



Developing the Anti-Poverty Agenda in the Eastern Area: A Shared Focus

Table Discussions I: Brief 1 NIAPN

Poverty and health inequalities for working age people in Northern Ireland

Key facts about working age people in Northern Ireland:

- Households where the respondent is separated have the highest rate of poverty 54%, followed by divorced households 46% & then single people 39%. Only those who are married or cohabiting have a poverty rate below the average.
- There are 185,500 poor households in Northern Ireland, with 502,200 people living in them.
- NI not only has higher poverty levels but considerably higher levels of income inequality than Britain. (Bare Necessities 2003)
- Northern Ireland is one of the most unequal societies in the developed world.' (Hillyard et al, 2003:43)

Key groups at risk:

- Of all persons in poor households 57% were female
- ½ of poor households are characterised by long-term limiting illness, health problems or disability.
- Carers have higher than average poverty rates. (Source: Bare Necessities 2003)

NI stands out from the rest of Great Britain because we have:

- High numbers of people receiving out of work benefits (19%)
- High numbers of disabled people, especially related to mental health (NI conflict)
- High low pay rates among full-time employees (22%)
- High numbers without paid work (31%)
- Very high fuel poverty rate (24%NI v 9% England) (Source: Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion - MOPSE 2006)

Table Discussions I: Connecting health inequalities and poverty to the reality of the four main life cycle groups: Brief 1

Poverty and health inequalities

- There has been a significant **rise in** the numbers presenting as **homeless in NI** (up **60 per cent since 1999/00**), **mainly among those without dependent children**.
- There is **great variation in the rate of premature death** (death before the age of 65) within Northern Ireland by **social class**. The rate for intermediate occupations is twice that for managerial and professional groups, the rate for manual and routine occupations is two and half times as high and the rate for those who have never worked or are long term unemployed is three and half times as high. (4 main causes circulatory problems & cancers & internal & external factors) Overall, there are around **3,000 premature deaths per year in Northern Ireland**.
- The proportion of **people suffering from a limiting long-term illness rises with age** – but is always **much higher among those living in social rented accommodation than among those who are owner occupiers**. Limiting long-term illness among people of working age is not only a potential cause of poverty but also a potential consequence of it. The proportion of working age adults in **Belfast** (20 per cent) places it **among those districts with the highest rates**.
- The Continuous Household Survey also suggests that the risk of experiencing a **limiting long-standing illness increases significantly for those with a household income below £5,000 per annum to 50 per cent**; more than three times the rate for those with a household income over £26,000
- **Two-fifths of adults** say that they were either **personally injured in the troubles or had a close friend or relative either injured or killed**. The proportion of people in Northern Ireland claiming DLA for mental health reasons has more than doubled since 1998, and is three times the level in Great Britain. Putting these two figures together implies that in the early years of this decade, around **half a million people had been affected by the conflict in this way**. The NI population is now 1.73 million.
- The **lower a person's qualifications, the more likely they are to be lacking but wanting paid work**. The lower a person's qualifications, the **more likely they are to be low paid**. 'Low pay' is defined as an hourly rate of pay of £6.50 or less.
- **More than half of employees in the retail, hotel and restaurant sectors are paid less than £6.50 per hour, two-thirds of them being women**. Two-fifths of all low paid workers work in the retail, hotel and restaurant sectors. A further quarter work in the public sector. Around **two-fifths of those paid less than £6.50 per hour are aged 40 or over**. **Low pay is equally common among Catholics and Protestants** – in each case around one third earning less than £6.50 per hour. (Source: Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion - MOPSE 2006)