advice' training on smoking cessation. The short course can equip you and your colleagues with the confidence and knowledge to address smoking-related issues with your tenants without needing to be overly involved in their personal health decisions. If you are interested in this training, please contact Total Wellbeing Luton:

Tel: 0300 555 4152

Email: info@totalwellbeingluton.org

5.3 Engage with your tenants

- Have a comprehensive programme of communications planned to raise awareness of available support and make the health and wellbeing motivation for this clear. Add questions into routinely collected information from existing residents to gather data and insights on smoking behaviours and engagement with quitting support. Collect data on new residents' smoking status to understand scale of issue and better direct support (appendix A). Explore utilising existing communication methods to promote stop smoking support.
- Introduce a new clause in tenancy agreements to reinforce your commitment to smoke-free homes and encourages residents not to smoke in their property. The clause should emphasise health and wellbeing motivation and not be enforced with punitive measures. It's important to do this in partnership with your tenants, gaining their feedback on proposals and taking them on a journey throughout the process to understand their needs.
- Review current health and wellbeing projects/initiatives for residents in place and explore opportunities to include smoking cessation support. For example, explore embedding stop smoking advice alongside financial inclusion advice.

5.4 Work with your local authority and NHS partners

- Engage proactively with local stop smoking services, for example by providing stop smoking clinics venues in community spaces and supporting this with clear signposting.
- Consider opportunities to work with local NHS and public health teams to engage tenants in health promotion activity (for example around Stoptober).
- Join the Tobacco Free Luton alliance of organisations in Luton helping to deliver Luton's Tobacco Control Strategy 2023-2028.
- Sign and return a copy of the Luton Social Housing Tobacco Control pledge (appendix B), and include in communications to show your commitment to supporting residents and to wider tobacco control in Luton.

By taking these actions, you can foster healthier living conditions for your residents, promote their wellbeing, and make a positive impact on the wider community.



