

Protecting public and environmental health Olympics/Paralympics 2012

March 2009

Environmental health briefing from the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health

1.0 Aim

- 1.1 The aim of this report is to provide an overview of the key issues and challenges that face environmental health professionals in the preparation for and operation of the London 2012 Olympic /Paralympic Games. It is not intended to be fully exclusive but aims to provide a basis on which environmental health professionals can view their potential role in the run up to the Games.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Environmental health views health as a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely as the absence of disease or infirmity. It is about the enhancement of public health, safety and wellbeing while contributing to sustainable development through making appropriate interventions, advocating policy and securing associated changes in behaviour and human activities. The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) exists to promote for the public benefit the dissemination of knowledge and professional practice in all aspects of environmental health.

- 2.2 The Olympics/Paralympics are the largest international mass gatherings in the world. As such they pose particular challenges for public and environmental health, namely they can:

- Place significant pressure on the civil infrastructure e.g. water supply, accommodation, transportation etc
- Create opportunities for the rapid spread of communicable disease
- Place strain on the continuity, safety and security of the food supply
- Provide a target for disruptive/terrorist activity e.g. deliberate (or hoax) release of chemical, biological or radiological agents
- Increase adverse impacts on the environment e.g. increased waste and pollution
- Increase risks to public safety and health

Consequently, extensive planning and preparation is required to develop and implement effective policies, protocols and strategies to minimise the risk and maximise the health, safety and welfare of all involved.

- 2.3 The primary role of environmental health practitioners (EHPs) is to protect public and environmental health. Key areas of activity for EHPs include “controlling” the safety of

food in supply, preparation and service; compliance assessment and management of drinking water quality; air quality; waste water; solid and hazardous waste; environmental control; pest management; housing standards; health and safety; emergency planning as well as promotion of healthy eating and sustainability. Within this framework environmental health can contribute through:

- Education and training
- Advice and auditing
- Enforcing standards and legal requirements
- Monitoring and providing active surveillance
- Facilitating resolution of problems
- Communicating with partners and stakeholders

The capacity and response of the environmental health services, both within local authorities and the private sector, will be considerably challenged by the demands of the Games. The CIEH can play an important role in helping to support and co-ordinate environmental health activities as it is ideally placed to support both local government and private sector environmental health services. As part of these activities CIEH is currently supporting the host London boroughs in their planning fora including the Host Boroughs Consortium, Joint Local Authority Regulatory Services (JLARS) and safety advisory groups. The CIEH has also set up a network for environmental health services managing venues outside London, to ensure that they link into the planning processes taking place within London.

3.0 CIEH Vision

3.1 The CIEH will support and contribute to activities aimed at securing the highest standards of public and environmental health in the run up to and during the Games.

In particular the CIEH aims to:-

- Position itself within the Olympic/Paralympic development, planning and administrative processes, to assist in promoting and protecting public and environmental health
- Promote consistency in professional environmental health standards, policy and practice within and outside the Games areas
- Identify and share the learning acquired through achieving consistent professional standards in environmental health policy and competent professional practice as a legacy for future public health and wellbeing

3.2 A key element of the CIEH strategy will be a focus on increasing the capacity of the environmental health profession to identify issues of public health importance and to ensure these are effectively managed and controlled.

3.3 Whilst the CIEH has the ability to take a holistic view of the environmental health aspects of the Games, it will be essential to focus support on specific issues in order to maximise outcomes. Key areas identified for contribution and support include:

- Food safety and standards:
Planning for safe food provision, systems audit and ensuring a competent workforce
- Public health:
Supporting public health and wellbeing, including infectious disease control, provision of healthy and nutritious food and water, healthy housing for participants, employees, volunteers and visitors and pest management

- Sustainability and environmental protection:
Addressing issues giving rise to increased environmental impact both in the short and long term e.g. waste management, air quality and origin of the food supply
- Legacy issues:
Supporting wider policies, skills and standard setting. This will also include appropriate “up-skilling” of environmental health professionals and enhancing business support.

