

Removal of Barriers to Optimise Access to NRT via HSE Stop Smoking Services in Ireland.

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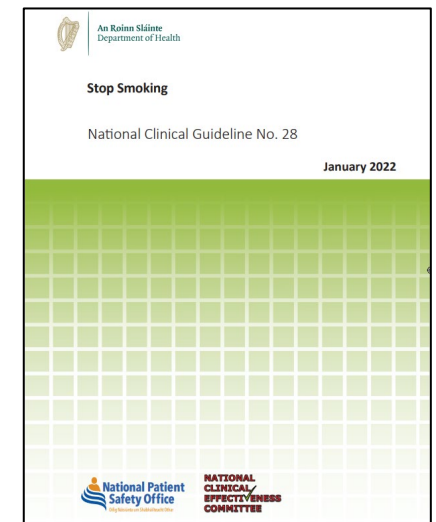
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HE Background

- Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death in Ireland resulting in almost 100 deaths and almost 1,000 hospitalisations per week.
- Smoking prevalence reflects a clear and growing socio-economic gradient in Ireland and internationally.
- In 2022, the Department of Health published Ireland's first National Stop Smoking Clinical Guideline, which outlines recommended stop smoking care.
 - Behavioural Support +/- Stop Smoking Medicine.
- Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) is a well established & recommended smoking medicine.
 - However, evidence suggests that cost may be a barrier to access.



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Sláintecare Healthy Communities Programme – Stop Smoking Services

- In 2022, through Sláintecare investment, dedicated stop smoking services were established in 20 designated Sláintecare areas in Ireland:
 - 1-to-1 stop smoking clinics established in local health centres & primary care centres with behavioural support provided by HSE Stop Smoking Advisors.
 - Group stop smoking programmes established in local community settings, with behavioural support provided by community facilitators.
 - Both services would provide free Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) to participants engaging in a quit attempt.
 - Arrangements were made locally with local pharmacists to support this initiative.



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Free NRT for all HSE Stop Smoking Services

- Following approval from the Department of Health, this offer of free NRT was extended to all clients engaging with HSE stop smoking services from July 2022.
- The provision of access to medication is:
 - Aligned with government policy,
 - Clinically effective and highly cost effective, as evidenced in the Health Technology Assessment and a Budget Impact Assessment (Stop Smoking Guideline), which were completed by Health Information Quality Authority (HIQA).
- Clients with medical card – access their NRT via the General Medical Services (GMS) scheme & their local pharmacy, with a prescription for product from their General Practitioner (GP).
- Clients with NO medical card – access their NRT via the HSE Stop Smoking Services & a named pharmacy in the area.



HSE Stop Smoking Services – Pre Quit Consultation



Client agrees to set a quit date and to use nicotine replacement therapy/stop smoking medicine.

An assessment of nicotine dependence is completed.

For clients with No medical card, the SSA arranges their order of nicotine replacement therapy/stop smoking medicine.

NRT/stop smoking medicine is provided at 4 stages in the quit journey over 12 weeks.

A red rectangular logo with the word 'QUIT' in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters.



Initial Administration Process for provision of free NRT to Clients

- Budget allocation provided to local Community Healthcare Organisations (CHO)
- Local arrangements made with community-based pharmacies in the area

Community-based SSA
A recommendation order was sent using healthmail to the local pharmacy.
Clients would pick-up their NRT order from these pharmacies.

- Pharmacies were being paid through Purchase Orders
 - There was no standardised costs for product.
 - Prices varied.
 - SSAs had to track orders on a separate template for reconciliation purposes.
 - Nationally all data relating to administration and costs was collated centrally and reported to the DoH.



Current Administration Process for provision of free NRT & Stop Smoking Medicines to Clients

- Budget allocation held centrally in HSE Health & Wellbeing
- Since December 2025, in contract with AllCare Pharmacy to provide product to Clients nationally
 - 153 stores across Ireland
 - Delivery service available to those who live >15KM from the nearest AllCare Store.

