

# A FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION to address life inequalities 2011 - 2015



Focusing on life inequalities

## **A FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION** *to address life inequalities* **2011 -2015**

**Improving Health and Wellbeing, Reducing Health Inequalities**

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## FOREWORD

We are pleased to present Belfast's *Framework for Action to Address Life Inequalities*.

It is unacceptable in this day and age that the people of Belfast have very different expectations and experiences of good health and wellbeing depending on which part of the city they live. In our most disadvantaged areas it is clear that people suffer significantly more from health problems, whilst those living in the most affluent areas can live up to 10 years longer. This is because of a wide range of life inequalities.

This problem has not been improving over recent years, so it is vital that we do things differently if we are going to break the cycle. We have therefore set up the Belfast Strategic Partnership to address these life inequalities and turn the trend around. It has developed this Framework for Action to enable the work of all the stakeholders to focus on a number of key priority areas that will make a difference to people's lives.

An annual action plan will be developed for each of the priority areas to ensure that our efforts and resources make an impact on the problems people face. This Framework is owned by all the members of the Partnership and the staff team in the Belfast Health Development Unit will support them in making it a reality.

There is a long-term commitment from senior decision makers and influencers in the city to challenge the barriers that have frustrated progress in the past and to do things differently. We realise that some of the inequalities will take a generation to properly address, but we want to start now with joined up affirmative action. This will include more effective interventions, ensuring that we use public money to best effect and influence the policy makers to focus on these issues and invest in the right areas.

A wide engagement process has taken place to get us to this stage and the Partnership will continue to take this approach in moving forward. We have and will continue to benefit from the experience of those fora and agencies that are already working to alleviate health and life inequalities in the city. We believe therefore that we have built a very solid foundation on which to collectively move forward.

We look forward to working with you to achieve the actions outlined in this document and make a practical and visible difference for the people of Belfast. We want to achieve a city where stark life inequalities are a thing of the past

**Dr Eddie Rooney**  
PHA

**Peter Mc Naney**  
BCC

**Colm Donaghy**  
BHSC

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# A FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION to address life inequalities 2011 - 2015

## Introduction

Welcome to the Belfast Strategic Partnership's (BSP) Framework for Action to address Life Inequalities.

The Framework is based on the following principles:

- *This Framework will drive action - it is not a strategy, rather a mandate to affect change in the Belfast area*
- *The actions developed under the framework will focus on areas where BSP can bring added value from a collaborative approach. If actions can and should be achieved individually by PHA, BHSCT, City Council, or other private, statutory or community sector stakeholders, these are not included in the Framework for Action.*
- *The Framework aims to place life inequalities on the agenda of every relevant stakeholder in the Belfast area.*
- *BSP will influence relevant stakeholders to include actions to address life inequalities in their respective corporate plans.*
- *The Framework challenges organisations to work collaboratively to maximise impact from existing resources*
- *The Framework and actions will take an assets-based and a Health and Health Equity in All Local Policies approach<sup>1</sup> to addressing life inequalities in the Belfast area, building on and adding value to the strong community, statutory and partnership infrastructure that already exists in the Belfast area.*
- *Each participating organisation in the BSP has agreed to remove barriers to collaboration and identify opportunities to enable the Partnership to address the underlying causes of life inequalities across*

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<sup>1</sup> An "asset" is defined as any factor or resource which enhances the ability of individuals, communities and populations to maintain and sustain health and well-being. These assets can operate at the level of the individual, family or community as protective and promoting factors to buffer against life's stresses. The assets-based approach values the capacity, skills, knowledge, connections and potential in a community. It doesn't only see the problems that need fixing and the gaps that need filling. In an asset approach, therefore, the glass is 'half full' rather than 'half empty'.

*the Belfast area. This will require working with partners to build their capacity and identify opportunities to address life inequalities.*

This Framework for Action builds on the significant amount of research, analysis and consultation that has been completed previously in the Belfast area by various partnerships, community organisations, agencies and more recently, the Belfast BIG Community Planning Pilot. The Partnership has undergone a robust consultation and analysis process to arrive at the priorities outlined in this Framework for Action. Given the collective time and resources expended by all partner organisations, we already know and understand the issues that impact on life inequalities in the Belfast area. The Framework must break down the barriers that have frustrated partnership progress in the past, and in the process, deal with issues of capacity and sustainability of communities

In addition, it is acknowledged that there are other groups in the Belfast area who will feed into the work of the BSP and the Framework for Action. For example, Healthy Ageing Strategic Partnership, Belfast Local Commissioning Group, Belfast Healthy Cities, Children's Outcome Planning Group and the Active Belfast Partnership. The partnership will not seek to duplicate these efforts; rather, it will build on these strengths, create open communication and linkages, and focus on the acknowledged gaps that remain using the collective power and collaboration of the partnership.

