



ROYAL COLLEGE OF
PHYSICIANS OF EDINBURGH



ROYAL COLLEGE OF
PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS
OF GLASGOW



ROYAL COLLEGE OF
PHYSICIANS OF LONDON

FEDERATION OF THE ROYAL COLLEGES OF PHYSICIANS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety

Fit and Well: Changing Lives - 2012-2022: A 10-Year Public Health Strategic Framework for Northern Ireland

The Federation of Royal Colleges of Physicians of the UK (the Federation) is pleased to respond to the Department's consultation on *Fit and Well: Changing Lives – 2012-2022: A 10-Year Public Health Strategic Framework for Northern Ireland*.

The aims, vision, values and principles of this ten year strategy are laudable, and the Federation feels that it is beneficial to place a strong emphasis on targeting inequalities and social exclusion through the long term strategy framework. The framework would however benefit from indications of how outcomes will be measured in addition to more detailed reference to certain issues.

The Federation has the following comments on various issues raised in the consultation:

Public health

Reference is made to the intention to allocate an increasing percentage of the overall health budget to public health. This allocation increase is welcome amidst the current economic climate but the importance of encouraging other government departments to increase their political commitment (and resources) to public health, both directly and indirectly, could also be strengthened in the framework.

Alcohol

The Federation welcomes the inclusion of specific outcomes for addressing alcohol misuse - including the focus on providing brief alcohol advice/intervention programmes, and addressing alcohol pricing, promotion, labelling and advertising. We would particularly support Northern Ireland introducing a minimum unit price for alcohol, in line with the legislation that has been passed in Scotland and the commitment that has been made in England and Wales.

WORKING TOGETHER TO SET STANDARDS IN MEDICAL PRACTICE

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Smoking

Content specific to smoking within the framework is almost all in the context of acknowledging the important contribution smoking makes to ill-health (and health inequalities), with occasional references to the importance of smoking cessation. It notes that prevalence has fallen by 3 percentage points in the past 10 years, which is about half that achieved in England and the Federation would welcome greater emphasis on how Northern Ireland plans to reduce smoking prevalence in line with the results achieved in other parts of the UK.

The Federation believes that Northern Ireland, with its devolved government, is in a position to take its own initiatives on smoking and could develop more proactive policies on smoking in public places, cars, point of sale display, packaging, smoking portrayals in the media and particularly in films rated suitable for viewing by young people, better coverage and uptake of smoking cessation support, harm reduction and a range of other strategies. At present, these are not mentioned in the document. Without this it is our view that it is unlikely to lead, in itself, to significant impacts on smoking uptake or prevalence.

Evaluation and outcomes

On-going evaluation is essential to monitor the success of any strategy and while the document states that research is underway with the aim of agreeing key high level indicators by December 2012, it would have been helpful if examples of possible indicators and targets were specified in the consultation document.

The Federation is supportive of the proposal to measure outcomes by key life stages but queries how practical it will be to accurately measure some of the outcomes, for example, an increase in the numbers of young people delaying their first sexual experience.

The Federation further supports the outcomes associated with sustainable communities. Greater emphasis is required to self-empower communities through identification and mobilisation of community resources. Volunteering should be actively encouraged to generate and sustain health communities and the importance of the role played by volunteers should be recognised and promoted more publicly.

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