

# Inform

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## Smoking cessation drive planned

The Agency looks likely to play a major role, along with other organisations working in the field, in responding to the Government's 'White Paper on Tobacco' in Northern Ireland.

Work is planned to build on the achievements of the annual No Smoking Day initiative in terms of supporting smokers who wish to stop and discouraging anyone tempted to take up the habit.

Key target groups for a major new initiative will be young people, pregnant women and disadvantaged smokers.

More details of this work will be available in the next issue of Inform.



# Building a health strategy for Bosnia

Representatives from the Health Promotion Agency visited Sarajevo and Banja Luka in Bosnia-Herzegovina recently as part of a NICARE initiative to help rebuild the health infrastructure in this war torn country.

Agency Chief Executive, Dr Brian Gaffney and Director of Programme Development, Linda Barclay, were part of a working party who collaborated with public health specialists on ways of rebuilding the public health function within the country.

This international initiative, planned to continue until March 2000, focuses on sharing health promotion knowledge and support.

Dr Brian Gaffney, Agency

Chief Executive said: "One of the elements of the work is to help a team of government and health professionals in Bosnia-Herzegovina develop a health strategy to emphasise the future role of community development and primary care based services in promoting health and wellbeing.

"I came away from Bosnia-Herzegovina not so much preoccupied with the issues to be resolved and overcome in that country but with an overwhelming sense that while we may have something to teach people in a professional sense, we also have much to learn as a community and society in Northern Ireland by what has happened in that country."

## Partnership, participation and power

This is the theme of the 8th Annual Public Health Forum to be held at the Harrogate International Centre on 28/29 March 2000. Organised by the UK Public Health Association (UKPHA), this is the UK's largest annual multi-disciplinary public health conference and is open to all. The Agency is a collaborating partner for this important event.

It provides a major opportunity for everyone concerned to exchange ideas on best practice, learn from others in presentations and discussions, network with others facing similar challenges and explore the implications of national and international policies.

The closing date for the call for papers is 17 September 1999 and further details are available from David Bebb, Profile Productions Ltd, Northumberland House, 11 The Pavement, Popes Lane, London W5 4NG. Telephone: 0208 832 7300 or E-mail: profilep@dial.pipex.com

## Alliances for health

Siobhan Weir joined the Agency in June as Physical Activity



Project Officer. Her role will involve managing the Agency's links with those organisations and groups working to implement

the Northern Ireland Physical Activity Strategy.

It is likely that Siobhan will be meeting with many of you in the future course of her work.

# Research, information and analysis

## No Smoking Day Evaluation

'Take the plunge' was the slogan for this year's No Smoking Day which was held on Wednesday 10 March 1999. The campaign was supported by a number of statutory and voluntary organisations as well as professional bodies across Northern Ireland.

As part of its support for No Smoking Day, the Agency broadcast a television and radio advertising campaign and placed advertisements in popular daily newspapers. The aim of this advertising campaign was to raise awareness of the day and allow smokers who wished to take part, the time to prepare to stop smoking.

Following the campaign 1,131 interviews with adults aged 16 and over were carried out in Northern Ireland. This evaluation indicates that

the Northern Ireland campaign was very successful, achieving higher levels of awareness and participation than in Great Britain.

In Northern Ireland 81% of respondents were aware that Wednesday 10 March was No Smoking Day. Awareness was much higher among smokers (91%) than non smokers (76%). In Great Britain 75% of respondents were aware that Wednesday 10 March was No Smoking Day

All respondents aware of No Smoking Day were asked if they participated in the day. Overall 40% of smokers in Northern Ireland who were aware of the day said they participated, with 10% stopping for the whole day or longer, 8% stopping for part of the day 12% smoking less

than usual and 10% thinking about stopping smoking. In Great Britain 35% of smokers aware of the day participated.

Throughout the UK there was a clear relationship between tobacco consumption and participation in the day with the lightest smokers more likely to have participated.

The proportion of respondents aware of advertising or publicity for No Smoking Day increased from 64% in 1998 to 72% in 1999. The most popular source of advertising/publicity for No Smoking Day was television advertising.



## Sugar-free medicines

The Agency was commissioned by the Department of Health and Social Services to assess the need for information on, and the promotion of, the benefits of sugar-free medicines. Research was carried out with the general public and health professionals.

### General public

One thousand members of the public aged 18 and over were interviewed to establish their knowledge and awareness of sugar-free medicines.

Less than half (47%) of those interviewed were aware that sugar-free varieties of many medicines were available. Of those who were aware less than half (39%) had ever requested them from a health professional.

However, 89% of all respondents said that if they knew that sugar-free medicine was better for teeth/oral health, then they would be likely to request it.

