



**A PLATFORM AND APP FOR
DIRECT BOOKINGS AND
SUPPORT THROUGH OUR
SMOKING CESSATION SERVICES**

ash wales
cymru
action on smoking and health

 Respiratory
Innovation Wales

1. Background

Smoking remains the largest preventable cause of morbidity and premature mortality in developed countries ¹. One in four hospital admissions for a respiratory disease can be attributed to smoking in Wales which costs the NHS £302m a year ². Smoking kills over 5,000 people in Wales every year ³.

There are 466,827 thousand smokers in Wales, representing 18% of the adult population ⁴. Statistics show **45%** of these smokers try to quit every year, however less than **3.4%** are accessing Wales' NHS smoking cessation services ⁵.

It has been clinically proven interventions combining pharmacotherapy and behavioural support increase quit attempts and success rates ⁶.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed models of NHS service delivery and technology has advanced at pace to meet the needs of service users. There exists a unique opportunity to harness these advances and embed a culture of innovation and change into the mindset of public service leaders.

This study explores attitudes as to the usefulness and importance of a digital smoking cessation platform through data gathered from professionals, smokers, ex-smokers, non-smokers and stakeholders.

2. Objectives:

- i.) To explore the existing framework for smoking cessation services and provide a context for evidence gathered on the usefulness and importance of a digital smoking cessation platform.
- ii.) Gather qualitative and quantitative data on
 - aptitude to use by stakeholders and potential clients
 - importance of specified behavioural change features
 - necessary and desired technical features
 - additional features
 - perceived challenges and opportunities
- iii.) Use the evidence to provide recommendations on the future digitalisation of smoking cessation service platforms.

¹ <https://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/tobacco>

² <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2017-11/tobacco-control-delivery-plan-for-wales-2017-to-2020.pdf>

³ <https://publichealthwales.shinyapps.io/smokinginwales/>

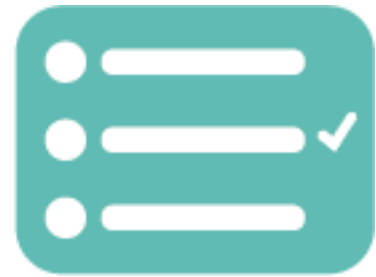
⁴ <https://gov.wales/national-survey-wales-headline-results-april-2019-march-2020>

⁵ <https://gov.wales/nhs-smoking-cessation-services#latest-release>

⁶ <https://www.cochranelibrary.com/cdsr/doi/10.1002/14651858.CD008286.pub3/full>

3. Data collection:

A series of short online questionnaires were created for the general public, stakeholders and pharmacists. The survey questions were written in collaboration with healthcare professionals, Respiratory Innovation Wales (RIW) and Community Pharmacy Wales. ASH Wales also consulted smokers from social media networks.



The survey results and free text comments were used to frame the themes of focus groups. Separate groups were held for smokers and stakeholders with questions scripted to ensure the themes were explored.

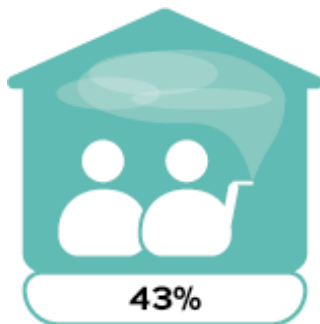
4. Results:

i.) Questionnaire results

General Public: In total, 1065 respondents took part in the survey. A high proportion of respondents were female 67% (n=509) 31% (n=231) male respondents.



Of these 33% (n=347) said they were a current smoker and 10.42% (n=111) said they were non-smokers but lived with a smoker. Making a total of 43% of respondents who either smoke or live with a smoker.

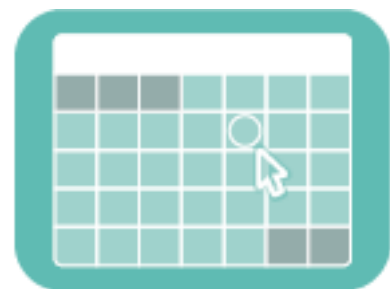


Of those that did not identify as a smoker and didn't live with a smoker, 38% (n=409) said they were ex-smokers. The final group made up of just 16.5% (n= 176) classified themselves as never having smoked and not living with a smoker.

