

Cardiff and Vale Public Health Team Newsletter



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To quit smoking, please contact *Help Me Quit* by:

- Calling freephone 0800 085 2219
- Texting HMQ to 80818 (text cost is one standard rate message)
- Going to the *Help Me Quit* website [here](#) and requesting a call back

Welcome to the Cardiff and Vale Public Health Team newsletter January 2026.

Welcome to this special edition of the Cardiff and Vale Public Health Team newsletter which showcases our work to support people to live smoke-free lives.

As we enter a new year, the team continues to work with our partners on a shared commitment to reduce inequalities and to improve and protect the health and wellbeing of our local population. One area of particular focus remains tackling smoking - a major

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cause of preventable illness and death across Wales. The harmful effects of smoking are well-documented, but the progress we've made in supporting individuals to quit is equally important to highlight.

In this newsletter, we share key updates, news and policy changes which enhance smoking cessation efforts across Cardiff and Vale. The impact of smoking reaches far beyond individual health, contributing to health inequalities that disproportionately affect our most vulnerable populations.

As a team, we are dedicated to reducing these disparities by ensuring that quitting smoking is accessible to everyone, regardless of their background or circumstances. By offering tailored support, increasing awareness, and improving access to services, we aim to create a healthier, smoke-free future for all.

I encourage you to take a moment to read through this edition and reflect on the role we each play in supporting our communities. Together, we can make a significant difference in reducing smoking-related harm and building a healthier, more equitable Wales for all.

Claire Beynon
Executive Director of Public Health

Who we are and what we do

Our mission to reduce smoking rates in Cardiff and Vale

Reducing smoking rates is one of the top three priorities for the Cardiff and Vale Public Health Team, alongside increasing vaccination rates and reducing overweight and obesity.

The Welsh Government has set an ambitious target to make Wales smoke-free by 2030. This means that 5% or less of the population will be smokers.

And we're pleased to report that prevalence rates are falling, with 9.1%

of the population in Cardiff and Vale reporting to smoke, according to latest figures.

Nevertheless, this still means that around 38,000 Cardiff and Vale residents are still smoking tobacco, particularly in areas of higher deprivation.

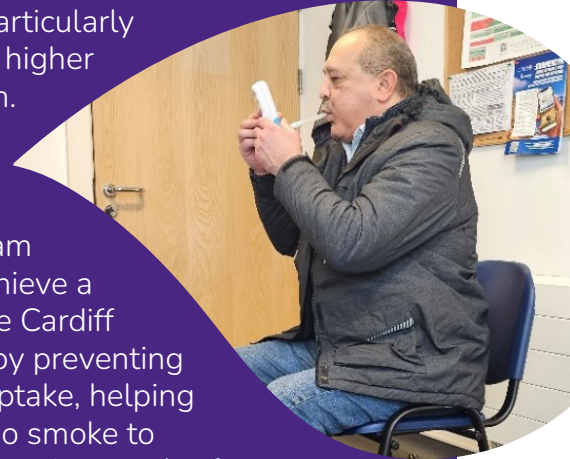
The Public Health Team aims to achieve a smoke-free Cardiff and Vale, by preventing smoking uptake, helping people who smoke to quit, and creating smoke-free environments.

One of the main ways people in Cardiff and Vale can stop smoking is through *Help Me Quit*, a free, community-based stop smoking service. There are currently 19 clinics based out of GP surgeries (many in areas with the highest smoking rates) and other community locations and run by our team of smoking cessation practitioners.

Help Me Quit offers:

- Free, confidential and non-judgemental support from a friendly stop smoking expert.
- Behavioural support to help smokers to recognise triggers and manage cravings.
- Weekly sessions tailored to meet client needs.
- Access to free Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) and prescribed stop smoking medication.
- Weekly appointments and Carbon Monoxide Monitoring to monitor progress.

