



Improving health and wellbeing:

priorities for the next
UK Government



When it comes to the food we eat, the homes we live in and the places where we work and socialise, standards in the UK are better than ever before.

However, as new problems arise the work of environmental health and its profession is never finished.

The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) is calling on the incoming Government to consider eight priorities which will improve and protect the health and wellbeing of people, businesses and communities.



A new Clean Air Act

Poor outdoor air quality contributes to thousands of premature deaths, costs businesses and health services billions annually, and unfairly impacts on vulnerable people. We stand on the cliff-edge of a public health emergency and urgent action is needed now before it's too late.

We are calling on the Government to implement a new Clean Air Act that is fit for the future and creates a comprehensive framework for delivering improvements in air quality in the UK.



Protect EU regulations following Brexit

Health and safety, environmental protection and food safety regulations. Over the past 30 years, they have all been driven by the EU. They are not a burden and strong regulatory frameworks will be essential for our economy, and particularly exports, in a post Brexit era. They support businesses and protect and improve the health and wellbeing of consumers, workers and communities.

We are calling on the Government to ensure that, when legislation is repatriated into UK law following Brexit, environmental health-related regulations are adopted and where necessary strengthened, not watered down.



Bring up housing standards in privately rented properties

37% of the private rented sector is now occupied by families and while the vast majority of landlords provide good quality accommodation, far too many don't.

We are calling on the Government to consider a national landlord licensing scheme in England, taking into account schemes in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, as well as experiences from abroad. We believe that, if designed well, such a scheme could provide the tools for more effective enforcement action and help to improve the overall standard of privately rented housing.



Minimum Energy Efficiency standards for all rented homes

From April 2018 there will be a requirement for any properties rented out in the private rented sector to have a minimum energy performance rating of E. However, the effective ending of the Green Deal in England and Wales means that these regulations are not fit for purpose and will need adjustment to ensure that they are effective at what they were brought in to do: to make privately rented homes warmer and reduce the number of people living in fuel poverty. Minimum energy efficiency standards will also help contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and help Government achieve its CO2 reduction targets.

We are calling on the Government to ensure this positive initiative does not fall by the wayside and urge them to publish the consultation on updated energy efficiency regulations without delay after the general election.



Mandatory food hygiene ratings in England

Northern Ireland and Wales have mandatory food hygiene rating schemes and have demonstrated that rather than being a burden, they have driven standards and are good for business.

We are calling on the Government to introduce mandatory food hygiene ratings in all parts of the UK and the necessary legislation in the next two years.



Recognise environmental health protects and improves health and wellbeing

Upholding food safety standards, ensuring high levels of health and safety, protecting air quality and ensuring noise levels are managed. These are just a few of the vital services the environmental health profession provides round the clock, 365 days a year

We are calling on the Government to recognise environmental health is fundamental to preventing harm and improving our health and should be resourced appropriately alongside other services in the UK.



Healthy workplaces contribute to healthy minds

Today we better understand that employers have a duty to care for their workers. The argument about being physically safe in the workplace has already been won. Today's debate has moved onto looking at the impact of where we work on employees' mental and physiological wellbeing.

We are calling on the Government to encourage and incentivise businesses to adopt initiatives that will contribute to good mental and physiological wellbeing, complementing existing policies dedicated to protecting workers' physical safety.



Government to consider health in their decision making

On all matters, Governments make decisions taking into account things like cost and ease of implementation. We believe that health and wellbeing should be on a par with these considerations.

We are calling on the Government to adopt Health Impact Assessments (HIA) in their decision-making to ensure initiatives maximise health and minimise harm. This will address health inequalities, avoid creating new ones, while promoting health and wellbeing into a wide range of policies, programmes and services.

Environmental Health in the UK

Environmental Health incorporates the disciplines of food, housing, health and safety in the workplace, environmental protection and health protection.

And Environmental Health Professionals (EHPs) are found in different settings across the public, private and third sectors, providing support and advice to businesses, local communities and consumers. They do this to ensure standards and regulations are maintained and upheld to protect and improve people's health, safety and wellbeing.

EHPs' work often goes unnoticed but is of vital importance. In improving and protecting health and wellbeing, the profession helps reduce inequalities and tackles causes of chronic illnesses. Ultimately this reduces demand and increases the capacity of our over-stretched health services.

CIEH is a membership body representing EHPs and the successes of our members and the wider environmental health profession pays dividends by reducing the burden on the NHS.

All the priorities found in this document have at their root a desire to improve public health and we will share this with the Government, politicians and other stakeholders to influence Parliament's programme.



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