



IPH Annual Review: 2010

Overview

The Institute of Public Health in Ireland (IPH) promotes cooperation between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in public health research, information, capacity building and policy. IPH was set up by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) and the Department of Health and Children (DoHC) and supports them and their agencies to achieve practical health benefits for people in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

In 2010 continued economic uncertainty reinforced the need for action to protect the health of the population and minimise health inequalities. IPH has responded by continuing its work in aspects of public health and strengthening work on health inequalities, including action on fuel poverty, food poverty, obesity and the environment.

This review gives a flavour of IPH work and accomplishments in 2010. Since its establishment IPH has been flexible, efficient and innovative in keeping with its stated vision and values. Further details of our work are available at:

<http://www.publichealth.ie>

Public health context – 2010

Health trends:

2010 has seen:

- Reductions in cardiovascular mortality in both jurisdictions
- Improvements in breastfeeding initiation
- Improvements in child mortality on the island
- Increased survival rates for most cancers in Ireland
- Significant increase in suicide rates
- Extreme weather events and water shortages
- Rising levels of fuel poverty in Northern Ireland
- H1N1 flu, Norovirus and isolated measles epidemics in both jurisdictions
- Policy developments on retail aspects of alcohol (promotions etc)
- Removal of point of display tobacco in the Republic of Ireland and consultation on similar tobacco control regulation in Northern Ireland
- Cervical Cancer (HPV) vaccine offered to Year 9 girls in Northern Ireland
- Northern Ireland Bowel Cancer Screening Programme begins
- Development of approaches to tackle the mental health impact of legally available psychoactive drugs in ‘headshops’.

Significant publications:

Health in Ireland: Key Trends 2010

Health and Social Care Inequalities Monitoring System reports 2010

Lifetime Opportunities Monitoring Update

Tackling Health Inequalities Together: Good Practice Guides (PHA)

All-Ireland Traveller Health Study

Update of National Immunisation Guidelines (Republic of Ireland)
Findings from *Growing up in Ireland* and *Millennium Cohort Study* describe impact of socio-economic factors on child development on the island
State of the Nations Children 2010
Fair Society Healthy Lives – the Marmot Review
White Paper on Public Health (England)
Report on consultation on the proposed Health Information Bill (Republic of Ireland)

IPH work

IPH's annual business plan sets out its work in the areas of cross sectoral work on the social determinants of health; strengthening prevention; giving every child the best start in life; mental health and wellbeing; developing healthy and sustainable communities ; and health intelligence. This brief review highlights selected actions in these areas.

Cross sectoral work on the social determinants of health

Public health is greatly influenced by policy and actions in many sectors. IPH works to create greater awareness of the social determinants of health among government agencies, the health sector and the public.

The social, economic and environmental conditions in which we live strongly influence health. These conditions are known as the social determinants of health. They are greatly influenced by public policy.

Fuel poverty remains a huge concern across the island with growing numbers of people at risk of being unable to heat their homes. Longer periods of cold weather and economic recession continued to place pressures on those already vulnerable to fuel poverty. IPH contributed to several fuel poverty related policy consultations in 2010. These included responses to the consultation on the review of the fuel poverty strategy in Northern Ireland (Department of Social Development) and the consultation on the National Energy Retrofitting Programme in the Republic of Ireland. IPH continued to work with the Interdepartmental Working Group on Affordable Energy (Department of Energy, Communications and Natural Resources and Department of Social Protection) to influence the development of Ireland's first Energy Affordability Strategy.

IPH highlighted the need to ensure that improving the health of fuel-poor householders is explicitly recognised as a key outcome of a new strategy.

IPH and DIT Kevin Street were successful in an application for funding from the Centre for Ageing and Research Development in Ireland (CARDI) to support primary and secondary research on fuel poverty among older people on the island of Ireland, which encompasses partnership with Dublin City Council, UKCRC Centre of Excellence for Public Health (NI), Brunel University and the community and voluntary sector.

An IPH commissioned review into Health Impact Assessment (HIA) in Ireland found knowledge of HIA is no longer limited to a few people and understanding has extended to a much wider range of people, many of whom have key responsibilities at the centre of policy-making, partnership and service development. Senior health personnel North and South acknowledged that greater awareness and understanding of HIA had been a key achievement of IPH.

IPH developed a briefing paper to inform reviews of gambling practice across the island. Health impacts of problem gambling include: mental illness, higher levels of substance misuse and violence. 'Developing a population approach to gambling: health issues' was published in December 2010. The paper presented ten key points highlighting links between gambling and health (and potential harm associated with problem gambling) and provided suggestions on the policy approach and practice change required to minimise potential harm from gambling.

DETERMINE is an EU programme developed to achieve greater awareness and capacity amongst decision-makers to take health and health equity into consideration when developing policy. IPH led one of the work packages in this project which aimed to strengthen knowledge on policies and actions addressing the social determinants of health inequalities. This included a focus on economic arguments. The three year EU-funded project concluded in April 2010.

