

Mental Health Matters

The annual report of
the Chief Medical Officer
for Northern Ireland

2018|2019



Department of
Health

An Roinn Sláinte

Mánnystrie O Poustie

www.health-ni.gov.uk

Foreword

by Dr Michael McBride, Chief Medical Officer

This is my 11th Annual Report and in this year's report I have focused on positive mental health, with an emphasis on children and young people.

Just like physical health, we all have mental health. Our mental health is how we think, feel and act. It controls how we manage day-to-day life and stressful situations. It is important we look after both our physical and mental health from infancy through to adulthood and throughout our adult life.

Protecting and nurturing mental health in childhood contributes to productive social relationships, effective learning and good physical health throughout life. My report focuses on a number of initiatives that currently help families, children and young people address the challenges they face on a daily basis.

Parents have a key role to play in building the skills necessary for strong emotional wellbeing in their children, such as positive self-esteem and resilience. Programmes such as Family Nurse Partnership and Think Family NI are available which support parents to nurture their child's emotional wellbeing and to build a supportive home environment.

GPs, midwives, health visitors, social workers and teachers also play a vital role in the emotional wellbeing of children and young people, through identification, intervention and referral to targeted support.

The stigma associated with mental health can make difficulties worse and can prevent people from seeking the help and support they need. The effects of stigma on a person with mental ill health and those close to them are far reaching. We must all work together to help reduce the levels of stigma and negative attitudes around mental health.

This year I have changed the format of my report to make it more accessible on-line and via mobile phones. It sets out some of the work we are doing in Northern Ireland to improve mental health and wellbeing and contains links to websites where you can find a range of other, more detailed, information and resources.

I hope that you will find my report interesting and useful, and please share it with others.



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Introduction

1 in 5 people in Northern Ireland will be affected by mental ill-health in their lifetime. The other 4 will know a friend, family member or colleague who will.

Mental health and wellbeing - definition

It is widely recognised that mental health consists of two dimensions:

- (i) Mental wellbeing, for example, life satisfaction, emotional resilience and relationships with others; and
- (ii) Mental illness such as depression, bipolar disorder, personality disorders, dementia and psychotic disorders.

Good mental health is, therefore, much more than the absence of a mental illness.

Stigma

One of the main barriers to seeking help for mental health problems is stigma. Stigma can significantly worsen someone's mental health problems, defining them as someone with an illness rather than a person with a meaningful voice and contribution to make. We all need to tackle stigma to create a lasting, positive change in people's attitudes towards mental health and to better inform people on the facts.

The Change Your Mind campaign, supported by the Public Health Agency (PHA), Comic Relief and Inspire, was launched on 10th October 2016 as part of a wider programme of work in schools and workplaces to help reduce stigma around mental health. The campaign brings together the work of the PHA and Inspire to reduce levels of stigma, discrimination, and negative attitudes towards people who experience mental ill-health. It also builds on the PHA's campaigns to reduce barriers and encourage help-seeking behaviours, and Comic Relief's commitment to supporting mental wellbeing and breaking down the associated stigma and discrimination.

<https://www.changeyourmindni.org/>

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Triggers

Points of vulnerability in life - everyone can be affected by mental health issues.

Homelessness

Lon**E**liness

exc**L**usion

Pressure

stres**S**

employ**E**nt

Exams

drin**K**ing

insecur**I**ty

Narcotics

Grief

3

Children and Young People

MACE 'Breaking the Cycle' Project

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) are traumatic events that affect children while growing up. Children who have been exposed to situations such as conflict, trauma, domestic violence, alcohol/drug abuse, mental illness, undermining, intimidation, bullying, manipulation, criticism, parental divorce and/or bereavement can experience negative impacts which last well into adulthood. Such impacts can include poorer educational achievements, employment status and health and wellbeing.

The Department recognises the growing body of evidence on the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences and has commissioned a number of initiatives, including the MACE Project.

The Multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences - Breaking the Cycle Project (the MACE project) is supported by the European Union's INTERREG VA Programme and managed by the Special EU Programmes Body. The project has been awarded grant funding up to €5 million which includes match funding from Departments of Health in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The MACE Project has established Cross Border Community Networks in five delivery sites across the island of Ireland. The MACE Project aims to transform the lives of vulnerable children and their families by identifying, intervening early and providing nurturing support within their homes and communities, by delivering 3125 interventions to those aged 0-3 and 11-13 and their families.

<http://www.cawt.com/projects/eu-interreg-va-programme-2014-2020/childrens-services-multiple-adverse-childhood-experiences-mace/>

Through the Early intervention Transformation Programme (EITP), the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland is delivering the Trauma-Informed Practice Professional Development Project. This project focuses on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), by supporting professionals to train together and embedding prevention and early intervention approaches.

<https://www.safeguardingni.org/northern-ireland-ace-animation>

Family Nurse Partnership

The Family Nurse Partnership (FNP) programme is an intensive, preventative one-to-one home visiting programme for first time teenage mothers from early pregnancy until their child reaches two. Its main aims are to improve pregnancy outcomes, child health and development and the economic self-sufficiency of the family. FNP aims to introduce a new approach to nursing, working with the parents to help them build up their own skills and resources to parent their child well, but also to think about their own future aspirations.

FNP significantly improves outcomes for young parents from disadvantaged communities who have experienced multiple adversities. FNP adds value, breaks the cycle of disadvantage and transforms the lives of babies, children and families who have graduated from the FNP programme.

Young people's satisfaction with the FNP program and family nurses is extremely positive.

Family Nurse Partnership is changing the world and changing Northern Ireland one baby at a time.

<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/directorate-public-health/health-and-social-wellbeing-improvement/family-nurse-partnership>

Since it started in 2010

- 785 teenagers have enrolled in the programme.
- In 2018, 127 teenagers enrolled in the programme.
- Lower number of babies with lower birth weight.
- Improvement in breastfeeding rates for mothers on the programme.
- Young mother mastery levels are higher at the end of the programme.
- Child development at 20 months is within normal limits.

Perinatal Mental Health

During pregnancy and in the year after giving birth women can be affected by a number of mental health problems. These can range from mild to moderate conditions, such as anxiety and depression, to more severe conditions, such as bipolar affective disorder, schizophrenia and puerperal psychosis. These severe conditions often develop suddenly and are potentially life threatening. The different conditions require different kinds of care or treatment. The majority of women have mild to moderate conditions which can be treated in the community. For women who develop more severe conditions, specialist care is necessary. Some women with more severe conditions can be cared for in the community by specialist teams but some women are so ill that they need inpatient care in hospital.

Perinatal mental health problems in mothers affect infant brain development and increase the risk of a child having a number of poor health, educational and social outcomes throughout their life. The costs of perinatal mental health problems in Northern Ireland is estimated to be around £250 million per year as outlined in a study published in 2014.

<https://www.pssru.ac.uk/publications/pub-4866/>

Mental health support for new or expectant mothers is provided in the community through general mental health services in line with the 2017 Integrated Perinatal Mental Health Care Pathway, which provides regional guidance for all health care professionals who come into contact with pregnant women, to ensure that any mental health problems are identified early and women are directed to the appropriate mental health services.

Currently only the Belfast Trust has specialist perinatal mental health practitioners providing care. Where inpatient care is required, this is provided within existing general adult mental health facilities, as there is no specialist Mother and Baby Unit in Northern Ireland. The voluntary and community sector also continue to provide a range of excellent support to women suffering from mental ill health in the perinatal period.

To further the development of specialist services a regional perinatal mental health group, led by the Public Health Agency in partnership with the Health and Social Care Board, has been set up to co-produce an updated service model, including comprehensive community-based services. Members of the group have already visited a number of Mother and Baby Units to learn from their experiences.

Additional funding has been allocated to ensure that appropriate equipment and child-friendly facilities are available within general mental health wards to meet the needs of a mother and her baby and older children during visits. Funding was also made available in 2018/19 to deliver staff training, to update knowledge and skills in the area of perinatal mental health.

Nevertheless, with the prevalence and severity of perinatal mental ill health, the case for more investment and better provision of perinatal mental health services across Northern Ireland is becoming increasingly more evident.

