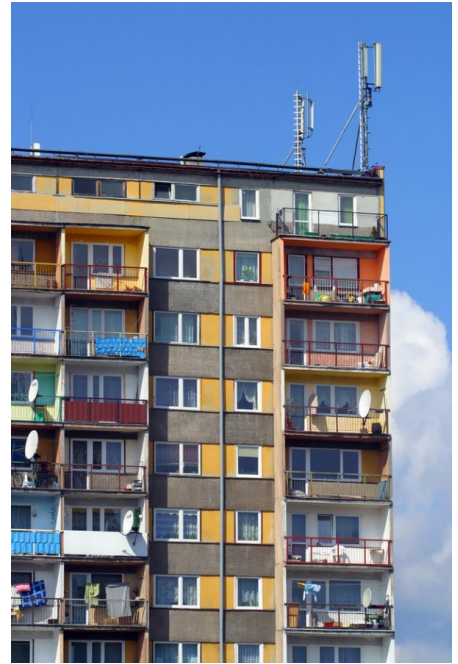


- Both poverty and economic inequality are bad for health.
- Persistent poverty in Northern Ireland (21% before housing costs) is double that in Great Britain (GB) (9%).
- In January 2010, 43,000 children in Northern Ireland were living in severe poverty.
- There are four main reasons for higher persistent poverty in Northern Ireland: high levels of unemployment, high rates of disability and limiting long-term illness, low wages, poor quality part-time jobs and obstacles to working mothers.



Poverty is an important risk factor for illness and premature death. It affects health directly and indirectly in many ways, for example:

- financial strain;
- poorer housing, living environments and diet;
- limited access to employment, services and opportunities.

Poor health can also cause poverty. In Northern Ireland, research on poverty carried out in 2006 found that 20% of the population was living in relative income poverty (where the household income is less than 60% of the median UK household income for the year in question) over the period 2002/03–2004/05.

Actions

Across Northern Ireland, the PHA is working in partnership with voluntary and statutory sector partners on a range of initiatives to support vulnerable groups who may not traditionally access services.

Through the Advice 4 Health project, a collaboration between the PHA's Northern Investing for Health (IfH) Partnership and the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), four specialist workers support vulnerable groups across a range of Health and Social Care settings, such as community rehabilitation centres, GP surgeries and local inpatient mental health units.

A programme funded by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) and coordinated by the PHA aims to improve the health and wellbeing of people living in the top 30% of rurally deprived super output areas (SOAs) by making them aware of, or helping them access, local services, grants or benefits.

Outcomes

Since 2006, advice has been provided to over 35,000 people across the Northern Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT) area through the 'Advice 4 Health' project - resulting in a minimum of £3.4m income maximisation being recovered for patients and clients.

Next steps

The 'Advice 4 Health' project is sharing good practice with other stakeholders with a view to considering how this effective, integrated services model could be developed and expanded across Northern Ireland.

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