

Belfast City Council response
CONSULTATION ON THE PHA PARTNERSHIP AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY
(2025-2030)



Belfast
City Council

Public Health Agency
12-22 Linenhall Street,
Belfast,
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Via email @ ppi.secretary@hscni.net

19 December 2025

Dear colleagues

REF: PHA Consultation on Partnership and Engagement Strategy (2025-2030)

Belfast City Council (“the Council”) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the recently published Public Health Agency’s draft Partnership and Engagement Strategy (2025-2030)

The draft Strategy was considered at a recent meeting of the Council’s Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 19 December 2025. Elected Members welcomed the stated vision “to make partnership and engagement working essential to Health and Social Care in a way that supports a healthier population” as well as recognising the commitment to work in partnership, listening to people’s experiences and involving them in service design and delivery.

Elected Members also supported the plans to deliver services more locally, focusing on neighbourhoods and tackling health inequalities. This includes the intention to create a focused team which will support how the PHA engages and partners with service users, carers, families, communities and the general public with a view to improve health and wellbeing for everyone. This approach recognises the need for and benefit of adopting place-based approaches.

In responding, the Council would highlight the joint work already underway between the Council, the PHA and other city and community partners through the Belfast Agenda (the community plan for Belfast) and the shared ambition that by 2035 to create a city where everyone experiences good health and wellbeing, an outcome that will necessitate a partnership approached if it is to be realised.

Specific comments for consideration

In reviewing the draft strategy, the Council would highlight the following specific comments for the consideration of the Public Health Agency (PHA).

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- i. The Council would note the current absence of any reference to local government and the Council in promoting health and wellbeing within the city or the collaborative work already underway with the PHA in delivering the ambitions set out within the Belfast Agenda.
- ii. In fact, the Council is already actively partnering with the PHA, and wider health sector partners, on a number of initiatives and programmes under the auspices of community planning including the joint work being taken forward through the Belfast Health and Development Unit (e.g. Take 5, Active Belfast, Age Friendly Belfast), Heathier Systems 4 Healthier Weight (previously known as whole systems approach to obesity), Belfast Learning Cities.
- iii. The Council believes the emerging draft strategy presents an opportunity to reference and highlight the statutory commitment of the PHA to Community Planning, and acknowledge local government as a key partner, particularly given the many challenging health issues that necessitate a partnership and wider population-based approach.
- iv. The Belfast Agenda provides a framework which maximises the opportunities for partnership working for collaborative gain on the agreed priorities within this plan, with health inequalities an identified priority under Our People and Communities theme of this plan.
- v. Our People and Communities theme has a published Action Plan. A key action, led by the PHA, is delivering on a Whole Systems Approach to Obesity. The PHA will be aware the Regional Obesity Prevention Implementation Group head up the regional Whole Systems Approach to Obesity. Within the governance of this programme of work, community planning is a structure that supports and feeds into the work, thereby illustrating one example of where community planning structures act as a key vehicle for partnership working in tackling challenging health inequalities.
- vi. In addition, the Belfast Health Development Unit is a co-located team of staff from PHA, BHSCT and Belfast City Council who are housed in council offices. We would highlight that this is a model of best practice in terms of partnership working and has resulted in the development of a range of innovative approaches in the Belfast council area. This partnership also supports more robust engagement across a range of stakeholders, particularly those who may not normally have their voices heard in relation to health issues, through the local community links that are in place through each service. We would recommend that this best practice is highlighted in the final strategy as a model for effective partnership working and engagement *'that makes the best use of our combined resources'*.

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We look forward to continuing to work closely with PHA colleagues and identifying opportunities to bring forward prototype delivery models and test and learn demonstrator initiatives which can be scaled up across the region.

It should be noted that this response remains subject to Full Council ratification on 8 January 2026. We will update you of any further comments which may emerge.

I trust this information is helpful in informing the finalisation of the draft Partnership and Engagement Strategy.

Kind regards,