As part of its programme to raise understanding of HIA, IPH ran a 3 day comprehensive training programme, which attracted key people with a policy interest.

As part of our series of seminars for health analysts, in 2010 IPH conducted a Health Analysts' Special Interest Group (HASIG) seminar on the development and availability of indicators of the social determinants of health.

Strengthening prevention and promoting good health

IPH contributes to policy and information needed to strengthen effective action to meet government targets. The conditions most strongly related to health inequalities, such as cancer and heart disease are associated with smoking, alcohol, drug use and obesity. Evidence suggests that health inequalities are likely to persist even if lifestyle factors are equalised. Policies and actions to modify lifestyle behaviour need to be complemented by work on the social determinants of health. IPH is working to strengthen the development and use of the current evidence base.

In 2010 IPH continued work to systematically estimate and forecast the population prevalence of specific health conditions across the island. 'Making Chronic Conditions Count: Hypertension, Stroke, Coronary Heart Disease, Diabetes' was published in March. The report estimated that by 2020, across the island: nearly 1.7 million adults will be living with high blood pressure; over 290,000 adults living with coronary heart disease; nearly 130,000 adults who have had a stroke and over 320,000 adults living with diabetes.

In December a further report ‘Making Chronic Conditions Count: Chronic Airflow Obstruction’ predicted that the number of adults on the island with chronic airflow obstruction would rise from 140,000 in 2007 to 187,000 by 2020, an increase of 47,000.

The Making Chronic Conditions Count series highlighted the need for a stronger focus on prevention and tackling inequalities using a social determinants of health and life course perspective, and the crucial importance of building appropriate information systems to support these efforts.

IPH continued to work with the Tobacco Free Research Institute and the Department of Public Health and Primary Care in Trinity College on an all-island Report on Tobacco and Health Inequalities.

Giving every child the best start in life

Early childhood interventions are uniquely powerful in reducing lifetime disadvantage due to social and environmental factors. There is commitment in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland to early childhood development with many organisations placing greater emphasis on the early years. IPH supports this work in areas such as reducing smoking in pregnancy.

Tackling inequalities in social, cognitive and personal development in the early years is recognised as a priority action to reduce health inequalities. IPH welcomed the development of a strategic approach to the early years in Northern Ireland and drew evidence from the IPH report Health Impacts of Education – a review.

Mental health and wellbeing

Many factors help determine mental resilience and ability to cope with adverse life events and stressful circumstances. These include wider societal and environmental factors as well as personal influences such as upbringing and relationships. Positive mental health and emotional wellbeing are essential for a better quality of life and for a flourishing society.

IPH commissioned a recent project to explore the impact of recession and unemployment on men’s health with a particular focus on mental health. The aim of the research was to give an insight into how unemployment impacts on men’s physical and mental health. It sought to identify possibilities for appropriate responses to the challenges identified. The research consisted of a literature review, a review of front-line organisations’ experiences, direct interviews and focus groups with men, action focused seminars and interviews with service providers and policy-makers. The report will be published in early 2011.

Developing healthy and sustainable communities

The health and wellbeing of individuals is greatly influenced by the communities in which they live. Creating healthy sustainable places and communities needs to go hand in hand with our response to climate change and measures to respond to climate change need to be carefully planned to ensure they do not widen health inequalities.

The impact of climate change on health, and the health benefits of tackling climate change were highlighted at an IPH conference in February. Over 120 delegates attending *Climate change: whose health will be affected?* gained a greater understanding of how climate change impacts on health, particularly those in more vulnerable groups, and how taking action can help reduce health inequalities. The conference was opened by the ROI Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, John Gormley TD. Speakers included: Prof Mike Gill, Co-Chair of the UK Climate and Health Council, Prof John Sweeney, NUI Maynooth, Prof Frank Convery, Professor of Environmental Policy, UCD Dublin and Mr Jim Kitchen, Head of the Sustainable Development Commission (NI).

In November, IPH published ‘Climate change and health: a platform for action’ providing an introduction to the links between climate change and health. The paper proposed ten steps to create a platform for action on climate change and health across the island.

Rethinking our built environment to improve physical activity was the focus of a seminar organised by IPH and the UKCRC Centre of Excellence for Public Health (NI). Over 90 delegates discussed the urgent need to rethink built environment policies which have contributed to increasing levels of physical inactivity and obesity. Professor James Sallis, a leader in tackling inactivity in schools and communities across the United States, shared highlights from the successful programme he has developed to improve physical activity in schools.

An update of the Community Profiles and the DoHC PHIS Tables on the Health Well website provides a comprehensive suite of health related indicators to support action for healthy and sustainable communities.

Health intelligence: supporting evidence based policy and practice

Government strategies in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland have identified the need for a strong health intelligence base to inform the identification of need, develop effective interventions and monitor progress.

