

Public Health Agency  
Health Improvement  
Tower Hill  
Armagh  
BT61 7NQ

Telephone: 028 95363324

Website: [www.publichealth.hscni.net](http://www.publichealth.hscni.net)

**1 December 2025**

**To: Community Pharmacies**

Dear Colleagues,

## **1. OVERVIEW**

The Public Health Agency, in partnership with SPPG and CPNI, is currently revising and updating the service specification and associated contract for all Pharmacy Based Stop Smoking Services in NI. The current service model has been in place for a number of years and has helped to bring smoking prevalence rates in Northern Ireland down from 23% in 2015/16 to 12% in 2025.

However, as health inequalities have increased and smoking prevalence rates in areas of high socio-economic deprivation and within specific target groups remains much higher, it is timely to revise and update the service model to ensure focussed efforts on these areas to bring about change whilst supporting providers to deliver a successful service model.

## **2. WHAT IS BEING REFRESHED & REVIEWED**

As part of this Pharmacy Service Review, and parallel ongoing reviews of Trust based Stop Smoking Services and Community Based Stop Smoking Services, PHA will be refreshing and revising a number of elements which relate to all Stop Smoking Services commissioned by PHA, including those provided by Community Pharmacies.

These include refreshing and developing;

- the Stop Smoking Service Quality Standards and timelines for re-entering services
- Stop Smoking Very Brief, Brief and Specialist Training Programmes available and maintaining a register of trained providers
- Transfer of Care guidelines to better meet client needs
- Review of client monitoring and CO validation within the 12-week model
- Updated resources and materials for providers and clients
- Refresh and redesign of the ELITE system to modernise and improve user



friendliness

- Refreshed KPIs and monitoring arrangements for all Stop Smoking Services
- Review and updating of the current service funding model

### **3. PHARMACY QUALITY ASSURANCE SCHEME (PHA & SPPG LED; with CPNI engagement)**

SPPG and PHA, in partnership with CPNI are currently in the process of carrying out a comprehensive assurance exercise with all Community Pharmacies across NI who are providing commissioned Stop Smoking Services. Pharmacies have already been contacted and reminded of the importance of logging clients on ELITE and claiming any associated outstanding payments within a set timeframe in preparation for this exercise.

This assurance exercise was paused during COVID as service provision was severely disrupted by lockdown, shifting government priorities and removal of the ability to deliver face to face services in the pharmacy setting. However, over the past two years, significant efforts have been undertaken by pharmacies to resume this service and at end of July 2025, 463 of the 506 pharmacies in NI are currently in contract to deliver this service (92%). It is therefore timely to recommence the assurance exercise.

Community Pharmacies selected for Assurance Visits will be contacted by letter to advise of the visit and given the opportunity to agree a visit date suitable to them. A PHA and SPPG representative will undertake the visit together. The purpose of the visit is to seek assurances that the service is being delivered as contracted and that ELITE records and Pharmacy Vouchers are up to date and correspond to level of services delivered by the contracted pharmacy. Visits will take place from August 2025.

### **4. MOIC EVALUATION OUTLINE**

The Medicines Optimisation Innovation Centre (MOIC), has been engaged by DoH to support an evaluation of the current Community Pharmacy Based Stop Smoking Service across NI.

**The MOIC evaluation will focus on 2 key elements;**

- a) Experience of delivery of the contracted 12-week specialist Stop Smoking Programme and suggested improvements
- b) Customer experience of using the specialist Stop Smoking Service available through Pharmacies & suggested improvements

The evaluation will also provide an insight into the main challenges faced by pharmacy providers when engaging clients from areas of high smoking prevalence / high deprivation. Engagement of service users in this evaluation will be used to support co-design and co-production in the refreshed service model and ensure service users have a say in how services can be improved to better meet their needs.

The evaluation commenced in July 2025 and will continue through to March 2026. It is intended that the findings of this evaluation will provide insights into the current model, which will be used to support the refresh of the Stop Smoking Service Specification and updated Contract for Community Pharmacies for 2026 onwards.

Further details in relation to engagement with the evaluation will be shared in the coming weeks and PHA strongly encourages input from pharmacies teams providing the Stop Smoking Service.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Rogers'.

**Colette Rogers,**  
**Regional Strategic Lead for Tobacco Control PHA**