4. Cross theme potential for environmental health involvement

4.1 Standard setting

A key area for environmental health involvement is in standard setting. With the wealth of expertise within the Policy Directorate and links to specialists across the country, the CIEH can co-ordinate a review and update of key policy areas, standards and protocols. This will refresh existing professional standards and will also enable the profession to position itself at the cutting edge of public health. The CIEH has already instigated reviews on:

- Guidance for Outdoor and mobile catering, including markets
- Pest minimisation and control during demolition, construction and site management
- Food safety, health and safety, and welfare of construction workers including housing accommodation
- Pest management in hospitality/hotel accommodation
- Role of environmental health in Safety Advisory Groups

Environmental health professionals can utilise the opportunity to revisit local protocols and procedures to update and enhance guidance, policy and practice. Shared learning from the preparations and planning as well as the implementation of the Games will be a useful legacy for the profession and public health.

4.2 Communication pathways

The CIEH has well established communication pathways through links with national and regional government departments, industry, voluntary sector organisations, professional membership, membership related groups and other professional based networks. The CIEH will use these to ensure effective linkages with key players across the piece.

Environmental health services have a long history of partnership working and the Games brings with it renewed enthusiasm for developing stronger links with a wide range of stakeholders. It also offers opportunities to develop creative and supportive programmes to local business response to increased activity around the Olympics.

4.3 Capacity/capability building

The scoping and risk assessment process currently being worked through will inform the development of a programme to ensure the profession can meet the expectations in all fields of environmental health. This will include:

- Ensuring sufficient professional resources are available to undertake effective public protection, audit and enforcement responsibilities
- Supporting capacity and capability building within private industry and commerce

- Establishment of a professional development training programme to ensure the competence and “up skilling” of the profession, both within the public and private sectors, to deal with Olympic “demands”
- Register of volunteers to help staff and manage a variety of environmental health activities

4.4 **Business training**

The Training team is developing two key strands of training:

- **Skills legacy**
This includes developing training solutions to prepare individuals both to enter employment and to improve the skills of existing employees. A specific course is being developed that “bundles” together core areas of knowledge such as basic food hygiene, handling of hazardous substances, manual handling and waste management. The training package will permit tailoring to meet local needs and allow delivery in specific languages and training styles
- **Skills passport**
This provides an opportunity to develop training solutions to ensure that food handlers who work on and/or around the London 2012 venues will be suitably trained and qualified. This follows the existing UK skills passport theme and provides a consistent framework for industry. The CIEH qualifications are already listed within the government scheme and this training framework might be used as an element of the pre-requisite standards required for acceptance of a contractor into the tendering programme. Again the training could be offered in “bundles” to suit the differing needs of the workforce

4.5 **Emergency planning**

London 2012 presents a unique risk potential for chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear (CBRN) or other terrorist type incidents. The CIEH has already established the role of environmental health professionals as key players in developing and implementing emergency/ contingency planning protocols. The environmental health function is to assess the risks associated with environmental health activities and work with partners to limit and manage the risks. Environmental health professionals can work within the local resilience framework to ensure that risks and environmental health action to negate or reduce the risks are part of the planning process.

5. Specific areas

5.1 **Food safety and standards**

5.1.1 Previous Olympic and Paralympic games have identified the risk of food and water borne infections occurring as high. This is largely due to the numbers of meals required (upwards of 15 million) as well as increased demand outside the venues. The CIEH is concerned to ensure that food safety standards are high and consistently maintained across all localities. The symbolic profile of the Olympics/Paralympics will mean high media profile for any food borne infections or other food related problems. Effective food safety management plans will need to be developed, implemented, and monitored and these will need to be supported by robust arrangements to address failures or other potential food related crises.

