

**HEALTH
PROMOTION
PROFESSIONALISM
STATEMENT**

This report was compiled by the Executive Committee of the Association for Health Promotion Ireland and Health Promotion academics from National University of Ireland, Galway, Sligo Institute of Technology and Waterford Institute of Technology.

Date: 24th June 2021

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HEALTH PROMOTION PROFESSIONAL STATEMENT

INTRODUCTION

It has long been recognised that Health Promotion plays a pivotal role in society and this is underpinned by government policies and strategies that aim to improve the health and wellbeing of everyone living in Ireland. In order to facilitate and promote the work of these policies and strategies, it is essential that the Health Promotion profession have the knowledge, skills and competencies required to translate policy, theory and research into effective action. This is critical to ensure accountable, ethical and efficient practice. This statement describes the history of health promotion particularly in Ireland and the recent advances in the professionalisation of the discipline.

DEFINING HEALTH PROMOTION

Health Promotion was a reaction against, and challenge to, the dominant bio-medical model of health. This model perceived health

as absence of illness in the early 1970s. Originally, the emphasis was on educating for health in an effort to persuade individuals to live more healthily through adopting healthier lifestyle behaviour. During the 1980s this approach broadened as individual health behaviour was recognised as being influenced by the circumstances and settings in which people live. In 1986 the first World Health Organization (WHO) International Conference for Health Promotion took place in Ottawa, Canada which resulted in the developed of the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion. This charter set out the conceptual framework for health promotion and highlighted five key areas for action. This Charter expanded health promotion from the narrow individual behaviour focus to a wide range of social and environmental actions. It has also provided the most widely used definition of Health Promotion; “a process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve, their health” (WHO,1989).

Box 1. Health Promotion is the process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve, their health (WHO, 1989)

HEALTH PROMOTION THROUGH TIME

The past thirty years has seen many changes and advancements in the area of health promotion both in academia and in practice. Since its emergence at an international level, health promotion in Ireland has developed and grown, with significant achievements in the areas of cardiovascular health, healthy public policies and healthy settings. A number of distinct health promotion policies and strategies have been developed along with the inclusion of health promotion actions /recommendations within wider health strategies. Healthy Ireland, a framework for improved health and wellbeing (2013-2025) recognises that 'basing Ireland's health promotion policies and programmes on robust evidence means that interventions will be in line with international best practice, cost-effective, integrated with service delivery and more likely to make an impact'. Health promotion actions have been included in several of the Health policies currently being implemented (Box 2). WHO Healthy Cities is a global movement working to put health high on the social, economic and political agenda of city governments. Ireland has implemented many National Healthy Cities and Counties of Ireland using WHO criteria that are based on the European Health Policy Framework, Health 2020.

In the 1990's, the Department of Health, through its Health Promotion Unit (HPU), had both a policy-formation function plus an executive function concerned with the development and implementation of national and local health promotion programmes. The HPU recognised that having an academic base for health promotion was a key element of a national structure and hence the Chair of Health

BOX 2. HEALTHY IRELAND POLICIES

Healthy Ireland a framework for improved health and wellbeing (2013-2025)

A Healthy Weight for Ireland 2016–2025 Obesity Policy and Action Plan

National Sexual Health Strategy 2015 – 2020 And Action Plan 2015 – 2016

Get Ireland Active! The National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland (2016)

Tobacco Free Ireland Action Plan (2015)

Public Health (Alcohol) Act 2018

Skin Cancer Prevention Plan 2019-2022

Sharing the Vision A Mental Health Policy for Everyone 2020-2030

Promotion in NUI Galway was established, along with an academic department which would engage in multi-disciplinary research and teaching programmes in health promotion. The Health Promotion Research Centre at the National University of Ireland, Galway is now a world leader in the area of health promotion research and contributes to national, international and local policies and strategies. The Established Chair of Health Promotion and Public Health at NUI Galway, Professor Margaret Barry, was appointed Global President of the International Union for Health Promotion and Education (IUHPE) in 2019.

There has been a surge in the number of specialist health promotion courses on offer in Ireland along with the inclusion of health promotion modules in broader degrees in the arena of health and community development. This has resulted in an increase in the number of health promotion practitioners.

In many countries professional bodies have been established for people working in the fields of health promotion practice, research and education. In Ireland the Association for Health Promotion (AHPI) was established over 20 years ago with the aim to advance good practice in health promotion, promote health promotion activities that are in the best interests of the general public, and provide and promote professional development for its members. Today the association is a growing, vibrant community with over 160 members. The AHPI and the academic institutions have maintained a close partnership since the inception of the AHPI and have worked closely together to initiate and promote health promotion professionalisation in Ireland.

