

Health Impact Assessment: evidence on health

*A guide to sources of evidence for policymakers
carrying out Health Impact Assessment as part
of Impact Assessment of government policy*

How to carry out good quality HIAs

- ✓ **Use HIA screening questions**
- ✓ **Make it evidence-based**
- ✓ **Look for positive health impacts**
- ✓ **Think beyond the health service when considering health**



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Part of a series:

Health Impact Assessment of Government Policy: A guide to carrying out a Health Impact Assessment of new policy as part of the Impact Assessment process

Health Impact Assessment: Case studies from government departments

Health Impact Assessment: A guide to quantifying health impacts of government policy

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Introduction

The purpose of including Health Impact Assessment (HIA) in Impact Assessment of government policy is to ensure that all government departments are focused on achieving better health and wellbeing of communities, as an outcome of their policy initiatives and plans.

Finding and appraising the available evidence is a necessary feature of a good Health Impact Assessment.

There are many sources available from which to obtain this evidence. This guide does not seek to be comprehensive, but provides information and guidance on where to start. Consultation with a librarian/information specialist before undertaking a literature search is also advised.

This guide is one of a series of publications to support HIA, including:

- *Health Impact Assessment of Government Policy: A guide to carrying out a Health Impact Assessment of new policy as part of the Impact Assessment process*
- *Health Impact Assessment: Case studies from government departments*
- *Health Impact Assessment: A guide to quantifying health impacts of government policy*

1. Statistics and epidemiological data

Epidemiological and other statistical data provide information concerning the occurrence and distribution of disease, the numbers of people exposed to particular risk factors and the numbers of people receiving particular health care interventions. There is a wide range of sources for such information. Some potentially useful sources are outlined below.

UK

Gateway to UK National Statistics – Health and Social Care: www.statistics.gov.uk/hub/health-social-care/index.html. This 'theme' has statistics relating to public health, health services provided by the NHS, social care, and health and safety at work

Office for National Statistics (ONS): www.statistics.gov.uk/default.asp ONS publishes a range of UK data, including:

- population by age, gender and area, and population projections by age and sex;
- mortality by cause, age, gender and area;
- morbidity in general practice from the 1991 *Morbidity Statistics from General Practice*;
- long-standing illness by age and gender from the *General Household Survey* and the 2001 Census;
- infectious diseases, etc;
- occupational health and child health;
- conceptions: numbers and rates;
- migration: internal and international.

ONS also conducts and publishes many health-related surveys: www.ons.gov.uk/about/surveys/index.html

The Health and Safety Executive provides data on injuries from accidents at work www.hse.gov.uk/statistics

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) provides home and leisure accident statistics www.hassandlass.org.uk/query

Other useful sources of relevant UK statistical information include departments of public health at regional and district level, public health observatories www.apho.org.uk university departments of public health, institutes of public health, and voluntary organisations

England

Department of Health statistics:

- Statistical work areas: www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Statistics/StatisticalWorkAreas
- Healthcare Statistics, Guidance and Performance Indicators: www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Statistics/Performancedataandstatistics
- Tackling health inequalities: a programme for action: www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4008268

Information on communicable diseases, environmental hazards and radiation is available from the **Health Protection Agency (HPA)** www.hpa.org.uk The HPA's role is to provide an integrated approach to protecting UK public health through the provision of support and advice. The HPA publishes the Weekly Communicable disease report www.hpa.org.uk/cdr/index.html

The Department for Transport publishes data on injuries from road accidents www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/statistics/datatablespublications/accidents/

The English Indices of Deprivation report is available from www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/indiciesdeprivation07

Scotland

Information on population and mortality can be obtained from the **General Register Office for Scotland** www.gro-scotland.gov.uk

ISD Scotland, part of the NHS in Scotland, is a useful first point of contact for information and statistics on Scottish health and NHS services www.isdscotland.org

The General Practice Administration System for Scotland holds data on morbidity from the GPASS system: www.gpass.co.uk/

Communicable disease information is available from **Health Protection Scotland** www.hps.scot.nhs.uk

Other data, including those on crime, deprivation, transport and road accidents can be obtained from **The Scottish Government**: www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics

Wales

Information on population and mortality in Wales can be obtained from the **Welsh Assembly Government**: wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/?lang=en Other statistics such as deprivation, transport and road accident data can also be found here.

