

Why is ASH Scotland interested in mental health – and why should mental health services be interested in tobacco?

The Royal College of Physicians and the Royal College of Psychiatrists jointly issued a report in 2013, 'Smoking and Mental Health'ⁱ, which highlights the specific issues of tobacco use within this cohort.

The Scottish Government's 'Tobacco Control Strategy for Scotland'ⁱⁱ has a stated aim of reducing the prevalence of smoking rates amongst adults to 5% or less by 2034. Amongst people living with poor mental health, however, smoking rates remains consistently high (typically higher than the current adult prevalence rate of 23.1%ⁱⁱⁱ).

Some statistics around smoking and mental health:

- people with mental health problems have a **higher smoking prevalence** than those who don't, they **smoke more and have higher nicotine dependency**
- **people with mental health problems are believed to smoke roughly a third of all tobacco smoked in UK^{iv}**
- **current smoking is associated with an increased risk of onset of depression**, including postnatal depression, and people with depression are more likely to become smokers
- people with mental disorders appear to have **higher risks of cardiovascular disease and stroke** (after accounting for the effects of smoking)
- anxiety and depression may be a factor in smoking initiation, but **smoking for the relief of stress is actually smoking to relieve symptoms of nicotine withdrawal**
- life expectancy among people with many mental disorders is substantially lower than that of the general population, so **steps should be taken to address any modifiable health factors which compound that basic inequality**
- **Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) is effective in people with mental disorders**, but is likely to be required in high doses, for longer durations and with more intensive behavioural support than in the general population of smokers
- **smoking reduces the efficacy of some drug therapies**, including those used to treat mental disorders - so **by quitting smoking, doses of medication such as clozapine can be reduced** (under medical supervision)
- **smoking increases psychotropic drug costs in the UK by up to £40m per annum**
- **a recent study estimates that the economic cost of smoking in people with mental disorders was £2.34 billion in 2009/10 in the UK, of which, about £719 million (31%) was spent on treating disease caused by smoking^v** . Productivity losses due to smoking-related diseases were about £ 823 million (35%) for work-related absenteeism and £797 million (34%) was associated with premature mortality.

What can ASH Scotland do for you?

ASH Scotland – Action on Smoking and Health (Scotland) - is the independent Scottish charity taking action to reduce the harm caused by tobacco.

We can help your organisation consider the impact that smoking and tobacco use may be having on the people you help support or to whom you provide services. We can do this in several ways:

- by offering your organisation a **free** [Tobacco Awareness-Raising Session](#) (TARS), which aims to look at issues relating to smoking, mental/physical health and the benefits of quitting;
- by providing '[Talking About Tobacco](#)' and/or '[Tobacco with Cannabis](#)' training to your staff/volunteers;
- by connecting you to a wealth of [research relating to tobacco and mental health](#).

If you would like to find out more about any of the services we offer, please phone us on 0131 225 4725 or email us via enquiries@ashscotland.org.uk.

ⁱ Royal College of Physicians and Royal College of Psychiatrists: "Smoking and Mental Health" [March 2013]
Report available online at: www.rcplondon.ac.uk/publications/smoking-and-mental-health

ⁱⁱ Scottish Government: "Creating a tobacco-free generation: a tobacco control strategy for Scotland" [March 2013]
Strategy available online at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/03/3766>

ⁱⁱⁱ Scottish Government: "Scotland's People Annual Report: Results from 2013 Scottish Household" [August 2014]
Survey available online at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2014/08/7973/0>

^{iv} McManus S, Meltzer H, Brugha T, et al. *Report from the Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey 2007: Results of a household survey* [January 2009]. Report available online at: <http://www.hscic.gov.uk/catalogue/PUB02931/adul-psyc-morb-res-hou-sur-eng-2007-rep.pdf>

^v Tobacco Control: "Economic cost of smoking in people with mental disorders in UK" [July 2014]:
Research paper available online at: <http://tobaccocontrol.bmj.com/content/early/2014/06/11/tobaccocontrol-2013-051464>

Action on Smoking & Health (Scotland) (ASH Scotland) is a registered Scottish charity (SC 010412) and a company limited by guarantee (Scottish company no 141711).