CHALLENGES FOR HEALTH PROMOTION

While the integration of health promotion into the more mainstream health arena has led to an increased awareness about the concept of 'health promotion' and the need to promote health, it hasn't always resulted in the health promotion activity being aligned with the principles set out in the Ottawa Charter. The rise in non-communicable diseases and the financial and health costs at a societal and individual level has resulted in a need to quell the dam and so direct resources and energy towards the main causes of these non-communicable diseases, namely lifestyle behaviour rather than tackling the more complex issues which are the

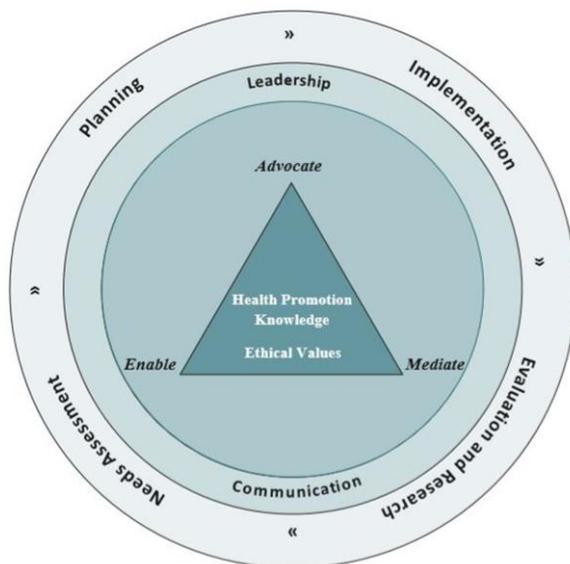
'causes of the causes' namely health inequalities, and the wider socio-economic determinants of health.

DEVELOPING PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS FOR HEALTH PROMOTION

The embracement of health promotion activity by a broader audience and the pressure to respond to the growing burden of chronic diseases has raised the issue of ensuring that all health promotion activity takes place in line with the values and principles of health promotion and an awareness of best practice. It is timely then

IUHPE Core Competencies and Professional Standards

that professional standards and core competencies have been developed for health promotion to ensure that both training and practice is grounded in evidence, and is consistent, professional and comprehensive.



The International Union for Health Promotion and Education (IUHPE), a global professional non-governmental organisation dedicated

to health promotion, and the Health Promotion Research Centre in NUI Galway led out on the development of the standards, competencies and an accreditation framework for practitioners. This process involved 22 other European partners (including the Health Service Executive in Ireland)¹ and was supported by an International Advisory Group. The goal of the IUHPE Health Promotion Accreditation System is to promote quality assurance, competence and mobility in Health

¹ Dempsey, C., Battel-Kirk, B., Barry, M.M. and the CompHP Project Partners (2011), The CompHP Core Competencies Framework for Health Promotion. IUHPE, Paris.

Promotion practice, education and training globally. The System is designed to be flexible and sensitive to different contexts while maintaining robust and validated criteria.

The System offers a voluntary process of registration of Health Promotion practitioners and accreditation of Health Promotion courses that are assessed as meeting specified competency-based criteria. The criteria for eligibility for practitioners and courses within the System build on the [agreed IUHPE Core Competencies and Professional Standards](#). At the centre of these competencies are Ethical Values and the Health Promotion Knowledge base which underpin all Health Promotion action detailed in the nine other domains.

Ethical values inform the context within which all the other competencies are practiced. The Health Promotion Knowledge domain describes the core concepts and principles that make health promotion practice distinctive. The remaining nine domains, including; Enable Change, Advocate for Health, Mediate through Partnership, Communication, Leadership, Assessment, Planning, Implementation,

Current IUHPE Accredited Health Promotion Programmes in Ireland

POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA/MA IN HEALTH PROMOTION, NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND GALWAY

BSC (HONS) PUBLIC HEALTH AND HEALTH PROMOTION, BSC HEALTH SCIENCE AND PHYSIOLOGY AND BSC (HONS) HEALTH SCIENCE AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, SLIGO

BA IN HEALTH PROMOTION, WATERFORD INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

through the accreditation of their Health Promotion programmes in NUI, Galway, Sligo IT and Waterford IT to the IUHPE global accreditation system. Indeed, as previously mentioned NUI Galway were lead authors in the development of these core competencies.

and Evaluation and Research, each address a specific area of Health Promotion practice with their associated competency statements articulating the necessary skills needed for competent practice.

