Annual Report for Wales 2006

This report considers the activities of the CIEH Wales Directorate in 2006.

Membership profile

At the end of 2006 there are 670 members in Wales. 369 are employed in local authorities, the majority of whom work in regulatory services departments. 106 members are either self employed or work for bodies such as Welsh Assembly Government, the National Public Health Service, WLGA or Wales Audit Office or in academia. There are 130 students and 65 retired members.

The position of the Environmental Health service in Wales

There are 22 local authorities in Wales. There are currently 3 EHPs acting as Strategic Directors at second tier in the local authority structure in Wales, in each case managing departments that are multifunctional, and in each of the authorities are differently constituted. In the remaining 19 local authorities the most senior EHP operates at third or fourth tier.

There is very wide variety in salaries paid to EHPs in Wales. Starting salaries for EHPs range from £19,713 - £26,625. Senior EHPs starting salaries range from £27,372 – 30,654 and Principal EHPs starting salaries range from £27,372 – £37,608 rising to a maximum range of £29,173 – £43,545. Salary scales reflect geographical location and local issues such as ability to communicate through the medium of Welsh. Further there is no consistency between authorities as to the job description of Senior and Principal EHPs. There is currently a pan-Wales job evaluation and single status exercise being applied to services including environmental health which is likely to have a considerable effect on salaries, but which will not come into force until April 2007 at the earliest.

Student numbers in Wales continue to rise, the University of Cardiff Institute Wales reports an increase in the first year intake rising from 28 in 2005-6 to 39 in 2006-7. Of the students in their 3rd year going into practical training it is estimated that 60% had a funding training place, but it should be noted not all of the students train in Wales. 7 local authorities currently offer funded training places in Wales. The students currently in their placement year had the benefit of funding provided to local authorities by the Welsh Local Government Association, however this appears to have been a single year funding, funded by an under spend in their Capacities budget. It is not likely to be repeated.

Outside local government one EHP holds the post of Local Director of Public Health, a further acted as Acting Local Director of Public Health, but has recently taken up the post of Environmental Health Manager with a local authority. There are a number of other EHPs currently on the training programme to be Local Directors of Public Health. The Local Directors of Public Health work with the Local Authority in their respective areas, and in consequence CIEH does not engage directly with them. We do however meet with them at meetings with the Directors of Public Protection Wales and at single issue groups where they may be in attendance. Given the nature of their role and function this is felt to be the most appropriate way of engaging with the NPHS.

CIEH has a regular interface with the Welsh Assembly Government through meetings with the Chief Environmental Health Advisor and his Deputy, both of whom continue to both support the Wales Directorate and to support the Region and the Wales Heads of Environmental Health Group.

The CIEH Wales Directorate

2006 has seen the CIEH Wales Directorate's continued growth. We seek to influence policy, to raise the profile of both the environmental health profession and of the CIEH in Wales and to provide services to members. In respect of all three aims we have had notable successes in 2006.

Influencing Policy

We have continued to influence policy emerging from the Welsh Assembly Government and from partner organisations. Building on work we did in 2005 on the proposed ban on smoking in public places we have worked closely with the Welsh Assembly Government on the development of the Enforcement Regulations, commenting on the pre-consultation draft and providing drafting Counsel with suggested forms of words. We have been asked to provide the training on the regulations across Wales, and by the time the ban comes into force anticipate that we will have trained close to 350 enforcement officers. The training programme will generate in the order of £10,000, which will be used to support an ambitious programme of work in 2007, including a major national environmental health conference in Wales.

We have also been successful in a number of funding bids in 2006. The Welsh Assembly Government Lifestyle Division has provided £35,000 to support a piece of research being undertaken into levels of environmental tobacco smoke in premises to which the public have access before and after the ban on smoking in public places. The Wales Directorate has worked closely with the Northern Ireland Directorate with respect to this research, so that the results obtained in both countries will be directly comparable. A researcher has been engaged, who will carry out the sampling and will prepare the interim and final reports. It is anticipated that the whole of the costs of the project will be met from the funding received from the Welsh Assembly Government.

