

# Smoking: supporting quit attempts

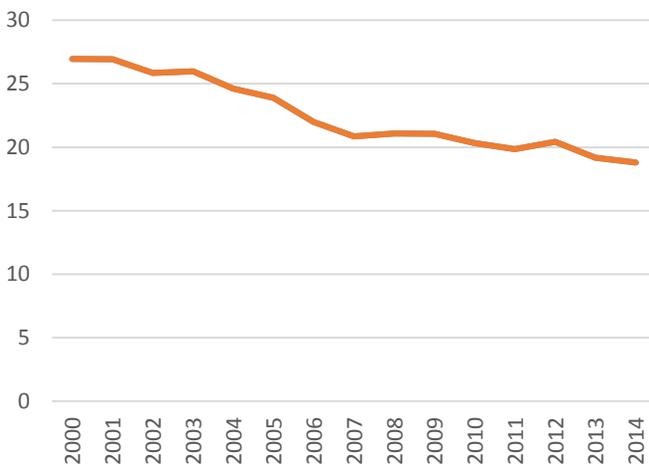
Supporting smokers to quit is an effective way to increase community wellbeing and save lives and money.

- ◆ Smoking is addictive and smokers need and want help to quit
- ◆ Stop smoking services are highly cost-effective
- ◆ Disadvantaged smokers find it harder to quit and need more help
- ◆ Success rates are much higher if services are run in line with best practice
- ◆ Local authorities must commission services to the highest possible standards

## Reducing smoking rates is the most effective way to improve health, save lives and money

### Proportion of adults who smoke cigarettes GB, 2000-2014

(ONS. [Adult Smoking Habits Great Britain 2014](#))



Smoking prevalence is declining and there are two million fewer smokers today than there were a decade ago.

Lower prevalence means children are exposed to fewer smokers and smoking is no longer seen as such a common and normal practice. In 2015, 8% of 15 year olds were regular smokers compared with 23% in 2002. ([HSCIC, Smoking, drinking and drug use among children, 2015](#)).

Over two thirds of smokers want to give up and 35% attempt to quit each year, usually on significant days, for instance New Years Day). However, only a small percentage (5%) successfully quit each year. ([HSCIC, Statistics on Smoking, 2015](#))

## Smokers need and want help to quit

Surveys consistently show that the majority of smokers want to quit.

When quitting the majority of people will attempt to go “cold turkey”.

However, Stop Smoking Services offer the best chance of success. Six month abstinence rates for those treated by Stop Smoking Services are likely to be 10 –20% higher than for those quitting without help. Stop Smoking Services also more than triple abstinence rates in the long-term compared with smokers who quit without support ([NCSCT, 2015](#))

Whilst they are the most effective route to quit, they are also the least widely used form of support.

**NCSCT**

**Effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of programmes to help smokers to stop and prevent smoking uptake at local level**

