



MEDIA RELEASE

Issued by NHS Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Group

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Breathe easy this winter – join in with #Scarfie

Health professionals across mid and south Essex are encouraging people with respiratory conditions to stay well this winter by joining in with a new campaign #Scarfie launching this winter.

#Scarfie hopes to encourage people with Asthma, COPD and other respiratory illnesses to wear a scarf this winter to ease their breathing and keep well.

Dr Vickram Bhat, local GP and Planned and Unplanned Care lead for Thurrock CCG said: “By wearing a scarf, people warm up their breath before it goes into their lungs and can help to ease any respiratory conditions from getting worse in the colder weather.

“843 people attended A&E due to respiratory problems and of these 220 people were ambulated to hospital last winter. This simple tip could help many people stay well this winter.”

9,155 people living in Thurrock have a recorded diagnosis of Asthma and 3,270 with a recorded diagnosis of COPD.

#Scarfie, an Asthma UK campaign, encourages people to share a selfie of them wearing scarves on social media.

Sonia Munde, Head of Asthma UK Helpline and Nurse Manager, said: “During the winter people are at greater risk of having a life-threatening asthma attack due to seasonal triggers such as cold air and cold and flu viruses.

“Wrapping a scarf loosely around your mouth and nose warms up the air before you breathe it in, which can reduce your risk of an asthma attack. More than 72,000 people in mid and south Essex have asthma and this could help them to stay safe this winter. We’d encourage anyone with asthma who needs further information and support to contact Asthma UK’s Helpline, which is staffed by nurses on 0300 222 5800 or visit www.asthma.org.uk”

The local voluntary services have been working with local knitting groups and other volunteers to make or bring scarves to give away for free this winter. Local schools, sports groups, patient groups and hospitals are also joining in the campaign to help keep people well this winter.

Giant scarves have also been placed on a number of high profile landmarks across mid and south Essex to help raise awareness of the #scarfie campaign.

Janet McCheyne, leader of Bulphan Community Group said: “We’ve been so excited to get involved in #Scarfie – our group is always happy to support great local projects and this one helped many people to see the benefits of using a scarf to protect themselves.”

Information about #Scarfie and staying well over the winter is available on all CCG and Hospital Trust websites across mid and south Essex and being shared with all GP practices and other health and care professionals.

Anyone can get involved in #Scarfie - all you need to do is take a selfie with a scarf covering your nose and mouth and post to Twitter or Instagram using the hashtag #Scarfie.

ENDS

Notes to editor:

Hundreds of Thurrock community groups, including children have already got involved in their scarves. Groups from St Margaret’s Church Messy Play group in Standford le Hope, Chadwell Knit and Natter group, East Tilbury knit and natter, Bulphan community group including Cllr Brian Little, Thurrock Council, Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Group, Healthwatch Thurrock.

Thurrock Park Run is also taking part on 2nd December with up to 70 runners donning a scarf for the campaign.

Ends

Notes to Editor

For more information, please email: crouth@nhs.net or angela.wongkeet@nhs.net or ring 01268 464522 or 464594

For further information about Castle Point and Rochford CCG, visit their website at: www.castlepointandrochfordccg.nhs.uk

For further information about Southend CCG, visit their website at: www.southendccg.nhs.uk