The Higher Education Institutes in Ireland have demonstrated their commitment to advancing Health Promotion professionalism in Ireland

The accreditation process is not only for new graduates but is also a system in which current Health Promotion practitioners can apply for accreditation and providing that they meet the rigorously applied competence and professional practice criteria can call themselves an 'IUHPE Registered Health Promotion Practitioner'. This registration process provides a reference point for employers and helps the public identify those registered practitioners. It also helps to assure the credibility of Health Promotion as an accountable and discrete profession. To date four jurisdictions (Ireland, UK, Australia and Estonia) have adopted these with additional countries in the process of doing likewise.

Under the global accreditation process set up by the IUHPE each country establishes a national accreditation organisation (NAO). In Ireland the AHPI is the NAO and as such has the responsibility for assessment of applicants, maintenance and oversight of the register and providing opportunities for continuing professional development. This register distinguishes Health Promotion practitioners who meet rigorously applied competence and professional practice criteria and provide a reference point for employers. It also assists the public in identifying registered practitioners and assure the credibility of Health Promotion as an accountable and discrete profession. The Register was formally launched in Ireland in February 2018. Its establishment was welcomed by the Minister for State for Health Promotion, Catherine Byrne, who said it was a '*core milestone in the advancement of Health Promotion in Ireland*'. To date 40 IUHPE Health Promotion Practitioners have been registered in Ireland. The Professional Registration System has been a major achievement and reflects the commitment and determination of the Health Promotion community.

ONGOING ADVANCES IN HEALTH PROMOTION PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

Advancing the professionalisation of Health Promotion in Ireland has been at the forefront of both the Association for Health Promotion Ireland (AHPI) and academic institutions across Ireland.

The AHPI and the academic institutions have maintained a close partnership since the beginning of the AHPI in 1997 and have worked closely together to initiate and

RECENTLY ESTABLISHED HEALTH PROMOTION FOCUSED PROGRAMMES

POSTGRADUATE CERTIFICATE MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION, NUI GALWAY

POSTGRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN HEALTH PROMOTION (WORKPLACE WELLNESS), NUI GALWAY

POSTGRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN HEALTH PROMOTION: APPROACHES TO CARDIOVASCULAR HEALTH AND DIABETES PREVENTION, NUI GALWAY

MSC HEALTH PROMOTION PRACTICE (ONLINE), SLIGO IT

BSC (HONS) IN PUBLIC HEALTH & HEALTH PROMOTION, WATERFORD IT

MA IN ADVANCED FACILITATION SKILLS FOR PROMOTING HEALTH AND WELL BEING, WATERFORD IT

promote Health Promotion Professionalisation. As such, huge advances have been made in the continuing professionalisation of Health Promotion practice in Ireland together with support mechanisms and opportunities for continuing professional development.

The AHPI works in partnership with the Health Promotion Research Centre at NUI Galway as a key member of the planning group for the Annual Health Promotion Conference held in June each year. The annual Health Promotion conference provides an opportunity for practitioners, researchers and

policymakers to meet and discuss current and future directions for the promotion of health.

Many of the third level institutions have expanded their suite of Health Promotion focused programmes providing more inclusive learning opportunities through online and part time training or opportunities to upskill. Many of these courses are accredited by the IUHPE.

Together with the academic institutions, the AHPI continue to support the Health Promotion community through the facilitation of workshops and training. Workshops and training have been provided around the key competencies of partnership, leadership, advocacy and implementation with future workshops planned. Our workshops and training are always heavily subscribed and provide an important networking and social dimension for many of our members.

Workshop Theme	Venue	Date
Partnership Workshop	Athlone IT	2016
Communication for Change Workshop	Sligo IT	2017
Leadership in influencing the Health and wellbeing agenda	Waterford IT	2018
Implementation for Successful Health Promotion Action	NUI Galway	2019

AHPI also provides support to those working in Health Promotion who are applying for IUHPE registration. Since 2017, the AHPI have provided annual information and support sessions on the application process. The AHPI website is a hub for education, information and resources including CPD opportunities and a popular career FAQ section for those studying Health Promotion or interested in the discipline.

More recently the AHPI have launched the 'AHPI Certificate of Recognition'. The aim of this award is to encourage, recognise and promote graduates from the Accredited Health Promotion programmes in Ireland. The first three students to be awarded the Certificate in recognition of the outstanding quality of their academic work graduated in 2019.

These ongoing advances in the professionalisation of Health Promotion ensures that graduates and professionals have met rigorously applied global standards and competencies and bring fundamental knowledge, skill and competencies to the interdisciplinary role of promoting health and wellbeing. Both the AHPI and Health Promotion disciplines in Ireland continue to strive to support Health Promotion and anticipate further advances in the future.