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**Executive Summary**

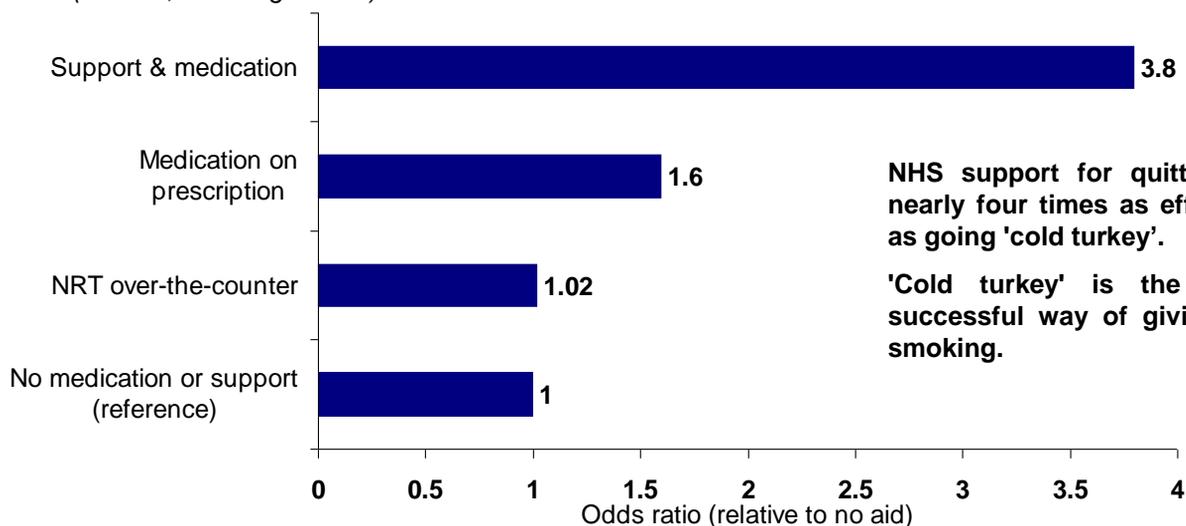
- ◆ Reducing smoking prevalence is a priority and there are national initiatives to drive down the number of people who smoke.
- ◆ Action taken by local authorities to reduce smoking prevalence plays an essential role in driving down smoking rates. Popular local measures for reducing prevalence include reducing smoking initiation amongst young people and supporting local smokers to quit, in particular through the commissioning of stop smoking services.
- ◆ There is strong evidence that stop smoking services are both effective at supporting smokers to quit in the long term and cost-effective.
- ◆ Studies investigating the effectiveness of programmes which aim to prevent smoking initiation amongst young people have mixed results, with some studies finding that these programmes only serve to delay smoking initiation rather than prevent it entirely.
- ◆ Local authorities looking to reduce the impact of smoking in their community are advised to invest in programmes that support existing smokers to quit because the evidence base for the stop smoking services is stronger than the evidence for smoking prevention programmes.

[www.ncsct.co.uk](http://www.ncsct.co.uk)

## Stop smoking services are the most cost-effective NHS treatment

### Comparison of quit routes

(West R, Smoking Toolkit)



NHS support for quitting is nearly four times as effective as going 'cold turkey'.

'Cold turkey' is the least successful way of giving up smoking.

Using a Stop Smoking Service to stop smoking is the most effective way of quitting – it's nearly [4 times more effective](#) than going 'cold turkey'. Although only a small percentage of smokers access Stop Smoking Service support, because it is so effective the Services are responsible for hundreds of thousands of successful quitters each year, saving local health services and local government millions of pounds each year.

### Success rates are much higher if services are run in line with best practice

Not every area in England provides the most effective support for quitting and there is a wide national variation in outcomes. Work to improve the quality of quit support for smokers is undertaken by the [National Centre for Smoking Cessation and Training](#) which provides training and support based on the best practice. Local authorities should also refer to [NICE guidelines](#).

### To reduce health inequalities services must be targeted

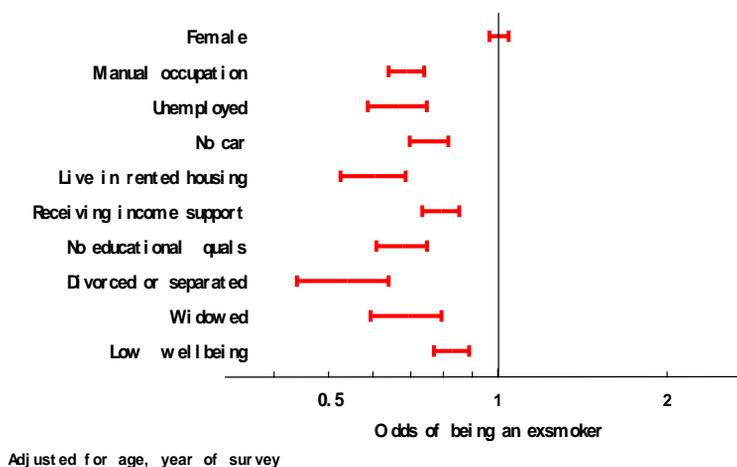
Disadvantaged smokers are equally likely to try to quit, but less likely to succeed.

However, where disadvantaged smokers access Stop Smoking Services they significantly improve their chances of success.

Support for quitting should be tailored for different minority groups, e.g. shisha smokers, pregnant people and those with mental health problems. Support should be available in diverse settings such as workplaces, recreation centres and prisons.

The best way to reduce smoking rates and the health inequalities smoking causes is to target particular groups with tailored support.

Socio-economic factors and quitting cigarette smoking  
Health Survey for England 2006-2012



April 2015