



2026

AN ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH MANIFESTO FOR SCOTLAND





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WHO WE ARE



An Environmental Health Manifesto for Scotland

We are the Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland, often referred to as REHIS.

What do we do and have you ever wondered what goes on behind the scenes?

From inspecting Michelin Star restaurants to monitoring noise at major concerts or testing water on the world's largest cruise ships, our officers work around the clock to protect public health. (For a peek behind the curtains [VIEW](#) our short video)

Did you know?

We are celebrating over 150 years of transforming the health of Scotland's people, through education, training and qualifications, having been founded in 1875.

- REHIS was incorporated by Royal Charter in 2001
- The Institute awards the qualifications allowing a person to practice as an Environmental Health Officer (EHO) and Food Safety Officer (FSO) in Scotland
- We also award Chartered EHO status – the highest professional standard for our profession
- The Institute plays an important role in working with schools to train up the next generation of workers for the hospitality and food industry
- Without Environmental Health Officers, there would be no one to enforce new government legislation
- We are instrumental in ensuring there are a sufficient number of Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) in Scotland to oversee everything from food safety to air quality
- REHIS awards qualifications at various SCQF levels in areas such as Food Hygiene, Food and Health, HACCP, Control of Infection, Occupational Health and Safety, Licensing and First Aid
- We are an independent and self-financing organisation



Improving and protecting health and wellbeing in Scotland

The Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland is a registered Scottish charity. No. SC009406.



OUR PARTNERS

- Scotland's 32 local authorities
- Society of Chief Officers of Environmental Health in Scotland
- Scottish Government
- Food Standards Scotland
- Public Health Scotland
- NHS Boards
- Health and Safety Executive
- SEPA
- Private sector
- Academic institutions



OUR CHALLENGE TO YOU

REHIS believes there are four key challenges essential to protecting and improving Scotland's environmental health to support our communities. We stand ready to work with politicians from all parties and stakeholders to strengthen public health in Scotland.

Are you ready to work with us?



**Lindsey-Anne McNeil
President**



**Jackie McCabe
Chief Executive**



CHALLENGE 1

How will you ensure that we continue to have locally based Environmental Health services across Scotland?

Environmental Health Services have historically been delivered by local authorities, providing local accountability, trusted expertise and a quick response to emerging public health concerns in communities from Dumfries to Wick, the Western Isles, Orkney and Shetland.

Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) and Food Safety Officers (FSOs) work closely with national partners such as Food Standards Scotland, Public Health Scotland, HSE, NHS boards, SEPA and others, sharing best practice to maintain high standards of service throughout the country.

Local delivery remains essential to effective environmental health protection. Any move away from this risks reducing public confidence and weakening the expertise and skillset of local government EHOs.



CHALLENGE 2

How will you support the training and development of new Environmental Health professionals and ensure Scotland has a fully resourced, competent Environmental Health Service?

A long-term reduction in the Environmental Health workforce, combined with fewer new entrants and a severe shortage of academic institutions offering suitable undergraduate courses, has substantially weakened capacity and resilience within local authorities.

There is insufficient officer numbers to deliver current functions let alone an expanded remit, requiring members to prioritise resource deployment at their council.



KEY FINDINGS:

Key findings from the Society of Chief Officers of Environmental Health in Scotland workforce sustainability report show:

- The number of EHOs have dropped by **27.3%** (the equivalent of **236** FTE officers) in the last decade in councils
- More than half of the current workforce is over **50** years old
- Notably, in the **35-49**-year-old age group, the number of EHOs has dropped significantly by almost half from **408 to 219** in the past nine years.
- There are currently **83** vacancies in the sector

EHOs require accredited academic qualifications followed by extensive practical training to achieve the REHIS Diploma in Environmental Health.

With **27.3%** less officers in post, there is concern around the impact on officers from growing workloads.

Food Safety Officers (FSOs) require specific qualifications for entry, yet few relevant courses are now available in Scotland. Workforce reductions and limited training placements have led to critically low numbers of newly qualified officers entering the profession.

To address these recruitment shortages, REHIS is urgently working with partners to create improved pathways, including integrated student placements and post graduate qualifications.

CHALLENGE 3

How will you help ensure employers, employees and the public have access to cost-effective training that supports safer, healthier communities?

