



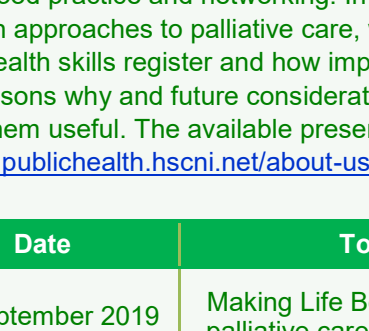
Welcome

Issue 2
Winter 2019/2020

Welcome to the second issue of the Making Life Better Newsletter: *MLB News*.
In this issue, we look back at the seminar series so far, we have updates from ADOG and from the Centre for Public Health, QUB and we also highlight some important dates for your diary.
Don't forget to let us know if you want to share your news and updates in the next issue!
We hope you enjoy this issue of MLB News.

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MLB Network Contact Details

If you need to speak to anyone regarding the Network or MLB News please contact Julie Mawhinney or Mark Johnston using the following information:
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If you wish to speak to someone regarding ADOG or the Mid-Term Review, please contact Gary Maxwell or Dolores Palmer using the following information:
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MAKING LIFE BETTER Network

Creating the Conditions for Collaboration

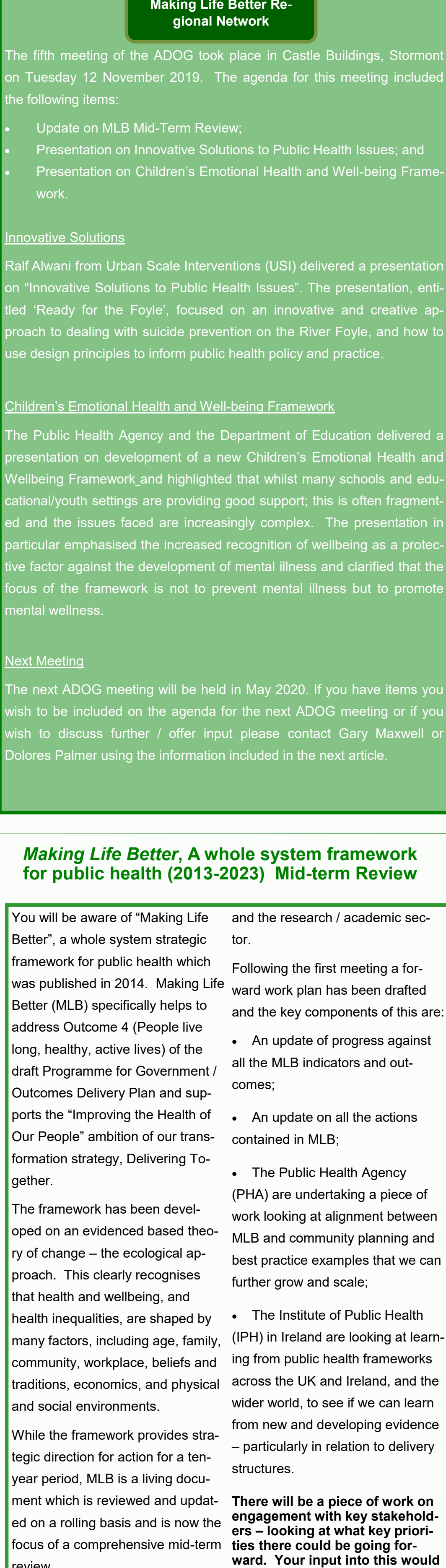
MLB SEMINAR SERIES

This Autumn/Winter saw the first MLB Network Seminar Series. The aim of the seminars is to take a closer focus on key topics – suggested by members – to encourage learning, sharing of good practice and networking. In this series we heard about the importance of public health approaches to palliative care, what the research through EITP is telling us, the public health skills register and how improvements in life expectancy are stalling, the possible reasons why and future considerations. Thank you to all who attended, we hope you found them useful. The available presentations from the seminars are now online at: <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/about-us/making-life-better/mlb-seminars>