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## The 'Building Blocks':

This Framework for Action is founded on a number of solid building blocks at both a macro and a local level.

### Macro building blocks

Overwhelming evidence exists about the persistent nature of life inequalities and of the pervasive impact that this has on all aspects of life. There are dramatic differences in health and well-being between and within countries caused by the 'unequal distribution of power, income, goods and services'.<sup>2</sup> In addition to structural determinants there are also powerful social and psychological processes which serve to compound life inequalities. What is perhaps less well understood and tested is the effective means of redressing this imbalance. It is clear that health inequalities mirror and reflect other inequalities in and between societies, and that this is inextricably linked with social processes and social status, alongside material deprivation and differentials.

The World Health Organisation Commission on Social Determinants of Health, chaired by Professor Sir Michael Marmot, issued policy advice for governments based on best practice across the world. The Partnership recognises the actions suggested by Professor Sir Michael Marmot and will ensure that these are central to the implementation of actions progressed by the BSP:

1. Improve daily living conditions
2. Tackle the inequitable distribution of power, money and resources

<sup>2</sup> WHO Commission on the Social Determinants of Health, Final Report 2008

3. Measure and understand the problem and assess the impact of action.

The Marmot Report 'Fair Society, Healthy Lives' (a strategic review of health inequalities in England post 2010) proposed that reducing health inequalities will require action on six policy objectives. Acting on the research completed by Sir Michael Marmot and his team, this Framework for Action aims to ensure that the following 'building blocks' form the foundations for a healthy, happy life and are incorporated into the Framework's detailed implementation plans.

- Give every child the best start in life
- Enable all children young people and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives
- Create fair employment and good work for all
- Ensure a healthy standard of living for all
- Create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities
- Strengthen the role and impact of ill health prevention

### Local building blocks

The N.Ireland Programme for Government (PfG) and the N.Ireland Public Health Strategy will provide a helpful context within which the 6 policy objectives (outlined above) add value.

The Chief Executives of the three BSP sponsoring organisations (PHA, BHSCT and BCC) came together in early 2010 to plan the establishment of the Belfast Strategic Partnership (BSP).

The BSP will be the key strategic decision-making forum on intersectoral initiatives outlined in this Framework

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which are designed to tackle and influence the root causes of ill health and to reduce life inequalities in the Belfast area. This is a hugely ambitious task and will require the collective action of all Partners represented on the BSP and those who are allied stakeholders. The Partnership will pursue its goals through a variety of levels:

- Taking **direct action** to address life inequalities
- **Influencing and informing** others to address life inequalities
- **Measuring and understanding** the impact of approaches to addressing life inequalities, building an evidence base where gaps exist and using this to contribute to best practice

### Building the Framework for Action

The aim of the framework is to:

Provide an overarching structure to enable the Belfast Strategic Partnership to address life inequalities at city and community level.

Fundamentally ***the Partnership will champion and lead the case for tackling life inequalities across all communities in the Belfast area.***

The Framework for Action:

- Provides a strategic context and commitment to address life inequalities.
- Highlights high level priorities for Belfast to address the causes of inequality
- Encourages effective collaborative action to achieve improvement in outcomes

- Requires individual organisations to align and integrate their plans to reduce life inequalities
- Supports key players whose work makes a significant contribution to reducing health inequalities
- Outlines BSP's commitment to addressing life inequalities
- Encourages local approaches to solve difficult problems

This Framework for Action will join the strategic vision of the BSP members to practical and pragmatic implementation plans, which will mandate partners to work differently to tackle life inequalities across the City. Crucially, Chief Executives have agreed to task their organisations and teams to work differently where required to challenge organisational norms. Using a community planning approach, where resources need to be invested differently to address historical and organisational barriers to integrated working, a commitment has been given by Chief Executives to actively support such action.

There is an onus on the various sectors to look honestly at the way in which resources have been invested over the years. Where gaps are identified, partners are committed to act to fill those gaps as required. Where duplication is identified, partners will show leadership and engage in different approaches to planning and commissioning.