REHIS is committed to employers, employees, members of the public and students in schools being healthier and safer in the environment through supported learning and training. Education, training and qualifications contribute to public health when learners gain knowledge which enables them to make appropriate choices at work or at home.

There is increasing concern about unregulated online training courses, as many do not adequately cover the required legislative framework or meet the levelling criteria. It is important to note that some legislation differs in Scotland for example food safety, and some courses may not address these differences.

REHIS awards nationally recognised qualifications, with many on the SCQF framework, through more than 500 Approved Training Centres and 200 secondary schools in subjects such as food hygiene, HACCP, occupational health and safety and infection control.

We also deliver specialisms in nutrition, first aid and licensing, with over 35,000 certificates issued each year.

Our initiatives include long-established food hygiene training for school pupils, as well as industry-specific courses that we aim to sustain in the long term.



CHALLENGE 4

How will you work with us to uphold public health, address unlawful activity and ensure a fair and level playing field for legitimate businesses?

Environmental Health professionals use a range of tools to secure compliance with legislation. While most businesses work constructively with regulators, effective action is required to guarantee public protection and maintain fair competition when standards are ignored. We use modern enforcement tools, using a relationship-based approach known as the 4Es:

- Engage
- Explain
- Educate
- Enforcement (as a last resort)

Along with a holistic regulatory framework, this enables Environmental Health Departments to protect communities while supporting lawful business activity. For example, Environmental Health teams in Scotland have played a vital role in protecting the public by successfully identifying and prosecuting the sale and use of unregulated diet pills and certain cosmetic aesthetic procedures.

[Read more here](#)





BACKGROUND READING: ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH IN SCOTLAND

Environmental Health improves, protects and maintains health by addressing the physical environment and wider life circumstances. In Scotland it covers six core areas:

- **Food Safety and Standards:** Averting serious health outbreaks by preventing unsafe food from reaching the public, promoting good hygiene practices and ensuring legal compliance
- **Public Health:** includes investigating statutory nuisances, pest control, smoking in public places, infectious and communicable diseases
- **Pollution Control:** noise, air quality, water and contaminated land concerns
- **Occupational Health and Safety:** protecting hazards and promoting workplace safety including monitoring the cosmetic surgery industry
- **Waste Management:** waste treatment and disposal, including waste regulation such as littering and fly-tipping
- **Built Environment:** inspecting housing standards, scheme of assistance, the registration of private landlords, and licencing activities such as HMOs/short term lets and caravan parks

Environmental Health Officers and the wider workforce operate in local authorities, national agencies and the private sector, with registered Course Presenters delivering training and qualifications that contributes directly to public health protection and disease prevention.



The Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland

The Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland, often referred to as REHIS, was established in 1983 following the merger of the Royal Sanitary Association of Scotland (founded 1875) and The Scottish Institute of Environmental Health (founded 1891). The Institute was Incorporated by Royal Charter in 2001.

The Institute is a founding member of the International Federation of Environmental Health and is a registered Scottish charity, No. SC009406. The affairs of the Institute are managed by a Council, elected annually by members.

The objects for which the Institute is established are for the benefit of the community to promote the advancement of Environmental Health by:

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

The Institute is a long-established awarding body in Scotland for qualifications in Food Hygiene, Food and Health, HACCP, Control of Infection, Occupational Health and Safety, First Aid and Licensing. Courses leading to REHIS qualifications are available at Approved Training Centres throughout Scotland and delivered by suitably qualified registered presenters. Industry and Enforcement Officers recognise REHIS qualifications, not just in Scotland but nationally and internationally.



Membership of the Institute is open to persons who are suitably qualified and who work in either the community health, environmental health or public health services or are engaged in commercial or industrial activities associated with environmental health. Elected members of local authorities, health boards and persons with an interest in environmental health are also eligible for associate membership.

The Institute supports members through their journey from student, to fully qualified, awarding Chartered EHO status – the highest professional standard for our profession, and continue supporting onwards into retired membership.

Being part of a professional member-based organisation, keeping skills up to date and learning from each other are essential to shape the future.

Further Information:

REHIS is keen to work with all who share an interest in improving and protecting public health in Scotland. More information is available at www.rehis.com or from:

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LET'S WORK TOGETHER

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