

Inform

Issue No.9

February/March 2000

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Agency briefs new Northern Ireland Assembly Committee

Representatives from the Health Promotion Agency were invited to Stormont on 12 January to brief members of the Health, Social Services and Public Safety Committee; one of the Assembly's newly formed statutory committees.

The Agency was one of the first organisations invited to explain its role within the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS). As the meeting was open to the public, a wide range of observers including people from the health sector, the voluntary sector and the media, took this opportunity to witness at close hand, the workings of Northern Ireland's new Assembly.

Dr Joe Hendron, Committee Chairman, began by welcoming the Agency's representatives to the meeting. Mr Douglas Smyth, Agency

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Let's talk drugs

The Health Promotion Agency launched the latest phase of its work on drugs, targeting 10 to 13 year olds, on Tuesday 18 January at Hazelwood Integrated Primary School, Whiteabbey. Rob Phipps, the Agency's Drugs Programme Manager, spoke to over 100 pupils at the school and also had the opportunity to talk to parents and a range of professionals working in the area of drugs.

Research conducted by the Agency revealed that nearly ten per cent of young people aged 10 to 13 in Northern Ireland have been offered drugs and of this number, three out of ten have actually experimented with drugs at some stage.

This group was last targeted three years ago, so now a new group of 10 to 13 year olds are being given information about the dangers of drug misuse. Research shows that the average age for young people to be offered drugs is 11.

A television advertisement supported by an information booklet will be used to get the message across to young people, that drugs can

be very dangerous. The advertisement will be broadcast on UTV and Channel 4 from 18 January to 15 February 2000.

More than 100,000 booklets entitled 'What do you know about drugs? - your body, your life, your choice' will be distributed to P6 and P7 pupils in primary schools and first and second form pupils in post primary schools during January and February.

A new leaflet for parents entitled 'Talking about drugs' has also been produced to support the campaign. It will be sent to the parents of 10 to 13 year olds via schools. The leaflet contains information on how to bring up the subject of drugs with children and highlights why parents should talk to their children about this important issue.

A short television advertisement promoting the National Drugs Helpline will also be broadcast during March 2000 as part of the public information initiative on drugs. The National Drugs Helpline number is Freephone 0800 776600.



Pointing the way: Rob Phipps talks about drugs to pupils at Hazelwood Primary School.

Agency briefs new Northern Ireland Assembly Committee *...continued from front cover*

Chairman, then proceeded to give the Committee a brief presentation about the structure and role of the Agency. Dr Brian Gaffney, Chief Executive, complemented this presentation by outlining the main business areas of the Agency. Each Committee Member was then given the opportunity to question the Agency on a wide range of issues relating to health and health promotion.

Questions covered concerns about specific health issues such as heart disease, cancers, mental health, and the needs of particular groups such as young people. The Committee also showed an interest in the possibility for national and international cooperation and the potential of initiatives such as Health Action Zones and Targeting Social Need.

Agency representatives were encouraged to find that members were on the whole, very supportive of the aims of health promotion and were very interested in the area.

While this was a valuable opportunity to outline the importance of health promotion as an integral part of the Health Service and to talk about the value of ongoing work and the potential for achieving more, there was not sufficient time to address issues raised in depth.

It is hoped that further opportunities will be given to the Agency to brief members in greater detail. The Agency is particularly keen to discuss the role of health promotion with Committee Members and to ensure that they have access to all relevant information.

Public information campaigns

Special Millennium Project Launched

The Agency launched a special initiative on 6 January 2000 to mark the new millennium, with the help of Northern Ireland's new Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Bairbre de Brun and Dr Hilary Jones (from GMTV). The 'Millennium Babies' project received extensive media coverage.

The project aimed to provide the first 2000 new babies of the Millennium with a special pack to welcome them into the 21st century and give them the healthiest possible start in life.

The packs were presented by maternity units across Northern Ireland and came in the form of a useful changing bag. The pack contained advice leaflets on issues such as nutrition, immunisation and safety as well as several useful baby products, among them a specially designed souvenir bib and an informative height chart.

Speaking at the launch the Minister said: "There is overwhelming evidence that the kind of patterns that are laid down early in life, determine the kind of health and wellbeing of an individual later. The timing of this initiative could not have been better as it gives a message of hope for the health and future of these young babies."