Think Family NI

The Health & Social Care Board have been improving services for parents with mental health issues and their children via the work of Think Family NI.

There have been significant resources invested in working with Health & Social Care Trusts and interagency partners to raise the awareness of the impact parental mental health can have upon others within the family i.e. children, young people and adult carers. The Family Model has been the conceptual tool used as a framework to demonstrate the diversity of individual needs within families across the lifespan.

The outcomes-based approach to the evaluation of this pilot and the evaluation of the Think Family Support Worker can be found at

<http://www.cypsp.org/regional-subgroups/think-family/>



Infant Mental Health Framework

The Infant Mental Health Framework focuses on social and emotional development during the first three years of life for an infant and their family. This includes a child's ability to form relationships with other children and adults; to recognise and express emotions; and to explore and learn about their environment in a safe and happy way.

A growing body of evidence from the clinical and social science fields shows that the areas of the brain that control social and emotional development are most active during the first 3 years of a child's life. Careful nurturing of a child's social and emotional health during their early years is vital to provide them with the skills necessary to form relationships and interact with society later in life.

However, developments start during pregnancy and the choices and experiences of the mother during this period can have a significant impact on maternal and infant social and emotional health.

The aim of this framework is to ensure that all children have the best start in life by prioritising and supporting families during pregnancy and in the first 3 years of life. In particular the framework supports workforce and service development to ensure the optimum use of evidence-informed interventions with families with children aged 0-3 where there are significant developmental risks for the child.

In 2017/18

- 211 people attending Surestarts, Early Years settings and through ante-natal support programmes participated in the Mood Matters in Pregnancy Programme.
- 97% of the 211 parents reported improved understanding of mental health, signs and symptoms and skills to cope with difficulties.
- 9 staff undertook Video Interactive Training designed to support the use of hand held mobile filming techniques in work with families with children with attachment problems to support improvement in attachment relationships.
- 28 staff from various organisations undertook the 2 year Tavistock M9 Infant Mental Health Diploma or Tavistock M7 Early Years Diploma.
- 90% of the Infant Mental Health 2 year Diploma practitioners reported improved knowledge of Infant Mental Health and its determinants.
- 75% of the Infant Mental Health 2 year Diploma practitioners reported a decrease in need for referrals for specialist services as problems were being resolved.
- 90% of M9 Trainees reported being better equipped to respond to families where there were difficulties in the parent infant relationship.

<http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications/infant-mental-health-framework-northern-ireland>

Roots of Empathy Programme

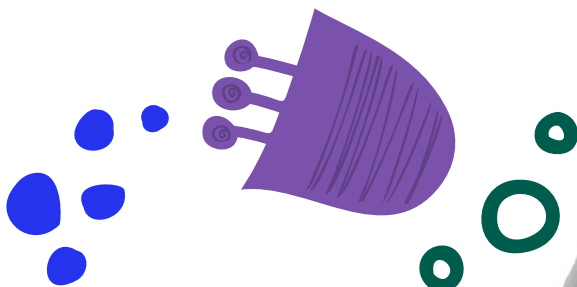
Roots of Empathy is a school based social and emotional competence promotion programme for primary school children which provides an effective approach to increasing pro social behaviour and reducing difficult behaviour.

