



HSE Tobacco Free Ireland

End of Year Report 2019



TFI Programme

HSE Health and Wellbeing, Strategic Planning and Transformation



Foreword

Improving the health and wellbeing of Ireland's population is a national priority and a key element of healthcare reform. As part of this reform and in response to increasing and unsustainable levels of chronic disease amongst our population, the [Healthy Ireland \(HI\)](#) Framework was adopted by the Irish Government in March 2013.

Tobacco Control is a central element of the work undertaken by HSE Health and Wellbeing. The HSE Health and Wellbeing function, under the Office of the National Director, Strategic Planning and Transformation is focused on helping people to stay healthy and well, reducing health inequalities and protecting people from threats to their health.

The Programmes (Tobacco Free Ireland, Healthy Eating and Active Living, Sexual Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing, Alcohol, Healthy Childhood, Staff Health and Wellbeing) support people and communities to protect and improve their health and wellbeing; turning research, evidence and knowledge into action; acting as the authority on health, wellbeing and policy development; building an intelligent health system and a healthier population.

Addressing the tobacco epidemic has been a key health service priority for almost a decade. The *HSE Tobacco Control Framework* published in 2011 evolved into the HSE [Tobacco Free Ireland Policy Priority Programme](#). The Programme has a remit to **“mobilise the health services to improve health and wellbeing and play its part in the achievement of a reduction in smoking prevalence to less than 5% of the population by 2025”**.

The Programme works collaboratively with internal and external stakeholders to strategically lead and co-ordinate evidence-based programmes and services across the health services so that we can deliver the HSE commitments outlined in the government's [Tobacco Free Ireland](#) strategy.

The [Tobacco Free Ireland Programme National Implementation Plan](#) (2018-2021) sets out the HSE's strategic direction and priority actions for delivery. This four-year plan has three key objectives:

- Prioritise the protection of children in all our initiatives and contribute to the denormalisation of tobacco use for the next generation
- Support people to quit and treat tobacco dependence as a healthcare issue
- Monitor, build and maintain compliance with tobacco legislation.

This is the second Annual Report published under the 2018-2021 Implementation Plan. There has been strong continuation of the work undertaken in 2018, as well as the addition of new, innovative projects. I would like to acknowledge the work and commitment of the Programme Team, the Programme Implementation Group, colleagues in Health Promotion & Improvement, Public Health, Environmental Health and colleagues across CHOs and Hospitals who continually prioritise this important work. I would also like to thank our Partner Network for their continued support and passion.

At the time of writing this Annual Report, COVID-19 has had a major impact and has changed the focus of the entire Irish healthcare system. The scale of the current challenge facing the HSE due to COVID-19 and the associated response is unprecedented. Smoking is a significant determinant in the progression of COVID-19 and now, more than ever, it is vitally important that the HSE takes actions to protect respiratory health at a population level. Preventing tobacco initiation and helping those who do smoke to successfully quit is the single most effective way of achieving this.



Helen Deely

A/Assistant National Director
Health and Wellbeing



Martina Blake

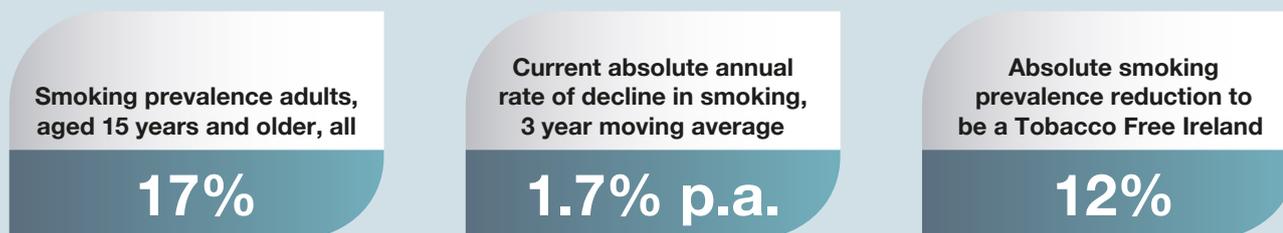
National Lead
HSE Tobacco Free Ireland Programme