IPH in collaboration with the UKCRC Centre of Excellence for Public Health (NI), led by Queen’s University Belfast (QUB) and the Health Research Board (HRB) Centre for Health and Diet Research led by University College Cork (UCC) has developed a unique all-island health information website. The Health Well promotes health and wellbeing by supporting evidence-informed decision-making. HealthWell

covers population health as well as health and social care and has an initial focus on chronic conditions. It includes specific hubs on obesity and fuel poverty. The Health Well website contains updated versions of the all-island health data catalogue with details of nearly 400 health related data sources and incorporating a more limited catalogue published by HIQA.

An event focusing on translating research into community action was attended by community and voluntary organisations interested in improving links between research and practice. The Community Development and Health Network (CDHN) organised the event with IPH and Queen's University Belfast (QUB) as part of the UKCRC Centre of Excellence for Public Health (NI) workstream on Public Health Knowledge Integration and Knowledge Brokerage.

IPH in association with the Centre for Ageing Research and Development in Ireland (CARDI) hosted a Health Analysts' Special Interest Group seminar to discuss the policy implications of various levels in health expectancy across the island. The seminar introduced a range of health expectancy measures and presented initial findings from the all-island study of life expectancy and healthy life expectancy. In partnership with the HSE, IPH ran two seminars focusing on building the HSE's capacity in the areas of quality improvement, patient safety and programme evaluation.

Reports, Resources, Events and Policy Consultations

Highlighted below are a selection of IPH reports, resources, events, consultation responses, meetings and presentations from 2010.

Further details of all our work are available at <http://www.publichealth.ie>

IPH Reports/resources

Making Chronic Conditions Count: Hypertension, Stroke, Coronary heart Disease, Diabetes. A systematic approach to estimating and forecasting population prevalence amongst adults on the island of Ireland.

Reviewing Health Impact Assessment (HIA). An IPH commissioned review into HIA in Ireland.

IPH Newsletter. Four issues (March, June, September and December).

Health Well launched. Unique all-island health information website . Initial focus on chronic conditions including Obesity Hub and Fuel Poverty Hub.

Making Chronic Conditions Count: Chronic Airflow Obstruction. Estimates and forecasts the population prevalence of chronic airflow obstruction among adults on the island of Ireland.

Developing a population approach to gambling: health issues.

Climate change and health: a platform for action. IPH briefing paper.

IPH Events

Climate change: whose health will be affected? The impact of climate change on health and health benefits of tackling climate change

Ireland on the move: enhancing opportunities for physical activity in the built environment

HIA Comprehensive Training Programme and half-day Training Programmes

HIA Forum Meetings:

- HIA: a tool to support action on health inequalities
- How HIA can support local government and health promotion action on sustainable travel?
- How can HIA support local government action on health inequalities

Health Analysts' Special Interest Group (HASIG) seminars:

- Indicators of the Social Determinants of Health
- Increasing life expectancy on the island: healthy years or just extra years?

IPH/HSE Seminars:

- Quality improvement, patient safety and knowledge integration in health services
- Building a learning health and social care service – the role of evaluation

Climate change: what can the health sector do? IPH Seminar

Translating research into community action

Influencing Policy: Consultation responses

During the year as part of our work to advise on policy, and promote public health, we responded to the following consultations:

Department of the Environment (NI): Draft Addendum to Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7)

Northern Ireland Assembly Inquiry into Sustainable Transport

Department for Regional Development (NI): Public Transport Reform Consultation

Department for Regional Development (NI): Belfast Rapid Transit Consultation

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) (NI): Consultation on Palliative End of Life Care Strategy

Dublin Regional Authority and Mid-East Regional Authority: Draft Regional Planning Guidelines (RPG) for the Greater Dublin Area 2010-2022

Department of the Environment (NI): Consultation on Preparing a Road Safety Strategy for Northern Ireland 2010-2010

Department for Social Development (NI): Draft Regeneration and Housing Bill

Central Statistics Office (ROI): Consultation on Census 2011 outputs

Department for Social Development (NI): Warmer healthier homes – Consultation on a new Fuel Poverty Strategy for Northern Ireland

Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (ROI): Consultation on a National Energy Retrofit Programme

Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM): ‘Everyone’s involved’ – Sustainable Development Strategy Implementation Plan

Department of Education (NI): Early Years (0-6 Strategy)

Department for Social Development (NI): Introduction of powers to prohibit or restrict irresponsible alcohol promotions

Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety (NI): Sunbeds Bill

Department of Health (England): Options for improving information on the labels of alcoholic drinks to support consumers to make healthier choices in the UK

Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI): Recommendations relating to variables in the Growing Up in Ireland longitudinal study of children

Office of the Minister for Children: Input into State of the Nations Children 2010

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) (NI): Draft Tobacco Control regulations relating to Tobacco Displays.

Inquiry by Pat Ramsey MLA: Compulsory Wearing of Cycle Helmets