Dr Hilary Jones highlighted the importance of credible unbiased health information. He said: "this is a project which focuses on giving babies the best start in life. The wide range of information contained in the pack will hopefully encourage mums and dads to make healthy choices for their children.

"There are so many things to think about when a new baby arrives in the household. This pack will help parents when they have to make important decisions shortly after the birth, such as getting a baby immunised at the appropriate times."

While this was a special one-off initiative, the Agency will continue to develop and support this project during the coming year.

All packs have a questionnaire attached to them and the information collated from the questionnaires could form the basis for developing future work on promoting family health.

In addition, the Agency has developed a special 'Millennium Babies Website' which can be found at: www.bornintheyear2k.com Visitors to this site will soon be able to access a wealth of relevant health information and hear news about some of the millennium babies.

A healthy New Year:
From left, Dr Brian Gaffney, Chief Executive, Health Promotion Agency; Dr Hilary Jones, GMTV's resident doctor and Minister for Health, Ms Bairbre de Brun.



Smoking Campaign

As part of the response to the Government's White Paper 'Smoking Kills', the Agency has been commissioned to design and implement a public information campaign on smoking. This will be launched on Wednesday 1 March 2000.

Young people were one of three priority groups to be identified in the White Paper and will be the focus of the Agency's campaign, in particular those aged 12 to 13 years.

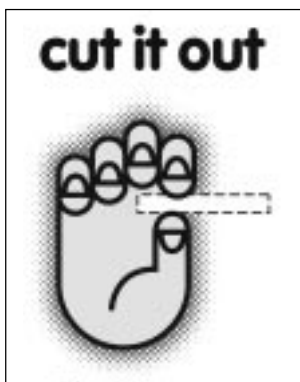
This decision was guided by research, which indicated that it is at these ages young people may begin to experiment with smoking. Television advertising will be supported by printed material and an interactive website.

A briefing day has been arranged to provide detailed information about the Agency's plans for the campaign. This will take place on Friday 25 February 2000 at 10.15am in Malone House, Belfast. Anyone wishing to attend the briefing should contact Lesley Whan at the Agency.

No Smoking Day 2000

Smokers in Northern Ireland will be asked to 'Cut It Out on No Smoking Day', which takes place on Wednesday 8 March. It is hoped that this year's campaign will encourage even more smokers to give up their habit for good.

Results from last years campaign proved encouraging with Northern Ireland showing higher awareness and greater participation in 'No Smoking Day', compared to other areas within the UK.



Alcohol Countdown

A campaign to raise public awareness of units of alcohol, drinking limits for men and women and the safe drinking message will be launched on Tuesday 15 February from the Botanic Inn Public House and Off-Sales in Belfast.

To promote the message, more than one million beer mats will be distributed to pubs, clubs and hotels across Northern Ireland with help from Bass Ireland and Guinness.



Off-sales will be involved in supporting the campaign by giving customers small cards, which contain the recommended information on units. Plastic unit measures will also be given to the public by off-sales as part of this campaign to enable people to count their units if they are drinking at home.

The off-sales chains supporting this campaign include the Co-op, Russells Cellars, Tesco, Wineflair and Winemark.

Policy development and advice

Development of Activate
During October 1999, a one-day workshop on the Activate Health Programme was organised by the Agency for Northern Ireland's Health Trusts and Boards. Its aim was to gain a broad insight to the progress made by Activate and most importantly to give consideration to its future development. The event coincided with a review of the promotional materials by Activate's tutors and trainers.

Recommendations from this research are now being considered by the Agency with a view to restructuring the programme from April 2000. Further developments in the programme will be available in the next issue of 'Activate News', which will be available from late February.

Northern Ireland Physical Activity Strategy

The Strategy Implementation Group published the first issue of 'NIPAIG News' in December 1999, recording the first twelve months of the strategy.

Four local facilitators have been appointed to help implement the Strategy. Loughborough University in association with the Training Advisory Group, has completed a Training Plan and a number of training modules are being prepared. Testing will be completed by March and courses will be organised by June 2000. The first phase of training will focus on three areas:

- training for policy makers and planners
- a toolkit for primary care professionals
- training resources for community leaders

The Health Promotion Agency and Belfast Healthy Cities are planning to organise a European conference at the Waterfront Hall, Belfast, from 22-24 October 2000. The conference will bring together two major networks - The European Network for the Promotion of Health-Enhancing Physical Activity and the Healthy Cities Multi-City Action Plan on Active Living. The conference's provisional title is: 'Active Living: Policy, Partnership and Practice'. Further details will be included in the next issue of *inform*.

