

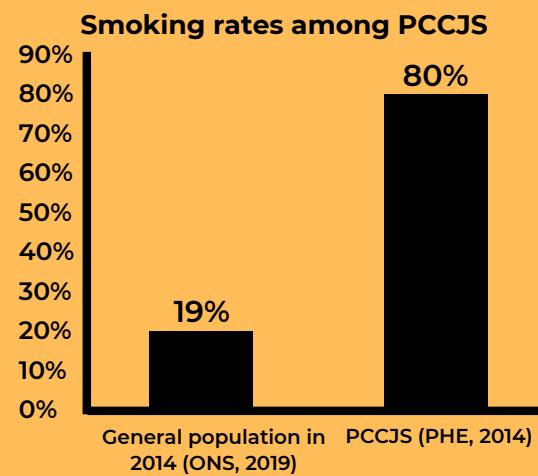
Smoking: People in contact with the criminal justice system (PCCJS)

- People who are incarcerated or in contact with the criminal justice system (PCCJS) are more likely to come from disadvantaged backgrounds. They experience greater health inequalities and higher smoking rates than the general population.
- PCCJS are just as likely to want to quit smoking as the general population.
- Prisons in England, Wales and Scotland are now all smokefree – the smokefree prison estate in England now represents the largest in Western Europe.
- Helping PCCJS quit smoking benefits the wider community and local authorities have a key role to play in providing support to PCCJS upon their release from prison.

PCCJS are four times more likely to smoke than in the general population

PCCJS typically have a lower life expectancy than their peers in the general population. They are more likely to have infectious diseases and are more likely to have problems with substance misuse, including drugs, alcohol and cigarette smoking ([PHE, 2014](#)).

In 2013, around 80% of PCCJS smoked compared with around 20% in the general population ([PHE, 2014](#)). High levels of smoking are also found among those in police custody and on probation ([RCP and RCPsych, 2013](#)).



High smoking rates among PCCJS deepen health inequalities

Higher smoking rates are seen in more disadvantaged groups which are over-represented in prison populations. Around half of prisoners have no educational qualifications, over two-thirds are unemployed prior to entering prison ([PHE, 2014](#)) and mental health conditions are disproportionately common ([NAO, 2017](#)). Smoking further compounds these inequalities by damaging health.

Smokefree prisons

As of July 2018, all closed prisons in England and Wales had gone smokefree (a total of 103 in England and 3 in Wales accommodating over 82,000 people). Prisons in Scotland went smokefree from November 2018 whilst Northern Ireland continues to implement an exemption in legislation allowing PCCJS to smoke in their cells ([ASH, 2018](#)).

An evaluation of air quality in Scottish prisons following smokefree implementation found second-hand smoke levels fell by 80% inside premises, with levels of fine particles in prison air comparable to levels measured in outdoor air in Scotland, confirming that exposure to SHS has been drastically reduced as a result ([Semple et al, 2019](#)).

Why is smoking in prisons a local authority issue?

Helping PCCJS quit smoking benefits everyone. PCCJS often come from disadvantaged communities. Addressing smoking among PCCJS benefits both them, their family, communities and wider society, thereby addressing and reducing the health inequalities higher smoking rates drive. Therefore, issues relating to health and justice directly affect all local authorities, CCGs, NHS and social care commissioners and all communities.

With prisons going smokefree in England, Wales and Scotland, local authorities need to be ready to support individuals moving from restricted smokefree environments and ensure that there is continuity of support.

Providing continued support once someone is released from prison

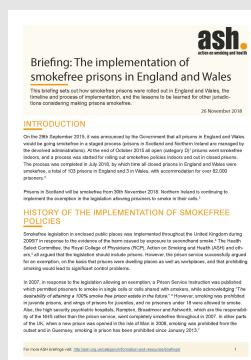
- PCCJS are often a “mobile population”. This makes it difficult to ensure joined up support to quit smoking. Being released from prison can also interrupt the provision of quit support at a potentially challenging and stressful time.
- As a result, relapse may be particularly likely at this time, even more so given the transition from what is now a largely smokefree environment.
- Local stop smoking services should therefore link with prison services to identify a clear pathway to ensure post-release support for PCCJS.

Advice & Guidance

- PHE Reducing Smoking in Prisons
- *Guidance on the management of tobacco use and nicotine withdrawal*
- NICE NG92 Stop smoking interventions and services
- Recommendation 1.11.1 advises that effective stop smoking interventions are provided and promoted in prisons.
- NICE PH45 Smoking: harm-reduction
- Provides harm reduction recommendations for people who stay or work in closed institutions.

Further information

ASH has produced a briefing on the implementation of smokefree prisons in England and Wales. This includes an overview of the implementation timeline, the key stages and actions taken in addition to learnings from the initiative for other jurisdictions.



[ASH Briefing: The implementation of smokefree prisons in England and Wales](#)