



MAKING LIFE BETTER

## NEWS

ISSUE 10 - SUMMER 2025

[Click here for previous Issues](#)

# WELCOME

## CMO Foreword

Welcome to the Summer edition of the MLB Newsletter.

I hope you have had an opportunity to enjoy some leave.

I am pleased to introduce you to my All Departments Officials Group (ADOG) colleague **Wendy Lecky**, Director of the Strategic Policy Division.

We have a packed Newsletter and there are two key updates I want to draw your attention to.

### 1. Joint North-South Public Health Conference

- Date: Thursday 18 September from 10am.
- Theme: “Turning the Tide: Tackling the commercial and political determinants of health through policy and practice”
- [Register for the conference](#)

### 2. Health Literacy Awareness Month (October)

- Focus: Making health information easy to understand and the health care system easier to navigate
- Articles and useful resources throughout October.

I hope you enjoy this edition of the MLB Newsletter.

## Get In Touch

If you have any questions about the content of MLB News, have work you want to share with the Network or wish to join please email:  
[mlbnetwork@hscni.net](mailto:mlbnetwork@hscni.net)



(Picture above) Dr. Michael McBride, Chief Medical Officer (CMO), Department of Health

## Health Literacy Awareness Month

October is **Health Literacy Awareness Month**. Throughout October, The Regional Health Literacy Forum members will be highlighting their work, sharing useful health literacy resources, and showcasing stories from across Northern Ireland. A full update on the work of the Forum will be included in the next edition of the MLB Newsletter

# All Departments Officials Group (ADOG) - Introductions

I have a diverse set of responsibilities, including providing strategic advice to the Minister of Finance on key economic and policy issues. I also oversee the assessment of major public expenditure proposals - including those related to public sector pay - and lead the development of associated guidance and training. Additionally, I am leading legislation to place the Northern Ireland Fiscal Council on a statutory footing.

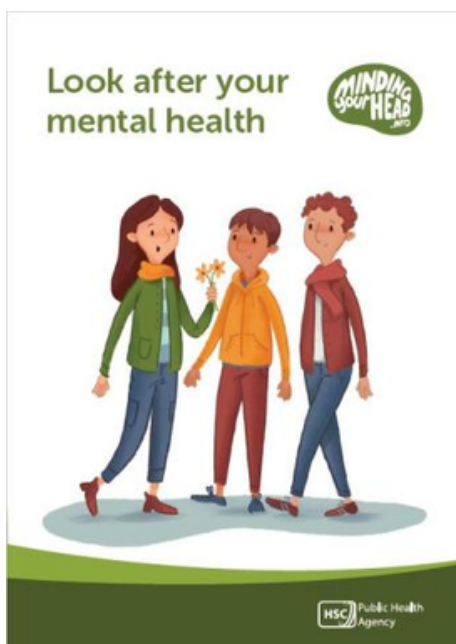
Alongside these responsibilities, I serve as Head of the Economist Profession, managing a network of approximately 140 economists across Civil Service departments and a number of ALBs.

As the Department of Finance representative on ADOG, I aim to bring a cohesive perspective that reflects the department's broad remit - particularly our leadership in supporting NICS colleagues through enabling individuals to realise their full potential.



Wendy Lecky  
Director of the Strategic Policy  
Division  
Dept of Finance

## Look after your mental health campaign 2025



This year, the Public Health Agency, NI Ambulance Service and the 5 local Trusts are co-launching their annual, month long HSC mental health campaign focussing on looking after your mental health from 10<sup>th</sup> September 2025 to 10<sup>th</sup> October 2025. This campaign is to support mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention through the implementation of Take 5 steps to Wellbeing and signposting people to information and support. Please see:

[Look after your mental health campaign 2025 | Minding Your Head](#)

More messages and links will be shared through PHA social media accounts over the month.

Save the date



## JOINT PUBLIC HEALTH CONFERENCE

18 September, 2025

**Turning the Tide:**  
*Tackling the commercial and political determinants of health through policy and practice*

This is a free online event via Zoom



**REMINDER - Mark your calendars!** You are invited to attend the **Joint North South Public Health Conference, which will take place online on Thursday, 18 September, from 10 am to 12.30 pm.** The title of this year's all-island conference is 'Turning the Tide: Tackling the commercial and political determinants of health through policy and practice'. The half-day conference will consider how those working in public health can help turn the tide on the commercial and political determinants of health. Registration for this year's conference on **18<sup>th</sup> September** is now live: [Register for the conference](#)

## Strengthening Communities for Health Workshop

Strengthening Communities for Health is a partnership approach to enhance community-centred and community development approaches to reduce health inequalities, following the ethos and principles set out in Making Life Better. Public Health Agency leads on the co-ordination and delivery of this workstream, working collectively with partners to develop and implement collaborative action to better support our communities to improve their health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities.

Members of the Strengthening Communities for Health Steering Group met together for a planning workshop at the end of June. The collaborative workshop saw representatives from cross-sectoral organisations working together to support the development of initiatives which promote, champion and advocate for the importance of community development approaches in reducing health inequalities.

