

developing
healthy
communities

Impact
Report

24/25

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Letter from the team

- **£1,504,138** of PHA short-term funding distributed to community groups.
- **668 employee health checks** across 22 businesses.
- Hundreds of people cooking seasonally and sustainably.

Those are some of the numbers, but our year has been so much more than that. From Ministerial visits to community development workshops, 2024/25 was a year to remember for Developing Healthy Communities. This report showcases a transformative period characterised by intensive activity across our diverse project portfolio.

We built capacity and momentum through focused programmes and delivered in partnership with leaders from multiple sectors operating at both strategic and grassroots levels. And all in the spirit of the WHO Healthy Cities model. So read on to learn more about what we accomplished in 2024/25.



Edel Doherty

Chief Executive



Emma Kevitt

Chair



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: The First and Deputy First Minister visit DHC; visiting the site of the Acorn Farm capital build; our creative health conference; the Causeway multicultural forum conduct a Clear-funded crafts session; Edel O'Doherty speaks at the inaugural Western Diabetes Group meeting; schoolchildren visit the Acorn Farm Gatelodge



The year in pictures



475
groups
funded

£1,504,138

distributed through PHA
short-term funding



Clear Forum events build links between community organisations, enhancing their capacity to address health and wellbeing

The Clear Project



Through events, short-term funding, capacity building and training, the Clear Project continued its mission to empower the community and voluntary sector to prevent suicide, self-harm, drug, and alcohol misuse in 2024/25.

During this period, the Clear Project distributed a total of **£1,504,138 through Public Health Agency short-term funding** programmes across the five Health and Social Care Trust areas. This funding supported **475 community groups**.

In addition, a total of **£25,936.60 was distributed to sports clubs in the Western HSCT area** to support the purchase of sports equipment, with 179 sports coaches taking part in suicide awareness and mental health training as a grant condition.

As part of our commitment to building capacity and confidence in the community sector we continued delivery of 14 training programmes focused on mental health, emotional wellbeing, and suicide prevention. This year **sessions were delivered to 192 individuals** working within the community and voluntary sector.



"The Families Voices Forum
continues to play an
important role in shaping
and developing
Protect Life 2"



Stock image: Age Cymru

Families Voices Forum



Throughout the year the Families Voices Forum (FVF), which is made up of individuals and families bereaved by suicide, has maintained strong momentum. Over the period we have supported members to participate in policy improvement and research collaboration. The FVF has worked on **veteran suicidality research** with Queens University, the development of **Suicide Prevention Care Pathways** with Health and Social Care and Toward Zero Suicide, and consulted on the Northern Ireland Prison Service's bereavement protocol.

The Forum continues to play an important role in **shaping and developing Protect Life 2**, Northern Ireland's suicide prevention strategy and action plan. The Forum is now embedded into the core governance structure of the Protect Life 2 Action Plan. This ensures that the voices of lived experience will shape the landscape of suicide prevention in the coming years.

At the most recent Forum event the spotlight was firmly on the power of youth voices in suicide prevention and postvention. This momentum will drive the Forum's commitment to amplifying these voices even further through collaborative initiatives. Looking ahead the FVF is actively expanding its reach, working to strengthen representation from youth and LGBTQ+ communities, as well as from the Traveller community to ensure that every voice is heard and empowered through this critical work.



Acorn Farm - I Can Cook



This year we continued our partnership with the Acorn Farm, a sustainable food project which will support 1,000 families to start growing fresh vegetables in their own home. Our I Can Cook programme focusses on cooking healthily and sustainably and **reached more than 250 people this year.**

At Open Farm Weekend (left) we introduced the seed-to-plate journey to 128 participants, including 87 schoolchildren, over two days, and gave parents and teachers evidence-based advice for understanding tastes and preferences and introducing new foods. At Fest-Hive-al at the Gasyard we delivered the same activities to 49 participants, including 24 children.

Our community cooking sessions included the inaugural Acorn Farm Stew Fest, which saw a range of facilitators preparing stew and discussing the relationship between traditional dishes, health and seasonality at ten community venues reaching over 100 participants. **96.5% of Stew Fest participants stated that they had gained 'new skills or knowledge about growing food, cooking and eating healthily.'** The venues, activities and delivery were all rated 'very good' by more than 85% of participants.

With construction of the Acorn Farm site (left) in St Columb's Park due to complete in 2025, we're looking forward to another exciting year.

668

employee health
checks across 22
businesses

WORK
WELL

LIVE
WELL

A Public Health Agency initiative

41 workplaces
enrolled

Workplace health training attendance



Workplace Health Champion training	32
Menopause Awareness	25
Managing Mental Health	21
Mental Health First Aid	30
Diabetes Awareness	17
Financial Wellbeing	15

Health@Work NI



In 2024/25, 41 new workplaces in the Western HSCT area signed up to the Work Well Live Well Public Health Agency workplace health service.