A key feature in bringing coherence to the work of the BSP would be to progress alignment of each organisations planning processes with the planning processes of the BSP. Likewise, individual partner plans need to reflect the priorities set within the BSP Framework for Action.

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Regional priorities such as the new public health strategy will influence and be influenced by the work of the BSP. The BSP will ensure that its work adds value to and learns from other initiatives across the region and beyond and also avoids duplication.

The outputs from each BSP work stream will be regularly monitored and reviewed. An annual report will be published setting out all activities and outcomes flowing from the BSP and this Framework for Action.



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## The Framework for Action:

The following priorities have been agreed by the BSP for inclusion in the *Framework for Action to address life inequalities*.

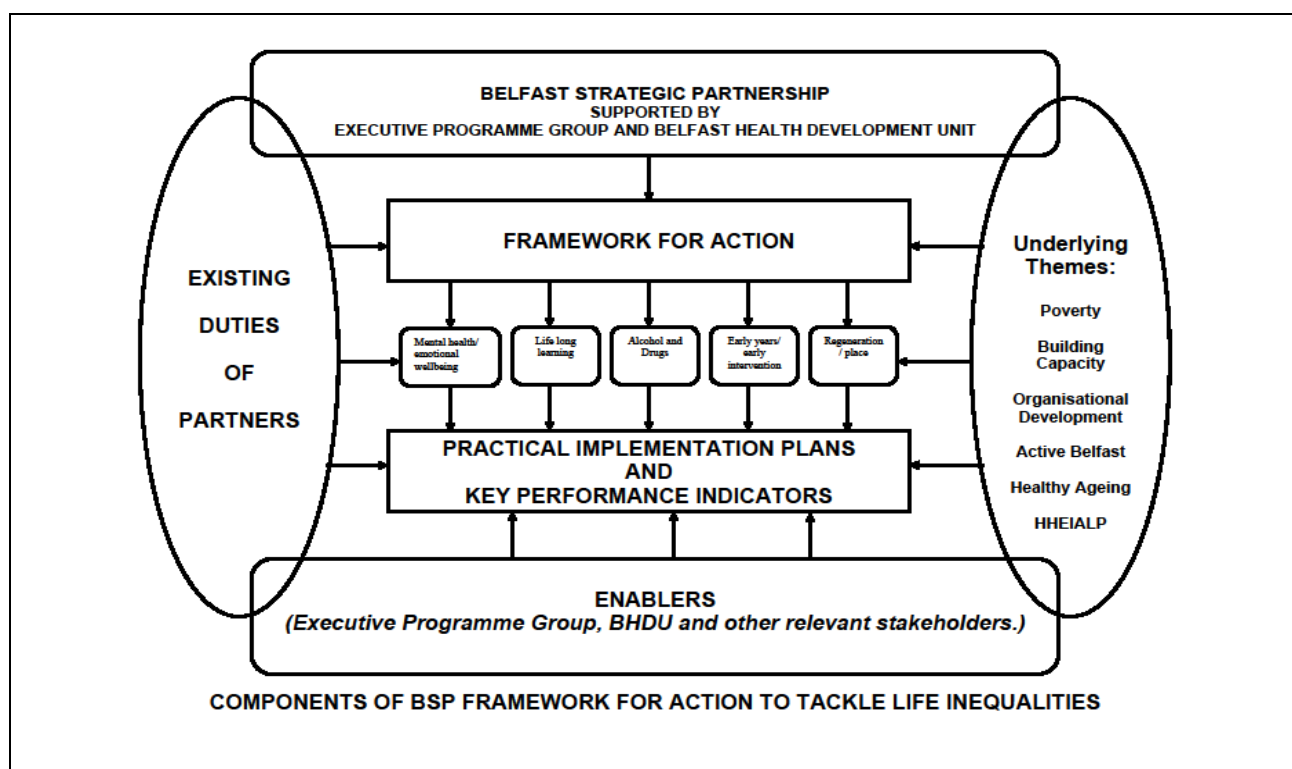
- Addressing mental health and emotional wellbeing
- Addressing issues of life long learning
- Addressing alcohol and drug related issues
- Focusing on early years and early interventions
- Regenerating living places and healthy spaces

Thematic subgroups (or work streams) will be established for each of these priority areas, led by a member of the Belfast Strategic Partnership. A life course approach will be taken across all themes and implementation will be coordinated by staff in the Belfast Health Development Unit or appropriate partner organisation.

