



BELFAST HEALTHY CITIES SETS OUT ELECTION PRIORITIES

Belfast Healthy Cities - a member of the World Health Organization European Healthy Cities Network for almost 30 years – today called on all Northern Ireland Assembly candidates to commit to the organisation’s key policies which it believes will improve the wellbeing of the public and help tackle local health inequalities.

The Election Briefing was held in Parliament Buildings this morning, during which Belfast Healthy Cities outlined its priorities and the significant role MLAs can play in advancing the main issues affecting health and wellbeing across Northern Ireland.

One of the notable issues highlighted by Belfast Healthy Cities today was that of Life Expectancy – a key example of health inequality in Northern Ireland. In areas of deprivation, including north and west Belfast, Derry and Strabane, the average life expectancy for men is 7.5 years lower than that of their counterparts in better-off areas, while for women in deprived areas, it’s 4.3 years lower.

Assembly candidates are being asked to commit to a target of no differences in healthy life expectancy between children born in any part of Northern Ireland by 2050. They were also urged to introduce a ‘Health Equity in All Policies’ approach across Departments to ensure policies and actions they develop enable effective action on inequalities.

Another topic highlighted by Belfast Healthy Cities was that of Improving Health Literacy to help people make more informed decisions about their health and wellbeing, promote better self-management, contribute to less risk-taking behaviour and in turn, lead to savings in public spending.

Other areas which came under the spotlight were Championing Health in all Ages with the introduction of a statutory entitlement for every school pupil to receive at least two hours of high quality PE every week, Strengthening Resilient Communities and Healthy Places, with a commitment to providing more traffic-free, child-friendly space in Northern Ireland’s towns and cities and the development of a ‘Place Standard, setting out minimum standards for healthy neighbourhoods and Reducing Health Inequalities by adopting ‘a whole of government, whole of society’ approach across all Departments.

Joan Devlin, Chief Executive of Belfast Health Cities, said:

“Elected representatives have an integral role throughout Northern Ireland in the leadership they provide on key issues, including health, and in taking forward policy initiatives in the Northern Ireland Assembly. It is vital that political leaders set out long term plans to address underlying health inequalities throughout the region and across our cities and towns.

“Today’s Election Briefing was aimed at assisting this process and we look forward to working with all elected representatives to push forward the key issues affecting health, wellbeing and health inequalities in Northern Ireland.”

ENDS

Copies of the Belfast Healthy Cities election briefing can be downloaded from www.belfasthealthycities.com