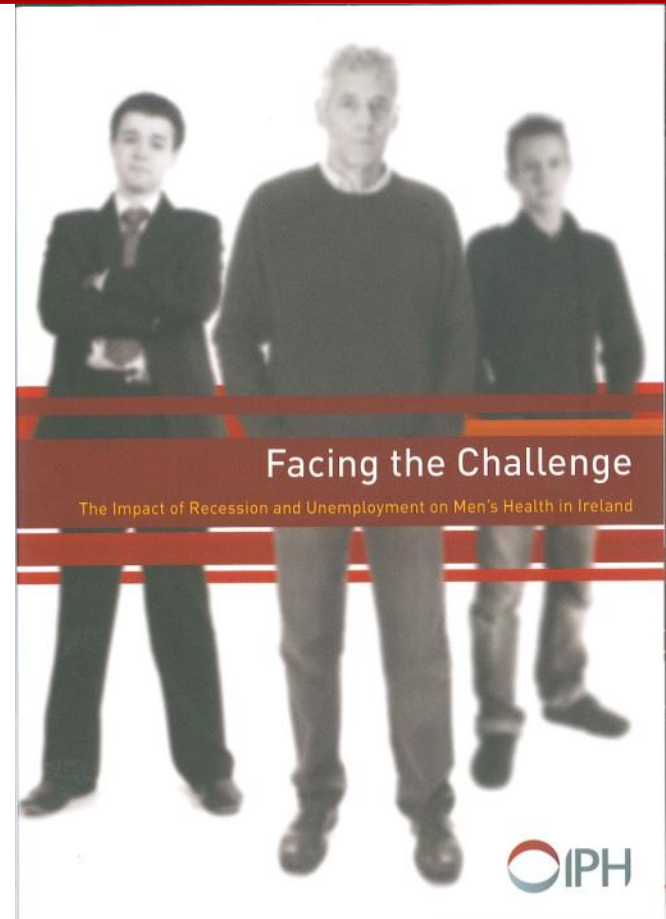


ARK Seminar

“Facing the Challenge – The Impact of Recession and Unemployment on Men’s Health

**Tuesday 14 February, 2012
Duncairn Gardens, Belfast**

Owen Metcalfe, FFPH



www.publichealth.ie

Institute of Public Health

Working for better health across the island of Ireland through:

- Strengthening public health capacity
- Providing /interpreting information for public health
- Advising on policy



Supporting action to address health inequalities



The Health Well

[Read the story behind our name](#)
Better intelligence, better decisions, better health

Search all resources Search

Guidance on searching

Topics Interventions Policies Data Evidence News Knowledge-Action Network Tools Links

Welcome to the Health Well

Health Inequalities Hub

Obesity Hub

Physical Activity & Nutrition Intervention Tool

Chronic Conditions

Fuel Poverty Hub

Data

Networks

All-Ireland Evidence Based Practice Forum

RSS Installer Follow us on Twitter

SHARE



The Health Well, its thematic hubs and web groups are managed by the INIsPHO Team in the Institute of Public Health in Ireland (IPH) with the co-operation of key organisations throughout the island. If you have any queries please contact us at info@thehealthwell.info

Well latest Latest news Latest resources Latest research Latest bulletins

30 January 2012

Border Ireland (including the Centre for Cross Border Studies) joins us at the Health Well

We are delighted to announce that the Border Ireland (including the Centre for Cross Border Studies) now contributes to the Health Well. The Centre for Cross Border Studies is an all-island/north-south body that develops cooperation across the Irish border in a wide range of practical areas including education, health, the economy, ICT and citizens' information. You can now search their resources alongside other Health Well resources. We look forward to working with them.

Health Well webgroups

- All-Ireland Evidence Based Practice Forum
- Health Analysts' Special Interest Group

People Finder

Search

To view or to download any of our flyers, please click the corresponding link below;

- [Health Well brochure](#)
- [Data flyer](#)
- [Fuel Poverty flyer](#)
- [Health Inequalities flyer](#)
- [Information Resources flyer](#)
- [Making Chronic Conditions Count flyer](#)
- [Obesity Hub flyer](#)

