



Knowledge and Library Services (KLS)

Impact Stories

Title: A KLS literature search helped in the production of an Evidence Synthesis Report on smokefree outdoor public places and outdoor commercial places.

User testimonial: *“Involving the knowledge and library service staff at the outset of the process for producing the synthesis report is invaluable. It really helps to ensure the search process is accurate and that the most relevant literature for the research question will be included”* **Jenny Mason, Senior Public Health Researcher, Research, Translation and Innovation.**

About the Evidence Synthesis Report: *“This evidence synthesis report was incredibly helpful in outlining the low evidence base for the effectiveness of and compliance with these policies. We hope this will help commissioners decide where to put increasingly limited resources”* **Martin Dockrell, Tobacco Control Lead and Sarah Williams, Tobacco Control Programme Manager. Health Improvement: Alcohol, Drugs, Tobacco & Justice Division.**

Challenge: It is more important than ever for public health to be able to demonstrate real health gain or a clear reduction in health inequalities, given pressurised local budgets and greater demand than ever to help reduce the burden on the NHS. Bearing this in mind, and an action from the tobacco control plan, outdoor smokefree public places were the focus of an evidence synthesis report produced by PHE's Risk Factor Intelligence Team.

For example, it is already well established that indoor exposure to tobacco smoke is clearly harmful to health and eliminating second-hand smoke indoors clearly improves air quality and reduces harm. Evidence about harm from outdoor exposure has already been explored in previous reviews but the effects are less certain. Yet, smokefree outdoor spaces are increasingly used in England as an intervention to help protect people from smoke and to reduce smoking rates. We wanted to know whether there was evidence for the effectiveness of this policy. The synthesis report therefore aimed to answer the research question: *What effect does banning smoking in outdoor public places and outdoor commercial places have on attitudes, behaviour and associated harms among children, adult smokers and the general population?*

Solution: The Project Team consisted of evidence staff in PHE's Risk Factor Intelligence and Tobacco Control teams, along with an Information Specialist from Knowledge and Library Services. The Information Specialist conducted a comprehensive, systematic search of the literature to help identify all relevant research. The evidence staff then critically appraised the quality of the papers and synthesised the literature to provide key findings. The report's production was also guided by an Advisory Team which included people external to PHE.

Impact: The report has helped to inform discussions between PHE and commissioners in public health about public attitudes towards interventions designed to create smoke free outdoors and also about how effective these interventions are in improving health or changing smoking behaviour. The report found that so far the case for smokefree outdoor places is - at best – unproven, and that where local areas do decide to proceed, it will be essential to conduct robust evaluation of the outcomes so that we can learn for the future. The report is available online as a PDF to download (<https://phelibrary.koha-ptfs.co.uk/syntheses/>) along with the associated data tables.

Success factors: The evidence staff worked closely with the Information Specialist to develop a comprehensive search strategy and ensure all the necessary literature to fulfil the research question was retrieved. The Information Specialist also wrote up the details of the search process in the method section of the synthesis report to help ensure this was accurately recorded. The Information Specialist was also available to answer any queries in a timely manner which really helped the smooth running of the early stages of the project. Having an Advisory Team helped to guide the process of producing the report.

Lessons: The process of extracting and synthesising the relevant information from articles is a time-consuming process due to differences in the populations, interventions, outcomes and context across papers. The help of an Information Specialist is invaluable to the work and helps to ensure searches are comprehensive and accurate.

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