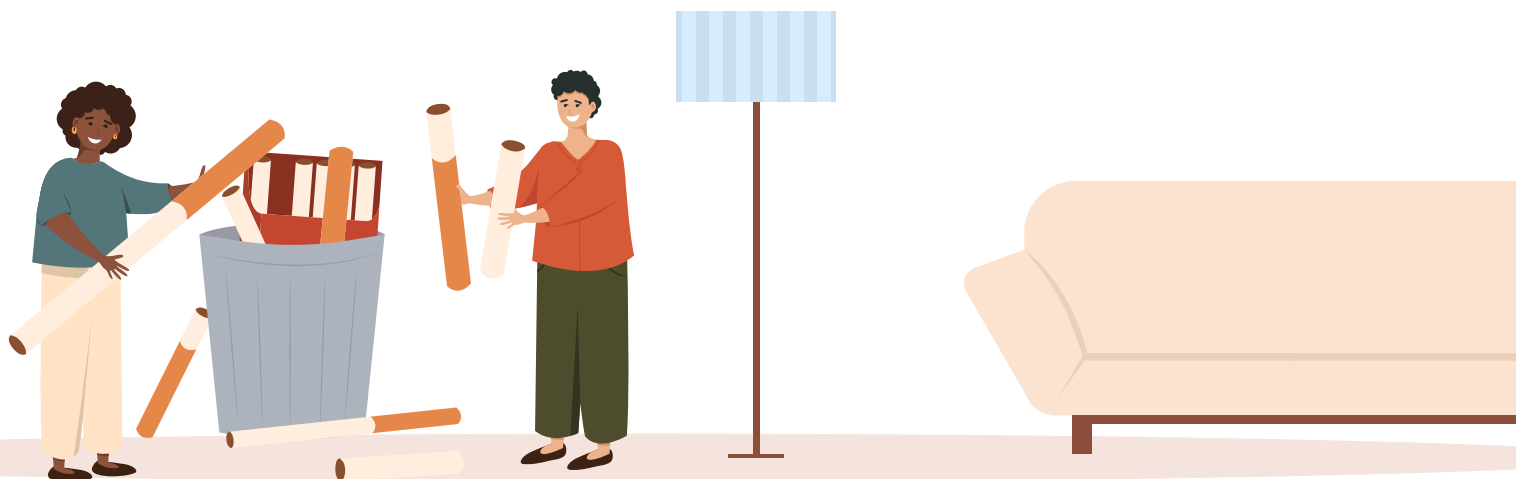
6. Case studies

6.1 Case study: collaboration to embed tobacco control across Flagship Homes practice

Collaboration to embed tobacco control across Flagship Homes practice On No Smoking Day 2022, Flagship Homes, a social landlord providing over 30,000 homes across the East of England, launched its smoke-free homes project. The multi-stranded, phased project aims to comprehensively support residents to quit smoking and lead healthier lives. The project, which began six months earlier in September 2021, is the result of close collaboration between Flagship Homes, Norfolk County Council, Suffolk County Council, and Essex County Council. The project involves:

- A survey of Flagship Homes residents to gather data and insights on smoking behaviours and engagement with quitting support.
- 90 frontline staff provided with free training by Norfolk County Council equipping them to deliver very brief interventions on smoking and providing them with a behaviour change framework that can be applied to other aspects of their work with residents.
- Further Level 2 Stop Smoking Practitioner Training to be delivered to 1 to 2 'champions' across each of Flagship Homes frontline teams.
- Establishing referral pathways from Flagships Homes to Stop Smoking Services across the 3 councils covering their footprint.
- Introducing a new clause in tenancy agreements which reinforces Flagships commitment to smoke-free homes and encourages residents not to smoke in the property. The clause explains Flagship's health and wellbeing motivation and is not enforced with punitive measures.
- Any new homes being built will be advertised as smoke-free from the outset.
- Collecting data on new residents' smoking status to understand scale of issue and better direct support.
- A comprehensive internal and external communications programme, explaining the project and its health-based motivation to internal staff. This also includes raising awareness of quitting support for staff that smoke, and to residents for a period of at least 12 months from the project launch, with a new focus/theme each month communicating the multifaceted benefits of quitting and support available.

All the project elements have been collaboratively developed with substantial resource and support provided free by the participating councils. The group intend to scope the possibility of further support in the future of the project, such as offering free e-cigarette starter kits. Further resident surveys will also be undertaken by Flagship Homes - initial feedback from staff has been very positive.



6.2 Case study: Salford ‘Swap-to-Stop’

In 2018, local housing associations in Salford joined worked with Salford City Council to run a 3-month scheme aimed at support social housing residents who smoke to quit with the help of e-cigarettes. The scheme enabled smokers in Salford to receive a free e-cigarette alongside a standard stop smoking programme, delivered by trained professionals in the local stop smoking service and community pharmacy.

Housing staff in contact with residents were trained in how to signpost to the scheme, with participants receiving vouchers which were exchanged for a free e-cigarette, charger, and nicotine liquid. E-cigarettes were distributed via the stop smoking service and community pharmacies, where participants would also receive standard smoking cessation advice, in addition to follow-up consultations at two and four weeks, which were incentivised with additional bottles of liquid for their e-cigarettes.

The scheme was highly successful, with over 1,022 people taking up the e-cigarette offer, the majority of whom were from the most deprived IMD quintile. The city wards most represented in the scheme’s participants also had the highest proportion of people living in social housing. The scheme was a huge success. A total of 614 participants returned for the 4 week follow up, with 62% of these (383) having a clinically validated quit at this point (37% of the 1,022 people that took part). The local stop smoking service saw 4 times as many service users compared the same period in the previous year and, overall, the scheme successfully engaged 2.3% of all smokers in Salford in just 3 months. However, due to lack of funding, the project was discontinued and after it stopped the level of service use fell back to previous levels, demonstrating the need for a sustained approach.