Building a healthy society

Challenge

Assess

Develop

Act

Reflect

Integrate

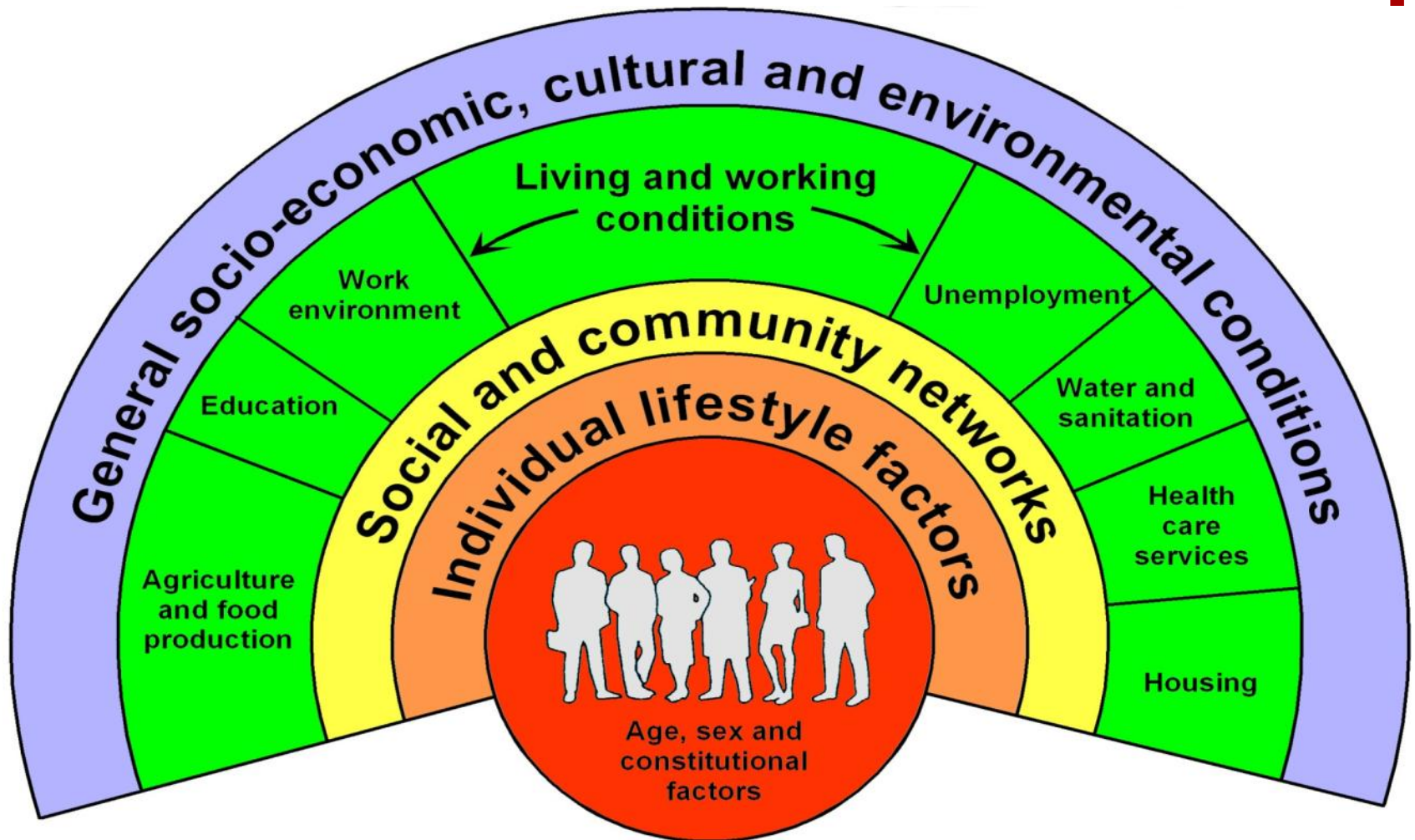
Leadership programme



Health impact reviews



Social determinants of health



Source: Dahlgren and Whitehead, 1991

Focus on Health Inequalities

A red crosshair graphic consisting of a horizontal line and a vertical line intersecting on the right side of the slide.

Work of IPH

- Generating public health knowledge
- Creating awareness and disseminating information
- Influencing policy and practice
- Fostering networks and partnerships
- Capacity building for public health

Strengthening cooperation

- Public health challenges
- Building mutual benefit

Focus on Men's Health

A red crosshair graphic consisting of a horizontal line and a vertical line intersecting on the right side of the slide.

