



Evaluating the North East and North Cumbria NHS Staff Tobacco Dependency Offer

April 2024



Who is this evidence useful for?

Tobacco Commissioners, NHS Smokefree Leaders, Public Health Colleagues, Occupational Health & Wellbeing Leads and Academics.

Quick-read summary

A tobacco dependency offer was piloted for NHS staff working within the North East and North Cumbria.

The service provided Behavioural Support, 12 weeks free Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) (including access to a vape), and free access to the premium version of the SmokeFree app.

Researchers conducted an evaluation of the North East and North Cumbria NHS Staff Tobacco Dependency Offer. This involved a survey and interviews with NHS staff who engaged with the pilot, to find out their views, perspectives, and experiences.

What did the research find?

Access

Participants, once familiar with the service, found accessing the service easy, and this was seen as a motivating factor for engaging with the service.

Options

Participants were satisfied with the options of NRT available for them, reporting an ability to access their desired form of NRT. Participants also found the service for ordering replaceable liquid for vapes, easy to navigate and reported fast delivery.

Devices

Some participants reported technical issues associated with the vape offered; however, participants generally suggested that the vape was a good starting point, with the free vape being a strong motivation to begin a quit smoking journey.

Communication

Participants reported good communication with stop smoking advisors, with regular contact being something that facilitated successful quits. Some suggested that they would have benefitted from more contact with advisors, and options for how they were contacted e.g., face-to-face, telephone, or video calling.

Recommendations - overview

Service promotion

Stop smoking services should be accessible to NHS staff across different settings.

Use advertising including posters/word-of-mouth for front-line staff/routine manual workers. Use email/trust intranet pages for office-based workers.

User engagement

Create an in-person environment to allow users to meet other staff accessing the service, and create peer networks for support.

Offer service users the scope to pre-book appointments for check-ins and tailor to the service user needs, e.g., private rooms, calls or video calls.

Training

Improve the frequency/quality of training for support staff. Provide staff with up-to-date knowledge on the known effects/benefits of vaping vs smoking.

Provide support staff with knowledge of the available vape options, and information about how to troubleshoot issues with vapes.

Service quality and evaluation

Create a space to provide service feedback, make regular improvements, where possible.

Why is this important?

This research highlights the acceptability of the Staff Tobacco Dependency Offer to NHS staff and provides recommendations to build upon the service. It also provides recommendations to improve smoking cessation support that is available for NHS staff.

Read more, including the full recommendations, at: www.arc-nenc.nihr.ac.uk/evidence/STDO24/