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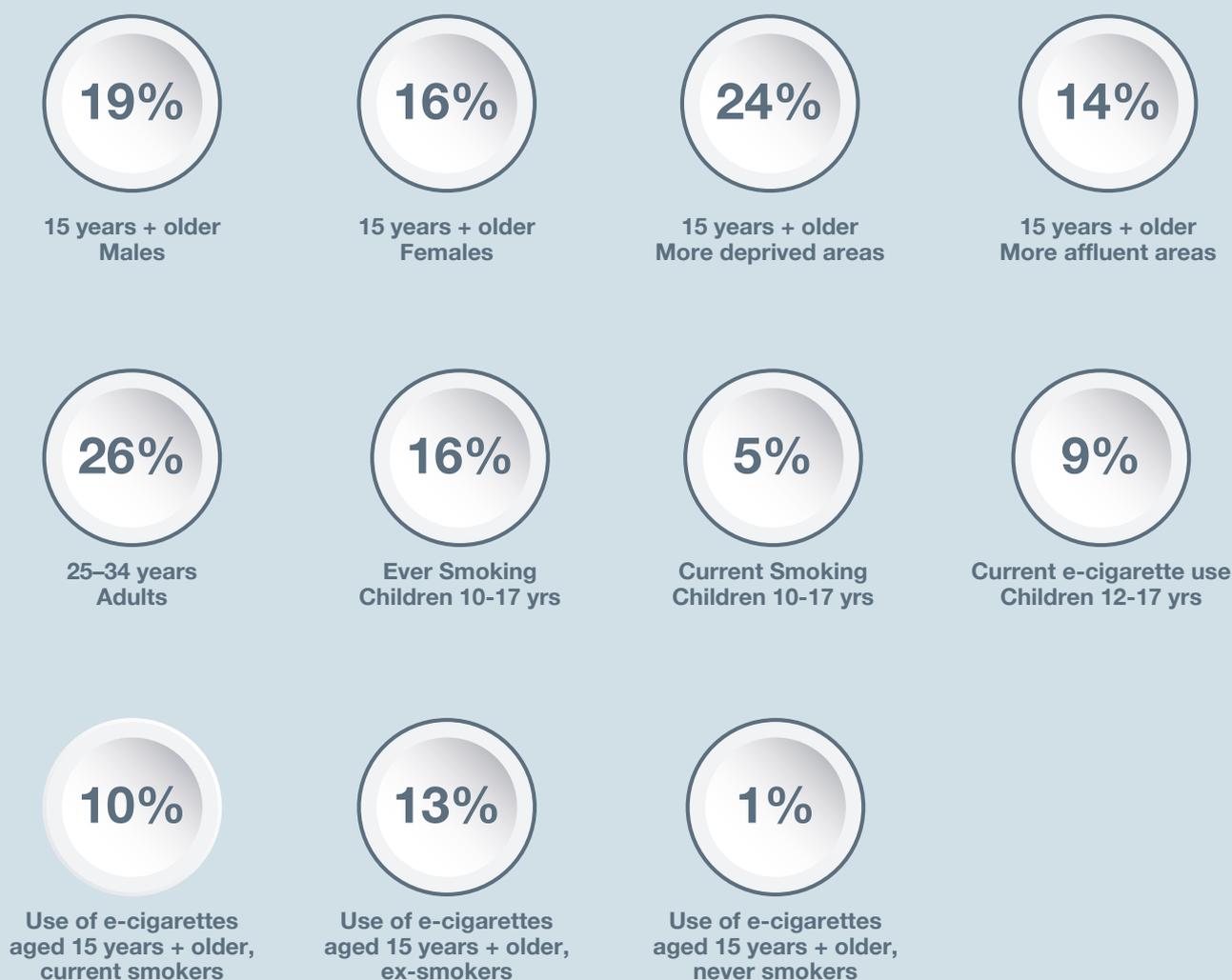
Population Prevalence and Rate of Decline

(Ref: Healthy Ireland Survey 2019)



Population Groups Smoking Prevalence

(Ref: Healthy Ireland Survey 2019 and HBSC 2018)



Building and Enforcing Legislative Compliance



13,230

Number of registered tobacco retail outlets



115

Number of tobacco legislation compliance complaints handled



15,105

Number of tobacco legislation inspections conducted (compliance 82%)