ALL SSA (across all services)

A recommendation order is sent from QuitManager (Patient management system) using healthmail to an AllCare pharmacy.

Clients preference for in-store collection or delivery service is included in order.

Clients pick-up their NRT/stop smoking medicine order from these pharmacies OR Clients order is delivered to their home.

- One invoice received monthly and reconciled using new QuitManager reports
 - GMS price is paid for product.



Long-term plan for Administration Process for provision of free NRT & Stop Smoking Medicines to Clients

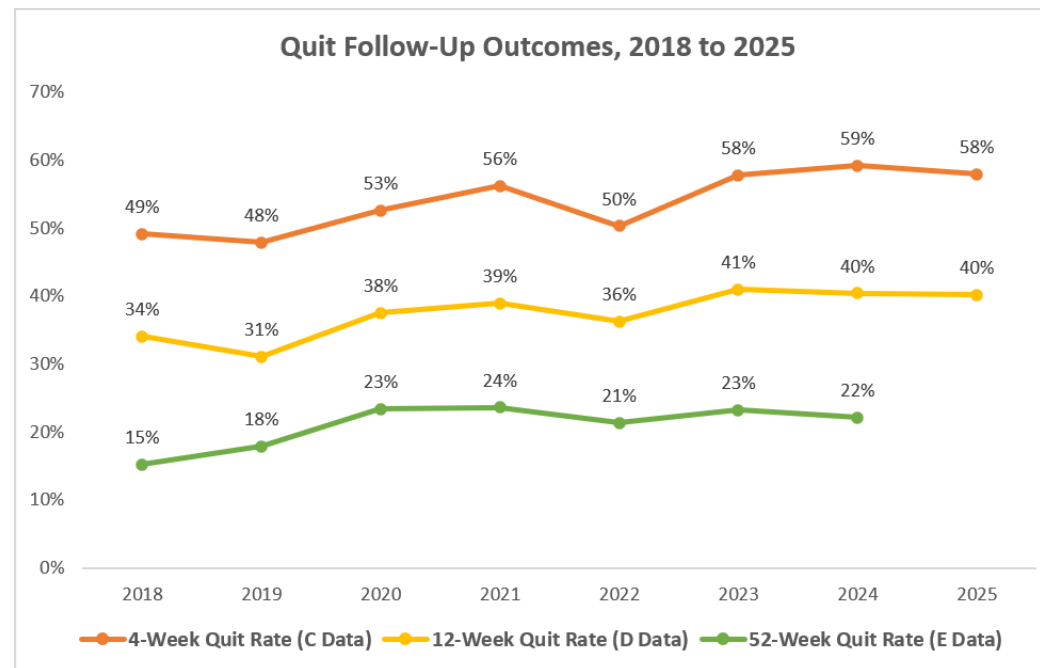
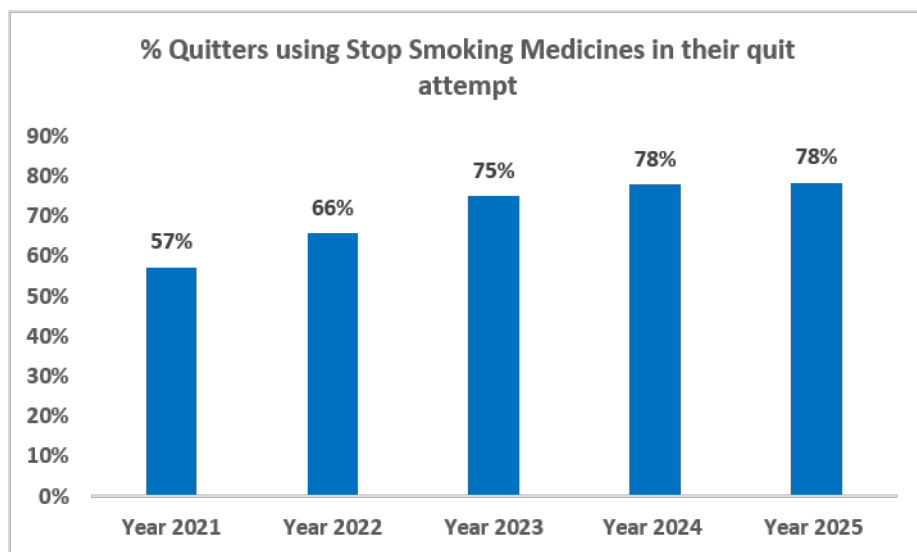
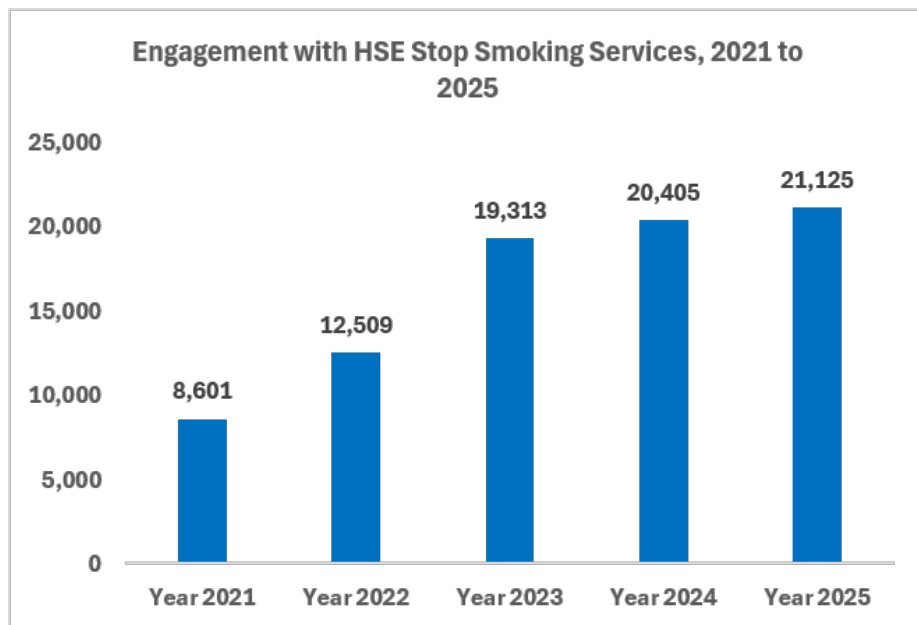
- A new Primary Care Reimbursement Services (PCRS) Scheme for the funding of NRT/Stop smoking medicines
- Clients would be able to collect product in all pharmacies nationwide
- Details of how orders would be placed etc to be agreed
- Engagement ongoing with colleagues in HSE PCRS & Department of Health

Benefits of such a scheme:

- Better value for money,
- Reduced administration,
- Allow all community pharmacies to participate in the scheme,
- Remove costs for posting & packaging
- Clients could collect products in their local pharmacy store.



Stop Smoking Service Activity Data



Data Source:
QuitManager Patient Management System,
HSE Tobacco Free Ireland Programme

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Formal Evaluation

JOURNAL ARTICLE

Positive effects from the introduction of fully subsidised nicotine replacement therapy in Ireland



P Naughton ✉, A Sheridan, E Murphy, M Blake, P Kavanagh

European Journal of Public Health, Volume 34, Issue Supplement_3, November 2024, ckae144.2183, <https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/ckae144.2183>

Published: 28 October 2024

- ☐ This study confirms the real-world effectiveness of NRT use as a smoking cessation aid.
- ☐ The removal of financial barriers is associated with increased NRT use and successful smoking cessation.

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Conclusions

- Service Data highlights the benefits of removing financial barriers to NRT & stop smoking medicines to ensure equitable access to this life saving intervention.
 - More people have engaged with services than ever before,
 - More people are using recommended stop smoking treatments,
 - More people are successfully quitting.
- Supports current national roll out of free NRT/stop smoking medicine.

Contact Us

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Contact the QUIT Team

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