### Health professionals

A postal survey was carried out among a sample of five health professional groupings (GPs, Pharmacists, Dentists, Practice Nurses and Health Visitors) to establish their attitudes and current practice in relation to sugar-free medicines.

Of the 1,000 health professionals surveyed, 404 returned completed questionnaires (a response rate of 40%).

Of those who prescribe or dispense medicine, 61% stated that they routinely prescribe or dispense sugar-free medicines, and 69% stated that less than a quarter of all medicines requested were sugar-free.

There was a high level of support (95%) among health professionals for a campaign to encourage the public to ask for sugar-free medicines.

The research findings also suggest that there is a need for more information on the benefits and availability of sugar-free medicines.

## Public Health Alliance

Members of the UK Public Health Association (UKPHA) and others working to promote the health of the public in Northern Ireland attended a meeting in the Health Promotion Agency in May 1999 to discuss the possibility of forming a local public health alliance.

According to Agency Chief Executive, Dr Brian Gaffney: "Given that promoting public health involves many sectors, organisations and individuals, our aim is to develop a collective voice for advocacy and lobbying on public health issues in Northern Ireland."

Members of the UKPHA also found the meeting beneficial in terms of finding out about public health and community initiatives in Northern Ireland.

It has been agreed that Dr Brian Gaffney and Mr Paul Fleming will organise a further meeting to continue this process and explore the issues with a broader group of interested parties.

## Public information campaigns

### Get a life, get active

The 'Get a life, get active' physical activity campaign is continuing throughout the summer months.

Many groups and organisations who benefited from the Cash Grant Scheme, a community awards initiative organised in association with NICVA and Disability Action, have events on-going from July to September.

These events have been organised with the key objective of encouraging and supporting people in the community to be more active. Groups from all over Northern Ireland have organised activities ranging from cycling to canoeing and rambling to tai-chi.

The Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health recently kicked off their initiative with the help of the Lord Mayor of Londonderry from

the steps of the Guildhall (pictured below).

To further raise awareness of the campaign, competitions have been featured in the regional and local press and a quiz took place on Downtown Radio.

The response from the public has been very positive with the Belfast Telegraph reporting 'an unprecedented response to the competition', and both the Newsletter and Irish News receiving hundreds of entries from people wanting to support the physical activity campaign.



## Recognised Research Groups (RRGs)

A new strategic framework for research and development in the Health and Personal Social Services has been set out in the strategy document "Research for Health and Wellbeing".

Recognised Research Groups are one of nine key strands in the strategy. Following a call for declarations of interest, published by the Research and Development Office of the Central Services Agency, the Agency is keen to establish likely interest and support for a health promotion research group.

Please contact Dr Brian Gaffney, Chief Executive of the Health Promotion Agency, to discuss this matter further.

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# Publications and resources

## CINDI Highlights



The Agency has published the fifth edition of CINDI Highlights.

This document reports on work being carried out to prevent noncommunicable diseases in the 24 countries belonging to the CINDI (Countrywide Integrated Noncommunicable Diseases Intervention programme) Network.

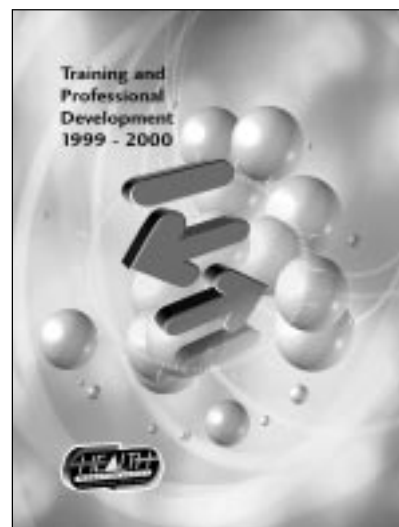
The CINDI Network is an important WHO initiative to reduce the incidence of noncommunicable diseases in the European region and beyond. Northern Ireland is the 'demonstration area' for the CINDI Programme in the UK.

## Pregnancy resources

The Agency has been working with the DHSS to provide up-to-date information about rights and benefits for pregnant women in Northern Ireland for the new editions of 'The Pregnancy Book' and 'Birth to Five' published by the Health Education Authority.

The Pregnancy Book and 'Birth to Five' are designed for women in Northern Ireland who are pregnant for the first time. These new editions should be available in the Autumn of this year.

## Training prospectus



The Agency's training prospectus for 1999/2000 will be available this month. It contains details of a wide variety of training and professional development opportunities in health promotion.

There is a combination of both short course and longer term programmes on offer for the coming year. Many are accredited and the Agency has again subsidised the course fees to promote wide accessibility to the training.

Remember, full details of the training and professional development courses are also available on the Agency's Website at: [www.healthpromotionagency.org.uk](http://www.healthpromotionagency.org.uk)

## Website: [www.healthpromotionagency.org.uk](http://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 on the site, will be very welcome.