Date	Topic	Venue
11 September 2019 10am-12.30pm	Making Life Better through a palliative care approach with the All Ireland Institute of Hospice and Palliative Care	Chestnut Suite – Lagan Valley Island
23 September 2019 10am-12.30pm	Giving every child the best start in life – what the research says part 1	Seamus Heaney Homeplace, Ballyglaghly
21 November 2019 10am-1pm	Recognising and supporting the multi-professional standards of those delivering on the Public Health Agenda	Craigavon Civic Centre
10 December 2019 10am-2pm	Life Expectancy is Stalling With Public Health England and NHS Scotland	Riddell Hall, Stranmillis, Belfast

Our evaluation also collated some ideas for future seminars and we will begin to look at these for future seminars.

PHOTO BOARD



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

The Making Life Better Conference for 2020 will take place on:
TUES 12 MAY 2020
More information will be announced in due course.

MLB Seminar Series Spring 2020

The Public Health Agency is pleased to announce the Making Life Better Seminar Series for 2019/20. Registration is now open for the following seminars.

Date	Topic	Venue
10am-1pm 12 February 2020	Cross-border Healthcare Intervention Trials in Ireland Network (CHITIN)	Fermanagh House, Enniskillen
10am-1pm 4 March 2020	Giving Every Child the Best Start in Life - What the Research says Part 2	Malone House, Belfast
10am-3pm 24 April 2020	A Whole System Approach to Childhood Obesity	St Columbs Park House, 'Derry

Numbers are limited so early registration is advised.
Please email MLBNetwork@hscni.net to register for the above seminars. Please note that registration for a seminar will close two weeks before the date of each seminar.
Further details including exact times and agendas will be circulated in due course.

All Departments Officials Group (ADOG) Update

The All Departments Officials Group (ADOG) is a key part of the structure for coordinating the implementation of Making Life Better (MLB) and serves as a forum for senior officials from all NI Government Departments to meet and to agree actions and priorities.



The fifth meeting of the ADOG took place in Castle Buildings, Stormont on Tuesday 12 November 2019. The agenda for this meeting included the following items:

- Update on MLB Mid-Term Review;
- Presentation on Innovative Solutions to Public Health Issues; and
- Presentation on Children's Emotional Health and Well-being Framework.

Innovative Solutions

Raf Alwani from Urban Scale Interventions (USI) delivered a presentation on "Innovative Solutions to Public Health Issues". The presentation, entitled 'Ready for the Foyle', focused on an innovative and creative approach to dealing with suicide prevention on the River Foyle, and how to use design principles to inform public health policy and practice.

Children's Emotional Health and Well-being Framework

The Public Health Agency and the Department of Education delivered a presentation on development of a new Children's Emotional Health and Wellbeing Framework and highlighted that whilst many schools and educational/youth settings are providing good support; this is often fragmented and the issues faced are increasingly complex. The presentation in particular emphasised the increased recognition of wellbeing as a protective factor against the development of mental illness and clarified that the focus of the framework is not to prevent mental illness but to promote mental wellness.

Next Meeting

The next ADOG meeting will be held in May 2020. If you have items you wish to be included on the agenda for the next ADOG meeting or if you wish to discuss further / offer input please contact Gary Maxwell or Dolores Palmer using the information included in the next article.

Making Life Better, A whole system framework for public health (2013-2023) Mid-term Review

You will be aware of "Making Life Better", a whole system strategic framework for public health which was published in 2014. Making Life Better (MLB) specifically helps to address Outcome 4 (People live long, healthy, active lives) of the draft Programme for Government / Outcomes Delivery Plan and supports the "Improving the Health of Our People" ambition of our transformation strategy, Delivering Together.

The framework has been developed on an evidenced based theory of change – the ecological approach. This clearly recognises that health and wellbeing, and health inequalities, are shaped by many factors, including age, family, community, workplace, beliefs and traditions, economics, and physical and social environments.

