

## IPH Newsletter

### Vol 3 Issue 4 - December 2009

#### Welcome to Public Health News in Ireland

Christmas Greetings and good wishes for 2010 to all our readers.

Inside this issue

- [New website highlights Belfast health inequalities](#)
- [Fuel poverty and health – 2009 update](#)
- [6<sup>th</sup> Population Health Autumn School – Podcasts available](#)
- [IPH welcomes action from Northern Ireland Assembly Health Committee on obesity](#)
- [DETERMINE update](#)
- [Analytical approaches to small area data](#)
- [Injury Prevention Conference highlighted good practice](#)
- [Public Health Alliance for the island of Ireland \(PHAI\) Roadshows](#)
- [Consultations](#)
- [Resources](#)
- [Events](#)

#### **New website highlights Belfast health inequalities**

A Health Inequalities conference held in Farset International highlighted the shocking health inequalities experienced by the local population of Belfast. Opening the conference Northern Ireland Health Minister, Michael McGimpsey, demonstrated his strong support for the conference, and highlighted the need to champion public health and tackle serious problems such as poverty, inequality and social exclusion by coordinated action right across government. Discussion on follow up action will be available on a new website specifically developed to highlight the conference and provide statistics on Belfast health inequalities <http://www.belfasthealthinequalities.com>



Northern Ireland Health Minister Michael McGimpsey with speakers, Farset Health Inequalities Conference, 23 October 2009

### **Fuel poverty and health – 2009 update**

Fuel poverty remains a huge concern in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland with growing numbers of people at risk of being unable to heat their homes. Recession is placing more people at risk of fuel poverty across the island, as unemployment and dependency on welfare rises. IPH published its Annual Update on Fuel Poverty and Health, on 2 December highlighting developments across Ireland in policy and research. The most recent figure for fuel poverty in the Republic of Ireland shows a rate approaching 10 per cent of households in 2007, with lone caregivers with children most likely to experience fuel poverty. In Northern Ireland the number of people dying as a result of cold has increased steadily since 2003, with excess winter deaths now approaching 1,000 per year.

IPH will continue to contribute to the development of interventions to tackle fuel poverty and protect the health and social wellbeing of fuel-poor households in 2010.

Access the Annual Update on Fuel Poverty and Health 2009

<http://www.publichealth.ie/publications/annualupdateonfuelpovertyandhealth0>

### **6<sup>th</sup> Population Health Autumn School – Podcasts available**

Better understanding of complex public health interventions was the focus of the 6<sup>th</sup> Population Health Autumn School. Over 150 delegates from Ireland, United Kingdom, Sweden and the Netherlands gained a greater understanding of complex interventions and the need to develop theory, evidence and knowledge translation.

Speaking at the event, Chief Medical Officer for Northern Ireland, Dr Michael McBride, welcomed the conference theme of building stronger links between policy and practice and congratulated the Centre of Excellence for Public Health (NI) on its work looking outwards across borders, highlighting the school as a prime example of good North South cooperation.

Access the event summary and podcasts <http://www.publichealth.ie/node/1174>



Population Health Autumn School organisers, Professor Frank Kee, Professor Jane Wilde and Professor Ivan Perry

### **IPH welcomes action from Northern Ireland Assembly Health Committee on obesity**

Obesity continues to create headlines as a major public health issue across Ireland. IPH welcomed the report from the Northern Ireland Assembly Health Committee stressing the need for all sectors to help in halting this epidemic. The Committee's wide-ranging and comprehensive report followed its recent inquiry which focused on current evidence and new possibilities for obesity prevention.

IPH evidence stressed the need for a broad cross government approach and identified the importance of urgent and short term action particularly for those who are more vulnerable to obesity, and the necessity for action to improve the physical environment and promote active transport.

[Access IPH written evidence and the full Northern Ireland Assembly Health Committee report.](#)  
[Listen to an interview with Dr Jane Wilde, IPH Chief Executive discussing the report and its findings on BBC Radio Ulster's Evening Extra](#)

### **DETERMINE update**

DETERMINE is a three year EU-funded project aiming to achieve greater awareness and capacity amongst decision-makers in policy sectors to take health and health equity into consideration. IPH is leading one of the work packages which aims to strengthen knowledge on policies and actions addressing the social determinants of health inequalities. This includes identifying examples of economic evaluations that have been conducted on relevant policies and actions as well as exploring economic arguments that are or could be used. A copy of 'Economic arguments for addressing social determinants of health inequalities' will be available from IPH in January 2010 or email [teresa.lavin@publichealth.ie](mailto:teresa.lavin@publichealth.ie) for further information.

