

Background Information –Belfast Health Development Unit (BHDU)

Purpose

This paper provides an update on the establishment of a joint Belfast Health Development Unit supported by the Public Health Agency (PHA), the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT) and Belfast City Council (BCC).

Background

In December 2008 the Minister for Health invited expressions of interest from district councils on the possibility of hosting joint working arrangements with the Public Health Agency in an effort to support council's in their future implementation of the power of well-being and community planning as well as developing strong inter-sectoral partnerships. As a result, the Belfast Health Development Unit (BHDU), launched on 23rd March 2010 is a visible and practical manifestation of joint working bringing together three sponsoring organisations (Belfast City Council, Belfast Health & Social Care Trust and the Public Health Agency) at strategic and operational levels. The strategic imperatives for the Unit will be the development of a single health partnership and an integrated health and wellbeing plan for the city. Partners from health, education, housing, regeneration and the community and voluntary sector (VCS) are all key stakeholders in the developing unit and in ensuring that outcome focused, integrated planning and delivery becomes a reality for Belfast.

The BHDU aims to improve the health and well-being and quality of life of citizens in Belfast and specifically reduce inequalities between those that live in deprived areas of the city and those that live in the most affluent neighbourhoods.

The joint working arrangements will inform the emerging community planning process, enabling the co-location of staff from these organisations and other key players to drive forward an agreed agenda to tackle inequalities in health and well-being in Belfast.

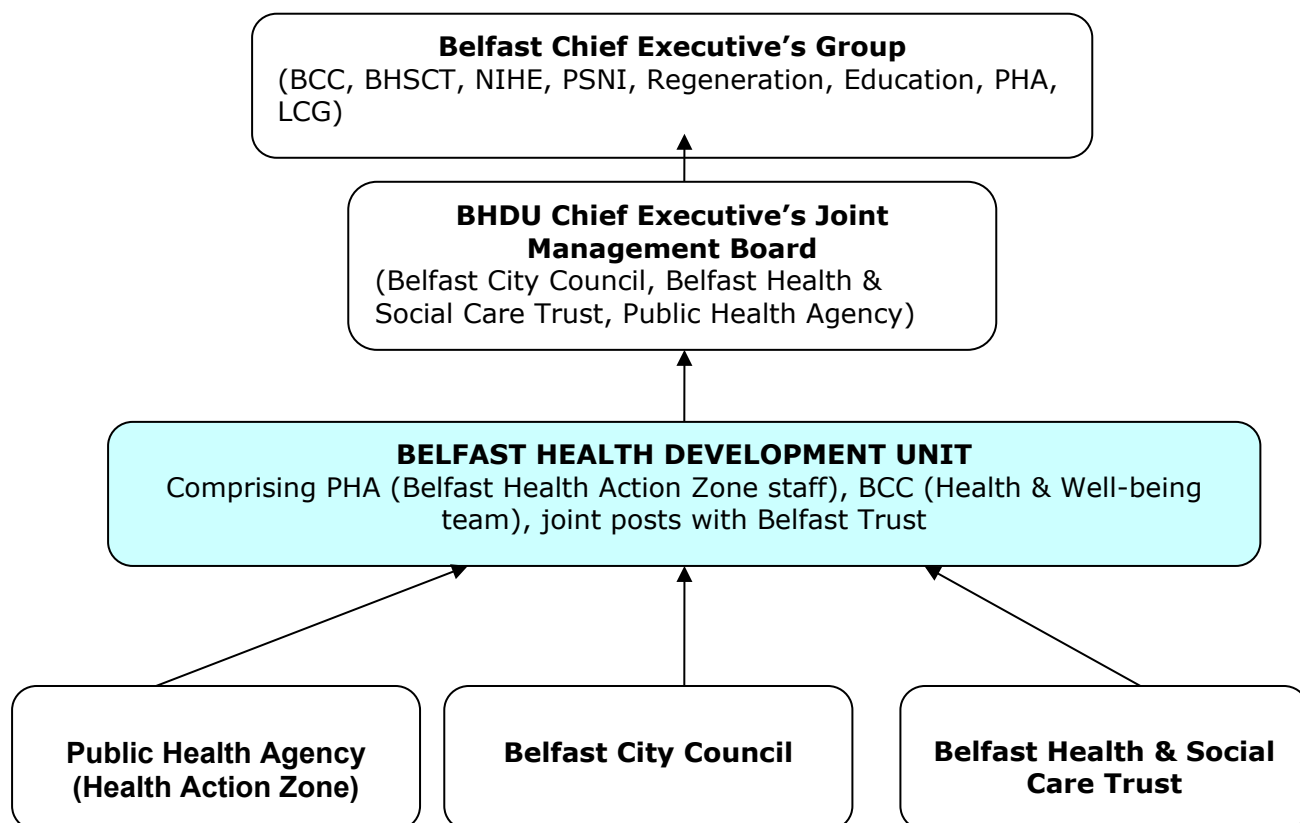
Establishment of the BHDU

The Unit aims to ensure that the strengths and achievements of existing partnerships and teams are consolidated and built upon and that resources are targeted towards agreed priorities for the city. The unit will be staffed initially by a number of posts, based in the Lanyon Building (BCC). Belfast Health Action Zone staff and commitments in terms of programmes of work have been fully incorporated within the BHDU (through the Public Health Agency) as well as staff from the Council's Health & Well-being Team and those supporting the Belfast Healthy Ageing Strategic Partnership and 3 new jointly funded posts by the Public Health Agency (PHA), Belfast City Council (BCC) and Health & Social Care Trust (BHSCT). It is also intended that Belfast Healthy Cities will align with the Unit at some point in the near future.

