



# The Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland NEWSLETTER

PROTECTING & IMPROVING PUBLIC HEALTH

March 2008

## World Health Day 2008 – 7 April

World Health Day 2008 marks the founding of the World Health Organisation. The objective of World Health Day 2008 is to catalyse public participation. Activities and initiatives will focus on the need to protect health from the adverse effects of climate change. WHO aims to put public health at the centre of the UN agenda on climate change.

The day provides an opportunity for international agencies, non-governmental organisations, and governments as well as WHO to:

- establish links between climate change and health and other development areas such as environment, food, energy, transport;
- hold events/activities in countries to publicise issues related to the impact of climate change on health;
- involve as wide a spectrum of the world population as possible in efforts to stabilise climate change;
- create advocacy campaigns for generating momentum that compels governments, the international community, civil society and individuals to take action;
- protect poor and vulnerable populations from the effects of climate change, especially in Africa.

Further information can be found on the WHO website [www.who.int](http://www.who.int).

Readers will be interested to learn that the lead article of the Spring edition of *Environmental Health Scotland*, the Institute's Journal, is entitled 'The Potential Health Effects of Climate Change in Scotland'. The author, Michelle Reid, an Environmental Health Officer, works with Health Protection Scotland.

## Healthy Environment Network Meeting by Lynsey McNair

The latest Healthy Environment Network (HEN) meeting was held in Stirling on 27 February 2008 and looked to consolidate and unify the agendas of children's health, the environment and transport, and to bridge across from the last HEN event in 2007 where the topics of heart health and healthy environments were discussed.

In his opening remarks the meeting chairman, Professor George Morris, opined that one might ask where Scotland is now, what are the 21st century targets for the Environmental Health Agenda and what are the threats/opportunities? Where within the Scottish Government's manifesto commitment to the five strategic objectives (wealth/fair, health, safe, smart and green) is there scope for the Environmental Health community? 'Well', advised Professor Morris, 'there are plenty'!

Professor Morris proposed a changing of emphasis in public health from the prevailing post-war paradigm of social and physical factors which interplay in creating chronic disease in middle age and early death, to one that takes account of the most vulnerable in our communities. Might it be that children have in the past been poorly served in terms of their environment? These vulnerable receptors (vulnerable in terms of small body weight: volume air breathed in and weight of food consumed) could have suffered because not enough has been done to ensure that the environments in which they live are conducive to their health, development and safety.

The first speaker of the day to discuss the topics of children's health and the environment was Fiona Crawford, (Public Health Adviser, Glasgow Centre for Population Health), who presented on 'Children and Transport, are we driving them to extinction?'

Fiona illustrated trends predicting the continuing growth in traffic in Scotland, on average up 27% in the 25 years and further reductions in active transport (ie, walk/cycle). The adverse health effects need not, I'm sure, be re-stated to the informed reader of this summary. Instead, refer if you wish to GCPH Briefing Paper 5 'How Can Transport Contribute to Public Health' (available at <http://www.gcph.co.uk/>).

The second speaker, Professor David Stone, Professor of Epidemiology, leads the PEACH Unit (Paediatric Epidemiology and Community Health) University of Glasgow, and is grappling with the idea of bringing injury into the public health forum. The PEACH Unit leads a major European programme on the epidemiology and prevention of childhood injury (EURORISC).

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/childhealth/PEACH11.pdf>

Professor Stone provided statistics to show that the annual cost to the NHS of non-fatal injuries in children was in the region of £40m. WHO mortality database shows pedestrian related injury and transport related injury to be leading causes of injury to minors.

Traditionally, Environmental Health, as per the WHO definition has excluded 'injury', for what Professor Stone described as 'complex and baffling reasons'. With reference to the 3 E's (Educate, Enforce and Environment/Engineering Control), he asked 'could Environmental Health be part of the response?'

The third speaker was Elizabeth Lumsden, RoSPA, who advised delegates of the reality of injuries to children: they lead to one quarter of child deaths, there is a strong link to deprivation, there appears to be a narrowing gender issue and one in five injuries lead to attendance at Accident and Emergency.

