

An integrated approach to health  
development for the people of Belfast

# Planning for a Healthy City

City Health Development Plan



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

February 2002



# Executive Summary

Health is fundamental to quality of life. Belfast's economic success as a city depends on the health of all its citizens. The environment in which we live, work, rest and play affects our health. Peace, political stability, regeneration, educational attainment, employment, and good physical planning within the city are as essential to citizens' health as effective public health strategies.

In parts of the city, people living in low income areas experience poorer quality of life and die younger than those who live in the most affluent areas.

Belfast Healthy Cities has been working with representatives from government departments, public, voluntary and community sectors to develop Belfast's first integrated approach to strategic planning for health development.

A thousand people from 250 organisations participated in the city health development planning consultation process, which resulted in four strategic themes:

- **Mental Wellbeing**
- **Transport, Environment, Planning and Housing**
- **Life Long Learning**
- **Integrating Information**

Representatives from forty organisations including key public sector organisations, government departments and relevant voluntary and community organisations have worked to translate these priorities into plans.

Improving health and quality of life is therefore everyone's responsibility.

# Why does Belfast need an integrated approach?

Improving health and quality of life in Belfast requires concerted action across the full range of factors that impact on health. It requires consideration of the interdependence of the effects of sectoral policies and actions on health. It can also address some of the fundamental health inequalities in the city.

The challenge set within *Planning for a Healthy City* is enormous but with the Charter of Commitment there is an opportunity to take small steps, which can make a lasting difference to the health and wellbeing of the citizens of Belfast.

**Belfast is unique** – for almost thirty years the city suffered from political conflict and violence resulting in the death of many of its citizens.

The peace process has brought political stability and, for the first time in thirty years, locally elected Assembly Ministers lead Government Departments. Recovering from this violence, which has had a major impact on health, will take considerable time. Levels of violence still exist, particularly in disadvantaged parts of the city.

Belfast has enormous potential – there are major opportunities under the new political structures and regeneration in the city is very evident.

Within Belfast there is a clear relationship between deprivation and ill health. People who live in low-income areas experience the highest rate of premature deaths in the city. In the North, East and West of the city the rates for male premature deaths are in excess of the Northern Ireland average – these high levels of inequalities are unacceptable.

# City Health Development Planning

Over the past four years, many people from different sectors have been working on the city health development planning process in Belfast.

The challenges within each stage of the process were far from straightforward. Traditionally, government departments with specific statutory remit would have taken forward strategies on the four priority themes, focusing on objectives that are key to their particular organisation.

With limited experience of strategic integrated planning in the city, there was a lack of systems and resources to support the planning process. Against this background, what has been achieved is significant – a clear focus on priority areas and commitment from partner organisations to take specific action in each area, jointly and individually.

The way in which the process has been facilitated by Belfast Healthy Cities has been key to this success:

- Genuine intersectoral collaboration in the production of *Towards A City Health Plan*;
- A comprehensive public consultation strategy;
- Formation of the Strategic Planning Groups;
- A determination to strategically respond to citizens' views using an integrated approach.

# Consultation Strategy

A comprehensive public consultation strategy was carried out in the city in 1998 and early 1999. *Towards A City Health Plan* was produced as a consultation document in 1998. Its purpose was to inform the citizens of Belfast on the many factors influencing their health and wellbeing, to identify health issues from a community perspective and to develop integrated strategies which would address these issues.

*Towards A City Health Plan* contained three documents:

*A Statistical Profile*, which included indicators on:

- Air quality levels
- Physical Infrastructures/planning
- Availability and use of public transport
- Population size
- Unemployment/Employment
- Crime rates
- Housing
- Educational attainment
- Socio-economic status
- Life Expectancy

*Peoples Views* provided a summary of qualitative research carried out on population groups and *A Discussion Document* provided information on public sector strategies relating to health and well-being.

# From Public Consultation to Strategic Planning

One hundred and thirty five concepts were raised during the consultation process. Two planning events were held to identify priorities and principles and a computer based strategic planning tool, *Decisions Explorer*, was used in the final analysis to prioritise the recurring strategic themes.

## Principles

- Community participation/ acceptability
- Intersectoral planning
- Sustainable development
- Social inclusion/ equity

## Strategic Priorities

- Mental Well Being
- Life Long Learning
- Transport, Environment, Planning and Housing
- Integrating Information

During the consultation process, five daytime community events were held across the city together with one evening event. Various methodologies were used to specifically target seven population groups.

# Strategic Planning Groups

Belfast Healthy Cities facilitated the formation of Intersectoral Strategic Planning Groups on three of the priority areas. The groups were challenged with developing a collective response to citizens' views outlined in *Influencing Change 1999* and summarised in *Belfast Healthy Cities Annual Report 1998/1999*. Representatives on these groups were nominated by the respective Chief Executive and Permanent Secretary.