General Public Key Findings:

When asked whether or not an online booking platform for services would be useful

- 70% (n=228) of current smokers said yes or maybe
- 61% (n=245) of ex-smokers said yes or maybe it would have been useful
- 43% (n=44) who live with a smokers said yes or maybe for the person they live with
- 95% (n=162) who have never smoked and don't live with a smoker said yes or maybe



- 68% (n=679) in total said yes or maybe.

137 smokers answered more detailed questions about the functionality of the system.

- 84 to 88% thought most of the suggested features were useful.
- Videos (74%) and peer support (74%) received the least amount of support.
- Older smokers were less keen on an online system and its features.

How important would the following features be?					
	Very Important	Important	Useful	Not Useful	Not Important
Able to book and manage appointments	38%	27%	23%	4%	7%
Notifications about appointments	37%	26%	26%	4%	7%
Support and advice notifications	36%	27%	24%	4%	9%
Personalised action plans with advice on (NRT)	40%	33%	15%	4%	7%
Access to on-demand quit videos	17%	26%	32%	13%	13%
Support from other quitters	13%	23%	38%	11%	15%
Progress Reports	27%	31%	26%	7%	8%
Incentives to quit eg financial	36%	24%	26%	2%	11%

- 72% (n=98) of smokers said they would or might use this system to book an appointment
- 37% would like virtual sessions, 34% telephone support, 32% face-to-face and 9% group sessions
- 80% (n=110) of smokers said they would like a personalised quit plan
- 84% (n=115) said they would be happy for their personal assessment to be shared with their quit smoking adviser

A free text box where participants could add comments provided some common themes, suggestions included;

- Chat forums
- Additional support i.e. weight gain, mental health, family
- A guide to vaping
- Incentivisation
- Individual support packages



Stakeholder Key Findings:

- Almost half of the stakeholders worked in SCS in some way (46%)
- 64 out of 65 of the respondents including every SCS thought an on-line system would or may be helpful
- Every suggested feature was thought to be important or useful by over 90% of respondents, with the exception of quit incentives (83%).

In your experience how important would the following features of an online system be for smokers?					
	Very Important	Important	Useful	Not Useful	Not Important
Booking and management of appointments	57%	23%	18%	2%	0%
Appointment notifications	63%	28%	9%	0%	0%
Support and advice notifications	51%	34%	14%	2%	0%
Personalised quit plans with information on smoking cessation aids such as NRT	69%	22%	8%	2%	0%
Access to on-demand quit videos	34%	31%	31%	2%	2%
Support from other quitters	38%	28%	32%	2%	0%
Progress reports	40%	37%	20%	3%	0%
Incentives to quit eg financial	34%	18%	31%	9%	8%

In your experience how important would the following features of an online system be for service providers or advisers?					
	Very Important	Important	Useful	Not Useful	Not Important
Able to book and manage appointments	72%	18%	8%	2%	0%
Able to refer between services	65%	25%	11%	0%	0%
Support and advice notifications	51%	32%	15%	2%	0%
Data sharing across smoking cessation services	52%	23%	19%	5%	2%
Access to personalised quit plans with information on smoking cessation aids such as NRT	62%	23%	12%	2%	2%
Access to cessation medication history	60%	18%	22%	0%	0%
Able to refer to bespoke cessation services such as secondary care	66%	22%	12%	0%	0%

When it came to the free text questions stakeholders were asked about what other features could be considered. The comments showed a high level of engagement and a depth of knowledge about the clients and systems used. The answers echoed those of the smokers including calls for;

- a service to fit around the service users
- additional support packages i.e. mental health
- incentivisation programmes
- advice on e-cigarettes.



Stakeholders were also asked about perceived challenges and barriers to the introduction of an online system. Issues that were raised included;

- barriers to service users having access to IT
- getting service users to sign up to the IT
- the need for consistent data across all services
- data protection around the service users' details.

Pharmacy Key Findings

- 44 pharmacists took part in the survey
- 93% (n=41) offered smoking cessation advice
- Only 1 out of 41 currently took on-line bookings
- 'Walk-ins' were how most clients booked in
- 86% (31) thought an on-line system would be useful
- 92% (33) indicated they would or may use it.

