

Defining inequalities and poverty: taking collective action

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Belfast

Population of City: 333,000 citizens

Population of Metropolitan Area: approx. 579,000

Area: 109.6 km²



Definition of equity

‘... health equity has many aspects, and is best seen as a multidimensional concept. It includes concerns about achievement of health and the capability to achieve good health, not just the distribution of health care. But it also includes the fairness of processes and thus must attach importance to non-discrimination in the delivery of health care. Furthermore, an adequate engagement with health equity also requires that the considerations of health be integrated with broader issues of social justice and overall equity, paying adequate attention to the versatility of resources and the diverse reach and impact of different social arrangements.’

Amartya Sen (2004) Why Health Equity?



Social inequalities in health are distinguished by three features:

- they are observed ***systematically*** in a population
- they are ***socially produced*** (and therefore they can be modified)
- they are ***unfair***

For example, children from poor families are more likely:

- to be born with low birth weight
- suffer passive smoking
- eat less nutritious food
- be less successful in school
- live in an area with more pollution and dangerous traffic
- have a parent who is unemployed
- have less choice when looking for a job themselves

. . . . the problems accumulate throughout life





In Northern Ireland for example:

Men from the lowest socio-economic groups live on average 7.6 years less than men in the highest socio-economic groups while women live 4.5 years less.

The mortality rate for the lowest social group is twice that of the highest.

The mortality rate from homicide/assault was 225% higher in the lowest occupational class than in the highest

Inequalities linked to living conditions

- 61% of school leavers in 2011-12 attained at least 5 GCSEs grades A*-C, including English and maths
 - figure for pupils entitled to free school meals is 34%
- Young people from the most deprived areas are six times more likely to leave school with no formal qualifications than young people in the least deprived areas
- People in rural communities
 - are less likely to identify they are in poverty
 - lower than average take-up of benefits
- Child poverty in NI is 21%, above the UK average of 18% (2010/11 figures)

Health Equity in Belfast

Improving health for all and reducing health inequities is a strategic goal for the WHO Europe public health strategy Health 2020

Key element in public health strategy Making Life Better
- also in predecessor Investing for Health strategy

Core theme for Belfast Healthy Cities throughout 25 year history

- Health Equity in All Policies model developed 2011



Defining Inequalities and Poverty: Taking Collective Action Workshop



Workshop outcomes:

- Feedback from the small group discussion to be included in a draft screening tool developed by Erica Ison, WHO Expert Advisor.
- The tool will be used to support organisations in the city to assess the impact of their policies and practice on inequalities.

Health equity screening tool

Aim: Support organisations in Belfast to assess the impact of their policies and practice on inequalities

Objective: Engage policy makers and practitioners to consider the definition and components of inequalities to be considered in a tool.

Process: An initial pilot took place on the draft tool with a small group. Following this, the final draft tool was piloted on a Belfast City Council draft framework.



Piloting the tool

The unsupported pilots provided learning on the practical use of the tool and determine if further amendments are needed to ensure ease of use. The supported pilot allowed participants to comment on the use of tool in a supported environment.

Unsupported pilot:

- Belfast Strategic Partnership
- Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

Supported pilot:

- Draft Employability and Skills Framework, Belfast City Council



Future use of the tool

Tool available by late 2015

Identifying opportunities to embed tool with agencies

Explore readiness to take action on equity

Capacity building



Thank-you

Further information:

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