New Minister for Public Health

REHIS welcomes the appointment of Shona Robison MSP as Minister for Public Health in the new Scottish Parliament. This new post highlights the importance that the new administration places on public health in Scotland and REHIS looks forward to meeting with the Minister in the near future.

Scottish Household Survey 2006

Key findings have been published about perceived living conditions in Scotland from the forthcoming Scottish Household Survey (www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2007/06/06103736). The full report will be available in August. The statistics include neighbourhood satisfaction, economic activity, transport, recycling, access to the internet, smoking and perceptions of health. It can be clearly seen that there is still a big divide in the perceived living conditions between the most affluent and least affluent in our society, with 41 per cent in the most deprived areas reporting that their health is good - compared with 64 per cent in the least deprived areas.

British Occupational Hygiene Awards

The British Occupational Hygiene Society (BOHS) is a registered charity, with the simple aim to help to reduce work-related ill-health. Each year BOHS presents awards to individuals who have made a valuable contribution to reducing work-related ill-health.

Nominations for the 2007 ‘Working for a healthier workplace - Peter Isaac Award’ from BOHS are now invited. This prestigious award - which recognises valuable individual contributions to the reduction of ill-health at work - is open to members of BOHS, REHIS and all other organisations within POOSH, as well as certain occupational hygiene/health students. Last year’s winner was Dr Olivia Carlton, Head of Occupational Health at Transport for London, for her role in developing and leading London Underground’s ‘Health Improvement Plan’. For full details go to http://www.bohs.org/newsArticle.aspx?newsItem=53

This year’s winner will receive £1,000 to be used to subsidise attendance at any 2008 health and safety conference, plus the specially engraved trophy for the year and a framed certificate signed by the BOHS President to keep, presented at the BOHS Annual Conference Dinner in May 2008. Also included is complementary attendance for one day of the Conference and the Conference Dinner, and free BOHS membership for one year.

Nominations must be for an individual (either for solo work or as a representative of a team), and the submission may be a one-off project or a summary of sustained activity or processes, and must demonstrate a real contribution to the prevention of ill-health due to work. Applications must be sent to BOHS by 30 September 2007. The full guidelines can be downloaded from the BOHS website.

REHIS Conference 2008

The next REHIS conference will be held on 17 and 18 April 2008, venue to be announced shortly. Please note there will be no conference in 2007.

Environmental Health Research

The Natural Environment Research Council is a national body which has commissioned a three-year Environment & Human Health research programme. There is a budget of around £5 million for this work. This is a joint interdisciplinary capacity-building programme supported by Natural Environment Research Council, Department for Environment, Food and
Rural Affairs; Environment Agency; Ministry of Defence; Economic and Social Research Council; Medical Research Council; Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council; Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council; and Health Protection Agency.

Areas of interest include:

- Transport and dynamics of micro-organisms of human health importance in the natural environment
- Emerging infectious diseases
- Transport and dynamics of both chemicals and particles of different sizes and compositions in the natural environment that are of human health importance
- Technologies providing new capabilities for establishing and predicting the impact of the environment on human health
- Social, economic and behavioural factors in the genesis and health impact of environmental hazards.

The outcomes of the Environment and Human Health Programme will be to: create working relationships between academics of different disciplines that can be built on for future multi- and inter-disciplinary research; increase in scientific knowledge regarding environment and human health issues; inform development of more effective policy and practice to improve human health.

For further information please visit [http://www.nerc.ac.uk/research/programmes/humanhealth/background.asp](http://www.nerc.ac.uk/research/programmes/humanhealth/background.asp)

### 10th World Congress in Environmental Health

The International Federation of Environmental Health will be holding its next congress in Brisbane, Australia next year, 11-18 May 2008. The theme of the congress is ‘Environmental Health, a Sustainable Future - 20 years on…’ Further information can be obtained from [http://www.ifeh2008.org/](http://www.ifeh2008.org/).

Readers may be interested to note that presentations are available on-line from the 9th World Congress in Environmental Health, held in Dublin, Ireland. Please visit: [http://www.ifeh2006.org/programme.htm](http://www.ifeh2006.org/programme.htm).

### Revised Food Safety Guide for Farmers’ Markets published by FSA Scotland

This guide has been developed by representatives from local authorities, the Scottish Food Advisory Committee and the Scottish Association of Farmers, with the main purpose of assisting market traders comply with food safety and food standards requirements.

The revised guide continues to build on existing good practice, and has been updated to reflect the changes following implementation of the EU Food Hygiene Regulations which came into force in January 2006. The guide has been enhanced to include a section on food labelling to cover most food found at farmers’ markets.

The information in the revised guide is designed not only to help market traders and organisers meet food safety requirements, but also to assist traders in the correct labelling of their products to comply with food labelling requirements. The guide remains applicable to similar events such as car boot sales, fetes, agricultural shows and continental markets.