Information on health, health services and communicable disease is available from the **National Public Health Service for Wales**: www.wales.nhs.uk/sites/home.cfm?OrgID=368

Northern Ireland

Information on population and mortality in Northern Ireland is available from the **General Register Office in Northern Ireland** www.groni.gov.uk part of The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency www.nisra.gov.uk Statistics on topics such as deprivation, transport and road accidents can also be found here.

Health and health services statistics for Northern Ireland can be obtained from the **Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety**: www.dhsspsni.gov.uk

Information on communicable disease is available from the **Communicable Disease Surveillance** Centre Northern Ireland www.cdscni.org.uk

2. Published reports, research studies and grey literature

2.1 Systematic literature reviews

Systematic reviews seek to collate all evidence that fits certain eligibility criteria to address a specific research question – they minimise bias by using explicit, systematic methods of identifying, appraising and synthesising evidence. Sources of good-quality published systematic reviews are given below.

The Cochrane Library: www.thecochranelibrary.org High-quality evidence from Cochrane and other systematic reviews, and clinical trials

The Campbell Collaboration: www.campbellcollaboration.org Systematic reviews in education, crime and justice, and social welfare

The Equality and Human Rights Commission www.equalityhumanrights.com publishes research, enquiries and literature reviews on issues relating to gender, race, disability and age.

EPPI-Centre (Evidence for Policy and Practice Information) eppi.ioe.ac.uk/cms/Default.aspx?tabid=61 and its Database of Promoting Health Effectiveness Reviews, DoPHER: eppi.ioe.ac.uk/webdatabases/Intro.aspx?ID=2 Systematic reviews from a wide range of topic areas.

Centre for Reviews and Dissemination (CRD), University of York: Database of Abstracts of Reviews of Effects (DARE): www.crd.york.ac.uk/crdweb Systematic reviews including quality-assessed reviews. DARE is also available via the Cochrane Library above.

CRD's Health Technology Assessment (HTA) database: www.crd.york.ac.uk/crdweb Completed and ongoing HTAs from around the world – many of these contain a systematic review of the literature.

National Institute for Health Research Health Technology Assessment (HTA) programme www.hta.ac.uk Information about the effectiveness, costs and broader impact of healthcare treatments and tests

2.2 Controlled trials and observational studies

Primary research, such as controlled trials and observational studies, provide information that can be used in a dose-response assessment. They provide an estimate, based on experience, of the likely effect on the health of an individual of a specific health intervention or of a given degree of exposure to some hazard. For example, clinical trials have consistently demonstrated that levels of dental decay are reduced by up to 50 per cent when fluoride is present in drinking water at a level of one part per million.

Controlled trials are often expensive and it can take a long time for usable results to become available. It is therefore unlikely that a new trial, tailor-made to answer the questions that arise in some policy appraisal, can be performed within the necessary time-scale. In the main, therefore, it will be the result of trials and studies that have been performed in the past that are used in policy appraisal to quantify the likely health effects on individuals.

Easily accessible sources of controlled trials and observational studies include:

PubMed www.pubmed.gov (free version of the database Medline)

- Use the Publication Type “*Controlled Clinical Trial*” or “*Randomized Controlled Trial*” if you wish to limit your search to controlled trials
- Ask a librarian or information specialist to assist with the development of a search strategy, and to recommend other useful databases

Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials (Clinical Trials; CENTRAL) database, available via the Cochrane Library www.thecochranelibrary.org

Note: some studies (or reports) may not be published in bibliographic databases such as above – but you can look for grey literature (produced in the countries of the European Community before 2005) by searching the System for Information on Grey Literature (OpenSIGLE) www.opensigle.inist.fr