Work of IPH

- Working with the Men's Health Forum in Ireland
- Developing 2 All-Ireland Men's Health Directories
- Participation on the Young Men and Suicide Project

Elements to the Research and Consultation Process

- Literature and Policy Review:
 - International evidence
 - Challenges in north and south of Ireland
 - The response
- Survey of locally-based organisations
- Meetings with groups of men
- Working groups to look at recommendations

Establishing the Links between unemployment, Recession and Men's Health

- Implications for men's health demonstrated in varied circumstances internationally, with the strongest evidence in relation to mental health and stress-related conditions
- Additional challenges highlighted in reluctance of men to access services
- Situation (linked to economic circumstances) deteriorating both north and south

International Evidence

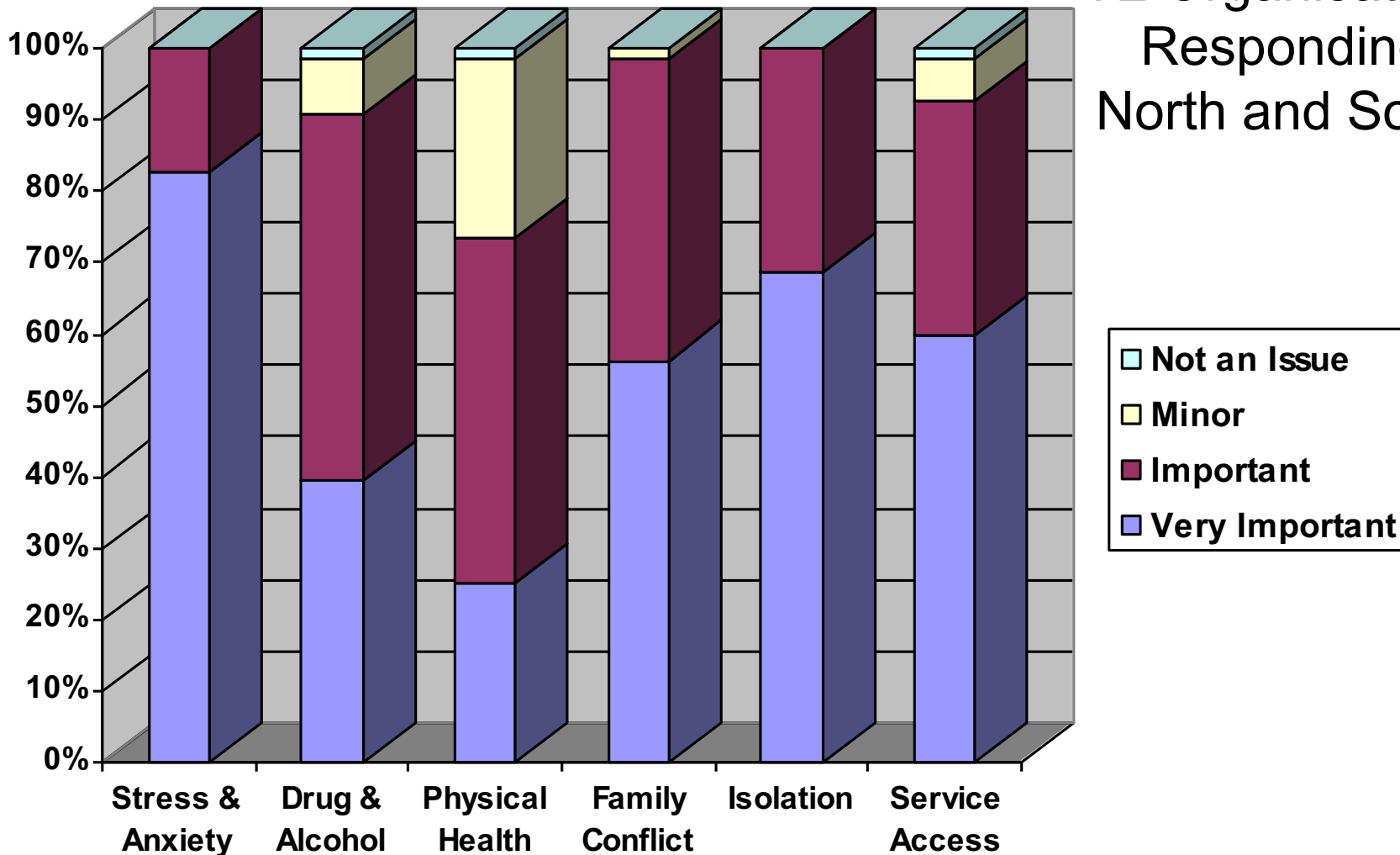
- WHO literature review (1985) established the 'probability' that unemployment damages physical health and the 'almost certain' conclusion that unemployment damages mental health.
- UK evidence (2009) that the unemployed twice as likely to have short-term depression and to experience other problems with negative health impacts.
- Correlation between unemployment and suicide across 26 countries (1970-2007).

