Smoking status:
12 weeks post-quit date

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Introduction

A number of stop smoking service providers are commissioned to offer extended behavioural support beyond four weeks post-quit date to people who smoke during their quit attempt, usually to 12 weeks.

Whilst the medication courses prescribed as part of standard treatment should be at least eight weeks in the case of NRT and 12 weeks in the case of varenicline, NHS Digital only require the submission of data regarding quit attempt outcomes after the standard four-week programme of behavioural support. The provision of an extended period of behavioural support is a local decision that is taken after assessing the needs of people who smoke and the resource implications. Therefore, there is limited data on the additional benefit of extended behavioural support, but we know that certain smoking populations (e.g. pregnant women and people with mental illness) are likely to benefit most from this.

Unlike four-week post-quit data, data collected up to and including 12 weeks post-quit is not submitted to NHS Digital and has not thus far been subject to agreed data definitions.

> A CO-verified four-week quitter is a treated person who smokes who reports not smoking for at least days 15 to 28 of a quit attempt and whose carbon monoxide (CO) reading is assessed 28 days from their quit date (-3 or +14 days) and is less than 10 ppm. Any client who reports smoking (even one puff) between days 15 and 28 of their quit attempt, or whose CO reading is 10 ppm or above, cannot be classified as a four-week quitter.
>
> **Source:** Local Stop Smoking Services and support: commissioning, delivery and monitoring guidance (2024)

To make sense of 12-week post-quit data collected by service providers, and to evaluate the merits of extended support programmes, it is important to have a clear picture of how the 12-week post-quit data are being assessed in different services.

Smoking status at 12 weeks post-quit

It is worth considering the different options, clinical and administrative, for CO-verified four-week quitters who receive extended behavioural support to 12 weeks.

A natural interpretation of a report of success at 12 weeks is that the client has not smoked at all from the third week post-quit date to the 12-week follow up. As with the four-week figure there needs to be some latitude as to when this is assessed and it is suggested that three days prior to, or seven days following, the target follow-up date would be appropriate.

If a client reports that they have smoked at any point between the four-week post-quit date and the 12-week follow up, they will be classed as a person who smokes.

Classifying a client as a person who smokes need not result in termination of treatment. This is a decision for the service and the practitioner based on a clinical judgement as to whether the client may be able to recover full abstinence. If treatment is to continue, it is suggested that a new treatment episode be recorded in the documentation and a new quit date set on that record.

To assist with standardising the assessment of outcome, it is suggested that the same question be asked at each follow up:

> ***"Have you smoked at all since the last session?"*** Yes / No

To qualify as a 12-week self-reported success, the client must have been classified as a success at four weeks **and** to answer 'No' at all later follow-up sessions.

To qualify as a 12-week biochemically verified success they must be a 12-week self-reported success **and** have expired-air CO concentrations below 10 ppm at all sessions.

Associated NCSCT briefings

Why use CO-verified four-week quit rates as the primary measure of stop smoking service success?

This briefing answers a question we are often asked: compared to measuring abstinence at four weeks, does assessing abstinence at 12 weeks give us a better idea of how many clients of Local Stop Smoking Services will become permanently smokefree?

www.ncsct.co.uk/publications/four_week_quit_rate_briefing

Transfer of Care: a solution for everyone

This briefing provides clarification on people who stop smoking spontaneously and of transfer of care to Local Stop Smoking Services following tobacco dependence treatment in hospitals, prisons and treatment centres.

www.ncsct.co.uk/publications/transfer-of-care