

CIEH NI Manifesto



What we do

The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) is a registered charity and the professional voice for environmental health. It sets standards, accredits courses and qualifications for the education of members and other environmental health practitioners.

It provides information, evidence and policy advice to local and national government and environmental and public health practitioners in the public and private sectors.

CIEH aims to promote improvements in environmental and public health policy.

Our members work in local authorities, in major businesses, in government and statutory departments, and in academia. They are involved in five main areas of activity:

Environmental Protection (for example noise, air quality and water quality)

Food Safety, Food Standards and Nutrition

Health and Safety in the workplace and in the home

Housing (for example decent home standards, illegal eviction and public health issues)

Consumer Protection (for example the safety of goods, tobacco control etc.)

Health development and improvement (for example healthier eating, active living etc)

We recognise that the Northern Ireland Executive is faced with unprecedented budgetary and policy challenges as we head into the local and Assembly elections on 5 May 2011. The policies and related budgets agreed by the next Assembly will determine both the speed and the method by which the economy recovers from the global recession.

CIEH wants to play its part in assisting the Executive in meeting these challenges. Therefore our manifesto will outline not only what we feel needs to be done by the Assembly and local councils but will briefly illustrate the value of the Government working in partnership with its local Environmental Health Officers.

What we see as priorities

Preventative Health

The Health budget for Northern Ireland is under severe strain. This is likely to continue unless there is a radical reprioritisation of investment. Preventative Health needs to be the foundation stone of all health allocations, with the Public Health Agency taking the lead; otherwise we will continue to treat the consequences rather than the causes. In our view, all the evidence indicates that without radical rethinking the NHS as we know it will collapse as costs escalate out of control

The last Executive stated in its Programme for Government that the economy was its primary focus. Without a healthy population to provide labour and services the economy will fail. However ensuring good health, including the fiscal responsibility for it, should not be the sole responsibility of one Department; it is the responsibility for all. We accept that there must be a lead department for coordination purposes, but the funding (and subsequent buy in and

ownership) should be shared across departments. This is particularly the case when, in reality, the most effective preventative interventions lie beyond the capabilities of DHSSPS to deliver.

There is a need for a revitalisation of the ministerial group on public health or else a new equivalent and new mechanisms found for funding preventative health across all of government rather than from within a single department. The same is true of other cross cutting issues for example poverty; sustainable development; and neighbourhood renewal.

CIEH NI calls on the new Assembly to:

Urgently agree a Programme for Government, with preventative health as a core issue for all departments.

Recognise that the Public Health Agency is the best lead in this area and to increase the budget allocation to it. This will help the Assembly invest to save much needed resources.

Reinstate a ministerial group on public health with appropriate delivery mechanisms or alternatively develop an alternative mechanism that would achieve the same end.

Sustainable Development

CIEH is extremely disappointed to see the ending of the Sustainable Development Commission which we believe is a particularly retrograde step at a number of levels. We strongly believe that sustainable development must be the central foundational principle for **all** government policies and legislation in Northern Ireland if we are to rebuild a sustainable economy for the future.

Therefore CIEH calls for the creation of a set of Sustainable Development Standards and principals against which all government policy and legislation can be assessed prior to implementation.

We also call for mechanisms to be found to address the deficit left by the demise of SDC.

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Alternative mechanisms are needed to address, at least to some extent, the void left as a result of the disappearance of SDC.

Review of Public Administration

CIEH is deeply concerned that the Review of Public Administration commenced in 2002 remains incomplete. Whilst we acknowledge that progress has been made within health and social care, colleges and libraries, much more remains to be done.

RPA promised so much for Northern Ireland. The proposed reduction in bureaucracy and the savings to be made are essential for the future well being of people in Northern Ireland.

CIEH NI calls on the new Assembly to immediately reinstate the RPA.

Furthermore we believe that the scope of RPA should now be extended to include all parts of public service, including Government departments themselves.

Subsidiarity and efficiency should be paramount principles.

Ensure the optimum model for Food Safety

Food Safety is vital to public protection and also in supporting businesses in meeting their legislative obligations. Local authorities already offer a vital cost effective service, through their environmental health departments who have built up trust and good working relationships with local businesses; offer accessible, local "face to face" support; understand local issues; and work in partnership across and beyond the local authority base including regionally, nationally and internationally. Whilst improvements are always possible within any system, we believe that food safety must retain the principal of subsidiarity. It is therefore vital that the NI Assembly recognises local authorities' leading role in food safety.

We do also recognise that there is perhaps scope for better integration of food safety both within the region between regional and local bodies and across national and international boundaries to avoid duplication in food safety systems and save much needed resources.

CIEH NI calls for the new Assembly to recognise and value the leading role of local authorities in food safety

Consumer protection and the role currently fulfilled by the Food Standards Agency is critically important.

It is also vital that strong linkages are maintained with other relevant bodies such as the Food Safety Authority of Ireland; Safefood and the FSA in other UK regions

We recognise there is scope for better integration of food safety both within and outside the region to reduce duplication and save resources.

How we can help?

Assist in connecting policy makers with local networks

- Based in every local council area, Environmental Health Officers can provide real analysis and evaluation of the impact of policies on the ground
- There is significant potential to further utilise this network to deliver relevant Government programmes around health improvement and sustainable development and to make an even more substantive contribution towards meeting Government targets across a wide range of issues.
- Offer an enhanced advisory role to Government on the effectiveness of legislation relating to environmental and public health

Audit and Evaluate

- Provide audits and assessments of Government policies in terms of Sustainable Development
- Undertake independent reviews of policies and systems.
- Assist with the development of sustainable development standards and principals.
- Undertake research projects relating to environmental and public health

Building capacity

- Provide low cost training and professional development to local authorities and Government departments, including capacity building for elected representatives.

For further details contact

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