



London Borough of Merton: Training Fire Fighters to give Stop Smoking Advice

Merton Public Health worked with the London Fire Brigade to train Merton fire fighters to support residents to stop smoking as part of their home fire safety visits. The programme was designed to give fire fighters the confidence to ask residents if they would like to stop smoking. If a resident responded that they wished to do so, then the fire fighter could signpost them to the evidence-based stop smoking service.

Nearly 100 fire fighters have received the training, and the initial training has been extended to give fire fighters a better understanding of alcohol and substance misuse. This training will be completed soon, resulting in a resource of front line staff that can help get messages to communities about public health.

The programme has involved the Director of Public Health and public health team, together with the Fire Brigade Borough Commander and his team, the local voluntary sector through Merton Voluntary Service Council, and Hounslow and Richmond Community Healthcare NHS Trust, who are the providers of the integrated health improvement and stop smoking service in Merton.

This joined-up partnership work has allowed the Fire Brigade to support local public health priorities and to meet its own objective of working with vulnerable people. Fire fighters have been given new public health skills and local people have been given extra support. It is hoped that in the near future the stop smoking service will make residents more aware of the Fire Service's Fire Safety Home Visits and the increased uptake of smoke alarms.

This pilot programme was recently recognised as an example of excellent partnership working and was shortlisted for the National Compact Awards in the Impact Category.

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In April 2013, responsibility for public health was transferred to local authorities. This case study is part of a series highlighting the innovative work London local authorities have done to promote healthier lifestyles and reduce health inequalities since taking on this new role. For more information, email addicus.cort@londoncouncils.gov.uk