2.3 Existing Health Impact Assessments

An insight into the likely number of people affected by a policy proposal can sometimes be gained from reports on the health consequences of similar policies that have been implemented before, or elsewhere. Reference should be made to any relevant reports by Government Departments, overseas administrations, and professional, research, university or charitable agencies. Examples are given below:

England

Department of Health (DH) – contains information about HIA including guidance and cost-benefit evaluation www.dh.gov.uk/hia

Association of Public Health Observatories (APHO) – **HIA gateway**. Provides access to information and documents (including guides, evaluation, tools, policy and evidence) to help you do or commission an HIA www.apho.org.uk/resource/view.aspx?RID=44535

Better Regulation Executive – Library of Impact assessments. Contains Impact Assessment reports published by Government assessing the costs, benefits and impact of new regulations: www.ialibrary.berr.gov.uk

Departments of Communities and Local Governments (DCLG) – page listing impact assessment reports from all Communities and Local Government sites www.communities.gov.uk/corporate/publications/impact-assessments

English regions

London Health Commission (LHC) – LHC works to reduce health inequalities and improve the health and well being of all Londoners: www.london.gov.uk/lhc

See in particular:

- Publications: Health Impact Assessments – evidence summaries, reports and guides www.london.gov.uk/lhc/publications/hia

North West Health Impact Assessment capacity building programme – aims to create culture whereby potential health effects of policies are systematically considered by public sector organisations; includes project documentation and reports: www.nwph.net/nwhia/default.aspx

North East Public Health Observatory – information about health impact assessment in the NE and elsewhere, including a review of capacity and report publication list: www.nepho.org.uk/topics/Health%20Impact%20Assessment

Scotland

The Scottish Health Impact Assessment (HIA) Network – includes information on HIA and health inequalities, training and support, evaluations and Scottish HIA resources and guides: www.healthscotland.com/resources/networks/shian.aspx

Wales

Welsh Health Impact Assessment Support Unit (WHIASU) – information on HIA in Wales, news and recent developments, evidence, case studies and reports: www.wales.nhs.uk/sites3/home.cfm?OrgID=522

Ireland

Institute of Public Health in Ireland (IPHI) – provides an overview of the methodology and resources to assist practitioners embarking on the HIA process: www.publichealth.ie/hia See in particular:

HIA publications (guidance and reports): www.publichealth.ie/eventsandresources/hiapublications

Other countries whose governments use HIA

Australia

HIA Connect – University of New South Wales (UNSW), Sydney, Research Centre for Primary Health Care and Equity – provides resources and information (reports, evidence and guidance) about HIA: www.hiaconnect.edu.au/index.htm

Finland

National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health (STAKES) – contains reports, guides, handbooks and articles in the field of human impact assessment (HuIA): info.stakes.fi/iva/EN/publications/index.htm

USA

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – information, resources and publications on HIA (reports, evidence and fact sheets): www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/hia.htm

International organisations

International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA) – IAIA is a forum for advancing innovation, development, and communication of best practice in impact assessment; includes guidelines, reports and newsletters: www.iaia.org/default.aspx

World Health Organization (WHO) International www.who.int

See in particular:

- Health and Environment Linkages Initiative (HELI) – Impact assessment: directory of web resources: www.who.int/heli/impacts/en
- Examples of HIA: www.who.int/hia/examples/en
- Use of Evidence: www.who.int/hia/evidence/en

WHO Offices and Collaborating Centres – there are several WHO offices in each of the 6 WHO world regions, including a regional office, and there are over 800 WHO collaborating centres in over 80 Member States working with WHO on areas such as nursing, occupational health, communicable diseases, nutrition, mental health, chronic diseases and health technologies; includes a database, networks, case studies and statistics: www.who.int/collaboratingcentres/en

WHO Regional Office for Europe www.euro.who.int

See in particular:

- Health Evidence Network (HEN) – provides answers to policy questions in the form of evidence-based synthesis reports and summaries, and easy access to sources of evidence from web sites, databases and documents: www.euro.who.int/HEN HEN also provides links to many other online databases: www.euro.who.int/HEN/20030602_2
- Internet resources for health impact assessment: www.euro.who.int/Document/Hcp/Net_Resources_HIA.pdf (pdf report)