467

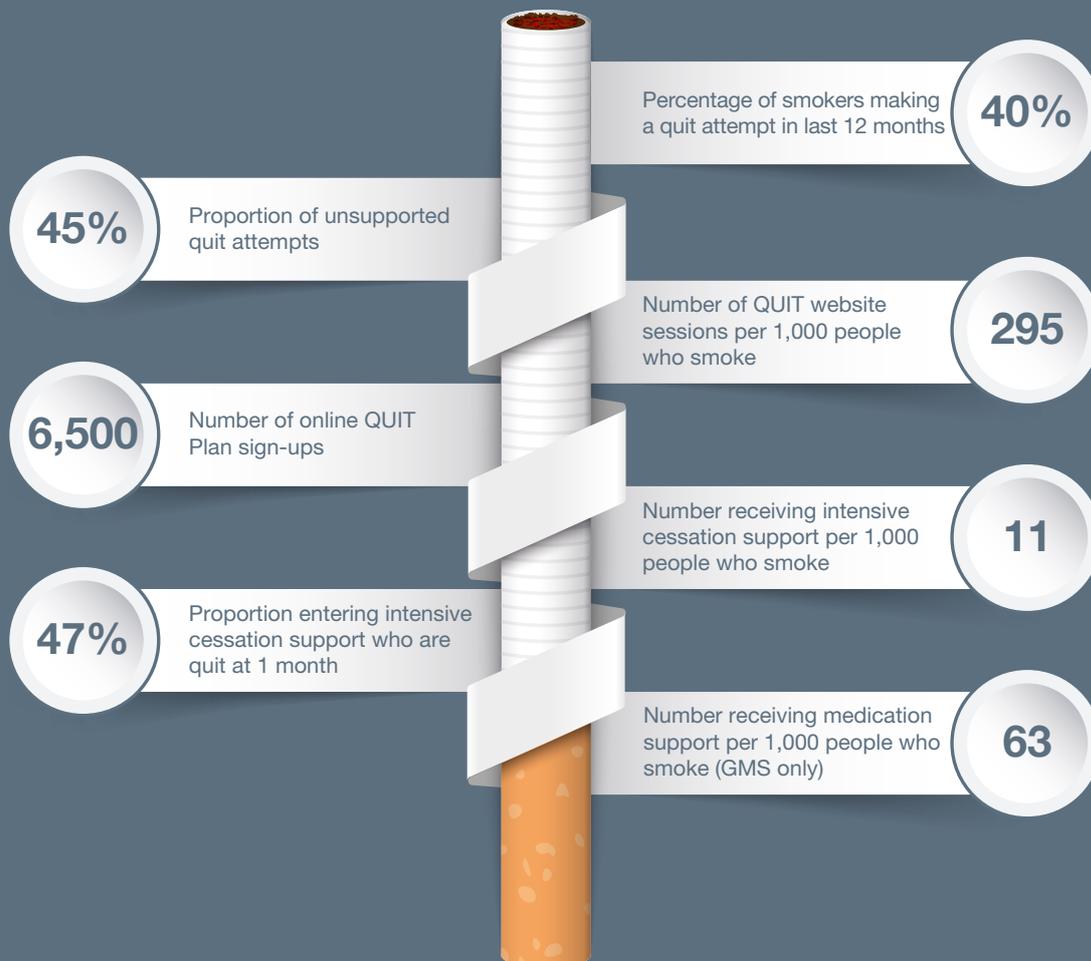
Number of minor tobacco test purchases conducted (compliance 86.5%)



41

Convictions under Public Health (Tobacco) Act 2000

Quitting and Support (Ref: HSE Tobacco Free Ireland Programme Data 2019)



Note: All indicators 2019 data or nearest available year

Sources: Healthy Ireland Survey 2019, HBSC 2018, HSE Data

Theme 1: Provide Leadership for the Implementation of the HSE elements of Tobacco Free Ireland

Action 1.1: Support Effective Implementation of the National Healthy Ireland and Tobacco Free Ireland Action Plans.

The TFI Programme held five meetings of the National Tobacco Free Ireland Programme Group (TFIPG) in 2019. This group is comprised of members from across all HSE service areas. Group membership in 2019 is set out in the table below.

Group Member	HSE Service Area
Aine Lyng	National Cancer Control Programme
Aishling Sheridan	Evidence and Information Officer, Tobacco Free Ireland Programme
Aoife O' Sullivan	Communications
Bedelia Collins	QUITmanager Project Manager
Edward Murphy	Project Manager, Tobacco Free Ireland Programme
Shirley Walsh	TUSLA
Elaine Buckley	Tobacco Cessation Services Coordinator, Tobacco Free Ireland Programme
Andrew Lynch	Mental Health
Martina Blake (Chair)	National Lead, Tobacco Free Ireland Programme
Martin Greaney	Community Healthcare Organisations
Maurice Mulcahy	Environmental Health
Miriam Gunning	Tobacco Free Campus Lead
Paul Kavanagh	Health Intelligence
Priscilla Lynch	Community Healthcare Organisations
Rachel Wright	Communications
Roisín Maguire	Older Persons Services
Sarah McCormack	Healthy Ireland Lead
Siobhan Lines	Hospital Groups

Miriam Gunning (Tobacco Free Campus Lead) retired in December 2019. The Programme would like to acknowledge the many years that Miriam dedicated to working so enthusiastically and passionately in tobacco control in Ireland.

