

Impact Case Study

UoA 3A: Allied Health Professions, Dentistry, Nursing and Pharmacy (Nursing and Health Science)

Centre for Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Over the last five years the Centre for Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (CIDD) has established an international profile with research grants totalling over £3million supplemented by over 20 PhD/MSc projects. Innovative research projects addressing the health disparities of this population have been completed and over 100 papers in international peer-reviewed journals have been published.

A strategic objective of the CIDD is the promotion of practice-based research and education, alongside knowledge exchange partnerships between Higher Education, Health & Social Care (H&SC) services and the voluntary sector with a particular focus on mainstream health services. Hence our programme of research has included healthcare practitioners, acute hospital staff and specialist services (diabetes, breast screening services, palliative care).

The programme of research undertaken within CIDD has been instrumental in addressing the health inequalities and the health promotion needs of people with ID (Taggart & Cousins, 2014). The impact is evident in the following six areas:

1. The identification of health inequalities through health surveillance:

Members of CIDD through robust research have clearly identified the health needs of this population. As a result, a **'health passport'** was developed which assists in the communication of information between the person with ID and mainstream healthcare professionals. In addition **training courses** for over 150 acute hospital staff in Northern Ireland were devised by University personnel in collaboration with a theatre company of people with ID. The training supported the implementation of the **GAIN Guidelines**.

The learning gained from this work led to an exploration of other **chronic health conditions** and a focus on **diabetes** emerged (Taggart et al., 2013). A new project has brought together an interdisciplinary team of international experts from across the four UK countries in order to adapt and test a Type 2 diabetes education programme for people with ID called DESMOND-ID. This is funded by a grant from Diabetes UK £291,678 in 2012.

2. The development of a network of Health Facilitators in GP Practices to promote health screening/annual checks:

The research undertaken by members of the CIDD was cited in Equal Lives (DHSSPSNI, 2005) that led to the pioneering appointment of nine Health Facilitators for people with ID across the five Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland. The health facilitators encourage attendance at annual health screens undertaken by GPs: with uptakes in certain areas (76%) exceeding those reported for other regions of the UK. They also support the **implementation of health action plans within ID**

services and they have adapted and instigated health promotion activities around healthy hearts and exercise (McConkey, 2013, McConkey et al., in press).

3. The development of accessible information to assist people with ID to make positive lifestyle choices:

A colourful, **user friendly information booklet on breast cancer/screening** was developed that allows women to make more informed decisions about monitoring their own health and accessing breast screening services (Taggart & McKendry, 2010). It gives women with ID, their family carers and professional staff a greater understanding of what breast cancer is, the signs/symptoms, what to do and the process involved in receiving a mammogram. This innovative publication was developed in collaboration with women with ID within an advocacy network and has been circulated widely within the UK and internationally (www.easyhealth.org.uk). A similar booklet on promoting good mental health has also been published (www.easyhealth.org.uk).

4. The translation of research into pre/post multi-disciplinary education:

Findings from research undertaken by CIDD researchers have guided the development of **best practice standards for 'Care of People with Learning Disabilities in General Hospitals'** (GAIN Guidelines, DHSSPSNI, 2010). Three major hospitals in Northern Ireland have implemented these standards focusing on the care of people with ID through service improvement plans. These plans focus on increased use of accessible information to explain admission, consent and care and treatment processes: as well as facilitating a comprehensive assessment of their needs and improving communication among hospital staff in meeting these needs. More recently, a new **innovative e-learning module** has been designed for teachers, classroom support assistants, H&SC professionals and parents to promote the physical and mental health of children and adolescents with developmental and ID. Also a **training DVD** and a resource manual has been produced to increase the partnership between palliative care and ID services focusing on end of life care for people with ID (McLaughlin, PhD thesis, 2012).

5. The influence of regional, national and international policy guidelines:

The research undertaken by CIDD researchers has resulted in specific recommendations in **key Northern Ireland H&SC policy documents** aimed at improving access to healthcare for people with ID (DHSSPSNI, 2005, Ch.7: www.dhsspsgov.uk/equallivesreportchpt7.pdf) and across the UK (Michael Report, 2008). These research findings were also cited in the World Report on Disability produced by the WHO in 2011(p8).