### **Analytical approaches to small area data gaps**

The lack of accurate and reliable population data – particularly relating to lifestyles – to support public health action at small area level was the focus of a recent IPH seminar. The final 2009 Health Analysts' Special Interest Group (HASIG) focused on greater understanding of different analytical approaches that can be used to fill small area data gaps. Speakers included Dr Diane Anderson, Public Health Agency (Northern Ireland), Professor Anthony Staines, Dublin City University and Dr Julian Flowers, Eastern Region Public Health Observatory. Attendees discussed working with small area data and examined the methodology that can be used. [View the seminar presentations and video here.](#)



Speakers at the Health Analysts' Special Interest Group seminar, 8 December 2009

### **Injury Prevention Conference highlighted good practice**

The Injury Observatory for Britain and Ireland (IOBI) organised the 2<sup>nd</sup> Injury Prevention Conference for Britain and Ireland in September. The event highlighted evidence of good practice, successful implementation of interventions, and how this knowledge could be useful for injury prevention practitioners and policy-makers. Presentations can be accessed at the IOBI

website at [http://www.injuryobservatory.net/2nd\\_injury\\_conference.html](http://www.injuryobservatory.net/2nd_injury_conference.html).

### **Public Health Alliance for the island of Ireland (PHAI) Roadshows**

Recent PHAI roadshows took place in Belfast, Derry, Dublin and Cork and highlighted an interest in increasing membership. The role of PHAI in providing an independent voice for public health continues to be valued and could be strengthened by focusing on issues of concern to members - such as food poverty, the culture of alcohol and health inequalities in a fast changing economic environment. This would contribute to identifying more clearly defined advocacy campaigns for the Alliance.

Further information and 'free' membership details may be found on [www.phaii.org](http://www.phaii.org) or email [info@phaii.org](mailto:info@phaii.org)

## **Consultations**

### **Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) Draft Strategic Energy Framework 2009**

The Draft Strategic Energy Framework 2009 published for consultation by DETI sets out proposed priorities for Northern Ireland's energy future over the next 10 years. IPH welcomed actions to address fuel poverty and highlighted the need for stronger commitment to low-income and vulnerable households. The drive towards renewable energy to address climate change is particularly important as it has major health benefits. A focus on renewable energy can help address climate change which has been identified as a major health issue of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

[Access IPH response here.](#)

### **Department for Regional Development (DRD) Regional Transportation Strategy Review**

DRD launched a review into the current Regional Transportation Strategy in September 2009. Travel behaviour can make a significant contribution to physical activity levels and subsequent risk of poor health including conditions such as obesity. DRD can play a key role in tackling obesity in Northern Ireland through the Regional Transportation Strategy. IPH recommended that improving health and well being should be at the core of the new Strategy.

[Access IPH response here.](#)

## **Resources**

### **'One Island – One Lifestyle? Health and lifestyles in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland**

The report provides a profile of lifestyles, health attitudes and behaviours, together with activities that promote or damage health, in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. This work was commissioned by the Department of Health and Children in Dublin and is part of a series based on the main SLÁN 2007 (National Survey of Lifestyle, Attitudes and Nutrition) survey.

[Access 'One Island – One Lifestyle? Health and lifestyles in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland: Comparing the population surveys SLÁN 2007 and NIHSWS 2005'](#)

### **Using small area data in public health intelligence**

The Association of Public Health Observatories (APHO) has published 'Using small area data in public health intelligence'. This briefing assesses the small area data available to analysts and

local policy-makers across the UK and Ireland reflecting differences between the constituent nations. Access this and other APHO technical briefings here <http://www.apho.org.uk/resource/item.aspx?RID=74894>

## Events

### **Health Impact Assessment Training – 8-10 February 2010**

Limited places are available for the next Health Impact Assessment training course on 8-10 February 2010 in Dublin and will interest those working in public health, central and local government and community and voluntary sectors. Further information and application form available <http://www.publichealth.ie/ireland/hiatraining/comprehensivehiatrainingcourse>

### **IPH Climate Change and Health seminar – 25 February 2010**

Professor Mike Gill, co-chair of the UK Climate Change and Health Council has been confirmed as a speaker at this event which will be held in Dublin. Further details will be published when available from <http://www.publichealth.ie>.

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