Action 1.2: Development of Key Performance Indicators

Through the TFIPG the TFI Programme retained the existing tobacco key performance indicators (KPIs) for inclusion in the 2020 National Service Plan.

% of smokers on cessation programmes who quit at 4 weeks (Target 45%)

No. of smokers who received face to face or telephone cessation support services from a cessation counsellor (Target 10,000)

No. of smokers who received online cessation support services (Target 6,000)

The Environmental Health Service tobacco control KPIs for 2020 are;

No. of initial tobacco sales to minors test purchase inspections carried out (Target 384)

No. of inspections of e-cigarette and refill container manufacturers, importers, distributors and retailers under E.U. (Manufacture, Presentation and Sale of Tobacco and Related Products) Regulations 2016 (Target 40)

Action 1.3: Identify Resource Implications to Deliver TFI Actions

During 2019, the TFI Programme participated in the estimates process for service planning for 2020. An application was made in partnership with the National Mental Health Office for the provision of nine smoking cessation advisors (health promotion officer grade) for direct cessation provision to mental health services. Unfortunately the bid for investment in posts to treat tobacco addiction in mental health services was unsuccessful.

The TFI Programme also applied to the Sláintecare Integration Fund for five clinical specialist midwife posts for tobacco cessation at large maternity hospitals. Funding

was approved for two posts which will be established during 2020. This project is detailed under Action 4.7: *Targeted Approaches for Special Groups.*

Action 1.4: Engage with International Health Colleagues

In her role as chair of the Global Network for Tobacco Free Healthcare Services (GNTH), Miriam Gunning chaired monthly on-line board meetings. The Programme worked closely with global colleagues to develop the online audit system.

The TFI Programme also assumed an active role as administrator for GNTH meetings.

Two members of the Programme team travelled to Poland where a number of European health services were awarded GNTH Gold Level Certification for implementation of tobacco free policies. Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda was among the select group of healthcare services to receive this high level of certification.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) Regional Office for Europe held a two-day training workshop on tobacco cessation services from the health system perspective for three Baltic countries (Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia) in December in Tallinn, Estonia. Ireland, described by the WHO as the 'gold standard' in tobacco cessation was invited to deliver three presentations, as well as contributing to workshop exercises. Elaine Buckley (Tobacco Cessation Services Coordinator) delivered these sessions. The aim of the training workshop was to strengthen capacities of participating countries in designing and implementing comprehensive tobacco cessation policies by; increasing knowledge and understanding of the concept of smoking cessation policies and exchanging practices and experiences among countries that have different models in place.

The TFI Programme hosted international colleagues from the Dutch and German Health Networks at a Tobacco Free Campus awards event in September 2019. This work is detailed in Action 2.2: Promotion of Tobacco Free Environments.



Delegates at the WHO Regional Office for Europe workshop in Tallinn, Estonia

The Programme continued to share examples of best practice with other health services. Martina Blake met representatives from Armenia and presented to them on tobacco control and tobacco cessation services in Ireland.

Action 1.5: Work with Non-Governmental Agencies to Achieve Policy Aims

The TFI programme chaired four meetings of the Tobacco Free Ireland Partners Group this year. The Tobacco Free Ireland Partners Group is a multi-agency partnership made up of representatives from across non-government organisations with an interest in Tobacco control. The aim of the group is to provide a formal platform for discussion and dialogue between the HSE and non-governmental stakeholders on tobacco control. Ideas and best practice can be shared in relation to tobacco control issues. This multi-agency working group also helps to drive, co-ordinate and support the delivery of the priorities in the Tobacco Free Ireland Implementation Plan.



The organisations currently represented on the group are detailed below.

- Alpha1 Foundation
- ASH Ireland
- Asthma Society of Ireland
- Communications, HSE
- COPD Ireland
- Environmental Health, HSE
- Health Promotion and Improvement, HSE
- Institute of Public Health
- Irish Cancer Society
- Irish College of General Practitioners
- Irish Dental Association
- Irish Heart Foundation
- Irish Thoracic Society
- Mental Health Ireland
- National Cancer Control Programme
- National Women's Council of Ireland
- Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland
- Public Health, HSE
- Royal College of Physicians Ireland
- Spun Out
- Tobacco Free Ireland Programme, HSE
- Tobacco Free Research Institute

The Programme reviewed tobacco content on the Spun Out website and helped to produce videos to promote the QUIT campaign. Mental Health Ireland and Spun Out worked together to develop content for a smoking and mental health campaign. All of Spun Out's tobacco content can be viewed [here](#).