While the framework provides strategic direction for action for a ten-year period, MLB is a living document which is reviewed and updated on a rolling basis and is now the focus of a comprehensive mid-term review.

The mid-term review presents an opportunity to reflect on progress to date, reinforce the principles and ethos of MLB in line with the draft Programme for Government / Outcomes Delivery Plan, reinvalidate collaborative action, and to refocus on a smaller number of key priorities and actions for the second half of the framework's implementation that will add the most value.

It has been acknowledged that a refreshed strategic direction may require Executive clearance. However, it was agreed that early consideration should be given to gathering evidence on the framework's impact to date and to possible recommendations for any changes that would improve progress over the remaining term.

The first meeting of the MLB Mid-term Review Group has now taken place. The Group is made up of representatives from Government Departments and agencies, the community and voluntary sector

and the research / academic sector.

Following the first meeting a forward work plan has been drafted and the key components of this are:

- An update of progress against all the MLB indicators and outcomes;
- An update on all the actions contained in MLB;
- The Public Health Agency (PHA) are undertaking a piece of work looking at alignment between MLB and community planning and best practice examples that we can further grow and scale;
- The Institute of Public Health (IPH) in Ireland are looking at learning from public health frameworks across the UK and Ireland and the wider world, to see if we can learn from new and developing evidence – particularly in relation to delivery structures.

There will be a piece of work on engagement with key stakeholders – looking at what key priorities there could be going forward. Your input into this would be welcomed – particularly where we can collaborate to develop and deliver cross-department actions that address the wider determinants of health and the outcomes you are trying to achieve.

To discuss further / offer input please contact either Gary Maxwell or Dolores Palmer

gary.maxwell@health-ni.gov.uk / dolores.palmer@health-ni.gov.uk

It is anticipated that the final report from this review will be available in May 2020 – in line with European Public Health Week and the next MLB Network event.

MLB Update from the Centre for Public Health, QUB

The 10 years between 2008 and 2018 was a period of considerable expansion when we could diversify and gain strength from working in new multi-disciplinary teams, with funding for a Centre of Excellence from the UKCRC. That initiative by the UKCRC, now concluded, gave a tremendous boost not only to our science, leading to the appointment of some fantastic young public health scientists (pen portraits below), but also an enthusiasm to co-produce our research with all our non-academic stakeholders. So we are keen and privileged to continue that philosophy, to help improve public health and reduce inequalities.

In concluding the UKCRC initiative, the research funders came together to form the UK Prevention Research Partnership (ukprp.org) and their objective was to stimulate new types of research partnerships that would address upstream structural determinants of public health. This would require even broader multi-disciplinary teams, including for example researchers from architecture, engineering, planning, local government etc. The UKPRP has already made awards to several large consortia, as well as a number of novel research networks.

Our Centre in 2018/19 contributed to or led two of the successful UKPRP networks. One of these, led by Professor Jayne Woodside (j.woodside@qub.ac.uk) is the UK school food network ("GENIUS": Generating Excellent Nutrition in UK Schools) the aim of which is to work towards a more health-promoting food and nutrition system in UK schools. It will support a network of academics and non-academics across the UK actively researching and influencing school food, using a range of novel research methods to understand the school food system, and to examine similarities and differences and areas of best practice across the four nations of the UK. The network will also explore opportunities for interventions that will positively impact on school food, improve the diet quality of children at school and reduce inequalities. Further funding applications will be developed based on the initial co-production of research questions and priorities emerging during networking activities, working in partnership with policy makers and schools, and this will sustain the network in the longer term.