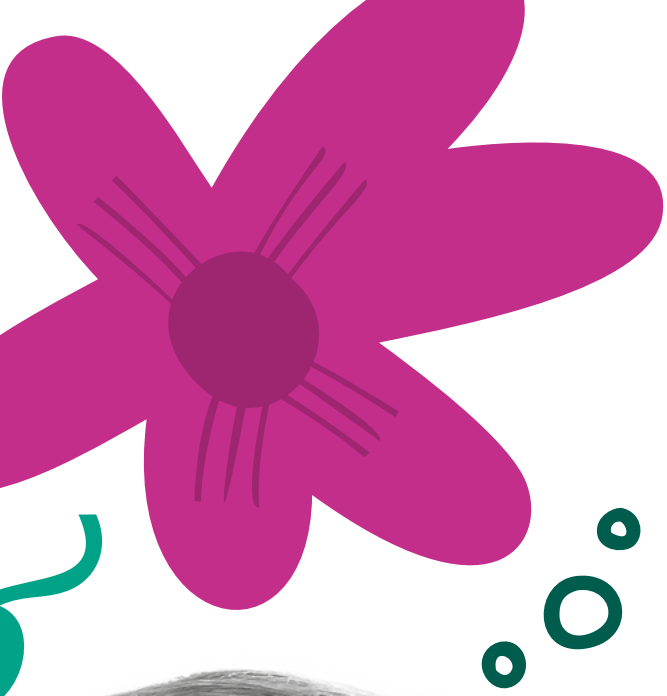
The programme comprises 9 themes and 27 lessons, based around a monthly classroom visit by an infant and parent, who are typically recruited from the local community and are 'adopted' by the class at the start of the school year. The specialised curriculum supports children as they learn to understand the baby's perspective, label the babies feelings and extend that learning to reflect on their own feelings and those of others.

In 2017/18

- 122 Roots of Empathy Programmes (ROE) were delivered in 115 primary schools across NI.
- 3050 children, representing 1 in 7 primary school children in NI, undertook the ROE programme within 2017/18.
- 99.3% of ROE programmes were fully completed.
- Training, Mentoring and Classroom Visits were provided for all 24 new school facilitators undertaking the ROE programme.

<http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/directorate-public-health/health-and-social-wellbeing-improvement/roots-empathy>





Regional Young Carers Service

The Department currently provides over £0.5m per annum to support young carers, through the Northern Ireland Regional young carers Service (NIRYCS).

<http://www.cypsp.org/regional-subgroups/young-carers/>

This regional service is delivered in partnership by Action for Children and Barnardo's NI. The service supports young carers to address issues identified through Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland (UNOCINI) assessments. This includes both individual support and group work. The service also works with the families of young carers and supports the participation of young carers in mainstream services including education, health, youth and community services. NIRYCS offers young carers a break from caring, a listening ear, information about illnesses, peer support groups, a safe environment to express concerns and worries, advocacy, advice and signposting.

In 2017/18

- 1649 children and young people participated in the Northern Ireland Regional Young Carers Service;
- 259 new referrals were made to the service;
- 176 children and young people were discharged from the service;
- 67% of all activities offered through the service involved 1-1 Therapeutic Work;
- Over 3000 people attended 82 awareness raising events;
- The average duration of engagement with the service was 114.7 weeks; and
- 172 UNOCINI Assessments were completed as part of the service.

A booklet on supporting young carers in school is available at:

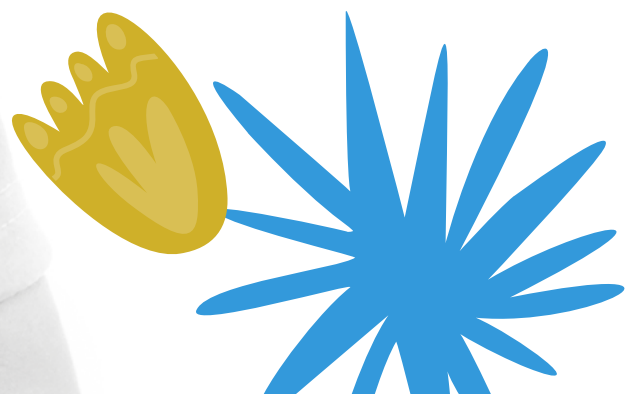
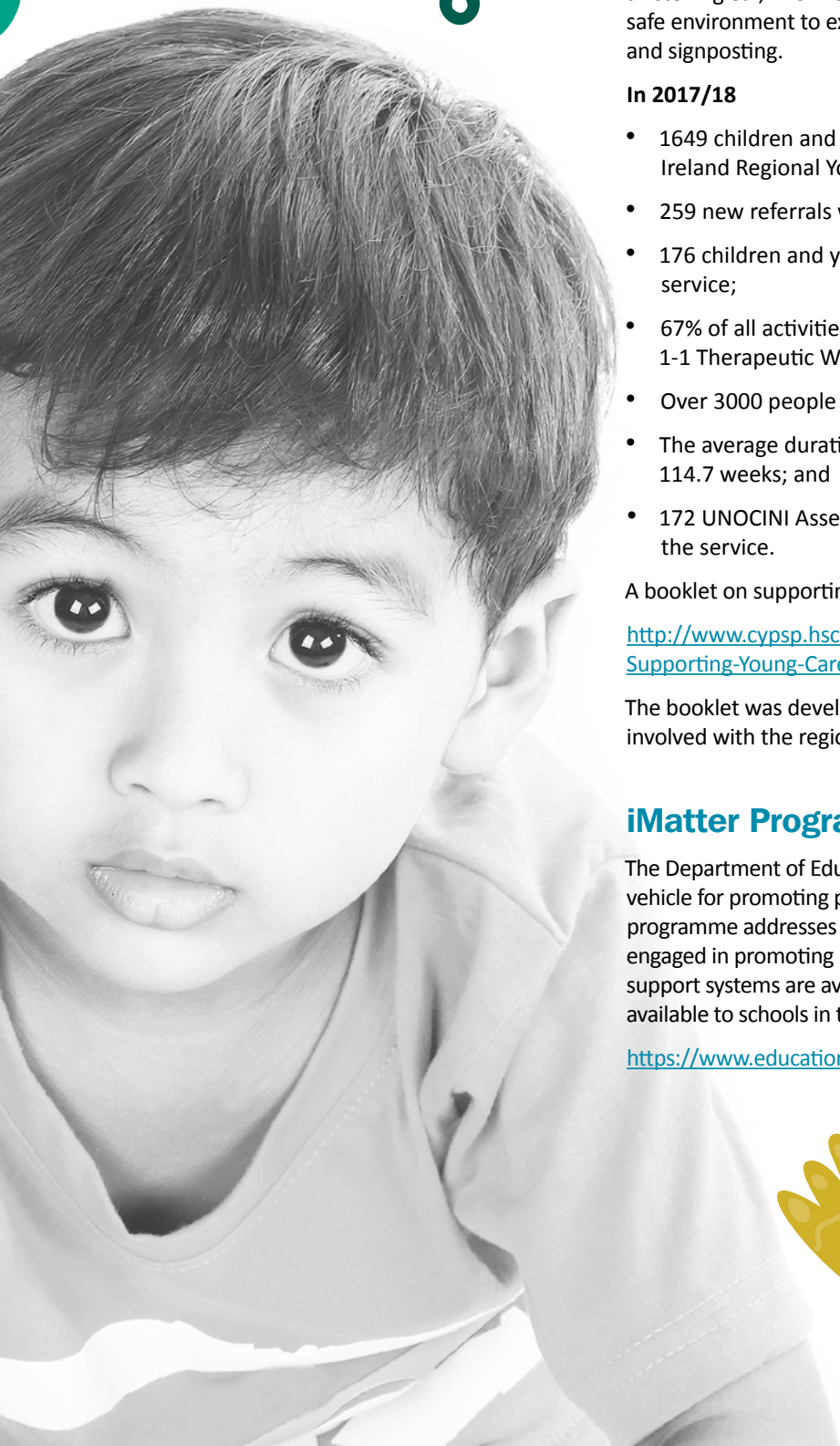
<http://www.cypsp.hscni.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Supporting-Young-Carers-In-Schools-Booklet-Final.pdf>

The booklet was developed on a co-design basis with young people involved with the regional service.

iMatter Programme

The Department of Education 'iMatter' programme is the overarching vehicle for promoting pupils' emotional health and wellbeing. The programme addresses how the entire school community should be engaged in promoting resilient emotional health for all pupils, what support systems are available for vulnerable pupils and what support is available to schools in the event of a crisis.

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/imatter-programme>





Social Media, Young People and Mental Health

The four UK Chief Medical Officers have published their independent systematic map of evidence on screen and social media use in children and young people, and recommended next steps and advice for parents and carers.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-cmo-commentary-on-screen-time-and-social-media-map-of-reviews>

They have concluded that the published scientific research is currently insufficient to support evidence-based guidelines on screen time, but there is enough basis to warrant a precautionary approach and action by schools, government and technology companies.