Progress will be monitored and reviewed on a bi-annual basis at BSP meetings. Each subgroup will produce an implementation plan, detailing specific implementation arrangements for each action where BSP can bring added value from a collaborative approach. The actions that can and should be achieved by PHA, BHSCT, City Council or others acting individually are not included in the Framework for Action; however BSP will link with these organisations to ensure there is appropriate alignment in the respective corporate plans of the organisations responsible.

The Framework will be delivered within the structure outlined below:

The actions of the BSP will populate the diagrammatic model set out below. This model attempts to set out in visual terms the interlinkages and alignment of the complex issues, duties and themes necessary to take the work of the BSP forward. As these actions are developed there will be a focus on outcomes and the framework will be adapted to reflect this.





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## Priority area 1: Addressing mental health and emotional wellbeing:

Addressing mental health and emotional wellbeing was a key priority issue identified through consultation in developing this Framework for Action. BSP needs to take action to identify opportunities across the city to raise the level of emotional health and social wellbeing both within and among communities, building resilience and a sense of belonging. This will create linkages to community relations, physical activity, poverty, regeneration, employability and suicide prevention work.

Gaps / opportunities already identified include:

- A city-wide Emotional Resilience and Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Improved pathways through mental health services between different sectors and the potential for a 'Place of Safety' in Belfast
- Create linkages between emotional wellbeing and other relevant programme areas – such as drugs and alcohol, Healthy Ageing, Active Belfast, employability, community development etc.
- Addressing the issue of wellbeing through encouraging and supporting positive relationships at community and city level
- The need to develop a clear link between the built environment and health and wellbeing.

## Priority area 2: Addressing life long learning related issues

This priority recognises the connections between educational attainment / learning opportunities and life inequalities. It acknowledges the significant role of schools in education, however recognises the extent of family, community and environmental influence on the lifelong learning of our citizens, particularly in areas with the lowest levels of achievement. It also encourages the integration of health priorities, education and learning.

Gaps / opportunities already identified include:

- Need to influence institutional barriers between health and education activities – build on full service schools model
- Focus on neighbourhoods/ communities with lowest levels of achievement
- Effective linkages with modern world of employment
- Mechanisms for more family support / education - better pathways back to education
- Affordable and accessible programmes/activities for mental stimulation with older people
- Affirming positive support

## Priority area 3: Addressing alcohol and drug related health issues

This priority recognises the significant impact of drugs and alcohol at an individual, community and city-wide level. A whole family and community approach focussing on prevention and early intervention will be the BSP focus. The BSP will be clear about the added value it can bring to the agencies already tasked with service delivery at city level.

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Gaps / opportunities already identified include:

- Informing and advocating for minimum pricing/licensing changes
- A whole life course, whole system approach – increased range of programmes for families and specific groups e.g older people.
- A Belfast wide Alcohol and Drug misuse plan, building on existing good work
- Education and prevention initiatives targeted at adults and at those with combined mental health and drugs/alcohol needs
- A new model for designing and commissioning services and initiatives

## Priority area 4: Focusing on early years and early interventions

This priority recognises the significant impact of prevention activity at an early age and also across lifecycles. The need for integration of services in this thematic area was highlighted at the consultation workshop.

Gaps / opportunities already identified include:

- The need to roll out models of integrated service delivery such as Integrated Services for Children and Young People
- Mainstreaming of Roots of Empathy Programme
- Need for integration of family support services, Surestarts, nursery schools, primary schools and health services
- Children at the heart of decision making and planning

## Priority area 5: Regenerating living places and healthy spaces

The Framework for Action will assist in health related action planning targeted at those areas in greatest need. The BSP, will work proactively with colleagues in Belfast Regeneration Office, the Council Belfast Healthy Cities and others to ensure that all organisations work to incorporate positive health outcomes in regeneration programmes.

Gaps / opportunities already identified include:

- Rolling out successful models of integrated planning at a local level
- Integration of health into neighbourhood strategies (including neighbourhood renewal)
- Achieving both a child friendly and an age friendly city
- An Active Travel approach for Belfast-

The priorities highlighted above are interrelated and while they require specific groups to lead on each individually, the Framework will require a forum to ensure cross-cutting opportunities are identified and implemented. The Executive Programme Group of the BSP will fulfil this function with representation from each of the work streams.

## Underlying Themes:

In addition to the 5 thematic priorities a number of cross-cutting themes have been identified, some of which reflect collaborative work around which there is already considerable momentum. These cross cutting themes will also require

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groups of partnership members to come together either on a time-limited or permanent basis. A number of these themes and priorities will be taken forward by existing partnerships in the City. The BSP will seek to support, link and add value to those partnerships where they already exist.

