

# **Sustaining positive change: Influencing the Future**

Pat Cullen

Assistant Director Nursing, Safety, Quality  
and Patient Experience

Public Health Agency, N-Ireland

# What I am going to cover?

- Challenges
- Opportunities and Possibilities

# The Challenge

- The gap between the rich and the poor remains with men living in our most affluent communities living 7 years longer than those in the most deprived.
- Men and women in N-I can expect to live about 2 years less than their equivalents in England.

# The Challenge

- Persistent poverty in N-I is double that of Great Britain
- High levels of unemployment
- High rates of disability and limiting long term illness especially mental health

# The Challenge

- Smoking claims 2,400 lives per year and costs over £23 million.
- 8 out of 10, 16-18 year olds take alcohol.
- The average man and woman in N-I consumes more fat and more calories than their peers in England, Scotland and Wales.

# The Challenge

- **Children of the poorest families:**

4 times more likely to die before 20 years

15 times more likely to die in house fires

5 times more likely to die in accidents

Northern Ireland is one of the most unequal societies in the developed world, with evidence that inequality is increasing.

(Bare necessities – Poverty and exclusion in NI, 2003)

**20% of most deprived areas represent nearly  
340,000 people who experience:**

- Lower life expectancy than N-I average
- 73% higher rates of suicide
- Self Harm admissions at **twice** the N-I average



# Legacy of the conflict

- More than 3,500 have died
- More than 35,000 have been injured physically
- More than 34,000 shootings
- More than 14,000 bombings

## Death rates in N-I overall: 0.22%

- If the troubles had been in Scotland at the same rate, 11,244 people would have died
- If the troubles had happened in the UK as a whole at the same rate, 106,432 people would have died

# Some Communities suffered more

- Some small neighbourhoods have had a death rate of 2.2%
- If N-I had this rate there would have been 34,000 deaths
- Across the UK this would have been over 1 Million deaths

# Current issues in a pre-Post Conflict society

- Sophisticated peace process/model of conflict resolution
- Continued paramilitary attacks
- Sectarian attacks
- Trans-generational trauma for many
- People under death threat
- Ongoing search for truth and justice (Bloody Sunday)

# The impact on small communities

- Mental ill health is a particular problem
- One small locality with a population of less than 30,000 people have had 9 suicides since March of this year
- All under the age of 20 years and 7 of them young boys

# Building capacity in our Communities

- Locality based (living in the area) Suicide Prevention Co-ordinators
- Locality suicide prevention plans
- Suicide Community Response Teams
- Education, Information and Awareness
- Working with key 'influencers'- Religious groups and Sports groups

## Building capacity: Developing a strategy - Promoting Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing

- Mental health – an issue for every person, family and community in N-I
- Positive mental health and wellbeing holds the key to a better life
- Linked to good physical health
- Fundamental to achieving improved educational achievement, increased employment opportunities, and other health inequalities

At individual level recognises the importance of the family, early childhood experiences and reflects the strong evidence that a nurturing childhood in the early years is of unique importance in terms of emotional and social development



# Florence Nightingale

The work we are speaking of has nothing to do with nursing disease, but with maintaining health by removing the things which disturb it...

**DIRT – DRINK – DIET- DAMP- DRAUGHTS –  
and DRAINS**

The future shape of N-I Health and Social Care system needs to change. Maintaining the status quo is not an option

(Joint commissioning plan, N-I: 2010)

# The Commissioning challenge

- An overall reduction in funding
- Increased demand and expectations
- Need to maintain quality
- Need to make a difference to inequalities