The group remit was to consider the elements raised within each strategic priority with a view to developing an integrated strategic approach to address them. The challenges that were set for each group are not to be underestimated and the strategies developed, specifically responding to citizens' views, represent a significant achievement for senior officers from both the public and voluntary sectors who participated in these groups.

Not all strategies outlined, however, are intersectoral - some issues are being taken forward by organisations who have specific remit for the area. What has been achieved however, is the development of new strategic partnerships for health and a determination to collectively respond to many issues that previously would have been addressed by single organisations.

The Learning City Forum, a group established by the Lord Mayor in 1997, facilitated by Belfast City Council and chaired by the Workers Education Association, have developed strategies outlined on the fourth strategic area, Life Long Learning.

The three Healthy Cities Strategic Planning Groups on Information, Mental Wellbeing and Transport, Environment, Planning and Housing largely used the same process in their approach to responding to citizen's views:

- Discussion on issues raised in the public consultation process;
- Review of relevant public sector and government department policy;
- Review of relevant programme delivery on priority area;

## Strategic Planning Groups

- Identification of gaps through mapping exercises, scoping studies and facilitated workshops;
- Identification of models of good practice on issues within Northern Ireland/ UK/ Ireland/ Europe;
- Strategic agreement, negotiation and commitment to delivery by appropriate bodies.

The implementation stage will continue to improve co-ordination and synergy between agencies, build on the new strategic partnerships for health and create strong foundations for sustainable health gain in the city.

Action areas under each strategic theme are summarised on the following pages.

## Monitoring and Reporting

Belfast Healthy Cities will develop, with lead agencies, an Annual Reporting Template (ART) for inclusion in Belfast Healthy Cities' Annual Report. This will report progress on each action area.



# Mental Wellbeing

Area	Lead Agency/ Timescale	Action
Shared Protocols	EHSSB– Children’s & Young Persons’ Committee (CYPC) 2002-2003	Establish a working group to examine best practice & develop protocols, standards & guidelines for staff working with young people.
Training and Development	EHSSB – CYPC 2003-2005	Produce training and development strategy/plan and monitor use of protocols, standards and guidelines with staff.
Training for Young People	Belfast Healthy Cities (BHC)/ Learning City Forum (LCF) 2002-2003	Produce a training prospectus for younger people that will be centrally co-ordinated, based on their identified needs and geared towards targeted audiences.
Training for Parents	BHC/LCF 2002-2003	Produce a training prospectus for parents which will be centrally co-ordinated, based on needs identified by them, and geared towards targeted audiences.
Leaving Care	EHSSB – CYPC 2002-2004	Develop and co-ordinate an interagency group to look at the specific needs of younger people leaving care, such as social care, training and employment and accommodation requirements.
Planning for Young People	BHC Annually	Develop and co-ordinate a joint planning process for services to younger people, which will include all relevant statutory and voluntary agencies/organisations.

# Transport, Environment, Planning and Housing

## Core Action

Area	Lead Agency/ Timescale	Action
Community Health and Wellbeing	Belfast Healthy Cities 2002 - 2003	Promote and improve community health and wellbeing and reflect community aspirations equitably in the formulation and implementation of public policy

## Planning

Area	Lead Agency/ Timescale	Action
Sustainability – Arterial Routes Project	Belfast City Council 2002-2004	Carry out a pilot study aim to gain a realistic assessment of the potential to convert underused commercial property into residential accommodation.
Quality of Life Matrix	Belfast Healthy Cities 2002 - 2003	To agree a set of health indicators and objectives for Belfast and to encourage participating agencies to use them as an integral test in the formulation and assessment of new policies.

# Transport, Environment, Planning and Housing

## Transport

Area	Lead Agency/ Timescale	Action
Walking	Department for Regional Development 2002-2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a "Quality Walking Corridor" (QWC) between Queen's University and Belfast city centre;</li> <li>• Implement two additional Quality Walking Corridors;</li> <li>• Identify &amp; develop a Home Zone project</li> </ul>
Cycling	Department for Regional Development 2002-2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide covered cycle stands in Lombard Street &amp; Rosemary Street;</li> <li>• Provide a cycleway between Holywood Arches &amp; Victoria Park;</li> <li>• Provide a number of cycleways linked to the National Cycle Network;</li> <li>• Provide cycle route between University area and City Centre.</li> </ul>
Travel Plans	Department for Regional Development 2002	Develop three pilot projects involving Belfast City Hospital, University of Ulster and Belfast City Council Gasworks site to encourage use of alternative methods of transport.
Safer Routes to School	Department for Regional Development 2002	Develop two pilot projects in Belfast to encourage children and young people to walk and cycle to school.

# Transport, Environment, Planning and Housing

## Transport

Area	Lead Agency/ Timescale	Action
Public Transport	Department for Regional Development 2002-2003	Provide two new Quality Bus Corridors to reduce road traffic and improve the environment.
Traffic Calming	Belfast Healthy Cities 2002-2003	Establish a Traffic Calming Forum with involvement of statutory agencies and local communities to provide advice on traffic calming and related issues.