Representatives from the Department of Health attended a Partners Group meeting to give an update on e-cigarette policy and pending legislation proposed in the *Public Health (Electronic Cigarettes and Herbal Cigarettes) Bill 2019*.

Theme 2: Protection of Children in all of our initiatives, denormalise tobacco use for the next generation and promote tobacco free environments.

Action 2.2: Promotion of Tobacco Free Environments

The TFI Programme ran an incentivised Tobacco Free Campus quality improvement process for the first time in 2019 with an allocated budget of €100,000 to encourage quality improvement in tobacco control across the health services. The programme awarded quality improvement bursaries to healthcare services that were able to demonstrate innovation, sustainability and internal compliance building in Tobacco Free Campus Policy implementation. The initiative involved each site completing a Global Network for Tobacco Free Healthcare (GNTH) Services audit and developing a subsequent quality improvement plan. A second audit was then carried out in order to evaluate progress. Audit results were submitted to the TFI Programme as part of the application process. Support for the initiative was provided through the Tobacco Free Campus implementation lead and local health promotion staff. Applications were reviewed and scored by a team of selected auditors who were trained in the application of GNTH standards. A total of 21 services (13 acute hospital and 8 mental health services) participated in the bursary competition, with awards being made to 18 services. A [Book of Abstracts](#) describing each individual quality improvement application was published and is available on the HSE Tobacco Free Ireland Programme [web page](#).

During 2019, the programme issued a survey to all Social Care (older persons and disability) and mental health services to assess the level of policy implementation nationally. Primary care services have fully implemented the policy previously. Survey results found that the policy was implemented in;

- 46% of Mental Health Approved Units (based on survey uptake rate of 68% of sites)
- 10% of Mental Health Residential Services (based on survey uptake rate of 15% of sites)
- 7% of Disability Residential Services (based on survey uptake rate of 10% of sites)
- 81% of Older Persons Residential Services (based on survey uptake rate of 53% of sites)

The HSE supported Athletics Ireland to develop a Tobacco Free Campaign in order to promote tobacco free sporting environments for children and young adults. A communications campaign was implemented, harnessing messaging developed with the HSE to promote tobacco free to athletes, coaches, parents and family members on Athletics Ireland campuses.



Launch of the Athletics Ireland Tobacco Free Sport Campaign



The Programme provided advice and support to the Irish Prison Service throughout 2019 for the implementation of a tobacco free policy in the Progression Unit at Mountjoy Prison. Prison staff were trained as stop smoking advisors and the Programme supported the prison service to supply Nicotine Replacement Therapy to individuals making a quit attempt. The Programme has carried out research at the prison pre and post policy implementation. The data collected will be examined in 2020.

The Programme supported Healthy Limerick to develop a tobacco free spaces initiative entitled *Not Around Us*.

This initiative launched to coincide with World No Tobacco Day 2019. *Not Around Us* promotes an environment where it is easier for those who smoke to quit and remain smoke free and helps to de-normalise smoking for the next generation through shaping policy development, signalling out appropriate areas for no-smoking signage, engaging on the effects of second hand smoking and raising awareness of the supports for those who wish to quit smoking. The *Not Around Us* signage can be seen in areas where young people play and learn such as parks, playgrounds and schools.

A series of animated videos with similar messaging were developed as part of the initiative. The videos can be viewed [here](#).



Not Around Us is another step Towards a Tobacco Free Limerick. This initiative is a HSE funded partnership with a range of stakeholders - HSE, Limerick Local Community Development Committee, Limerick Comhairle na nÓg, Limerick Children and Young People's Services Committee, Limerick Childcare Committee, Healthy Ireland and ASH Ireland, Council of the Irish Heart Foundation.