It provides specific information on compliance with Regulation 852/2004 on the hygiene of foodstuffs, Regulation 853/2004 specific hygiene of foods of animal origin, where applicable, and in relation to temperature control, the Food Hygiene (Scotland) Regulations 2006. The new composition & labelling section provides

### All Africa Environmental Health Congress

The All Africa Environmental Health Congress is being hosted by the Association of Public Health Officers Kenya with the vision to improve the standards of environmental health in Africa. It will be held in Nairobi, Kenya on 27-30 August 2007. The conference theme will be ‘The Sustainable Development of Environmental Health in Africa’. Further information can be obtained from: [http://www.aphok.org/conf2007/confinfo.htm](http://www.aphok.org/conf2007/confinfo.htm).
guidance on general labelling requirements as well as product specific labelling requirements.
To view the guide please visit: www.food.gov.uk/Scotland/regsscotland/regsguidscot/revisedfarmersmarketguide.

Health Protection Scotland Weekly Report

The HPS Weekly Report is the national health protection bulletin for Scotland, publishing weekly on Wednesday mornings. Since January 2007 the HPS Weekly Report has been an electronic only publication.

The HPS Weekly Report contains current news and articles as well as surveillance reports covering the following topics: gastrointestinal infections, respiratory infections, AIDS and HIV, vaccine preventable and childhood diseases, travel medicine, sexually transmitted infections, environmental health and healthcare associated infections.

For further information or to sign up to the weekly report, please visit: www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/ewr/index.aspx.

Public Health Professional Spotlight

The road to registration…

Liz Smart is one of the first in Scotland to be registered on the UK Voluntary Register for Public Health Specialists (UKVRPHS).

The UKVRPHS provides professional regulation to specialists in Public Health from a variety of backgrounds. The primary reason for the UKVRPHS is for the protection of the general public, although the registrant may gain the benefit of improved access to employment, as well as professional accreditation. Whatever their professional background, and wherever they may work, all such specialists have a common core of knowledge, skills and experience, and work (or have the ability and potential to work) at a strategic or senior management level.

I have just received my registration number 288 (March 2007) and have my certificate tucked away in a file. However the journey to registration has been very hard work regardless of what anyone tells you.

The journey began when I was the Manager of the Specialist Health Promotion Service for Ashton, Leigh and Wigan Primary Care Trust in Wigan in the North West of England. I completed a self assessment form and attended an interview with an assessor from Manchester University in 2003. He was very helpful and said in his opinion I would be able to prepare a portfolio for submission to the UKVRPHS – we amiably agreed my gaps in the ‘show how’ and ‘knows and know how’ competencies. I then applied for a Public Health Specialist post in Dumfries and Galloway and was successful. At interview I enquired about the registration process and was told by the Director of Public Health that I would be able to go ahead. Shortly after arriving in Scotland I attended a second assessment with a very nice Director of Public Health who said I should be able to prepare a portfolio for submission to the UKVRPHS – we amiably agreed my gaps in the ‘show how’ and ‘knows and know how’ competencies….. Readers may
be pleased to read that they were identical showing consistency between England and Scotland! My gaps were in Health Protection and in Screening and Immunisation, fairly typical of someone from a non-nursing or medical background and a first degree in the social sciences.

The deadline of 31 May 2006 for generalist portfolio submission was rapidly approaching so I worked up a timetable and started to plod my way through developing a portfolio. I spent virtually every Saturday of winter 2005/6 at work writing up summaries, finding evidence for past work or tracking down people who could provide a testimonial. My biggest challenge was to provide enough evidence for work carried out in Nepal where I was employed by VSO on a basic hygiene and sanitation programme. The village I lived in had no electricity and computers only existed in Kathmandu usually in the offices of aid agencies and companies. In my final portfolio submission I put in several photographs, a copy of my introductory letter in Hindi with a translation and extracts of a final written report to the Ministry of Health. The competencies I was claiming were about working with and for communities and health protection.

As some of my gaps linked to environmental health I arranged a four day placement with the Dumfries and Galloway Environmental Health Service. I accompanied Environmental Health Officers on kitchen and farm inspections, air sampling and water sampling visits and the staff willingly told me about their areas of work and provided information about the many functions of environmental health. I particularly enjoyed my visit to the sewage works!! So thank you Dumfries and Galloway Environmental Health Department.

I took a gamble with the 31 May 2006 submission as I knew that I still had one or two gaps but submitted early to beat the inevitable rush. I had feedback from one of the assessors in August 2006 who told me I had two areas of clarification and three areas of work yet to complete for the Health Protection competencies. I re-submitted my areas of clarification within three months (analysis of data on a small areas basis and application of a model to a change management situation) and submitted the three outstanding areas within six months.

Fortunately everything was accepted and my gamble had paid off as many colleagues who submitted at the 31 May 2006 deadline are still waiting for feedback. Across Scotland there are now a handful of people registered under the generalist route and to my knowledge no one has yet submitted a defined specialist portfolio. My achievement has been recognised within the department and I have a personal congratulatory letter from the Chief Executive.

I am now one of four facilitators for the defined specialist route (for the South West) with the remit to assist others in their preparation for submission of a portfolio.

If you are thinking of preparing a portfolio or have started I would advise:

- Use the support systems that have been set up across Scotland
- Plan a timetable that gives you enough cushioning at the end for photocopying, chasing up testimonials and completing the Voluntary Registration submission forms
- Fill any gaps through using opportunities within your current work
- Organise and bribe a good proof reader and someone to do your photocopying.

I am happy to answer any queries; phone 01387 272717 or e-mail: elisabeth.smart@nhs.net.