- 5.1.2 The CIEH is already in the process of reviewing professional guidance such as on outdoor and mobile catering and is working with the Olympic Delivery Authority to support the development of food safety management systems for the construction phase.
- 5.1.3 The CIEH is also working closely with the Food Standards Agency to identify activities that will enhance food safety during the Games.
- 5.1.4 LOCOG has recently launched their draft Food Sustainability Strategy framework which aims to encourage and assure world-class food safety and hygiene standards to ensure the integrity of all food and beverage products. The draft strategy identifies four key themes:
- Food safety and hygiene- excellent food safety and hygiene through the venues and in the surrounding areas. Visible excellence.
 - Health and nutrition – healthy options and water easily available at the Games. Promotion of healthy eating in the run up to the Games.
 - Environmental Impact- minimising the negative environmental impact of food consumed at the Games from production to disposal.
 - Diversity and inclusion- Food that reflects the diversity of London’s communities. Ethically responsible sourcing.

5.2 Public Health

- 5.2.1 There are various models that have been used by host countries when planning for the Olympics/Paralympics. However, following the general risk assessments from Atlanta, Sydney and Athens the table below identifies key general risks to public health leading up to and during the event. Specific risks can be further categorised through detailed risk assessments, still to be undertaken, for instance, Athens looked at an air travel radius of four hours to assess potential risks/diseases being imported via visitors to the Games.

Table 1: London 2012-General overview of risks to public health

Public health risk category	Risk
Infectious disease	Food borne and water borne diseases
	Travellers diarrhoea
	Airborne disease
	Sexually transmitted disease
	Vector transmitted disease
Non infectious traumas	Non endemic diseases
	Climate related illness such as heat stroke
	Injury such as falls, road accidents or drowning
Other health impacts	Deliberate use of CBRN agents
	Nuisance- environmental and social (noise, pests)
	Environmental factors

- 5.2.2 Communicable diseases represented less than 1% of the total number of visits to health care settings both in Atlanta 1996 and Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. However the recognised risks to public health from large numbers of people congregating in a limited number of venues means that public health

contingency planning is a high priority. The financial and symbolic profile of the Games also increases pressure to ensure that health surveillance/ monitoring systems are in place and are able to effectively identify and respond to outbreaks and cases of disease. Athens reviewed the potential for transfer of non endemic infections within a four hour air travel radius as part of their risk assessment process. The most common health problems experienced at the Athens 2004 Games were respiratory infections (6.7% visits to primary care physicians) and gastroenteritis (3.7% of visits).

- 5.2.3 The NHS and the Health Protection Agency will be responsible for the development of a public health plan that will include an infectious disease surveillance and control arrangements. The CIEH through the work of the Policy Directorate has excellent links with both the NHS and with the Health Protection Agency at national and regional level. It is anticipated that the CIEH will fully engage in supporting the development and implementation of the public health planning process for London 2012.
- 5.2.4 The Olympic Games offers unique and multiple opportunities for health promotion on a scale that not only benefits participants and visitors but can reach millions of viewers through the media, as well as the public as a whole. Sport for promoting physical activity and active living is perhaps an obvious link. However, other areas for health promotion and disease prevention can also be maximised e.g. safe alcohol use, healthy eating, sustainable consumption, safer sex and sun protection. Environmental health professionals can seek to support and promote such activities in line with local policy positions and programmes.

5.3 Sustainability and environmental protection

- 5.3.1 London puts sustainability at the heart of its bid for the 2012 Games framed by the concept of 'Towards a One Planet Olympics'.
- 5.3.2 The CIEH also views sustainability as central to its vision and activities. Sustainability can encompass a huge range of issues, on which environmental health activities will have varying impacts. However, in certain areas direct action can be taken to limit environmental impacts, particularly in relation to regulated activities. Through its existing links and partnerships environmental health can support the assessment, surveillance, monitoring, management and control of key environmental issues including:
- Air quality (e.g. construction activities, increased transport demands)
 - Water contamination
 - Noise, including construction noise and event noise management
 - Nuisance management
 - Dealing with hazardous waste/materials
- 5.3.3 The CIEH will support the control of these issues through its work with environmental health professionals working in local authorities responsible for the venues and other related Olympic/Paralympic events. Through taking a broader public health perspective environmental health can influence and promote policies and protocols that are linked across the environmental health and sustainability spectrum.