Appendix A) Sample resident letter – second-hand smoke survey for use by owners and property managers.

[insert date]

Dear Residents,

We are pleased that you have chosen to reside at [name of building/property]. The [name of Management Company or apartment building] have been collecting information on smoking behaviours within our properties, to best ensure the health and safety of all persons living here.

We value your input! Please fill out the short survey below and return it to [address].

Sincerely,

[Management name]

Q1) Are you a current smoker?

Yes

No

I vape

Q2) Do you smoke in your home?

Yes, I smoke in my home or allow others to smoke in my home

I vape or allow others to vape in my home

No, I do not smoke or allow others to smoke in my home

No, I do not vape or allow others to vape in my home

Q3) If you are a current smoker, have you accessed local support to quit from Total Wellbeing Luton?

Yes I've tried a few times but not quit

Yes but service didn't work for me

I'm not aware of support available

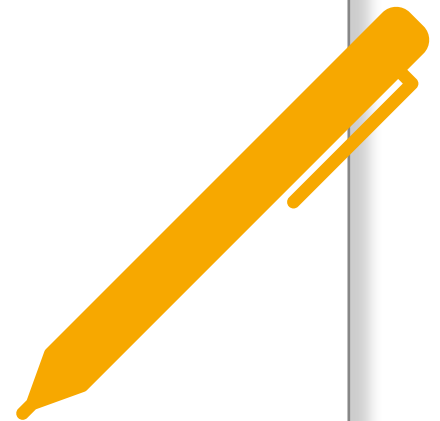
Other

Q3) Can you smell second-hand smoke in your home?

Yes, I can smell second-hand smoke coming into my home from somewhere else in the building and it bothers me.

Yes, I can smell second-hand smoke coming into my home from somewhere else in the building but it doesn't bother me.

No, I cannot smell second hand smoke coming into my home.



Q4) Would you like to live in a smoke-free building (tick all that apply)

Yes, I would like our building to be smoke-free, including individual home/ apartments

I would also like the following to be smoke-free:

- Patios, balconies
- Building entrances
- Entire property, including all outdoor and indoor areas

No, I would like our building to continue to allow smoking in people's homes

I have no preference

Comments:

Optional information:

[Insert statement about confidentiality and how the data collected will be used]

Name:

Address:

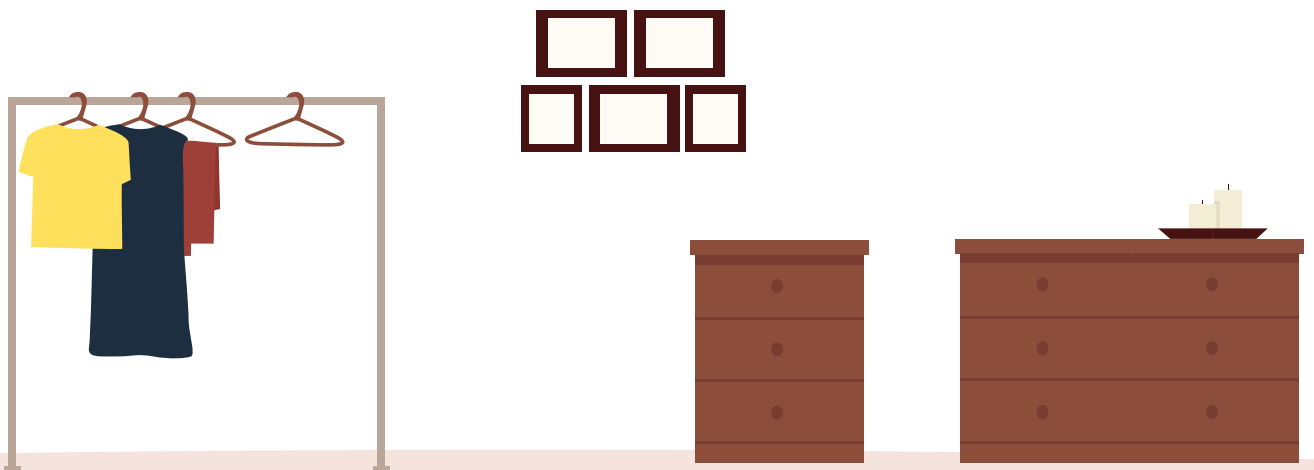
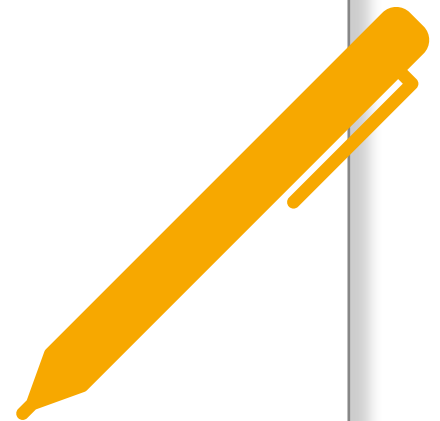
Phone number:

Total Wellbeing Luton free Stop smoking support:

Text 'QUIT' to 60066

Tel: 0300 555 4152

Email: info@totalwellbeingluton.org



Landlord smoke-free pledge

You can evidence your organisations commitment to supporting smoke-free homes for your tenants by signing, sharing and displaying the below pledge:

Achieving a smoke-free generation for every home in Luton

_____ acknowledges that:

- Smoking causes nearly 78,000 preventable, premature deaths each year in England;
- In Luton, it is estimated that 191 people die as a result on smoking each year.
- As smoking rates have declined smoking has become more concentrated in the most deprived households. Smoking prevalence amongst social housing tenants in Luton is 1.8 times higher than the general population and 3.4 times higher than households with a mortgage or owning outright.
- Tobacco addiction locks households into poverty – 4029 households with a smoker in Luton fall below the poverty line.
- People who smoke and who live in social housing want to quit and try to quit as often as others who smoke but are half as likely to succeed;
- Smoking is the leading cause of fire deaths in the home;
- Most people who smoke start in childhood - 280 children start smoking every day in England; children who live in a home where parents smoke are 90% more likely to start;
- One in five children are exposed to tobacco smoke in the home at least weekly.

Therefore, we:

- Welcome and endorse the government’s ambition to make England smoke-free by 2030, and its commitment to achieving a smoke-free generation where less than 5% of the population smokes; and
- Pledge to work towards a future where no child and less than 5% of adults are exposed to smoke in the home by 2030;
- Support Luton’s Tobacco Strategy – with the aim of reducing smoking rates amongst those living in social housing by 5 % in 5 years.

In doing so, people in our communities will benefit from:

- Living longer, healthier lives;
- Experiencing fewer health and economic inequalities;
- Living in homes free from harmful secondhand smoke;
- More money in their pockets and lower levels of poverty



In support of achieving a smoke-free future, we commit to supporting action to:

- Prioritise reducing smoking as the single biggest cause of ill health, premature death and inequality in our communities;
- Joining the Tobacco Free Luton alliance
- Working with Luton Council to sign-post people who smoke to services and information to help them quit;
- Promoting evidence-based harm reduction, including encouraging people who smoke to switch to nicotine replacement products or e-cigarettes when at home;
- Implementing a policy to protect the workforce that enters people’s homes from secondhand smoke exposure;
- Actively working with local partners and residents to tackle the sale of illicit tobacco and create safer communities;
- Collaborating with local partners and residents to identify and reduce the risk of smoking related house fires;
- Ensuring staff receive training in very brief advice on smoking cessation so staff are equipped to have brief meaningful conversations with people who smoke;
- Delivering consistent, positive messages about the benefits of quitting and living in a smoke-free home.

Signatories:

Space to add job title

Space to add job title

To find out more please visit [smoke-free spaces.](#)