People who wish to contact *Help Me Quit* can do so via the contact details



at the very start of this newsletter. They can also be referred by their GP or practice nurse, or if they find themselves in hospital they can access services and products on-site before being transferred back to the community. Some pharmacies in Cardiff and Vale also offer *Help Me Quit* advice and products. In addition, stop smoking support is given to all pregnant women through Cardiff and Vale UHB's maternity services.

This combined effort helped around 1,100 people living in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan quit smoking in 2024/25.

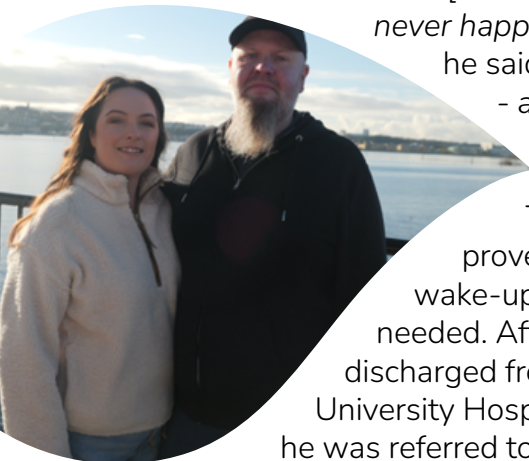
Adam's story: 'I suffered a stroke at 41 because of my smoking addiction'

Adam Watkins, from Splott, Cardiff, lost movement on his left side and struggled to speak after experiencing a sudden mini stroke at home last summer.

Doctors later explained that years of heavy smoking, combined with an inherited blood disorder, significantly increased his risk. Adam began smoking at 17 and quickly became addicted, going on to smoke for more than 25 years. *"I always had the*

attitude that [a stroke] would never happen to me," he said. *"But it did - and it was terrifying."*

The stroke proved to be the wake-up call Adam needed. After being discharged from the University Hospital of Wales, he was referred to the Help



Me Quit service at his GP surgery where he received tailored support and nicotine replacement therapy. His partner Laura Milford, 36, also decided to quit, and the couple supported each other throughout the process.

Since stopping smoking, Adam's health has improved dramatically. His blood condition has stabilised, his breathing is better, his cough has gone, and he says it feels like he has *"a third lung"*. Financially, he estimates he's saving around £200 a month.

Adam, now 42, said quitting together made all the difference. *"Having expert support and someone who truly understands the addiction was amazing,"* he said. *"It's changed our lives."*

For the full story, please go to the [Cardiff and Vale UHB website](#).

Helping hospital patients quit

Cardiff and Vale University Health Board has a long-established Hospital Smoking Cessation Service led by Helen Poole and supported by the *Help Me Quit* community smoking cessation team, hospital pharmacy service, and many others across the health board.

The service aims to ensure that every single hospital patient is asked whether they smoke, is encouraged to quit and provided with the right kind of help. When patients are discharged, the support is continued within local communities.

Helen Poole explained: *"Being admitted to hospital is often a time when people really focus on their health and wellbeing. Motivation to quit smoking is often high as people are concerned about their health and consider the*

potential benefits of quitting such as improved recovery and reduced hospital stays.

“As the hospital is a smoke free environment, many of the usual cues and triggers associated with smoking are absent, and healthcare professionals are available to provide support and advice. It is essential that any patient admitted to hospital who smokes is offered a pharmacological aid, such as nicotine replacement therapy (NRT), to prevent withdrawal symptoms.



“Nicotine leaves the body within approximately 48 hours and is highly addictive, comparable to substances such as heroin and cocaine. Without appropriate nicotine replacement, patients may experience significant withdrawal symptoms that can impact their comfort, wellbeing, and engagement with care.

“NRT products deliver controlled doses of nicotine without the tar, carbon monoxide, and other harmful chemicals found in cigarettes. Alongside pharmacological support, offering behavioural support, such as strategies to manage cravings, change habits, and maintain motivation, can further enhance a patient’s ability to remain smoke free during their hospital stay.”