All-Island Evidence

- Employment status: the most important predictor of psychological distress (HRB).
- Unemployment associated with a two to three fold increased risk of suicide among men in the period 1996-2006 (NSRF, 2008).
- The NSRF (2009) reported a 5% increase in the rate of hospital treated self-harm (2008-2009).
- In the wards of North and West Belfast suicide rates were more than two-thirds higher than the NI average in 2010.

Local Organisations Rating of Relative Importance of Issues for Men where Unemployment or Recession Impacted upon their Health

72 Organisations
Responding:
North and South



Summary of Issues Emerging from Survey

- Almost universal experience of responding frontline projects saw health issues for men as being directly related to the recession, to unemployment or to the threat of unemployment.
- This was true for organisations in both jurisdictions; for projects working mainly with men, and for projects dealing directly with unemployment.
- It was also true for more general projects and services such as Family Resource Centres, Citizen's Information Centres and Community Development Projects.
- Mental health issues were rated as more significant than physical health issues by almost all respondents: with this trend applying in the case of men threatened with unemployment as well as men currently unemployed.
- Incidences of stress and anxiety, and difficulties in communicating were the most commonly identified related issues noted by respondents generally
- Almost all report an increase in demand for help and support from men – due to health problems directly related to unemployment or to recession.

Men Telling the Story:

Feelings of Self Worth:

“As a bloke, we still have that thing in the male psyche that we are the breadwinners, that we should be the breadwinners, so when that is taken away, it really damages you”

Men Telling the Story:

A Sense of Purpose is Gone:

“The mental distress has been appalling. Work used to keep me fit and this was important to me. The strain of doing nothing has worn me down.”

Men Telling the Story:



The Stigma is Felt:

“I felt people around me were saying: Look at the state of you: who wants to talk to you?”

Men Telling the Story:

Options are limited:

“In the 80s recession, I couldn’t get work and had to go England, this time around, there is nowhere to go.”

Men Telling the Story:

Failure in efforts to make progress:

“Inequities become bigger when you’re out of work and you’re down on the ground looking up. There is more and more frustration to be felt. You try so hard, then you give up and then you’re smacked in the head”.

Men Telling the Story:

Turning to harmful and addictive behaviour:

“There is a huge impact on my self confidence and my health. The easiest route out is to take to drink. This is uncontrolled in the house. Who’s watching?”

Men Telling the Story:

Increased financial pressures:

” Problems with debt have left me retreating into myself. My physical health has been suffering due to the strain and the stress.”

“There is no peace - you are being followed by debtors every step of the day. Opening letters and always finding threatening words”

Men Telling the Story:

How Services 'Help':

"I feel a darkness appear every time I have to deal with the social welfare office. The darkness leaves when I leave the building and I get back to normality "

"There is nowhere to talk. You are made feel degraded everywhere that you turn."

Men Telling the Story:

What does Help?:

“Being able to reach out to other men and have some support within the community has ensured that there is a reason to be getting up and getting involved”.

“The group allows me realise that it’s not just me who feels like this”

Working for Equity in Health (2012)

Concern that the current fiscal crisis will reinforce long term trends of inequality, low pay & related poverty in Europe.

In all countries the unemployment rate for men has increased by **30-50%** more than women.

But it is not just about unemployment...

17.5 million people experiencing **in-work poverty** in the EU.

Working for Equity in Health (2012)

Policy Options:

- Role of Active Labour Market Programmes (ALMP)
- Developing an evidence base: natural experiments and measuring health impacts of non-health sector interventions
- Including Health Impact Assessment (HIA) in labour market policy design

What is Needed



- Making the case: “Cutbacks cost Money”
- Initiatives that communicate effectively: not just about ill health, but also about positive health and self esteem in relation to male unemployment.
- Related improvements in understanding and approach taken by mainstream service providers: in communication and positive outreach; in targeted and accessible service provision; in integration amongst key areas of service provision; and in ‘basic humanity’ in dealing with clients.
- A formal and structured approach to supporting and developing community-based networks and mechanisms for association: creating absolutely vital spaces for men facing health challenges as a result of unemployment.
- Forming real working partnerships between local and mainstream: “Mutual Recognition”

Institute of Public Health in Ireland

owen.metcalfe@publichealth.ie

www.publichealth.ie/hia