These interventions are in line with the World Health Organization's focus on workplace settings; working to improve health by providing workers with personalised information on their health status and changes to lifestyle.

The support we provided included training for **32 new workplace Health Champions**, and tailored mentoring for **15 workplaces** who completed health and wellbeing needs assessments and action plans.

This year we also celebrated the successful completion of our contract to deliver Work Well, Live Well in the Western Trust area. **Since 2016 we have supported hundreds of local businesses to improve the health of their employees and trained around 300 Workplace Health Champions** who will carry the knowledge and skills to promote workplace health into the future.



The Healthy City and District Leadership Group



The annual Derry and Strabane Healthy City and District Conference (right) took creative health as its theme in 2024



Derry and Strabane Healthy City and District



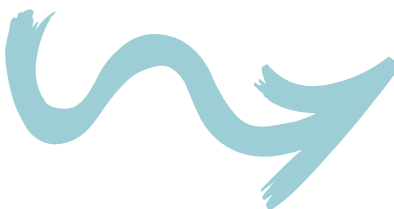
In the final year of Phase VII of the WHO European Network of Healthy Cities, the Derry and Strabane Healthy City and District project, we reflected on the past seven years.

The WHO Phase VII evaluation process, highlighted key strategic developments and outcomes across the city including investment in green infrastructure.

At the same time we began planning for Phase VIII by reaffirming our commitment to the WHO Healthy Cities model and by **working to embed key global concepts like the 'wellbeing economy' and 'health in all policies'** into our local health improvement work.

It was also a year where our Healthy Cities Leadership Group (left) saw a number of areas of focus come to fruition, with **collaborative groups established to pursue action.**

Some of those groups, including the Whole Systems Approach to Healthy Weight, Western Diabetes Group and Creative Health network are reflected in their own right overleaf. Others, like the Skeoge Health Inequalities group are set to grow in influence and impact over the coming period.



Creative Healthy City Taskforce

Building on the theme of our annual healthy city and district conference (p16) a dedicated taskforce was established to advance creative approaches to health. The initiative secured Mayoral endorsement and will align cultural engagement with local health strategies.

Whole Systems Approach to Healthy Weight

The Whole Systems Approach to Healthy Weight (WSA) took major strides in 2024/25 with DHC joining the WSA leadership group alongside DCSDC, PHA and the Western Trust.

In the coming year Developing Healthy Communities will continue to support DCSDC and the PHA to apply the Leeds Beckett model to improve the ways in which health is supported in Derry City and Strabane.

Community Research Collective

DHC continued its participation in the Community Research Collective, embedding the work of the British Science Association Ideas Fund and supporting

community and academic collaboration in partnership with the North West Community Network and Ulster University, funded by the Wellcome Trust.

Western Diabetes Group

The Western Diabetes Group has come into its own this year with a number of partners including the Healthy Living Centre Alliance and Western HSCT embarking on collaborative work in response to growing numbers of Derry & Strabane residents with type 2 diabetes or prediabetes.

Successes included monthly prediabetes education sessions and work to link in with GP referral pathways for prediabetes.

In the coming year activity will include collaboration with Acorn Farm and the Neighbourhood Health Improvement Project (below) to embed action on prediabetes in existing work.

Neighbourhood Health Improvement

This year DHC administered **£36,358 in NHIP funding on behalf of the PHA to six community groups** to improve health in areas of deprivation. Joining the dots between our strands of work, next year the groups will build prediabetes education into their activity.

The year ahead



Next year marks the **start of Phase VIII of the WHO European network of healthy cities**. The healthy cities approach has always been at the centre of our work and the milestone is a natural reset point. With that reset comes a refreshed sense of purpose.

As ever, that purpose is built around reducing health inequalities, but it is also an important moment to reevaluate and refresh our aims and methods, particularly when it comes to preparedness for the future.

And that is what we see in much of our **emerging work on climate preparedness** through Acorn Farm and the DCSDC Climate Commission, or **preparedness for emerging health and demographic trends** including healthy weight and healthy ageing.

When we look around us, we want to see health equity, communities that live sustainably, and people who have access to the right information and decision-making power to make that happen. Most importantly we want to be part of that journey.

So join us. On the facing page is a list of the key collaborative groups that we will continue to contribute to in the coming year, we hope to see you there.



Reducing health inequalities

- Skeoge Health Action Research Partnership
- Western Area Integrated Partnership Board
- Western Diabetes Group
- Whole Systems Approach to Healthy Weight
- Neighbourhood Health Improvement Project
- Age-Friendly and Child-Friendly Networks for Derry and Strabane
- Protect Life Implementation Group
- Creative Healthy City Taskforce

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Key collaborations
for 2025/26



Sustainable communities

- DCSDC Climate Commission Community and Health Working Group
- Acorn Food Network



Research and learning

- Healthy Cities Leadership Group
- WHO Healthy Cities Network

With gratitude to our funders