5.4 Health and safety

- 5.4.1 The CIEH is working alongside the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) to support their programme to ensure the safety and welfare of the construction workforce during the demolition and building phase of the preparation for the Games. The CIEH is able to not only support the ODA management for health and safety but can also help link these programmes to food safety, healthy eating and general wellbeing themes.
- 5.4.2 As arrangements for the operation of the Games are developed CIEH will seek to support environmental health professionals working within health and safety functions within the local authorities that are responsible for enforcement at the Olympic venues and at related events. The CIEH is working closely with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). The overarching vision of the HSE is to support an exemplar Olympics with exemplar HSE performance. This will be achieved through encouraging strong leadership and competence, driving up standards of health and safety and creating a healthier, safer working environment. Environmental health professionals will also need to assess health and safety risks relating to venues if they are hosting them but also related events such as street and community events.
- 5.4.3 One of the key ways environmental health professionals can contribute to the wider planning of the Olympic venues or local community events is through taking part in safety advisory groups or operational management groups (SAG/OPG) associated with the events/venues. The main role of a SAG/OPG is to provide specialist advice on the event, venues and immediate environs. It provides a forum for a co-ordinated approach across partners and stakeholders. It also provides a forum that can take on other safety and public functions as agreed. Environmental health is very much a key stakeholder and should be represented on the groups that are set up for events/stadia. Some of the areas for environmental health contribution include:
- Health and safety
 - Food safety
 - Public health
 - Crowd management
 - Licensing
- 5.4.4 The key issues that are under discussion in relation to the Olympic Park Safety Advisory Group (SAGOPS) include:
- Crowd safety
 - Public safety
 - Barriers
 - Temporary stands
 - Licensing
 - Worker safety (particularly vulnerable workers)
 - Flexible warranting
- 5.4.5 The Olympics /Paralympics encourages and inspires local communities to celebrate local culture and diversity. It is likely that this will create opportunities for a wide range of community, street and sporting events. Environmental health will need to play an active role in helping to manage the public health and safety impact of these events. Licensing is a useful mechanism for managing community events. However, the Secretary of State does have the powers to

change the licensing hours for specific events and this is currently being considered for the Olympics. This may also encompass the conditions associated with licences for this time period. The impacts of this could be wide ranging on local environmental health management of the events.

- 5.4.6 Temporary Event Notices (TEN) are a short notification of a community event. They were brought in to reduce the administrative burden of licensing. The only means of objection to the event (TEN) is through the Police on crime and disorder issues. The notification is not an application and the local authority can only control the events through ensuring excellent internal and external communications and developing good links with partners in licensing and police to help sort out potential problems associated with the events. There are other ways of controlling the events such as using High ways consent or if the event is being held on public land/owned by the local authority but these still require robust response systems in place within the local authority.

5.5 Pest minimisation

- 5.5.1 Pests can be responsible for transmitting infection and disease and can also cause serious nuisance and discomfort. The symbolic profile of the Games will mean that any negative publicity about pest infestations is likely to impact adversely on the UK reputation. Pest minimisation and pest proofing will be important steps in reducing the risk to public health.
- 5.5.2 The CIEH recognises the importance of protecting the public from threats associated with pests. The CIEH is currently working with the National Pest Advisory Panel (NPAP) to produce a programme of initiatives to support professionals and industry in the effective minimisation of pests likely to affect the Olympic experience. These initiatives are:
- A best practice guidance document for the construction industry for pest minimisation and proofing during design, demolition and construction of the Olympic park and similar venues. This will be supported through training and discussion fora with contractors and relevant personnel.
 - A best practice document for the hospitality trade dealing with pest minimisation especially focussing on the identification and management of the control of bedbugs. This will also be supported by a series of training events for the hospitality trade including local bed and breakfast establishments.
 - A best practice document for the site management of events venues and buildings to reduce the risk of pest infestation.
 - A review of potential pest infestations associated with large numbers of visitors and addressing surveillance and monitoring of existing venues during preparation and staging of the games.

6. Further information

- www.cieh.org
- www.london2012.org

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