Action 2.4: Engage with Stakeholders to Ensure Tobacco Denormalisation is Included in all Initiatives

The Programme has developed new tobacco topic lessons for the SPHE Junior Cycle curriculum in conjunction with the Department of Education. Five new lessons will be piloted in 2020/2021 academic year with junior cycle students;

- Tobacco; Nicotine and why some people smoke
- Roll Your Own Tobacco (RYO's/Rollies)
- Vaping, (E-cigarettes/ENDS)
- Marketing of Tobacco and Tobacco related products
- Smoke free - Denormalising

The TFI Programme has also commenced work the Healthy Ireland Smart Start (HISS) team to develop a tobacco free information session to be incorporated into the HISS Programme. HISS provides information and resources for pre-school staff and provides an opportunity for the pre-school services involved to become publically recognised as Healthy Ireland pre-school services.

The Tobacco Free Ireland Programme engaged with TUSLA to advocate for the implementation of tobacco free policies in their child and adolescent residential services and foster services.

The Institute of Public Health prepared a briefing paper on *Scope for enhancing smoking cessation within service developments in Cervical Check* which they presented to the Tobacco Free Ireland Partners Group. The paper makes recommendations regarding the introduction of routine brief interventions for tobacco use and referral to stop smoking services. The Tobacco Free Ireland Programme has commenced initial engagement with the Cervical Screening Programme to progress these recommendations.

Theme 3: Legislative Compliance and Regulating the Retail Environment

The EU Tobacco Products Directive 2014 as transposed into Irish legislation in the EU Regulations 2016 is implemented by the HSE as the competent authority and market surveillance authority. The regulations require that a manufacturer or importer make submissions via the European Union Common Entry Gate to the HSE in relation to all tobacco and related products placed or intended to be placed on the market for sale in the Republic of Ireland. The number of submissions made to the HSE by category up to 31st December 2019 is as follows:



Notifications to EU-CEG	Total figures up to 31st December 2019	Figures for 2019 only
E-cigarettes and Refill Containers	44,463	10,040
Tobacco Products	701 (excluding novel and herbal products)	120 (excluding novel and herbal products)
Novel Products	29	23
Herbal Products	15	3

The Environmental Health Department continue to prioritise the risk assessment and investigation of complaints regarding tobacco control and related products. In 2019 a total of 115 complaints in relation to the Tobacco Products Directive were received, risk assessed and investigated by the National Tobacco Control Operational Unit.

In 2019 the HSE National Environmental Health Service (EHS) Tobacco Control Inspection Programme carried out the following;

- 15,105 inspections, of which 12,386 were compliant, representing 82% compliance.
- 467 test purchase inspections, of which 404 were compliant, representing 86.5% compliance. The KPI target of 384 initial test purchase inspections for 2019 was met.
- 41 convictions were secured in respect of prosecution cases taken for non-compliance with the prohibition of smoking and the provision of signage in workplaces, and sales of tobacco products to minors.



Theme 4: Treat Tobacco Dependence as a Healthcare Issue

Action 4.4 Development of Clinical Practice Guidelines

The Clinical Practice Guideline (CPG) Development Group continued to meet in 2019. Clinical Guidelines have been drafted and will be released for stakeholder consultation pending the publication of an Evidence Review of the harms and benefits of E-Cigarettes which is being carried out by the Health Research Board, as commissioned by the Department of Health.

Action 4.6: Training and Intensive Cessation Support

30 staff trained as intensive smoking cessation specialists in 2019. This training was provided by the National Centre for Smoking Cessation and Training (NCSCT). 10 staff members were also trained as NCSCT train the trainers so that intensive training is more readily available and accessible for HSE staff going forward.

- 39 staff completed the online training module in 2019.
- 27 Staff trained in the Mental Health specialist module and 14 staff trained in the pregnancy and smoking module to end of December 2019.
- 1792 staff completed the Making Every Contact Count online training in 2019.
- 367 staff went on to complete the Making Every Contact Count face to face training module.

Intensive cessation support was provided to 9,235 clients by a smoking cessation specialist (80% of the National Service Plan target) up to the end of December 2019. The National Service Plan *QUIT at 4 week KPI* (target 45%) is 47% (i.e. 47% of those who enter into the standard stop smoking support treatment programme were quit at 4 weeks).



Action 4.7: Targeted Approaches for Special Groups

The TFI Programme submitted an application to the Sláintecare Integration Fund proposing the creation of five dedicated midwifery led smoking cessation services at 5 large maternity hospitals. The bid was successful for 2 of the 5 sites applied for. Funding was made available for two clinical midwifery specialist posts to provide dedicated smoking cessation support for pregnant women. Project groups to establish these services have been convened at Cork University Maternity Hospital and the National Maternity Hospital.