Calling for a duty of care to be established and for a voluntary code of conduct to be agreed ahead of government legislation, the UK Chief Medical Officers have also published advice, giving tips on how to have a healthy balance with screen time. This is based on evidence around activities that are important for healthy child development such as sleep, exercise and education.

Social media and screen-based activities can be hugely beneficial for children and young people, encouraging social interaction, education, and providing easy access to support and information but it should not intrude on activities which are proven to support healthy child development such as exercise and quality sleep.

It is essential we provide advice which strives to balance screen time with healthy living which is why we work alongside other government Departments on early intervention programmes such as PlayMatters which encourages independent play and time away from screens.

www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/play-matters

In addition, we are prompting industry and other partners to take responsibility to ensure children are protected online. As Chief Medical Officers we are trying to help children and young people reap the benefits of screen time while not incurring any harmful consequences.

Parenting Infants in a Digital World

In the past year, Barnardo's Northern Ireland (NI) has published a research report exploring parenting 0-3s in a digital context. 'Connections: Parenting Infants in a Digital World' provides insight into how digital technology may influence interactions between parents and infants at home.

The message from Barnardo's NI focuses on supporting parents to understand the need for positive and consistent interactions to help develop their child's emotional wellbeing and attachment.

The full report is available at www.barnardos.org.uk/connections-parenting-infants-in-a-digital-world.pdf

The Executive Summary is available at www.barnardos.org.uk/connections-parenting-infants-in-a-digital-world-executive-summary.pdf

The Information for Parents booklet, 'Promoting Good Infant Mental Health: Supporting Emotional Wellbeing for 0-3 Year Olds', is available at www.barnardos.org.uk/barnardos-connections-parentbooklet_v6.pdf.



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Lifelong Mental Health

Self-help

Minding Your Head -Take 5 steps to wellbeing

Follow the link for practical steps we can all take, throughout our lives, to look after our mental health.

<https://www.mindingyourhead.info/>



Physical activity and mental health

Physical activity enhances our wellbeing and helps us feel better. Participation in regular physical activity can improve mood, increase self-esteem, aid better sleep and reduce stress and anxiety. It reduces the risk of developing depression and can improve many of the symptoms experienced by people with depression. It can also reduce the risk of dementia including Alzheimer's.

Being active doesn't have to mean doing sport or going to the gym. There are lots of ways to be active, such as gardening or going for a walk; find one that you enjoy and remember that even short episodes of physical activity are beneficial. For information on recommended levels of physical activity for health gain and on opportunities to be active go to www.choosetolivebetter.com

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Signposts to Help

Lifeline is the Northern Ireland crisis response helpline service for people who are experiencing distress or despair.

Lifeline counsellors are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to listen and help in confidence.

Phone: 0808 808 8000

<http://www.lifelinehelpline.info/>

ChildLine is a free 24-hour helpline where children and young people can talk to a counsellor about any problem.

Phone: 0800 1111

www.childline.org.uk

Samaritans provides confidential, emotional support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair.

Phone 116 123. Calls are free.

Email: jo@samaritans.org

www.samaritans.org

There are a number of mental health organisations in your area that can provide help and support and this link

<https://mindingyourhead.info/services>





Key Statistics

These statistics are taken from the Health Survey (NI) First Results 2017/18. The Health Survey (NI) has run annually since 2010/11.

3,355 The sample size for this survey was **3,355 individuals** aged 16 and over.

70% **Over two-thirds (70%)** of respondents rated their general health as very good or good.

43% **43%** of respondents **have a physical or mental health condition or illness** expected to last 12 months or more.

26% A quarter of respondents (26%) of respondents **had concerns about their own mental health.**

58% **58% of these sought help**, with **82%** of these seeking help from their GP and **44%** from a family member.

74% Of those who did not seek help, **three-quarters (74%)** felt that they could handle things on their own.

40% Around **two-fifths (40%)** reported high levels of **satisfaction with life**, feeling worthwhile and happiness.

21% **A fifth (21%)** reported **high levels of anxiety**, while **45%** reported very **low levels.**

www.health-ni.gov.uk/cmo

