

# Barriers to and facilitators of smoking cessation in pregnancy and following childbirth: literature review and qualitative study

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## Plain English summary

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## Plain English summary

Smoking in pregnancy harms the health of mothers and babies, yet many women find it difficult to stop, and one in eight pregnant women in the UK continues to smoke. Smoking is influenced by many factors. In this study we used a model called the social-ecological framework to better understand the factors that influence whether someone continues to smoke or stops during pregnancy. We carried out an assessment (review) of the literature and carried out interviews with three groups: pregnant women, their partners (or another person close to the pregnant woman) and health-care professionals. This review included interviews that took place in a number of countries with these three groups and involved 1440 people. Our interviews were with 121 people in two areas: one in Scotland and one in England. The main themes in the reviews and interviews were similar, with some exceptions. We found that issues that prevent women from stopping smoking (barriers) and things that help (facilitators) exist at the individual level (such as knowledge, beliefs and resources), the interpersonal level (such as relationships with partners and professionals), at the community and society levels (such as whether or not smoking in pregnancy is acceptable) and, importantly, at the organisational level (such as services provided and workplace practices). Professionals working in a number of different organisations have a key role to play in supporting women to quit, particularly through referral to Stop Smoking Services, which provide counselling and nicotine replacement therapy. Our study suggests areas for improvement to existing services, such as improving professionals' ability to offer accurate advice, and also recommends promising areas for future research, such as financial incentives, self-help and methods that involve the support of family and friends.

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