We are also a part of the "PHASE" network which aims to learn how to improve health in the real world by studying "simulated populations" (*in silico*), identifying how individual citizens, or "agents", within this virtual world might interact with each other and how their health behaviours might change when aspects of the simulated environment change. This Population Health Agent-based Simulation nEtwork (PHASE) will bring together scientists, computer software developers, government workers, charity sector staff, and University researchers and aims to: (i) demonstrate how simulating individual and environmental factors and their influence on population health can improve our understanding of how to prevent non-communicable diseases; (ii) build stronger teams by bring together scientists with simulation expertise with those working in communities in the front line to improve public health. Training in simulation methods will be delivered through the network, and expert network members will write reports and guidelines so a wide range of people can learn about the best way to use new simulation methods. Dr Ruth Hunter (ruth.hunter@qub.ac.uk) from CPH is our lead academic within PHASE. The network is developing an interactive website and online registry where people can find out more. <https://phasenetwork.org/>.

Academics from the Centre were also pivotal to two submissions in the autumn to the 2nd UKPRP call for new research consortia. One of these, collaborating with local authority partners in Edinburgh, Newcastle, Cardiff, Bath and Belfast is focused on how we can help to change the culture around public health evidence generation and evaluation and to learn lessons for community planning across the UK. In the other bid (led by Dr Ruth Hunter) a new partnership with Glasgow, Liverpool and Exeter universities will focus on how to maximize the cross sectoral benefits of urban green and blue space. The outcome of these two new bids will be known in the summer of 2020.

Irrespective of the success of these two new research bids, the future is all the brighter for having attracted several talented young researchers to full academic positions in the Centre over the last year and in what follows we offers a brief portrait of some of them.

In November the Centre for Public Health joined forces with the Public Health Agency, the Institute for Public Health in Ireland, the Health Services Executive (Dublin) and University College Cork to host the joint Annual Scientific and Practice Conference. Over 200 delegates from across the island contributed enthusiastically to parallel sessions on the theme of innovation in public health interventions, practice and evaluation and benefited from three excellent plenary speakers (Professor Laurence Moore, Glasgow University; Dr Wendy Hardeman, University of East Anglia; and Dr Marguerite Nyhan University College Cork).

Further details are available here : <https://www.qub.ac.uk/research-centres/CentreforPublicHealth/Events/InnovationinPublicHealth.html>

Our New Staff (2019)

Dr Blánaid Hicks is a recently appointed Queen's Vicer Chancellor's Fellow and holds a Cancer Research UK Population Research Fellowship (2017-2020). Working within the Cancer Epidemiology Research Group at the Centre for Public Health her research interests are in using large routinely held electronic healthcare databases to (1) identify commonly used medications that influence the risk of cancer and cancer survival and (2) evaluate the safety of treatments in cancer patients. Some examples of her work include recent findings that suggest little evidence of an increased risk of melanoma with hormone replacement therapy use in women (<https://doi.org/10.1093/humrep/dex222>). Through her Cancer Research UK Fellowship, her current research also aims to investigate the role of commonly used medications on renal cell carcinoma risk and progression, as well as other lifestyle factors, such as hormonal factors and obesity. Ultimately, her research aims to better understand how to prevent and treat cancer.

Health Protection module and is a practising public health medicine consultant in the Public Health Agency.

Dr Leandro Garcia is a complexity scientist and his main research interest is in the development and application of systems thinking and complexity science to a wide range of population health subjects. An example of his work involves the study of how individuals dynamically interacting with their environment generates population patterns of recreational physical activity (<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12966-018-0750-9>). Another general area of interest is in physical activity and population health. Currently, he is a member of the World Health Organization Guideline Development Group updating the Guidelines on Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour in Youth, Adults and Older Adults.

Dr John Busby was recently appointed as a Lecturer in Medical Statistics in CPH. Although his research interests are varied, he is the lead statistician for the UK Severe Asthma Registry and has recently been involved in efforts to combine data from across Europe (DOI:10.1183/13993003.01163-2019) and worldwide (DOI: 10.1016/j.chest.2019.10.053) to enable real-world research studies in severe asthma at truly international scale. His future research plans include exploring socioeconomic and ethnic inequalities in asthma within the UK, and building on his novel work in remote monitoring of asthma medication adherence (DOI:10.1164/rccm.201806-11820C).