To help Cardiff and Vale University Health Board colleagues develop the skills they need to encourage inpatients to quit smoking, a new online training model has been created. ‘Supporting Smokers in Secondary Care’ aims to help clinical and non-clinical staff

initiate conversations about quitting smoking, deliver personalised advice and offer support and resources.

The training, which can be accessed by NHS Wales staff from the [ESR Learner Home Page](#), takes around 30 minutes and needs to be undertaken every three years.



Team member profile

Catherine Perry Principal Public Health Practitioner

Catherine Perry is a Principal Public Health Practitioner in the Cardiff and Vale Public Health Team.

She initially joined Cardiff and Vale Public Health Team in November 2012, working on the Vale of Glamorgan Healthy Schools and Healthy Pre Schools Schemes. In March 2023 she changed role and now is the principal lead for tobacco.

With a degree in psychology and education, followed by a master’s in public health, Catherine began her career in south Wales, before moving to London and working for Bromley Primary Care Trust as Lead for the Prevention of Long-term Conditions.

Having moved back to Wales in 2011, Catherine’s work has focused on initiatives to promote the health of school-aged



children, and more recently, to reduce the harm caused by tobacco. She is registered with the UK Public Health Register and is an assessor for the Public Health Practitioner Registration Scheme for Wales.

Smoking continues to be the biggest preventable cause of disease and death, so Catherine enjoys being involved in innovative projects to reduce the harm caused by tobacco. She plays a key role in working towards a smoke-free Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan, which includes supporting the work of the *Help Me Quit* team.

Her role contributes to preventing people starting to smoke, helping them to quit, and developing smoke-free environments.

Outside of work Catherine enjoys travelling, cooking and gardening.

Recent work of the team

No smoking patrols across our hospital sites

Despite it being illegal to smoke on hospital grounds since March 2021, people are continuing to light up cigarettes outside hospital entrances, on walkways and in our car parks.

Second-hand smoke can be a very serious health hazard for vulnerable people including pregnant women, babies and young children, and those with chronic conditions.



To address this ongoing issue, in November 2025 Cardiff and Vale UHB collaborated with Shared Regulatory Services to reintroduce no-smoking patrols across all our hospital sites.

To ensure people are familiar with the changes, they are being implemented in a phased way. At present, a dedicated officer is approaching anyone seen smoking on hospital grounds, asking them to stop smoking and signposting them to Help Me Quit.

However, following this initial period - which will last for a maximum of six months - anyone who smokes on hospital grounds (and is therefore not complying with the law) will be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice, requiring them to pay a fine of £100. In addition, any Cardiff and Vale UHB employees found smoking on hospital sites could also face disciplinary action from their line managers as they will be breaching the Health Board's no-smoking and smoke-free policy.

In the first four weeks of the patrols, the officer has approached a total of 112 people and asked them to stop smoking to comply with the law. More than half of these were visitors (67), 37 were patients and 6 were Health Board staff. People who smoke have been signposted to smoking cessation services where they can quit with expert advice and support

Primary school children design new posters for children's hospital

Pupils at a Cardiff primary school have helped design eye-catching new posters urging people to stop smoking.

Year 5 and Dosbarth 5 pupils at Creigiau Primary School were tasked with creating two poster designs for display at the Noah's Ark Children's Hospital for Wales.

One poster warns of the dangers of second-hand smoke for babies and children, and the other reminds smokers it is illegal to smoke on hospital grounds.

The Creigiau pupils added their own catchy slogans, bold fonts and bright colours to help make the posters stand out. For their amazing efforts, the school was given a £200 award to invest in outdoor play and learning equipment.



Congratulations to all who took part – the posters look fantastic!

Digital advertising across Cardiff and Vale

To help further promote *Help Me Quit* and the range of services on offer, new digital adverts have been designed by the Cardiff and Vale Public Health Team.

Between November and December 2025, colourful adverts were displayed on 7ft-tall digital screens around Cardiff city centre with the aim of reaching large numbers of people quickly and easily.

