

RESOURCE FOR HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT

VOLUME I

(THE MAIN RESOURCE)

Erica Ison

October 2000

Commissioned by:



Executive

London

Partnership development and collaboration

This resource was commissioned and developed by the **NHS Executive London**, along with a 'sister' publication '*A Short Guide to Health Impact Assessment*'.

It has been developed to:

- support the region's collaborative and partnership work for '*London's Health*' and
- as a contribution to the Department of Health's and Health Development Agency's national efforts to promote and support the development and application of Health Impact Assessment approaches and methodologies.

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In addition valuable contributions have been provided by the **project team**, individual **case-study writers**, and the **pilot sites** who have helped refine and develop the resource.

This resource has been developed primarily as a **developing web-based resource** (available through www.londonhealth.gov.uk and www.ohn.gov.uk) which can be added to and developed as new Health Impact Assessment work becomes available.

Writer / Researcher

- Erica Ison Consultant

Project Co-ordinator

- Clive Blair-Stevens Department of Health & NHS Executive London

Supporting editor

- Marsaili Cameron Consultant

Core Project Team

- Hilary Samson-Barry NHS Executive London
- Neil Townley Department of Health
- Bobbie Jacobson East London & City Health Authority
- Jenny Wright Public Health Resource Unit, Oxford

Pilot Sites

- Brent Health Action Zones
- St John's Housing Association
- Healthy Hillingdon (a Hillingdon Health & London Borough of Hillingdon partnership)

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For enquiries contact: Public Health Directorate, NHS Executive London, 40 Eastbourne Terrace, London W2 3QR. Tel: 020 7725 5496

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Patrick Vernon	Brent Health Action Zone

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- Hammersmith & Fulham health impact assessment project – regeneration, healthy living initiatives and health improvement ... work in progress

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AN INTRODUCTION TO HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT....

A relatively young methodology, health impact assessment (HIA) is evolving rapidly. But already it is a powerful tool. In essence, it offers a route to understanding the potential health risks and benefits entailed in any proposal – and doing so in a rigorous fashion. At the same time, health impact assessment is nothing if not adaptable. It is designed to be sufficiently flexible to match both the resources and the responsibilities of decision-makers.

The Government is committed to improving public health by adding health awareness to policy-making at every level and by making concern for improved public health a norm in all decision-making. HIA can make a significant contribution to the achievement of these aims, not least because the values that underlie HIA fit well with the Government's aims and with the aims underpinning the London Health Strategy. HIA offers a systematic and democratic way of combining quantitative and qualitative evidence to review the effects on health of any policy, programme or project, and to submit recommendations to the relevant decision-makers.

HIA emphasises the importance of health to everyone. The Acheson Report, for example, recommended that:

'as part of health impact assessment, all policies likely to have a direct or indirect effect on health should be formulated in such a way that by favouring the less well off they will, wherever possible, reduce such inequalities.'

[Inequalities in health (The Acheson Report). The Stationery Office, London. 1998]

HIA, then, offers an inclusive framework for examining patterns of potential health gains and losses, especially for those suffering from health inequalities, HIA emphasises the importance of health to everyone. As such, it is already proving to be a catalyst for change within individual organisations and within partnerships across public and private sectors.

...AND TO THE RESOURCE

Development of the Resource - an iterative process

Work on the Resource began in November 1999 when the NHSE London commissioned the Public Health Resource Unit at the Institute of Health Sciences, Oxford, to work with others to develop a resource for health impact assessment (HIA) to support development and implementation of the London Health Strategy. A Project Group, consisting of key stakeholders, was set up to oversee the development of the Resource.

From the beginning, there was agreement that:

- development of the Resource would be an iterative process in which a wide range of stakeholders would be engaged - including academics, practitioners and interested parties across London
- publication of the document would not mark the end point of the initiative - there would be a framework for continuing exchange of knowledge and experience amongst users of HIA
- the Resource would be inclusive in its approach, synthesising the work being undertaken, and would not be aligned with any one school of HIA.

Developing the contents and structure

The following methods of consultation were used to identify the contents and structure of the Resource.

- Semi-structured interviews (n=30) in person or over the telephone with key individuals from the NHSE London's two databases relating to HIA (HIA Nominees and HIA Interested). People included academics who are involved in developing the methodology, and practitioners.
- Survey by postal-fax back questionnaire of Chief Executives at:
 - NHS Trusts;
 - PCG/Ts;
 - Voluntary Organisations.
- Survey by postal-fax back questionnaire of all those on NHSE London's two databases relating to HIA (as above).