Another important step will be to develop a single health partnership for the City as soon as possible. This will be vital to the success of the Unit, particularly in delivering a 'health in all policies' approach and to bring in other agencies such as NIHE, Education etc. and effective representation from the community and voluntary sector. It is also essential to align programmes of work with the Local Commissioning Plan. This BIG Lottery proposal provides the opportunity to use a

community planning approach and to ensure effective community engagement in the development of a single health partnership and the creation of an integrated health and wellbeing plan for the city. This is an ambitious task and the proposal creates the impetus and commitment from the Consortium to take this forward. It has been noted that involvement of the VCS within this new approach has been limited to date and the connection with the VCS, in addition to the statutory sector is critical for the future development of a successful city-wide single health partnership and integrated planning process.

Structure & Governance of the BHDU



Key Issues for the Belfast Health Development Unit 2010/11

The BHDU is at an early stage of development. In addition to developing an effective team, the following key issues are central to establishing and guiding the work of the Unit:

- Developing effective mechanisms to engage and maintain relationships with key stakeholders, including Belfast Healthy Cities, the education sector, other government departments and the community & voluntary sector. This has been identified as a critical success factor for the future of the BHDU. The BHDU has recognised the opportunity provided by this BIG Lottery proposal to focus effort, plans and potential resource to take forward additional actions at this early stage of its own development which will develop and embed effective engagement mechanisms with the community and voluntary sector. This will result in a more meaningful health and well-being plan for the city and enable the BHDU to build more effective working relationships with all key stakeholders.
- Rationalising, co-ordinating and integrating planning and resources to improve health and well-being in Belfast around priority themes. The BHDU recognises that this depends on building effective engagement and working relationships with all sectors including the community and voluntary sector.

- Identifying opportunities to secure resources to deliver new programmes of work
- Building an evidence base and reputation to influence the wider health agenda
- Demonstrating success / defining key outcomes

Initial Priorities for the Unit 2010/11

Pending the development of a single health & wellbeing partnership for the city, initial discussions between the PHA, BCC and BHSCT have concluded that the following themes would serve as a starting point for the *Health Development Unit's* draft business plan 2010/11.

1. **Children and Young Peoples' Outcomes:** including Early Years Intervention Programmes, Obesity, Alcohol Misuse and HAZ's Integrated Services for Children and Young People in local areas. This would in turn relate to BCC's strategy on Children and Young People and to other key goals of the PHA and BHSCT, such as, reducing teenage pregnancy and improving sexual health.
2. **Improving Outcomes to Disadvantaged Neighbourhoods** (including links between regeneration and health). This will relate to joint interventions at a local level, linking to the work of Neighbourhood Renewal Partnerships, the Strategic Regeneration Frameworks (and the indicators that are currently being developed on local regeneration and health). There is considerable potential to bring the added strengths of City Council across parks and leisure, good relations, community development and local area working, as well as capital and investment strategies of all partners.
3. **Older People** and alignment with the Belfast Healthy Ageing Partnership on older people. This is already a priority of both BCC and the PHA and this work would seek to build synergy and maximise benefits for older people.
4. **Physical Activity** particularly related to children and young people, policy development, older people and regeneration. It also relates to the corporate agendas of BCC and the PHA. The Council's strategies for parks & leisure, capital works and community support offer potential for bringing considerable added value.
5. **Black and Minority Ethnic Groups:** City Council has a multi-agency partnership aimed at developing good relations and service provision to this grouping and is also undertaking some specific work at a European level on health needs within this group. This aligns with the PHA commitment to address inequalities amongst Black and Minority Ethnic Groups. This issue is also on the agenda of most of the key statutory organisations.
6. **Policy Development** – 'health and health in all policies'. The Unit needs to have a strategic focus, influencing how agencies operate and plan in order to create strategic alignment of agendas. This is a key goal of WHO Phase V programme for Healthy Cities who will have a leading role in this area and could make a contribution to this goal. Healthy Cities has also carried out research into capacity building for agencies and elected representatives and have developed a programme to take this work forward. There is potential for this agenda to be aligned with / included in the new Unit.

These six themes are proposed as a starting point for development. Engagement with the VCS and other key stakeholders is essential to shape the development of the initial work priorities; to inform the development of a City-wide health plan and to create more effective engagement mechanisms and working relationships to establish an effective single health partnership for city which will make a real difference in improving quality of life in the city.