For more information contact:

[amanda.cotter@hscni.net](mailto:amanda.cotter@hscni.net) or

visit: [Expansion of community development approaches | HSC Public Health Agency](#)



(Picture above) Members of the Strengthening Communities for Health Steering Group

# Did you know?



**NISRA**  
Northern Ireland  
Statistics and Research Agency  
Gníomhaireacht Thuaisceart Éireann  
um Staitisticí agus Taighde

**DataPortal**

The Making Life Better section on the NISRA Data Portal ([data.nisra.gov.uk](https://data.nisra.gov.uk)) now has over 368 tables and has recently been populated with tables from the PfG Wellbeing Framework which includes data across equality groups. This is the sixth article in a series which highlights the data and tools available on the NISRA Data Portal.

## Recorded Crime and Anti-social Behaviour

On the Data Portal, tables relating to recorded crime and anti-social behaviour sit under MLB Theme 5 – Empowering Communities. There are separate tables for recorded crime by crime classification, domestic abuse incidents and crimes, anti-social behaviour incidents and hate motivated crime by motivation – sexual orientation, racist or sectarian. The data is available across several geographies including LGD, DEA, HSCT and Ward.

In 2024/25, there were 1,188 crimes with a racist motivation recorded in Northern Ireland, 518 with a sectarian motivation and 219 with a sexual orientation motivation. The ward with the highest number of crimes with a racist motivation was Botanic (234). The line chart below illustrates the trend figures for NI and was created using the chart function in the Data Portal.



When you create an account and log in to the Portal, you can save your tables to a favourites list or save output using the save queries option, so you can retrieve them quickly. You can also use the widget function in the system to create an html version of table output or charts which can be saved to your desktop, website, blog etc. and will automatically update when new data is added to the corresponding table on the Portal.

To find out more about widgets, why not check out [the user guide and instructional video](#) on the [NISRA Data Portal FAQs and training materials page](#).

**Online training sessions will also be available.**

**Please contact [mlbnetwork@hscni.net](mailto:mlbnetwork@hscni.net) to register your interest.**

If you need further information or assistance relating to the NISRA Data Portal, contact us at [info@nisra.gov.uk](mailto:info@nisra.gov.uk)

*NICS staff requiring statistical input and advice should continue to contact their departmental statistics colleagues in the first instance.*

# News from the Network

## Belfast Healthy Cities designated as secretariat for UK National Network of WHO Healthy Cities



(Picture above) UK and Ireland delegates and Dr Kira Fortune WHO Euro Healthy Cities Network Focal Point, at the Annual Business Meeting of the WHO European Healthy Cities Network in Bursa, Türkiye Credit: WHO / Belfast Healthy Cities

The UK National Network of the World Health Organization European Healthy Cities Network has appointed Belfast Healthy Cities (BHC) as secretariat.

With its new designation, Belfast Healthy Cities will facilitate the implementation of the WHO agenda on Healthy Cities across the UK through aligned priorities in health and wellbeing including a place based approach to Health in All Policies, Commercial Determinants of Health and Resilient Food Systems, through collaborative working knowledge sharing, thought leadership and capacity building activities.

The UK Healthy Cities Network seeks to put health high on the political and social agenda of cities and towns, by building a strong movement for public health at the local level. It strongly emphasises equity, participatory governance and solidarity, intersectoral collaboration and action to address the determinants of health.

Charlene Brooks, CEO at BHC commented: “Belfast Healthy Cities is delighted to provide secretariat for UK National Network and look forward to supporting cities, towns and organisations to deliver the WHO health and wellbeing priorities across the UK”.

“The UK National network joins over 30 National Networks and 100 flagship cities in 42 Members States across Europe, providing members with significant opportunities to exchange knowledge and information with other leading cities, towns and organisations, strengthen capacity for training and collaborative working across the UK to contribute to the international health agenda,” she continued.

*Continued overleaf...*



WHO Healthy Cities Network Annual Business Meeting, Bursa, Türkiye

UK Member cities benefit from access to WHO expertise, networking opportunities, and support in developing innovative approaches to urban health. Belfast is joined on the UK Network Steering Group by cities including Liverpool, which brings valuable insight and leadership to the collaborative effort.

Professor Matt Ashton, Director of Public Health, Liverpool City Council said: “Liverpool is proud to be a founding member of the World Health Organization’s Healthy Cities Network, a commitment that dates back to 1987.

As one of the original pilot cities, we have consistently championed a ‘Health in All Policies’ approach – placing health, equity, and wellbeing at the heart of our local governance and urban planning. We are delighted to work closely with Belfast and other members of the UK Network to continue this important work.”

The UK National Network was established in 2011 after the WHO called for increased commitment and investment in local level action and currently delivers on the Sustainable Development Goals. Together the flagship cities and national networks cover some 1400 municipalities and a population of over 600 million people. Global problems are being dealt with at a local level. The Healthy Cities vision acknowledges this.

### **How new members can get involved:**

To find out more about how to get involved in the UK Healthy Cities project, contact Anne McCusker, UK National Network Coordinator at [ukhcn@belfasthealthycities.com](mailto:ukhcn@belfasthealthycities.com)