

- At least one in five adults in Northern Ireland may suffer from some form of common mental health disorder in any year.
- Research into public sector sickness absence highlighted that stress, depression, mental ill health and fatigue accounted for 23% of lost working days, at a cost of around £5.3m.
- In the Health and social wellbeing survey, 19% of the Northern Ireland population aged 16 and above scored four or more on GHQ12, indicating possible psychiatric morbidity.
- It is estimated that the rate of mental health problems in Northern Ireland is 20-25% higher than in the rest of the UK.
- In 2009, there were 260 registered deaths by suicide in Northern Ireland, of which 205 were males and 55 were females.

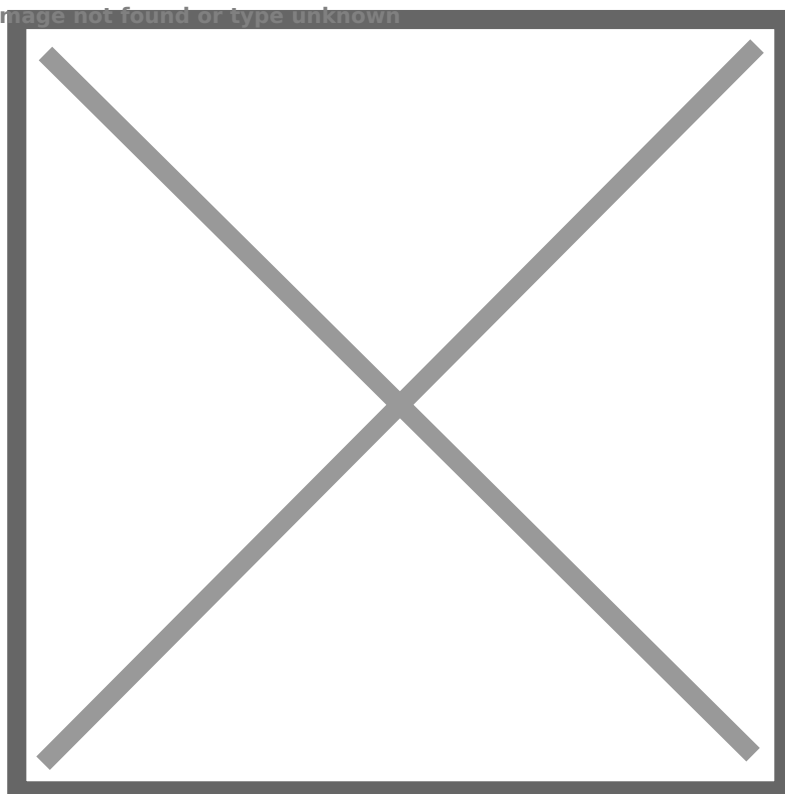
Poor mental health affects at least one in five of the adult population in Northern Ireland. The current economic downturn has led to an increase in unemployment, fears of redundancy and money worries – all of which have an impact on the mental health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities in Northern Ireland.

Actions

The campaign to promote Lifeline, the free helpline for those in distress or despair, has led to increased public awareness of the Lifeline number 0808 808 800. A website www.lifelinehelpline.info was launched to raise the profile of the service.

The PHA's award-winning public information campaign encouraging young men to open up and talk about their feelings was also re-run during 2010.

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In June 2010, we held an event with key stakeholders to help inform the development of phase three of the mental health public information campaign. The next phase of the campaign will include a focus on issues that can have a negative impact on the mental health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities, including the economic downturn.

Responding to a request from the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), we facilitated training for 36 union representatives from across Northern Ireland to help build their skills and confidence in supporting colleagues in a range of workplace settings. Participants attended Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training and applied suicide intervention skills training (ASIST).

Outcomes

ICTU plans to re-run both training programmes as part of its ongoing calendar of training next year.

Next steps

The development of the new mental health public information campaign is underway, with implementation scheduled for 2011/12. We will continue to support the regional rollout of MHFA training and take forward the recommendations from the all-island evaluation of the ASIST programme.

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