

4,000 – that’s the number of people in Northern Ireland each year who die prematurely. That adds up to 61,000 years of life lost unnecessarily, with some groups affected much more than others.

Does it matter that some people die early? To their families and friends, absolutely; to ‘Northern Ireland plc’, it should. A healthy population is the basis for a cohesive, vibrant and economically strong society, so better health and wellbeing should be everyone’s business.

Much has been achieved so far, with reductions in mortality rates from the main causes of death – heart and respiratory disease, stroke and cancer.

But we need to do more. We need to build a more resilient population so that people don’t get ill unnecessarily in the first place.

Many of the key health behaviours significant to the development of chronic disease follow the social gradient, eg smoking, obesity, lack of physical activity, lack of nutrition, drug-taking, alcohol abuse and mental illness, along with other factors such as breastfeeding and poor oral and sexual health. The PHA commissions a range of programmes to address these concerns and to encourage and enable ‘healthier choices’ for the population of Northern Ireland.

Use the menu to find out more about the PHA's work in the following areas:

- [Tackling childhood obesity](#)
- [Improving wellbeing through peace of mind](#)
- [Stopping smoking](#)
- [Highlighting the dangers of emerging drugs](#)
- [Averting an alcohol crisis](#)

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