

Making Life Better

Thematic Action Plan

Easy Read

This is an Easy Read version.

It does not include all the information but tells you about the important parts.

You may still want help to read it.

Some words are in **bold**. When you see a bold word, we will explain what it means in the next sentence.

[Blue and underlined](#) words show links to websites. If you are on a computer, you can click on these links.

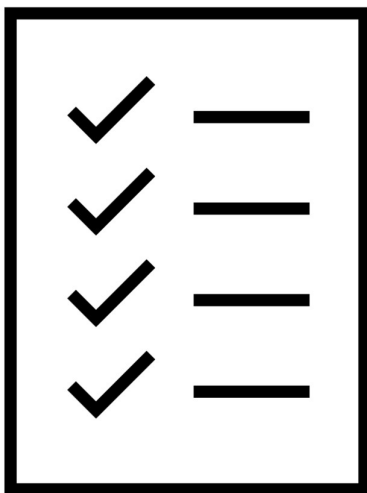
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WHAT IS THE MAKING LIFE BETTER THEMATIC ACTION PLAN?

In 2014 the Government of Northern Ireland wrote a plan to explain what they would do to help everyone live healthier lives. This plan was called Making Life Better.

The goals of Making Life Better are to:



- reduce **health inequalities**. **Health inequalities** are when some groups of people have worse health than others; and
- help people stay healthy, for longer.

These goals are still very important, and the Government of Northern Ireland has agreed a new **thematic action plan** to help meet them.

A **Thematic action plan** is a list of areas where Government Departments and other organisations can work together to help reach a goal.

WHAT ARE HEALTH INEQUALITIES?

Health inequalities are when some groups of people have worse health than others. This happens when people find it harder to get the health care or the information they need, because of where they live, or their gender, race, religion, disability, health condition or sexual orientation.

Health inequalities lower people's chances to live longer, healthier lives.

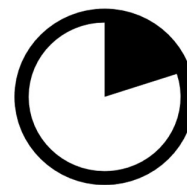
In 2022-24, the **life expectancy at birth** for people who live in the poorest areas of Northern Ireland was 7.2 years less for males and 5.5 years less for females, compared to those who live in better-off areas. **Life expectancy at birth** is the number of years someone is likely to live for after they are born.



Whether or not you have good health starts long before you need to see a doctor.

Making changes to the health care system alone, for example visits to the doctor or hospital, cannot reduce **health inequalities**.

Research shows that only 20 percent of a population's health is affected by the care provided by our health system.



A lot of other factors in day-to-day life can affect health and wellbeing. These are often called the **social determinants of health**.



Because of the **social determinants of health** not everyone has an equal chance of having good health.

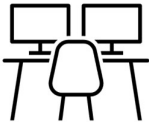
Examples of the **social determinants of health** include:



The food we eat.



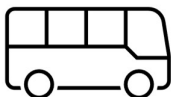
Where we live and our housing.



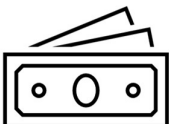
Where we work and the type of job we have.



Our education and training.



The transport we have access to.



The money we have.

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WHAT IS THE FOCUS OF THE MAKING LIFE BETTER THEMATIC ACTION PLAN?

Making Life Better and this thematic action plan aim to create environments which allow people, and the communities they live in, to improve their health.

The goal is to try and stop poor health throughout someone's life.

This will help reduce pressures on our health system, like trying to visit a doctor, in the future.

In order to deliver this, the Government will focus on:

Prevention – this means taking action to try and stop a health problem happening.

Community – this means taking action to support the people and communities who experience the worst health inequalities.

Whole system approach – this means taking action to create systems and environments that support people to be healthy.

WHAT ARE THE NEW THEMATIC ACTIONS IN THIS PLAN?

The Government will work together on 6 new thematic actions:

- 1. Addressing health inequalities in places;**
- 2. Economic inactivity;**
- 3. Physical Activity;**
- 4. Mental Wellbeing and Trauma;**
- 5. Vaccines and Screening; and**
- 6. Underpinning health behaviours.**

The next pages will explain what each of these thematic actions might mean for you.

Addressing health inequalities in places

This will mean you should receive care earlier and closer to your own home.



To help do this, health services and activities delivered by other local community workers will need to be better joined up.

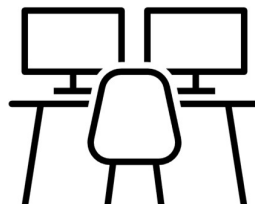
The goal is to improve a local communities overall health and reduce the need for unnecessary hospital visits.

Economic inactivity

Economic inactivity means people who are not in work and are not looking for work.

This includes people who cannot work because of their health or a disability.

This will mean that if you are not working, the government will try to understand why you are not working and help make sure that you have the skills you need to get a job, stay in a good job and earn more money.



Physical Activity

This means the Government wants to help you take part in sport and get more exercise.

This includes **active travel**.



Active travel is making a journey using physical activity, like walking or cycling.

Active travel includes journeys to go shopping, go to work or go to school.

The Government wants to make active travel an easy option for everyone.

Mental Wellbeing and Trauma

Mental Health is how you think and feel about things in your mind. If you have mental health problems you might feel sad, angry or worried.



The Government wants to make sure that if you have a mental health problem, you get the help you need, as soon as you need it.

Trauma is when something has happened that was very upsetting or unexpected. Northern Ireland has more people who are dealing with trauma because of our history of fighting, called the ‘troubles.’

The Government wants to make sure the right support is in place, at the right time for anyone who is affected by trauma.

Vaccines and Screening

A **vaccine** is medicine that helps your body to fight an infection in the future.



Screening appointments are where you will have different tests to check if your body is healthy.

The Government will continue to support as many people as possible to get vaccines and to go to screening appointments.

This includes helping you understand how vaccines can help prevent sickness in the future. It also means helping you understand how screening can help find sickness earlier, to allow treatment to be started as quickly as possible.

Underpinning health behaviours

This means helping you understand things you should do to stay healthy.

For example:



- stopping smoking

or



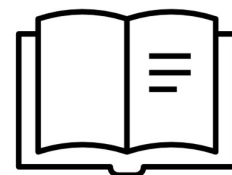
- knowing what foods to choose to help stay a healthy weight.

The Government already has a number of plans to help address problems that can cause poor health. Work will continue to deliver the actions within these plans.

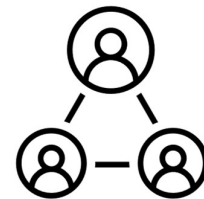
HOW WILL THE GOVERNMENT DO THIS?

To help meet the goals of the 6 thematic actions the Government will try to:

- Understand what matters most to people and where people think they can take steps to support their own health in everyday life. This information can then be used to make decisions about new plans for the health service.
- Help to improve **Health Literacy**. **Health Literacy** means how well someone can find, read, understand and use health information and services to make choices about their health



- Consider how any new agreed Government plan could change a person's or communities health. This is sometimes called 'Health in All Policies' and includes decisions around local transport, housing and education.
- Ensure services and activities across the Government of Northern Ireland are better joined up to help the most vulnerable people.
- Write reports about how we are doing each year.



WHEN WILL THINGS HAPPEN?

Over the next 3-5 years, all the Government Departments in Northern Ireland will work together, and with other local organisations, to help make sure this plan works.

Some of the work has already started.

All the Government Departments will meet regularly to talk about how they can best work together to deliver the **Thematic Actions** and what else they should be doing to achieve the goals of this plan.

Reports will be produced every year to see if the work the Government is doing has reduced health inequalities. You can look at the reports here: [Health inequalities statistics](#)
[| Department of Health](#)