Elizabeth has been involved in a project co-ordinated by the European Child Safety Alliance. The aim of this large-scale project is to use standardised tools and processes to develop action plans to enhance child safety in 18 countries in the European Union. The project outcome delivered a report card for each of the participating countries, attached for reference.

<http://www.eurosafe.eu.com/csi/eurosafe2006.nsf/wwwVwContent/l2europeanchildsafetyalliance.htm>

RoSPA has developed a Child Safety Action Plan to take forward some of the ideas highlighted in the scoping project, for making Scotland a better, safer place for children. <http://www.rospace.com/europe/childsafety/>. In connection with this RoSPA is actively trying to engage ministerial interest and a champion for child safety.

The fourth and final speaker of the day was Phillipa Cochrane, School Travel Project Manager for Sustrans. 45% of children would prefer to walk or cycle to school, so why don't more do it? Phillipa discussed the work she has been involved with in several schools in creating travel plans which overcome the barriers actively travel. Several case studies were shown where the travel plans had dramatic increases in increasing the proportion of children who walked/cycled to school.

Sustrans' Scotland School Travel team has produced a new educational resource aimed at tackling the school run. The DVD, Healthier Routes School Travel Planning in Action, was launched last September and has been distributed to primary schools throughout Scotland by local authority School Travel Co-ordinators. The Scottish Government's Transport Directorate funded the DVD as part of the 'Tackling the School Run' scheme.

<http://www.saferoutestoschools.org.uk/index.php?f=scotland.htm>

The workshops that followed provided an opportunity for delegates to discuss what was good, or ineffective and who should be involved who was missing and showed that the health, well-being and safety agendas could all be linked up in one tidy parcel.

## **Food and Health Trainers' Seminar**

The annual REHIS Food and Health Trainers' Seminar took place at Dundee College on 12 March. The event proved to be very popular with 45 delegates representing commercial training companies, local authorities, colleges/universities, schools, the NHS and HM Prison Service in attendance. Speakers included representatives from the Food Standards Agency Scotland, Baxter's of Speyside, the Scottish Government, the World Cancer Research Fund, Community Health Scotland, the healthy living award, Learning and Development, Glasgow City Council and NHS Tayside. Delegates were

provided with an update on the many developments in the areas of food, nutrition and health. Copies of several of the presentations are available on the Training Briefing page of the REHIS website.

### **WHO Monthly Bulletin**

The latest edition of the Bulletin (Volume 86, Number 3, March 2008) takes the form of a 60th anniversary commemorative volume. This month's issue is dedicated to the importance of health information, and one of WHO's first statistical texts is highlighted in the lead editorial. In a second editorial, Sanjoy Bhattacharya proposes some strategies for breaking down the divide between advocates of 'vertical' and 'horizontal' public health programmes. In an interview, Sally Stansfield, executive secretary of Health Metrics Network, says it's time for the world to shift the ownership of health information to countries instead of letting donors and disease-specific programmes run the agenda. Interesting stuff!

### **Free Water in Scottish Schools**

Access to free chilled water in schools in Scotland is expected to be implemented by Scottish local authorities from August 2008. The Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) Act 2007 unanimously passed by the Scottish Parliament gave Ministers the power to set school nutritional standards and provide free drinking water. The enabling regulations are currently with the EU being considered under the Technical Standards Directive. They are expected to return to Scottish Parliament to complete the legislative process ready for local authorities who have the responsibility for implementation in state schools in Scotland. For further information visit [www.scottishgovernment.info](http://www.scottishgovernment.info) (Source: 'News Tap' Water for Health News Briefing, March 2008).

### **Dates for your diary**

REHIS Annual Conference, 17 and 18 April 2008, Menzies Belford Hotel, Edinburgh

APHA/FSAS/REHIS Implementing the International Health Regulations 2005, 30 April 2008, Menzies Belford Hotel, Edinburgh

REHIS Public Health and Housing Update Course, 13 and 14 May 2008, Menzies Belford Hotel, Edinburgh

AIEH/IFEH 10th World Congress on Environmental Health, 11 to 16 May 2008, Brisbane, Australia

**If you wish to feature any Environmental Health or Public Health initiative, event or activity in the REHIS Newsletter, please contact Tom Bell, Chief Executive, on 0131 225 6999 or [tb@rehis.com](mailto:tb@rehis.com)**