

Supporting people to quit smoking in a prison setting

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QUIT



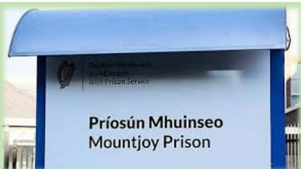
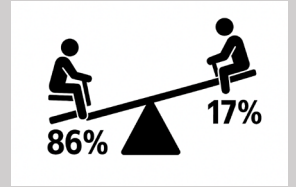
Background – HSE and Irish Prison Service

Public Health (Tobacco) Act, 2004
Some exemptions:

- Nursing homes
- Secondary mental Health Units
- Residential Units disability services
- **Prisons**



Tobacco use remains disproportionately high within Irish prisons



- 2018 – work with the Irish Prison Service to support smoke free environments
- 2019 – Progression unit of Mountjoy became smoke free



Local stop smoking advisors have been delivering one-to-one support onsite to prison staff.

More prison staff have been trained as stop smoking advisors across a number of prisons – providing support to inmates.

TFI, the local stop smoking services and Irish Prison Service continue to progress this work...



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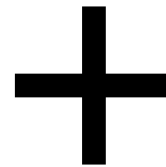
2025 – Training inmates as stop smoking advisors



Trained 10 inmates as stop smoking advisors (SSA)

- Adapted online module delivered by prison staff (trained SSA's)
- Two modified days face-to-face delivered by TFI

Two trained volunteers provided peer-to-peer group stop smoking support





Results

Engagement and quit attempts

- 9 people
- All set quit dates
- All commenced NRT
- 1 relapsed and left the programme

Support from Irish Red Cross trained peer advisors significantly influenced commitment to the programme.

‘I’ve never known peace like it, nobody is bothering me every 5 minutes looking for a cigarette.’

Relapse and re-engagement

Lockdown disruption

- Unable to access NRT
- Resulted in relapse for four participants
- Two reset quit dates

March 2026:

- 3 were transferred to another prison – lost to follow up
- 1 smoke free on prison release
- 1 smoke free (in prison)
- 3 have relapsed

‘The participants felt really encouraged that the health service showed an interest in them and their health.’

Attitudes

The Prison Governor has

- embraced tobacco control measures,
- working towards creating some smoke free corridors
- followed by smoke free wings, and in time a smoke free prison.

More prison nursing staff have been trained as stop smoking advisors, in order to support peer led groups in other prisons across Ireland.



What have we learnt?

There is an appetite for quitting smoking despite the restrictive environment, including the restrictions brought about by prison lockdowns.

Training inmate volunteers as peer stop-smoking advisors within an Irish prison setting is both feasible and effective.

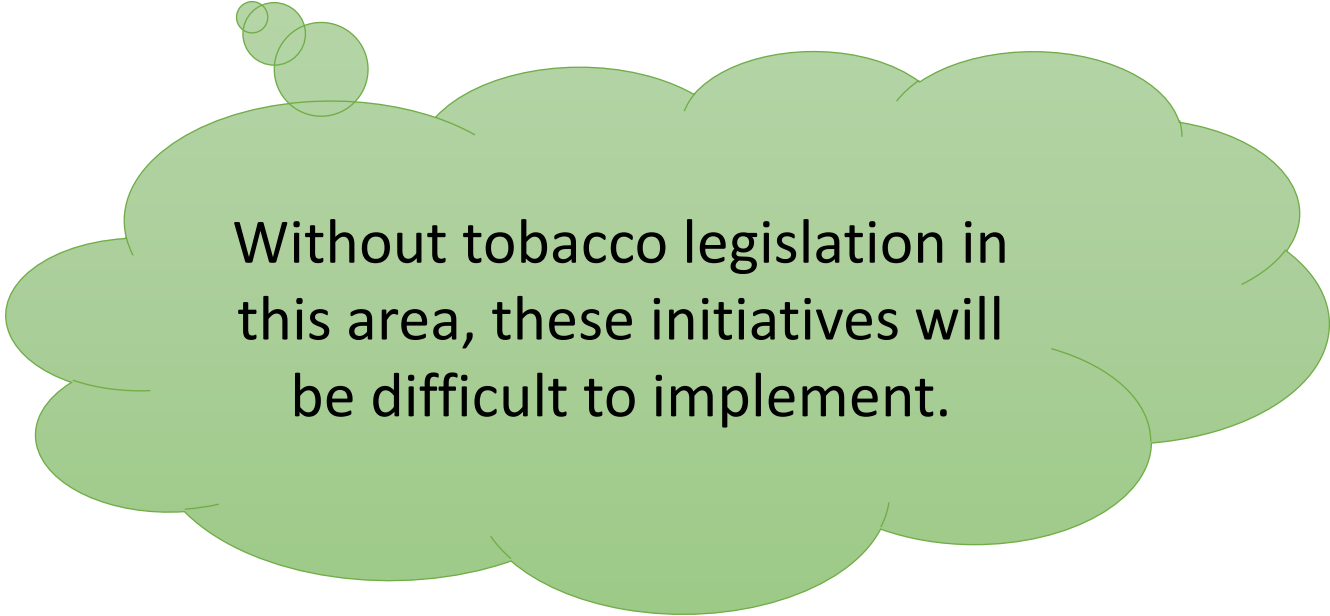
The Irish Red Cross model provides an existing volunteer infrastructure to recruit peer led stop smoking advisors.

The transient relapse caused by lockdown underscores the critical importance of maintaining continuity of access to NRT and behavioural support.





Final thought

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Without tobacco legislation in this area, these initiatives will be difficult to implement.