This project is a joint initiative between the TFI Programme and the National Women and Infants Health Programme, both of which have specific actions within their strategic plans to establish and support smoking cessation support services in Irish Maternity services. The project aims to develop capacity and capability in maternity settings to better diagnose and treat smoking in pregnancy through the introduction of routine breath Carbon Monoxide testing at booking in visits and subsequent referral of pregnant women who smoke to dedicated, midwifery led, stop smoking services.

HSE stop smoking staff continue to deliver and support the “We Can Quit” smoking cessation programme, which targets female smokers from disadvantaged areas, in conjunction with the Irish Cancer Society. 356 women participated in the We Can Quit Programme in 2019.

Action 4.9: QuitManager Patient Management System

Quitmanager is a comprehensive electronic stop smoking referral and tracking system that will allow direct entry by referrers, and a comprehensive patient record of all cessation service support provided. This system has been in use throughout 2019.

The project is still in the implementation phase with new Stop Smoking services being added and modules being scoped and developed for inclusion in the system.

Data impact assessments were completed for a number of Stop Smoking Services located in voluntary hospitals.

Scoping for the development of the referral module commenced. The Project Manager assigned to this project took up a new role in 2019, thus delaying some aspects of the project.



Theme 5: Monitor Tobacco Use and Prevalence and Evaluate the Effectiveness of all Interventions

Action 5.2: Assessment, Evaluation and Improvement

The 'I Will Survive' TV ad campaign continued to air in 2019.

QUIT campaign activity for 2019 included;

- 238,678 visits to Quit.ie
- 168,851 unique visitors to Quit.ie
- 4,016 calls to the QUIT phone service
- 2,388 lead generations through Facebook
- 6,500 activated Quit plans

All of the content on the Quit.ie website was reviewed by subject experts and updated to ensure that it was as user-friendly as possible. The updated content was migrated into the main HSE website in April 2019.

The new content and structure saw organic search traffic to Quit.ie increase by 70%. This means that those who are looking for information to quit smoking are finding Quit campaign content easily. Since migrating, we've seen a 13% positive decrease in bounce rate, from 58% down to 45%.

In October we ran a dedicated Quit month campaign which proved very successful. The 'October Quest 2019' campaign generated almost twice the number of quit plan signups than October 2018.

Market research on the Quit campaign found that awareness levels were high with 66% awareness of the TV ad among the general population.

Almost 1 in 2 people who smoke said that they were likely to act having seen the ad (either by quitting smoking or engaging with Quit Service). 43% claimed to have quit smoking or cut down on the amount of cigarettes smoked having seen the ad.

The Quit campaign worked closely with groups of people who smoke throughout 2019 to develop a new and responsive QUIT campaign. Co-creation research with different target audiences of people who smoke, including staff and consultation with Stop Smoking Advisors helped

us identify the barriers for people in accessing our Quit services. We responded to this with a new advertising approach which broke down the challenge of stopping smoking and used the voices of real life people who smoke to show the ways in which people put off quitting smoking. The new campaign, 'Curated by you' launched in January 2020. The central message of the campaign will be 'Quit for 28 days and you are five times more likely to quit for good'.

The programme progressed its research priorities through the coordination, publication and peer review of a number of pieces of tobacco control research.



Papers Published in 2019

Evans DS, O'Farrell A, Sheridan A, Kavanagh P. Comparison of the health and well-being of smoking and non-smoking school-aged children in Ireland. *Child Care Health Dev.* (2019;1-8). <https://doi.org/10.1111/cch.12681>

Sheridan A, Quintyne KI, Kavanagh P. Smoking-related hospitalisations in Ireland 2016. *Irish Medical Journal.* Volume 113, Number 1. Jan 2020.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338630753_Counting_the_Toll_of_Smoking-Attributable_Hospitalisations

Sheridan A, O'Farrell A, Evans DS, Kavanagh P. The impacts of smoking on the health and wellbeing of older Irish adults - a special analysis of TILDA prepared on behalf of the Tobacco Free Ireland Programme. *National Institute of Health Sciences Research Bulletin.* Volume 8, Issue 2. Spring 2019.

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/leadership-education-development/national-institute-of-health-sciences/research-bulletin/nihs-research-bulletin-volume-8-issue-2-spring-2019.pdf>

Evans DS, O'Farrell A, Sheridan A, Kavanagh P. Factors associated with youth smoking in Ireland - a special analysis of the HBSC study on behalf of the Tobacco Free Ireland Programme. *National Institute of Health Sciences Research Bulletin.* Volume 8, Issue 2. Spring 2019.

