

Your Career as an Environmental Health Officer *in Scotland*



Improving and protecting public health in Scotland

Introduction

For well over one hundred years in Scotland, Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) and their predecessors have been employed to look after the health of the public.

In the early days poor and overcrowded housing, polluted water supplies, and adulterated or contaminated food were the source of much disease and ill health.

In 1897, the passing of the Public Health (Scotland) Act gave wide powers to the then Sanitary Inspector to take action to improve conditions for the people of Scotland.

The work of the EHO has evolved from these days and the following pages will tell you about the work EHOs do and how to join the Profession.

What do EHOs do?

EHOs are public health professionals primarily concerned with protecting the public from the harmful exposures they may encounter in the environment and with improving its health. They act as advisers, educators, consultants, managers and enforcement officers. EHOs carry out site visits and give advice and assistance to individual householders and businesses and to managers and workers. In certain circumstances, they take enforcement action to ensure compliance with legislation designed to protect the health of the public.

Some EHOs work in the private sector advising business of their legal duties.

Many EHOs pursue a general career and deal with a wide range of functions. An increasing number become specialists in specific areas of environmental health and work in local authorities, national agencies and the private sector. Wherever they work, EHOs have the same goal:

To improve and protect public health.

What is Environmental Health?

Environmental Health is that area of Public Health activity which strives to improve, protect and maintain health and well being through action on the physical environment and on life circumstances.

(Old Report 2006)

In Scotland, the seven principal subjects within Environmental Health are:

- Food Safety
- Food Standards
- Occupational Health & Safety
- Public Health
- Waste Management
- Built Environment
- Pollution Control

Is a career in Environmental Health right for me?

The knowledge, technical skills and competencies needed to qualify as an EHO will be acquired at university and during practical training.

However, your outlook on life is just as important!

It is no good training to be an EHO if you want a strict nine-to-five job, you do not like working with and helping people, and have no interest in helping to solve the environmental problems prevalent in every community. EHOs need to be broad minded, approachable, flexible, and persuasive.



"Environmental Health is a marvellous career if you crave variety and diversity in your occupation. The training and initial experiences of an EHO provide a framework from which general management skills can be developed thereby creating a range of career opportunities."

Robert Howe, EHO and a Chief Officer with South Lanarkshire Council



"I chose to study for a career in Environmental Health because the variety of the job is huge; when working as an EHO no two days are the same. There are also great prospects for career progression in both local authority and private sector settings."

Morgan Sales, Student EHO



"My EHO training and 16 years as a Local Authority EHO based in Edinburgh, Inverness and Elgin have helped me diversify into the challenges of my new post as an Environment Protection Officer with the Scottish Environment Protection Agency."

Helen Gordon, EHO



Food Safety Enforcement

The career is suitable for a person who:

- wishes to contribute to the improvement of public health in Scotland.
- cares enough about the environment and the effects it has on health to want to do something about it.
- is a good communicator and enjoys meeting and working with people from all educational, social and cultural backgrounds.
- is sympathetic to the views of others and is prepared to listen to problems whilst remaining objective.
- is not afraid to give professional advice.
- enjoys working in a team, but can also manage projects alone.
- is not put off by the occasional unpleasant task.
- pays attention to detail and accuracy.
- is keen to learn more and develop their professional competence.



Teaching at the University of Strathclyde

How do I become an EHO?

To qualify as an EHO requires academic study and structured practical training.

Academic study: BSc (Hons) Environmental Health

The admission requirements for acceptance onto the BSc (Hons) Environmental Health degree course at the University of Strathclyde are:

SQA Higher Grade

Four passes at ABBC or BBBB or equivalent, including Chemistry, Mathematics and preferably either Physics or Biology. An appropriate Advanced Higher is an acceptable alternative to upgrading Highers.

GCE Advanced Level

First Year Entry: A levels at grades below those required for second-year entry will be considered.

Second Year Entry: Three passes at CCC or BCD, including Mathematics, Chemistry and either Physics or Biology.

Academic study: MSc Environmental Health

Applicants who already have a science honours degree (2:2 or above) can undertake a REHIS accredited MSc course either part/full-time at the University of Strathclyde or by distance learning at the University of Derby.

For further information on University entrance requirements contact:

The Academic Selector,
Division of Environmental Health,
Department of Civil Engineering,
John Anderson Campus,
University of Strathclyde,
Glasgow,
G4 0NG

E-mail: t.k.beattie@strath.ac.uk

Telephone: 0141 548 3200

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www.strath.ac.uk/Departments/Civeng/EnvH

Alan Whitfield
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Telephone: 01332 591899

www.derby.ac.uk



“Since qualifying two years ago, I have worked mainly in the field of Public Health and Health Improvement. Environmental Health legislation, procedure, policy and practice is constantly evolving making it one of the most demanding yet rewarding career choices available.”

Brian Auld, EHO



Air Quality Monitoring

Practical training

Structured practical training must also be undertaken. The Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland (REHIS) Scheme of Practical Training consists of a minimum of forty eight weeks with a Scottish local authority. When you apply to university for the degree course, it is advisable to look for a training place with a local authority as soon as possible.

You may be able to carry out the training in vacation periods throughout the course of academic study (integrated training), or you may defer all training until the completion of academic study (end on training).

You must register with REHIS at the commencement of your practical training.



Environmental Noise Monitoring



Occupational Health & Safety Enforcement



"As General Manager of Health and Food Safety for the Compass Group (UK & Ireland), the world's largest catering organisation, I enjoy a varied and interesting career and the privilege of world travel."

Craig Cunningham, EHO

On registering with REHIS, you will be given a copy of the current Scheme of Practical Training and arrangements will be made with the local authority training provider to produce a training plan to cover your training.

You will be required to keep a training record, detailing the practical work carried out, its relationship to the training plan and indicating its connection to achieving a particular skill or competence.

The training provider undertakes to carry out regular assessments of your progress during your training.

After obtaining a BSc (Hons) or an MSc in Environmental Health degree and completing the practical training you will require to pass professional examinations

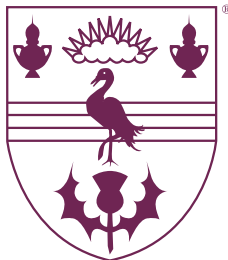
which assess your professional skills and competence in each of the programme areas.

On passing the professional examinations, you will be awarded the REHIS Diploma in Environmental Health and become an Environmental Health Officer.



Annual Awards Ceremony

The Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland



The Institute was incorporated as a Company Limited by Guarantee on 16th February 1983, to give effect to the amalgamation of The Royal Sanitary Association of Scotland and The Scottish Institute of Environmental Health. The Institute was Incorporated by Royal Charter on 8th March 2001, following which the company was wound up.

The Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland is a Registered Scottish Charity, Number SC009406

The objects for which the Institute is established, contained in Article 3 of the Charter, are for the benefit of the community to promote the advancement of Environmental Health by:

- a. stimulating general interest in and disseminating knowledge concerning Environmental Health;
- b. promoting education and training in matters relating to Environmental Health; and
- c. maintaining, by examination or otherwise, high standards of professional practice and conduct on the part of Environmental Health Officers in Scotland.

The Institute's affairs are managed by a Council which is elected by members.

The Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland is a founding member of the International Federation of Environmental Health.

On occasion, the Institute uses the acronym: REHIS®.

For further information on how to become an Environmental Health Officer in Scotland, and for details of membership of the Institute, contact:

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