In the free text section Pharmacists were asked to share their own ideas of what other features would be useful. The responses included calls for;

- full integration with all smoking cessation services
- location based so it can show the client services available in their area
- a nicotine dependence assessment so that the client can be guided to which product best for them.

ii.) Focus Groups

Smokers: Questions centred around smoking experiences and quit attempts. The group explored general attitudes towards smoking, quitting experiences and the potential features of an online smoking cessation support system.

All of the smokers had some knowledge around NRT, some had an in-depth knowledge of smoking cessation services and half of the participants had been spoken to by a professional at some point about their smoking.

There was a positive response to support being offered. Virtual support was seen as an important element of smoking cessation support.

The discussions around previous attempts to quit smoking did not present trends or threads, the experiences were individual, and participants strongly indicated their needs differed.

The heavier smokers needed immediate access to stop smoking medications with the ability to adapt and change when necessary. From the heavier smokers there was more reliance on the support from smoking cessation specialists and group support. There was an acceptance of the need for medical intervention to support their quit attempts.

In contrast the lighter smokers focused on the possibility of rewards system, and ability to access NRT without having to physically go to a group. For these smokers, smoking was perceived as more of a choice than an addiction.

Overall, the personalisation of quit smoking support was key to the development of online support for smoking cessation.

Stakeholders: There was a high level of engagement in the stakeholder focus group, a total of 15 were invited and 13 attended. The group explored perceived challenges to implementation and to capture the views of a broad base of advisers, support workers and policy advocates.

The participants all shared their experiences of smoking cessation services and several themes emerged.

- Existing need to improve patient flow through services
- Data collection and sharing needs to improve
- Data protection of patient details
- Creating a service accessible to all
- Creating a service specific to the user
- Ensuring the app/ platform supplements existing services
- Need to invest in technology and supportive media



5. Conclusion

There is a high acceptability for proposals to enhance the digital offer for smokers from stakeholders, service providers and smokers.

A total of 70% of smokers saying an online booking service would or maybe useful and 61% of ex-smokers saying they would have or may have used this system to help them quit. There are some age differences that should be taken into account and with almost a third of

smokers saying they would not use an online system it appears that currently this could not be the sole method for managing SCS appointments

When it came to stakeholders, the majority supported the development of a digital platform for smoking cessation services. Challenges were raised over the technical barriers to integrating systems, data protection and accountability. On the whole, the development of a digital platform that more readily meets the needs of service users and providers was supported by the participants of the survey and the focus groups.

The pharmacists that took part in the study also indicated support for the development of a digital platform. Their responses focused on the capabilities of the system and the avoidance of a duplication of processes.

The infrastructure of Wales' national smoking cessation services provides the architecture for technical development and co-ordinated delivery. For service users enhancing the digital offer in NHS services has proven to be effective and acceptable.

This study highlights the need for development to help to address the preferences of smokers in Wales and ensure more smokers are accessing the services to help them quit.

6. Recommendations:

These recommendations outline the key elements of a plan to deliver digital solutions aimed at supporting more smokers to quit and enhancing cessation services.

- Prioritise the use of innovative digital solutions within national strategies to reach an Endgame target of less than 5% of the population smoking
- Set up a national digital solutions task and finish group to explore system transformation, overcoming barriers to implementation, accountability and key actions
- Commission research into;
 - Latest quit methods of smokers that do not access NHS services and how services and digital solutions can support their choices
 - The capacity of existing smoking cessation services and how digital solutions can provide additional support and reach more smokers
 - New intervention technology that connects the delivery device, the user and services and the potential to support smoking cessation
- Welsh Government to task public service leads with driving transformational change to deliver an integrated and seamless smoking cessation service that optimises the use of digital solutions

- Improve data flow and collection, to include the creation of a single client record which documents quit attempts and intervention methods and can be transferred between cessation services
- Create and deliver digital solutions that wrap around the preferences of smokers with options tailored to their needs
- Develop digital solutions which can work across support services outside of the NHS



This survey was conducted by ASH Wales on behalf of RIW as part of the RIW project titled **A platform and App for direct bookings and support through our smoking cessation services**. This project was funded by Pfizer through their competitive grant program *2019 IM L Smoking Cessation Patient Education* (application ID 60288553).