Short Course Programme

The Agency's short course programme continues throughout February and March with a variety of courses designed to suit professionals involved in health and health promotion. As with all of the Agency's courses, topics have been selected on the basis of assessed need. Where possible, professional accreditation has been obtained for selected courses. To promote wider accessibility, the Agency is continuing to subsidise course fees where appropriate. Forthcoming courses in this series include:

- **Current Issues in Health Promotion: Training for Trainers**
- **Drugs and the Family**
- **Sexuality and Learning Disability: Developing Policy and Procedures**
- **Alcohol Education and Young People**

For further details on these, or any other courses run by the Agency, please contact Claire Hind at the Health Promotion Agency to request a copy of the latest training prospectus.

Alternatively, details of all training courses, as well as the necessary booking forms are available on the Agency's Website at: www.healthpromotionagency.org.uk

Investors in People

The Health Promotion Agency has recently been awarded the prestigious Investors in People Award. This award is the National Standard, which recognises good practice in improving an organisation's overall performance through investing in its staff.

On receiving the award, Dr Brian Gaffney, Chief Executive of the Agency stated: "The Health Promotion Agency is committed to staff training and development and this has, I believe, contributed much to the ongoing success of the Agency. I am very proud of this recognition and can only conclude by saying that the achievement of this award is a credit to all staff who work in the Agency."



Agency receives top people award: Front row, from left, Mr Douglas Smyth, Chairman of the Agency; Máire Gallagher and Dr Brian Gaffney, Chief Executive of the Agency. Back row, from left, Sean Arbuckle; Sam Lawther and Mary Patterson.

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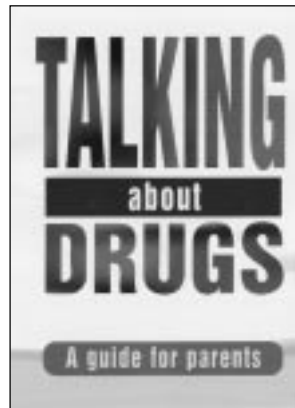
Inform is published bi-monthly by the Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland to provide information on current areas of work.

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Publications and resources

Drugs Resource



An information leaflet 'Talking about Drugs - a guide for parents' has been produced for parents of 10 to 13 year olds, to give advice and tips on how to approach the issue of drugs with children. This leaflet complements

'Drugs and Solvents - a guide for parents', which gives detailed information on what drugs look like, their effects and how to recognise the signs of drug taking.

The new leaflet is part of the Agency's contribution to the Northern Ireland Drugs Campaign. During February and March the leaflets will be distributed to young people and their parents through schools.

A revised edition of the drugs handbook for professionals, will be available in the Spring.

Millennium Babies Website

The Agency has set up a special website as part of its initiative to mark the new millennium. The site, which is under development, can be accessed at: <http://www.bornintheyear2k.com>

The site will provide relevant health information for parents and will chart the progress of some of Northern Ireland's special Millennium Babies.



Oh baby, what a site:
TV Doctor, Hilary Jones, gets online with the Agency's Millennium Babies Website.

Nutrition Factfile



Following a very positive evaluation, the Agency is currently updating its resource 'Nutrition Factfile: Factsheets on Diet and Health' in collaboration with community dietitians from the four Health and Social Services Board areas.

All twelve of the existing factsheets will be updated. The new Factfile will also include two additional factsheets on diet and cancer prevention and nutrition and dental health. The revised publication will be distributed to all post-primary schools, colleges of further education, dietitians and health promotion departments in March 2000.

Promoting Health Journal

The latest issue of 'Promoting Health' focuses on the workplace as a setting for health promotion. It includes articles on the potential benefits of workplace health promotion for both employers and staff, as well as international examples of successful workplace health promotion initiatives.

Further details of this issue can be obtained from the Agency's Website. Readers of **Inform** who would like to receive a copy of 'Promoting Health' should contact Ann Marie McCann at the Agency.

Website: www.healthpromotionagency.org.uk

The Agency's Website features a range of information about the Agency and its work. The site will be regularly updated to provide a current source of information for anyone with an interest in health promotion. Any comments you may have or suggestions for additional information you would like to see there, will be very welcome.
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