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News Release: Healthy Ageing

Senior policy representatives from the World Health Organization and European Union countries gathered in Belfast this week to explore public policy and the impact of an ageing population. Belfast Healthy Cities hosted the Healthy Ageing summit on Tuesday and Wednesday, which was followed with a lecture examining Ageing policy across Europe.

More than 25 policy experts from across Europe attended the Healthy Ageing Subnetwork, including Dr Manfred Huber, World Health Organization Director of Healthy Ageing Policy. Other countries represented at the meeting were the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Turkey, Sweden, the UK, Italy, Poland, Croatia and Denmark.

Belfast Healthy Cities, the World Health Organization (WHO) body in Northern Ireland believes that healthy and active ageing starts at birth. Chief Executive Joan Devlin said,

“The population locally and across Europe is getting older, so it is important to work together to explore policies and practices which can help produce a healthy older population. Active adults are more productive and healthy older people can continue to contribute actively to society and enjoy a more satisfying lifestyle. We are delighted to host both the WHO two day Healthy Ageing Subnetwork meeting and the lecture which includes local speakers as well as policy experts from across Europe.

“This week Belfast is at the centre of the discussion on the right policy to support our older population.”

The Belfast Healthy City lecture took place on 14 February and stimulated debate around healthy and active ageing. Speakers included Duane Farrell of Age NI, Iain Deboys, Commissioning Head for Belfast, Health and Social Care Board, and Belfast Councillor Bernie Kelly, who chairs City Council Cross Party Political Reference Group.

Belfast Lord Mayor Gavin Robinson greeted the visitors from across Europe including Dr Manfred Huber and the Mayor of Udine Professor Furio Honsell in Belfast City Hall this week.

NOTE - Northern Ireland has the fastest growing population in the UK and it is an ageing population. By 2020, the number of people over 75 years is expected to increase by 40% from that in 2009, and the number of people aged over 85 is expected to increase by 58%*. (*Transforming Your Care)

The 2011 Census shows that 14.5% of the population of NI is aged 65 or over. The Belfast figure is 40,891.

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