

**National Collaborative Commissioning Unit  
& Royal College of Psychiatrists Wales**

**Dyfodol Programme**

# **Smoking & Mental Health**

## **A framework for action in Wales**

**May 2024**

## **Lay summary**



**GIG  
CYMRU  
NHS  
WALES**

Uned Gomisiynu  
Cydwethredol Cenedlaethol  
National Collaborative  
Commissioning Unit

in collaboration with



**Public Mental Health  
Implementation Centre**

## Report summary

Smoking isn't just bad for our bodies, it can also be bad for our mental health. People with severe mental illness often don't live as long as others. Smoking is a big reason for this, because people with severe mental illness often smoke more than other people. In Wales, there are programmes to help people stop smoking, under the smoke-free Wales policy.

There is evidence that these programmes can help people quit.

In this report, we look at three strategies to reduce smoking in people with mental illness in Wales.



## The three strategies for lowering smoking rates

First, staff in hospitals and clinics need better resources to learn how they can help their patients to quit. Some healthcare staff think that it isn't their job to help people with mental illness to stop smoking, or that they won't want to quit. But lots of people with mental illness want to quit smoking, and they can do it if they get help.

Second, making mental health hospitals in Wales smoke-free can help patients quit. When people aren't allowed to smoke, they can learn better ways to handle their stress and mental health. But to do this, we need to give staff the right training and tools. Staff need to learn about different ways to help people quit and how they can best support their patients.

Third, we need to collect more information about people's smoking habits in Wales, and how often people try to quit. At the moment, there isn't information about the number of people with severe mental illness who smoke. This makes it hard to know if people are smoking more or less, and in which areas. We need to make sure everyone gets the help they need, including people who don't have good access to healthcare.

## How we can use three strategies to help people to stop smoking

In this report, we talk about four main ways to help people with mental illness in Wales stop smoking:

1. By training staff in mental health services to help patients quit smoking.
2. By making it easier for people with mental illness to access Help Me Quit.
3. By making it easier for people to get stop-smoking treatments (like nicotine patches, gum and sprays).
4. By keeping track of how many people smoke in Wales, including people with severe mental illness

## Working together we can make Wales smoke free

We can lower smoking rates and improve mental health in Wales by working with government, healthcare and other organisations. The right leadership is needed to make sure that all the organisations can work together to help people with mental illness to stop smoking.

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