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/leadership-education-development/national-institute-of-health-sciences/research-bulletin/nihs-research-bulletin-volume-8-issue-2-spring-2019.pdf>

O'Farrell A, Sheridan A, Evans DS, Kavanagh P. Factors associated with attempting to quit and successful quitting among Irish adults - a special analysis of the Health Ireland Survey prepared on behalf of the Tobacco Free Ireland Programme. *National Institute of Health Sciences Research Bulletin.* Volume 8, Issue 2. Spring 2019.

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/leadership-education-development/national-institute-of-health-sciences/research-bulletin/nihs-research-bulletin-volume-8-issue-2-spring-2019.pdf>

Poster Presentations 2019

Sheridan A, Quintyne KI, Kavanagh P. Counting the toll of smoking-related hospitalisations in Ireland. Presented to the RCPI Faculty of Public Health Medicine Winter Scientific Meeting. December 2019.

Sheridan A, Blake M, Kavanagh P. HSE Smoking Cessation Services - who is attending our service? Presented to the RCPI Faculty of Public Health Medicine Winter Scientific Meeting. December 2019.

Laura Heavey. Mixed methods evaluation of a new service development to deliver group-based smoking cessation support using Facebook. Presented to Society For Research On Nicotine and Tobacco in Oslo. November 2019.

Below: The Tobacco Free Ireland Programme Team and international colleagues Christa Rustler and Dr Robert Van De Graaf



The Tobacco Free Ireland Programme in 2020

The Tobacco Free Ireland Programme is working to progress a number of key priorities in 2020:

Clinical Guidelines for the identification, diagnosis and treatment of tobacco addiction will be completed in 2020.

A stakeholder consultation process will be undertaken and following this, the guidelines will be delivered to the National Clinical Effectiveness Committee at the Department of Health for quality assurance.

The newly developed QUIT TV Campaign will launch in January 2020. The campaign will promote the central message of Quit for 28 days and you're 5 times more likely to quit for good.

The smoking cessation in pregnancy projects will begin at Cork University Maternity Hospital and The National Maternity Hospital under the auspices of the Sláintecare Integration Fund.

Representatives from the Tobacco Free Ireland Programme will attend the European Conference on Tobacco or Health in Spring 2020. The Programme will present the Tobacco Free Campus Bursary Scheme as an example of innovative practice for the implementation of tobacco free healthcare services.

Tobacco lessons for the SPHE Junior Cycle Curriculum will be piloted in conjunction with the Department of Education.

Intensive smoking cessation services will continue to be delivered nationwide and reporting will commence on new service Key Performance Indicators.

Site specific Tobacco Free Campus implementation data will be collected from mental health services, services for older people and disabilities services. This will enable the Programme to map TFC implementation nationally and determine where to focus resources going forward.

COVID-19 and Tobacco Control

As more evidence accumulates on the associated risk factors of coronavirus, it is becoming clear that smoking is a determinant for the progression of COVID 19. Smoking is a known risk factor for acute respiratory infections for example: influenza (flu), as smoking affects the immunity of cells in the airways, lung tissue and throughout the body. This reduces your natural protection against infections. Similarly to a flu, COVID 19 primarily affects the upper respiratory tract and subsequently infects the lungs. People who smoke are more likely to get COVID 19 and the risk of having a severe infection is more likely compared to those who don't smoke. Secondary to the direct physiological effects of smoking on COVID 19 infection, smoking also increases the risk of infection by touching your face. Coronavirus is spread through droplets expelled from the airways by coughing or sneezing. In order to become infected, coronavirus must be transmitted from an infected person's nose or mouth into eyes, nose or mouth of another person. This can be direct or indirect (on hands, objects, surfaces). For this reason public health guidelines advise against the touching of your face.

However if you smoke the likelihood of touching your face increases, especially your mouth. This increases the risk of becoming infected.

As the TFI Programme moves through 2020 and into 2021, there will be continuous focus in all of our work on the elevated risk that smoking contributes to the potential development of COVID-19. To protect at risk groups and vulnerable populations in light of the COVID 19 pandemic, the implementation and sustainability of the HSE Tobacco Free Campus Policy will be actively promoted. We will continue to work with our partners to prevent smoking initiation in young people. The QUIT campaign will continue to direct and encourage those who smoke to engage with our suite of stop smoking services in order to drastically increase their chances of quitting for good.

In the current environment, it is now very important that we take steps to protect the respiratory health of the entire population and the Tobacco Free Ireland Programme is firmly committed to this task.



TFI Programme