Dr Una McMenamin is a Vice Chancellor's Patrick G. Johnston Fellow in the Cancer Epidemiology Research Group in the Centre for Public Health at Queen's University Belfast. She conducts population level research to identify risk factors for cancer development and progression with a particular focus on hormonally driven cancers including breast, gynaecological and prostate cancer. In the last year, she published seven academic papers, including one in the top journal *Epidemiology*, which evaluated the influence of androgen deprivation therapy, used in the treatment of prostate cancer, on the risk of cardiovascular events (doi: 10.1097/EDC.0000000000001132). She has recently been awarded funding as a co-investigator from Cancer Research UK to evaluate the long-term impact of hormone replacement therapy on survival in women diagnosed with cancer.

Dr Ving Fai Chan is a Lecturer (Global Eye Health), whose research focuses on finding pragmatic approaches to address the burden of blindness and vision impairment in developing countries. He lived and worked in Africa for 10 years, during which he contributed to the development of the Eritrean National Blindness Prevention Programme. He was a recipient of three Lions' Clubs International Foundations research grant and the USAID Child Blindness Prevention grant and a co-recipient of a World Bank research grant. His peer-delivered health promotion strategy has been adopted in several National Child Eye Health programmes in Africa. This year, he has received three grants to expand his work in Nigeria, China and India.

Dr Declan Bradley is a clinical lecturer in public health. His PhD investigated the genomics of human diseases and his research now focuses on the quality and equity of health and healthcare. His research programme uses modern data science and systems approaches to investigate health and healthcare systems with the aim of improving health and health equity. His current research topics include antimicrobial resistance, vaccination, emerging infectious diseases, microplastics, and systems engineering in healthcare. He organises the Masters in Public Health

Dr Andrew Kunzmann has a special interest in pancreatic cancer which has one of the poorest survival rates of all cancers. He was recently awarded a Patrick G. Johnston Fellowship to use "big data" to study methods to identify individuals at a high risk of pancreatic cancer. His studies will assess whether information on risk factors like age, diabetes, smoking, genes and blood tests could allow GPs to identify which patients would benefit most from a pancreatic cancer screening test. His previous work found that better use of simple factors such as age, gender, smoking status, obesity and medical history could help to identify individuals at a high risk of oesophageal cancer: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/29559360>

Dr Neil Heron is an academic GP and Consultant in Sport and Exercise Medicine (and in his spare time is a Team physician for the World Tour cycling team, Team Ineos). Neil completed his PhD in 2018, which was funded by the National Institute of Health Research (NIHR). This project developed home-based rehabilitation for patients following a Transient Ischaemic Attack and/or small stroke and was nominated for a BJSM PhD academy award, with a summary of the work recently published in the BJSM journal <https://bjsm.bmi.com/content/53/13/839.info> He also has interests in finding better ways to manage musculo-skeletal problems in the community.

Notice Board

Alzheimer's Society Service Showcase
Alzheimer's Society showcase their valuable services and celebrate collaborative working with local organisations.
Tue, 28 January 2020 10:00 – 15:00
This event is open to all health professionals or any organizations that may be working with people who may be affected by dementia. If you would like to attend please book [here](#) using the link below and we look forward to seeing you on the day.

Don't forget the Making Life Better Conference on Tuesday 12 May 2020!
If you wish to share any notices, news or upcoming events, please just let us know using the contact details below.

MLB Network Contact Details

If you need to speak to anyone regarding the Network or MLB News please contact us by email at: MLBNetwork@hscni.net

The aim of this newsletter to help you, to help all of us, as we work to make life better with useful information, updates and announcements. If there is anything you wish to see included, anything you want to submit to be included or anything you want to ask network members, please just let us know by email.

If you have received this but aren't yet part of the network and want to keep up to date with MLB, please click [here](#).

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