After approval by the Project Group, the draft framework for the Resource was sent for comment to:

- Directors of Public Health in London Region;
- those on HIA Nominees database;
- those on HIA Interested database.

A workshop was held at the Second London Health Strategy Conference in December 1999. This workshop attracted a large number of participants, from a wide range of backgrounds, reflecting the generally high level of interest in the potential of HIA.

The draft framework was amended in the light of the comments from Directors of Public Health, those on the databases and workshop participants.

Writing the Resource

An early draft of the Resource was tested on three pilot sites:

1. Brent HAZ - National Stadium at Wembley;
2. Healthy Hillingdon - transport policy;
3. St John's Housing Association - housing for those with special needs.

Contents and structure were amended in response to comments from pilot sites. Work also started on a separate **Short Guide to HIA**, reflecting the desire of piloters and others to have available an immediate 'helicopter view' of HIA. As work progressed at two of the pilot sites, material about the process of HIA they were undertaking was incorporated into the Resource (Brent and Healthy Hillingdon).

A later draft of the Resource was sent to readers for comment. Readers included key people interviewed earlier in the process, London Directors of Public Health, and selected members of the London Health Strategy Steering Group. The draft was amended in light of comments.

Case-study material

Over 50 practitioners/academics were invited to write a Case-study, covering work in England, Wales and Scotland; just over 20 accepted (refusals tended to be related to short timescale, or feeling that the HIA work they were doing had not reached an appropriate stage of development for exposure). Contacts for Case-studies came from the preparatory work to identify those involved in HIA in London (semi-structured interviews, grant recipients, networking, etc.), and outside London from a survey of Directors of Public Health about current activity in HIA the author had undertaken in Autumn 1999 as part of her work for The Four Counties (developing a rapid appraisal tool on a multi-disciplinary, multi-agency basis). The material represents both completed HIAs and work in progress.

Using the Resource

The Resource (when printed out) is made up of two volumes.

- Volume I structured in three parts (with 8 sections), provides an introduction to health impact assessment both as a concept and as a methodology, and the ways in which it can be applied.
- Volume II: expands on Section 8 by providing the full details of 20 health impact assessment case-studies.

As a reader, you do not have to take a sequential approach to the material – you can dip in and out as suits your needs, drawing on the cross-references to make links between different parts of the Resource.

In Volume I at the start of each section in Parts I and II, an overview highlights the main issues covered; while at the end of each section, review questions support you in exploring the potential relevance of the key points to your own organisation and/or partnership.

Part I Introducing health impact assessment

Key terms and concepts have been used in rather different ways by different writers and practitioners. Accordingly, Part I of the resource aims:

- to draw together the key terms and the range of current usage so that you can be clear what writers and practitioners mean by terms like ‘stakeholder’, ‘community’, or ‘qualitative evidence’
- to present an overview of the methodology – both of the health impact assessment framework/process as a whole and of its constituent parts and how they fit into the framework/process.

Part I consists of two sections:

- Section 1** **What is HIA?**
Section 2 **The process of HIA**

Part II Applying health impact assessment

HIA is a tool designed to support policy- and decision-making. It is well suited to fulfilling many of the requirements set down by central Government and called for by London’s Coalition for Health and Regeneration. But, as with the successful use of any tool, careful preparation is required. Part II explores the work that needs to be done before embarking on HIA – and outlines some suitable entry points.

Part II consists of three sections:

- Section 3** **Understanding why HIA is important**
Section 4 **Preparing to introduce HIA into your organisation/ partnership**
Section 5 **Embarking on HIA**

Part III Resources for health impact assessment

Much work, academic and practical, has been done on HIA; much remains to be done. Part III offers you a starting point for finding out more. You have the opportunity to explore the range of academic models and approaches currently used in HIA. You are referred to relevant websites and bibliographies which can help you deepen and extend your understanding of HIA. And made available to you is a unique collection of case-studies which describe the use of HIA in a wide range of situations – a rich source of learning points for anyone embarking on HIA.

Part III consists of three sections:

- Section 6** **Models of HIA**
Section 7 **Sources of information**
Section 8 **The case-studies (20)**