### **Addressing poverty related issues**

Poverty is central to all of the priorities identified. BSP will establish an exploratory group to create an implementation plan on how the partnership can add value to or extend initiatives that address income and affect those living in greatest poverty the most. For example they are likely to focus on:

- employability,
- education, lifelong learning and links to poverty,
- fuel poverty
- access to services
- sharing experience and good practice from other jurisdictions both nationally and internationally.

### **Building community capacity to enable people to address health concerns**

The Belfast Strategic Partnership recognises the need to build community capacity to engage in the Framework for Action, and likewise to build the capacity of statutory sectors to engage with the community. Through the Belfast Health Development Unit and in association with partners in the community and voluntary sectors the BSP will explore opportunities to not only build capacity to address health concerns, but to harness community intelligence, vision and the will to work together.

### **Organisational Development**

This Framework for Action will influence organisations (and the decision making processes within) and challenge the historical/traditional ways of working to enable delivery on the priorities. This will include providing information and training to decision makers resulting in more clear and innovative ways of working that will evidence a shift to joined up planning, resourcing and delivery.

### **Active Belfast**

The Active Belfast Strategy will contribute to all of the five priority areas through linkages between physical activity and emotional wellbeing. The BHDU has led on the development of an Active Belfast Strategy and brand and the concept will provide for a more co-ordinated approach to the promotion and provision of physical activity opportunities throughout Belfast. The ultimate aim is to increase physical activity and reduce obesity linking to emotional health and wellbeing, helping reduce dependency on drugs and alcohol, contribute to educational achievement, support healthy ageing etc.

### **Healthy Ageing Strategic Partnership**

HASP leads on a joined up approach to the planning and delivery of services, which promote the health, wellbeing and independence of older people. Its partners are successfully working together on joined up information, combating isolation and supporting the voice of older people in Belfast. Greater Belfast Seniors Forum has come together to try to make life better

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for older people in Belfast. Their voice is very important in building community capacity and working alongside organisations to address life inequalities with older people.

HASP recognises the need for a wider partnership approach and action across the life course to bring forward change on fuel poverty, a healthy standard of living, a good living environment and developing an age friendly city. It is committed to supporting and working alongside BSP in some of its priority area and thematic areas.

### **Health and Health Equity in All Local Policies (HHEiALP)**

Applying HHEiALP in Belfast will ensure a stronger focus on equity and children when delivering public policy. The HHEiALP process will affect corporate and departmental plans resulting in greater equity and health gain.

Further, each public body has specific obligations imposed by Section 75 of the N.I. Act. This will ensure that consideration will be given to the impact of the actions across the section 75 groups.

Moreover the thematic groups will need to consider the needs and opportunities for various groups of people in the development of each action, particularly if there is a particular need or gap relevant to a particular group of people.

## The Approach...

### **Development**

This Framework for Action has been founded on a comprehensive cross-sectoral consultation process. The BSP

has worked collaboratively with the Belfast BIG Community Planning Pilot in gathering research and analysis previously completed by various organisations, agencies and partnerships throughout the Belfast area.

A stakeholder workshop was held on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2011 to enable comprehensive involvement in the development of the Framework for Action. More than 110 stakeholders from the community and voluntary, private and statutory sectors attended this event to help select the priorities for the Framework for Action. This event was run in conjunction with the Belfast BIG Community Planning Pilot, enabling total integration between the Community Planning Pilot and the Framework for Action to address Life Inequalities.

BSP's Executive Programme Group considered the workshop report and the priorities identified and developed a draft Framework for Action. The Framework was discussed and endorsed by the BSP at their 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2011

## Next Steps...

Following on from the workshop event in June feedback will be made available to all stakeholders.

The process will;

- Provide feedback on activity to develop the Framework
- Share the adopted Framework For Action
- Outline next steps for Framework development
- Offer stakeholders the opportunity to continue to be involved as BSP moves forward

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The BSP will establish thematic groups to develop outcome focused action plans for each priority area.

Once agreed the action plans will be resourced and ready for implementation from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012.

### **Contact Details**

For further information please contact;

Jackie McBrinn  
Manager  
Belfast Health Development Unit  
5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
9 Lanyon Place  
Belfast  
BT1 3LP

Tel: 02890 502073

Email: [Jackie.mcbrinn@bhdu.org](mailto:Jackie.mcbrinn@bhdu.org)