## Housing

Area	Lead Agency/ Timescale	Action
Community Safety	Northern Ireland Housing Executive Ongoing	Improve access to services for vulnerable tenants through the new Estate Warden Service
Healthy Living	Northern Ireland Housing Executive Ongoing	Promote healthy living and other health initiatives through Northern Ireland Housing Executive's consultative arrangements.
Fuel Poverty	Northern Ireland Housing Executive Ongoing to 2006	Deliver a range of Energy Conservation schemes in Belfast to promote warmer homes and lessen risk of cold-related illnesses.
Traveller Accommodation	Northern Ireland Housing Executive Ongoing	Promote two group-housing schemes for travellers in Belfast which will improve the health of the travelling community in the city.

# Transport, Environment, Planning and Housing

## Environment

Area	Lead Agency/ Timescale	Action
Pollution	Belfast City Council September 2002	Establish a multi-sectoral Air Quality Forum for Belfast to improve air quality, reduce pollution and meet the standards in the National Air Quality Strategy.
Sustainability	Belfast City Council September 2002	Develop an educational demonstration project to increase awareness and encourage sustainable living.
Waste Management	Belfast City Council September 2002	Establish a Community Waste Forum to promote action on litter and cycling.
Open Space	Belfast City Council September 2002	Establish an Open Space Group to improve co-ordination of action by relevant statutory bodies in the maintenance of public open space in residential areas.

# Life Long Learning

## Marketing and Promotion

Area	Lead Agency/ Timescale	Action
Local Learning Ambassadors	Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education Ongoing	Recruit and train local community representatives to undertake ambassadorial roles to increase awareness of the direct benefits of learning and promote the benefits of returning to community-based education.
Learning for Life Publication	Belfast City Council Annually	Provide a single reference point for citizens by publishing a user-friendly brochure to document the learning and training opportunities available in Belfast and include real-life stories of adult learners.
Information Advice and Guidance Signposts	Belfast City Council January 2002	Place information posts at strategic points across the city, where learners and potential learners can access information about learning in Belfast.
Website On Line Information	Belfast City Council January 2002	Compose and host a portal enabling users to access real-time information about learning opportunities in Belfast.
Learning Festival	Belfast City Council Annually	Organise and publicise a series of learning opportunities across the city to demonstrate the learning culture in Belfast.

# Life Long Learning

## Collaboration Between Providers

Area	Lead Agency/ Timescale	Action
Learning Shop	Belfast City Council (under consideration)	Open a shop front showcase venue for all learning opportunities available in Belfast at a neutral site and provide information, advice and guidance for Belfast's citizens.
Community Schools Initiative	Belfast Education & Library Board	Work with appropriate partner schools to develop ways of widening access to their facilities.
Learning Houses	Northern Ireland Housing Executive	Increase the number of informal sites of learning at a micro-community level within the city.
Citizenship Education	Belfast City Council August 2001	Develop the idea of citizenship in Belfast through a programme of learning across the city which will provide clear information on active citizenship.
Business Education Links	Northern Ireland Business and Education Partnership	Work with Northern Ireland Business Education Partnership to amplify the links between business and education in Belfast, and to assist Learning City Forum partners to forge links in appropriate areas.
Collaborative Projects Fund	Belfast City Council	Open a fund of money that enables the Learning City Forum partners to part fund collaborative projects that promote learning to the citizens of Belfast and demonstrate good practice.

# Integrating Information

Area	Lead Agency/ Timescale	Action
Development Plan	Belfast Healthy Cities April 2002	Develop a business plan to secure resources.
Desktop Research	Belfast Healthy Cities 2002	Recover from partner agencies, published information on the life event themes for people over 55.
Web Site Development	Belfast Healthy Cities 2003	Develop an Information Technology solution that will link existing web sites of Healthy Cities partner organisations to allow easy access to information by people over 55.
Development of Common Template/ Architecture	Belfast Healthy Cities 2003-2004	Develop common architecture for use by all partner organisations for the delivery of information both in hard copy and through Information Technology.
New Partners	Belfast Healthy Cities 2004 onwards	Explore within the city, additional new partners to be involved in delivering information in this common format.



# GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS

A number of abbreviations have been used in this report and these are explained below.

BCC	Belfast City Council
BELB	Belfast Education and Library Board
BIFHE	Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education
BHC	Belfast Healthy Cities
CYPC	Children's and Young Persons' Committee
DOE	Department of the Environment
DRD	Department for Regional Development
EHSSB	Eastern Health and Social Services Board
LCF	Learning City Forum
NIBEP	Northern Ireland Business Education Partnership
NIHE	Northern Ireland Housing Executive
UoU	University of Ulster

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