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**With photo**

**Prioritise your lung health this Lung Cancer Awareness Month**

November is Lung Cancer Awareness Month and a good opportunity to explore what can often be a difficult subject, particularly if your family has been affected by lung cancer. Anyone who has lost a loved one to cancer may be understandably fearful of what this could mean for them, some even preferring not to know. It is important to remember, though, that treatment advances in the last 20 years mean that more people survive cancer and enjoy a full life after treatment.

The NHS Targeted Lung Health Check (TLHC) Programme is the biggest initiative in NHS history aimed at improving early lung cancer diagnosis, and the latest NHS data shows that 5,037 lung cancers have now been found nationally through the programme since its launch in 2019.

Dr Jason Page, Clinical Director TLHC Programme SYB, said: “Lung cancer is the third most common type of cancer in the UK, leading to around 35,000 deaths each year, so this Lung Cancer Awareness Month is a great time to remind people about the TLHC Programme, especially as we are heading into the winter flu, coughs, and colds season when we are even more mindful of our lung health.

“Because lung cancer often doesn’t cause noticeable symptoms until it’s spread through the lungs or into other parts of the body, catching it early saves lives. A free NHS Lung Health Check gives us an invaluable opportunity to pick up the smallest changes that might otherwise go unnoticed – often when a person might otherwise feel fit and well.”

In South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw (SYB), the lifesaving screening programme started as a pilot in Doncaster in 2021, and has expanded across Bassetlaw, Rotherham, and Barnsley, with the final piece of the county puzzle – Sheffield – launching in September 2024.

Dr Page said: “The success of the programme so far in SYB has undoubtedly saved lives, and now we are starting the work in Sheffield with the intention of saving even more.

“Almost 140,000 people in SYB have been invited to take part in the TLHC Programme so far, and an incredible 525 cases of cancer have been found to date, with 413 being lung cancer – almost 10 % of the national total. What’s even more impressive is that 75% were caught at an early stage and 74% of these patients were suitable for successful treatment.”

As 72% of lung cancer cases are caused by smoking, people in SYB aged 55 to 74 who smoke or used to smoke and are registered with a GP have been receiving letters through the post inviting them for a free NHS Lung Health Check.

The Lung Health Check itself is a quick telephone call with a respiratory nurse, at the end of which they will decide if you need a scan of your chest in one of our mobile trucks. If you do, an appointment is booked so you don’t need to wait long, and staff are on hand to offer reassurance and support should you need it. The trucks are located at community venues like supermarkets and leisure centres, close to home with free parking right outside or on a bus route, so are convenient to get to. The scan itself only takes a matter of minutes and there’s no need to get undressed, so you can go about your day in no time.

Dr Page added: “Anyone with a set of lungs can develop lung cancer whether you have smoked or not, so don’t be complacent. You know your own body and what is normal for you, so if you have a cough that persists for three or more weeks, repeated chest infections, breathlessness or wheezing when you didn’t before, coughing up blood, continuing tiredness or lack of energy, and an unexplained loss of weight or appetite, please do not hesitate if you’re experiencing any of these symptoms – go and speak with your GP.”

As part of the TLHC Programme, current smokers will be offered help to stop if they would like it, and 700 people have done just that.

Vernon and Elaine are just two of the success stories referred to smoking cessation support through the TLHC Programme, and both agree they wished they had never started smoking at all.

Vernon said: “I had thought about stopping smoking before I was invited for my lung health check; my wife would keep saying I need to stop as I was the only one in my family that did.

“I would tell my younger self to not start smoking at all. My dad smoked but didn’t want my siblings or me to smoke – I should have listened to him.”

Elaine added: “I’d never thought about stopping before, but I was thinking about my grandkids and was determined to stop. I can feel a difference in my health, and I’m saving money. I’m breathing more easily and food tastes better.

“I used patches and an Inhalator offered to me and they really helped. I have a lot more energy now to play with my grandchildren.

“I wish I hadn’t started smoking in the 70s. If I could go back, I’d not start.”

Sheffield-based GP Dr Maria Read said: “We urge those invited to take up the opportunity of this free, lifesaving screening service. Please don’t wait until you feel unwell.

“If you receive a letter, please keep your appointment. We know how busy life can be, so you can contact the service to change it if you cannot make that time. Just like people who have benefitted in our neighbouring cities – please be smart and have your free lung health check."

The UK National Screening Committee and Government announced the TLHC Programme has been approved as a national screening programme and should be fully rolled out across the country by 2030.

For more information about the SYB TLHC Programme, please visit lunghealthchecks.co.uk.

**ENDS**

Photo captions:

Successfully quitting: Julie (right) from Yorkshire Smokefree Barnsley advises Jane – who was also referred through the TLHC Programme – on the best ways to stop smoking for good

Inside the trucks: Dr Jason Page (second from left) with South Yorkshire Mayor Oliver Coppard (third from right) and the TLHC team showcasing the scanner in the mobile truck