The advert, which featured Cardiff case study Nabil, was shown on rotation alongside many well-known brands in popular locations including Queen Street, Churchill Way and The Hayes.

Meanwhile in January 2026, targeted *Help Me Quit* adverts will be shown on people's

mobile phones in the Vale of Glamorgan. When using some apps, phone users will be shown a non-invasive advert which will direct people to the *Help Me Quit* website (should they tap on it).

In addition to our local advertising, watch out for the Wales-wide *Help Me Quit* 'Break its Hold' campaign run by our colleagues in Public Health Wales. New advertising will appear on S4C and ITV in January 2026 and on social media.



Supporting mental health patients to quit smoking

Some groups within our population need a bit of extra help to quit smoking.

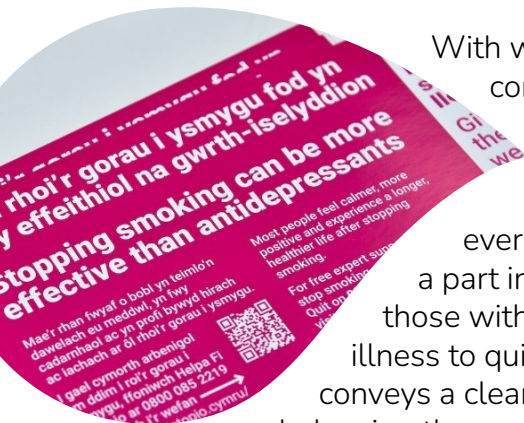
Those with mental illness have a higher prevalence of smoking, meaning there are more people who smoke within this group than among the general population.

A training module has been created to help those working in a hospital setting offer tailored support to patients with mental illness.

The *Help Me Quit* in Hospital Mental Health Training module has now been launched for NHS Wales staff on ESR (incorporated within the existing *Help Me Quit* in Hospital training) and will support colleagues with common questions specific to mental health patients. The training can be accessed by NHS staff via the existing ESR code and course name:

- English: 000 NHS Wales – Supporting Smokers in Secondary Care
- Welsh: 000 NHS Wales – Supporting Smokers in Secondary Care Welsh

Kelly Panniers, Senior Nurse for Physical Health, Adult Mental Health Inpatient Services at University Hospital Llandough, helped create the content and provides the voiceover for the module.



With warmth and compassion, Kelly describes how everyone can play a part in supporting those with mental illness to quit smoking. She conveys a clear message, balancing the needs of someone with mental illness and the harm smoking can cause.

Thanks to Kelly for her input in this work and ensuring Cardiff and Vale UHB had a strong voice in the development of this resource.

Working with primary care

Primary care colleagues working in GP practices, dentists and opticians across Cardiff and Vale can play a key role in advising patients about the benefits of quitting smoking and referring them to *Help Me Quit*.

Healthcare professionals are a trusted source of information. By providing health promotion information or having a brief conversation about smoking they can support and encourage patients to make positive changes to their health. Cardiff and Vale Public Health Team is working on several projects to encourage and support primary care colleagues to promote the *Help Me Quit* service and refer patients when they can.

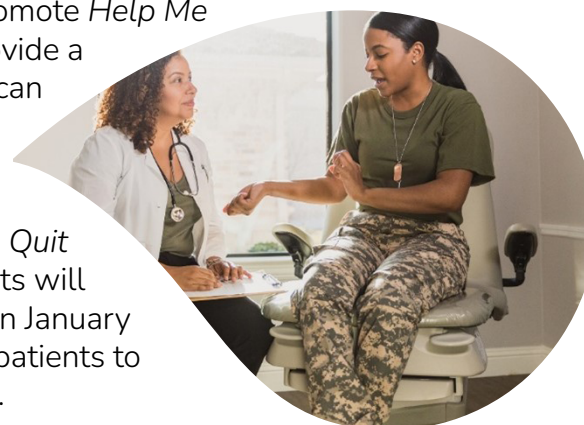
For example, practice nurses in Llan Healthcare have been trialling the use of carbon monoxide (CO) monitors during

health check appointments. CO is a poisonous gas – a product of incomplete combustion – found in tobacco smoke.