Wales Directorate was also successful in obtaining a grant of £5,000 to support the production of the second volume of the 'Environmental Health Contributions that support Health Challenge Wales' tool kit. The tool kit will be launched by the Chief Medical Officer for Wales at a national conference in Cardiff on 28th February and 1st March, to be run by CIEH, called 'Public Health: Everyone's Agenda'. This conference will launch a number of policy initiative including the Allergy Strategy for Wales and the Healthy Options Nutrition Award for Wales, as well as reporting on a number of pieces of research commissioned by the Wales Directorate.

We have worked very closely with the Wales Heads of Environmental Health Group in 2006 looking at the DTI Retail Enforcement Project and whether it can be usefully rolled out in Wales. Whilst it is felt that the project as run by DTI will not sit comfortably in Wales due to differing structures, reporting arrangements and priorities there are a

number of parts of the initiative that are being considered for adaption and adoption, and CIEH will continue to work with WHEHG in this regard. We also continue to work with this group on the Performance Framework for Wales and have begun a piece of research seeking to quantify the distortion of and disruption to service delivery caused by internal and external service audits, inspections and studies and whether these deliver measurable benefits to public health. We have also worked closely with the Heads of Environmental Health Group on the first revision of the Best Practice Standards for Wales, which have been updated and enlarged, by including Best Practice Standards covering broad areas of public health, such as Engagement with the Corporate Health Standards, the Clean Neighbourhoods Agenda and Nutrition as well as the more service area based standards that were in the first volume of the document.

In order to provide a service to members and to influence policy, CIEH in Wales has made it a policy to circulate our draft consultation responses to Welsh Assembly Government and others to the members of the Wales Heads of Environmental Health group, in order that they may incorporate our views into their group response and also into the responses they provide from their individual authorities. In this way we can seek to have our view repeated by others and also to promote a unified voice from the professional body and the profession on the ground.

It is suggested that the most tangible evidence of our growing importance and influence is to be found in invitations received in late 2006 for CIEH to join two Ministerial working groups, both of which are to report to the First Minster. The first is a group convened by the Deputy Health and Social Services Minister to consider the practicalities of the ban on smoking in public places, the second is convened by the Minster for Planning, Environment and Countryside to consider the Strategy for dealing with climate change in Wales. Although both groups have limited life, reporting in March 2007 it is evidence of the value that Ministers attach to the contribution that we make that we have been invited to participate.

Profile Raising

The profile of the CIEH in Wales has risen significantly during 2006. The Director did a considerable amount of media work in late 2005 based around the E. coli outbreak in South Wales, and in consequence of that the regional electronic and black and white media have come to CIEH on a number of occasions seeking comment on a variety of topics, such as noise nuisance, mobile food vendors, sun beds, skin piercing and the ban on smoking in public places. The nature of the media interface has changed over 2006, the contribution of CIEH being greater or central to pieces produced for radio and television or to newspaper stories.

The Director continues to make regular contributions to BBC Wales radio Breakfast programme, reviewing the newspapers and had also taken part in a number of live radio debates. She also contributes regular environmental health based columns to Caterer and Hotelkeeper magazine.

There is now evidence that the media is seeking out CIEH to work with us on projects. After working with a regional new programme in 2005 we have been approached to work with them again in 2007 on a programme based around Food Fraud, the Director having

been invited to join the programme planning team. This will give us an opportunity to highlight the role of CIEH, EHPs in local authorities and the Welsh Food Fraud Co-ordination Unit, and will hopefully lead to further similar opportunities.

The Director has received a large number of invitations to attend events organised by other bodies who wish to be associated with us, at which she has been invited to provide papers or to chair sessions. We have had to be selective about acceptance of some of these, and have agreed to accept only those where we feel that we can bring influence to bear or where we should be seen to be present. For capacity reasons this policy will continue in 2007.

