



FAG END ...
from left,
Norcare's
Vicky
Richardson
is helping
Craig
Roberts and
Christine
Langley
stop
smoking.

HELPING VULNERABLE TO KICK BAD HABIT

Mental health patients on course to quit smoking

VULNERABLE people in South Tyneside are being given a helping hand to give up smoking.

The group, all of whom have mental health issues, are taking part in a 12-week course to help them stop smoking.

Housing charity Norcare is running the course at the Eco Centre in Jarrow.

The course also offers advice on coping with everyday tasks such as paying bills, eating healthily, socialising and playing a part in the community.

Norcare health improvement officer Vicky Richardson said: "A lot of people

By **PAUL MYLES-KELLY**

within the group use cigarettes as a psychological support. It helps them to cope with the stressful situations they deal with on a daily basis.

"This makes it more difficult for people with mental health issues to quit smoking because initially it causes greater anxiety levels.

"We also need to be careful that any nicotine replacement treatments, such as patches or gum, that they use do not conflict with medication they may be taking to control their health."

The course uses a range of props supplied by the NHS to show the damage smoking causes. Craig Roberts, one of

those taking part in the course, said: "One of the most effective things was a jar of tar, showing what you absorb into your lungs from a single cigarette.

"People in the smoking group are getting through their illnesses, but trying to stop while you are ill is very hard. This course is the extra help you need to kick the habit and improve your health."

Christine Langley has cut her 40-a-day habit in half in the brief time she has been on the course.

She said: "I have tried stopping before by using patches but still kept smoking.

"Thanks to the course, I can now go for longer periods without needing a cigarette. I hope that by the end of the course, I'll have stopped completely."

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