A CO monitor is a handheld device that measures CO in your breath and gives a reading that can be shown to the patient. If patients have a high reading, they are encouraged to accept a referral to *Help Me Quit* for support to stop smoking and reduce their CO score. Initial results are positive with more patients being motivated to accept a referral.

In addition, a *Help Me Quit* referral competition has been launched for GP practices in areas of Cardiff and Vale where smoking rates are highest. All members of the GP practice teams are being encouraged to ask patients if they smoke, advise them of the benefits of quitting and refer using the professional referral page on the *Help Me Quit* website. The GP practices who have made the most referrals by the end of January will win a prize.

Finally, the Cardiff and Vale Public Health Team is working with GP practices in the City and South and South East clusters to send out text messages to patients who smoke to promote *Help Me Quit* and provide a link so they can book a call back with a member of the *Help Me Quit* hub. The texts will be sent out in January to motivate patients to quit in 2026.



If anyone in primary would like more information, please email Laura.Wilson3@wales.nhs.uk

Other key updates

Tobacco and Vapes Bill a 'landmark step' in creating a smoke-free UK

The Tobacco and Vapes Bill has been described as the "biggest step in a generation" to protect children from addiction and reduce the harm caused by smoking.

In short, the Bill will:

- Make it illegal to sell tobacco products to children born on or after January 1, 2009, to prevent the next generation from becoming addicted to tobacco. Children born on or after this date will never be able to be legally sold tobacco products, breaking the cycle of addiction and disadvantage. It is estimated that raising the age of sale each year will prevent up to 473,000 cases of stroke, heart disease, lung cancer and other lung diseases, leading to 155,000 fewer deaths.
- Give the government powers to stop vapes and other consumer nicotine products (such as nicotine pouches) from being deliberately branded and advertised to appeal to children.
- Give the government powers to extend the ban on smoking in public places to some outdoor spaces and introduce vape-free areas. A further consultation will determine exactly how these powers will be implemented.

On December 9, 2025 the Senedd voted to support the Legislative Consent Motion for the [Tobacco and Vapes Bill](#), marking a major moment in Wales' efforts to protect future generations from the harms caused by tobacco.

This decision follows years of committed work by charities, health bodies, researchers and community groups across Wales.

The ill-health caused by smoking puts huge pressure on the NHS across the UK, with almost one hospital admission every minute attributable to smoking and up to 75,000 GP appointments each month due to smoking-related illness.

The direct cost of smoking to the UK public finances in 2023 was £21.9bn. This mainly consists of lost economic productivity and NHS and social care costs. This is more than double the £8.4bn the treasury raised through tobacco tax revenues. This means less money left over for vital public services.

The Tobacco and Vapes Bill will help to create a smoke-free Wales. Children are exposed to tobacco products designed to attract them - bright packaging, sweet names and pocket-sized devices make nicotine products far too appealing. This bill will protect children, reduce harm and make it harder for unsafe or illegal products to reach our communities. More information [here](#).

No Smoking Day: March 11, 2026 - get involved!

No Smoking Day first started in 1984 as a way of highlighting the health risks associated with smoking and supporting smokers to quit. Over the years, it has gained momentum and has become a significant event in public health campaigns across the UK. The day sees a collaboration of health organisations,





communities, and individuals rallying together for a common cause.

No Smoking Day is about promoting the benefits of quitting smoking and offering support and resources to those who wish to quit. Beyond individual health benefits, the day emphasizes the broader positive impacts on families, communities, and the environment.

This vital awareness day falls on the second Wednesday of March every year. In 2026, smokers and supporters alike will unite in their mission to promote healthier, smoke-free lives on March 11, 2026.

Contact us to find out more -
cav.publichealthteam@wales.nhs.uk.