Services to Members.

Members in Wales have indicated that they look to the CIEH in Wales as the provider of low cost accessible training. The Cymru Wales Interim Management Board supports members in Wales by providing a low cost training seminar package, which provides 6 training courses each year. In addition to this it also hosts the annual weekend study course, this year held in Tenby. The Wales Directorate therefore only offers training only where a perceived need is identified that is not being met by the region.

In 2006 at the request of the Wales Heads of Environmental Health Group training was offered on the Drafting of Health & Safety at Work Notices, offered in North and South Wales. A similar course was also offered based around the drafting of Environmental Protection Act Notices, both courses being strongly supported. The Wales Directorate also hosted a training day on Allergens, at which an Allergy Strategy and Action Plan for Wales was derived. This has generated further work, which is on going, and will include a sampling programme which CIEH will co-ordinate and a Pan-Wales awareness raising campaign which will be delivered by CIEH and the FSA. CIEH also worked with the Wales Food Fraud Co-ordination Unit to offer a one day training course on Incident Investigation and Management, which was very successful, and will be repeated in 2007.

Following our engagement with the Smoking in Public Places agenda CIEH was invited by the Welsh Assembly Government to offer the training on enforcing the ban to local authorities. Five courses have been arranged, three being offered to all local authorities in Wales and two being arranged specifically for small groups of local authorities taking in all of their enforcement staff. Further courses have been arranged for 2007, and will form part of next years work programme.

The income generated by the training courses undertaken has allowed CIEH to support a small student training programme, allowing students to attend for one or two week work experience with the Wales Office. A number of students have attended and have been able to take part on policy and strategy formulation, political lobbying and attending Ministerial meetings. The students appear to find this experience valuable, and the role of CIEH in supporting their training is appreciated by Training Officers.

Income generated from training is also being used to support piece of research into public perception of environmental health, which will report in 2007.

Challenges for 2007

2007 will be a very challenging year. The work programme for 2007 is very ambitious including the first national multi disciplinary conference we have hosted in Wales, at which we will report on two pieces of research we have commissioned and three initiatives will be launched. This will generate considerable follow up work, which will all either be led by or will engage CIEH.

We have an agreed programme of training in Wales which will be delivered both as a service to members and as a generator of income to support further research and project work. As with 2006 other training opportunities are likely to be identified for delivery and these will be met as they arise.

The imminent ban on smoking in public places will create media opportunities as well as opportunities to engage again with the Welsh Assembly Government and its Ministers, and the Pennington Inquiry into the 2005 E. coli outbreak should start, and will again create media opportunities as well as a need to provide support to the Inquiry in whatever form it wishes.

2007 may see political changes in Wales after the Assembly elections in May. Currently the Assembly is hung, having been labour run since its launch. A number of prominent members including the First Minister are standing down at the election, therefore change is inevitable and new relationships will have to be established and developed. The incoming Assembly will have increased powers as the Government of Wales Act will be in force, and CIEH will seek to be in a position to influence any decisions made by the Assembly that will impact on environmental health.

As in 2006 capacity in the Wales Directorate will be an issue. The Director has the assistance of a Personal Assistant who works for 20 hours a week, and throughout 2006 has used income generated in Wales to purchase support where a project has demanded it. As noted the work programme for 2007 is challenging, and as the role of CIEH expands it will become increasingly difficult to take all of the opportunities that present themselves and to meet the expectations of members. As in 2006 Director will be selective, ensuring that we take up all opportunities that allow us to promote our policies and raise our profile, and purchasing in extra assistance when projects demand and resources allow, but it must be acknowledged that our increasing role and profile will extend us beyond our capacity on a more frequent basis. There is likely therefore to be an imminent need for the Council to consider additional technical and administrative resource to the Wales office during 2007 if we are to continue to deliver to the level we currently at and are to expand our influence.