WHO European Centre for Environment and Health, Rome – this WHO office evaluates scientific evidence and develops policy advice on areas including food safety, global change and health, health-enhancing physical activity, health impact assessment and transport and health: euro.who.int/ecehrome. See also:

- HIA publications (articles, books and reports): euro.who.int/healthimpact/infprods/20011129_1

WHO European Centre for Environment and Health, Bonn – this WHO office evaluates scientific evidence on topics including air quality, environment and health information systems, housing and noise, and provides guidelines and recommendations: www.euro.who.int/ecehbonn

WHO European Office for Investment for Health and Development, Venice – this WHO office monitors and reviews the policy implications of emerging research findings on the social and economic determinants of health: www.euro.who.int/ihd See in particular:

- Publications (books, newsletters and journal articles): www.euro.who.int/socialdeterminants/publications/publications

World Bank – a source of financial and technical assistance to developing countries around the world: www.worldbank.org Provides reports, books, official records, data and statistics on topics including climate change, energy access and renewables, environment, food crisis, health nutrition and population, oil gas and mining, transport, urban development and water. See in particular:

- Introduction to health impact assessment (pdf report) [www.ifc.org/ifcext/sustainability.nsf/AttachmentsByTitle/p_HealthImpactAssessment/\\$FILE/HealthImpact.pdf](http://www.ifc.org/ifcext/sustainability.nsf/AttachmentsByTitle/p_HealthImpactAssessment/$FILE/HealthImpact.pdf)

2.4 Professional research, university or charitable agencies

Chartered Institute of Environmental Health – the professional voice for environmental health. See publications (reports): www.cieh.org/policy/publications_list.html

Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia – the HIA Research Unit focuses on the application of HIA to policies, strategies, projects and programs that are likely to have an impact on health, wellbeing and inequalities: www.deakin.edu.au/hmnbs/hia

Faculty of Public Health – The standard setting body for specialists in public health in the UK. See publications (reports and articles): www.fphm.org.uk/resources/AtoZ/default.asp

Joseph Rowntree Foundation – a charity that funds a large, UK-wide research and development programme that seeks to understand the causes of social problems, and to identify ways of overcoming them. See publications (reports) on topics such as housing and communities, environment, social problems, health and care: www.jrf.org.uk/publications

New Economics Foundation (NEF) – NEF aim to improve quality of life by promoting innovative solutions for economic, environmental and social issues. See publications (reports): www.neweconomics.org/publications

Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) – RTPI produce publications on a wide range of topics related to planning. See publications (reports): www.rtpi.org.uk/the_rtpi/rtpi_publications

University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Health Impact Assessment Clearinghouse Learning and Information Center – summaries of HIAs conducted in the United States, reviews of common pathways examined by HIAs, news, and information about methods and tools: www.ph.ucla.edu/hs/hiaclic/

University of Liverpool, the International Health Impact Assessment Consortium (IMPACT) – aims to improve health and reduce health inequalities locally, nationally and internationally, through HIA: www.liv.ac.uk/ihia See HIA reports: www.liv.ac.uk/ihia/IMPACT_HIA_Reports.htm

2.5 Examples of health impacts in specific topic areas

Built environment

A brief literature review of published evidence relevant to the prospective health impacts of the “Central Park Life Centre” proposals. London Health Observatory. www.lho.org.uk/download.aspx?urlid=10591&urlt=1

Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) – CABE work with architects, planners and designers, offering them guidance on projects involving buildings and spaces. Publications (reports) list: www.cabe.org.uk/publications

Health Impacts of the Built Environment – The Institute of Public Health in Ireland. www.publichealth.ie/publications/healthimpactsofthebuiltenvironmentareview Report contains a “sources of information” list.

Healthy urban planning (report): WHO Regional Office for Europe. www.euro.who.int/InformationSources/Publications/Catalogue/20010917_13

Housing – evidence base: WHO International www.who.int/hia/evidence/doh/en/index4.html

Economic development/regeneration

Health Impact Assessment – Draft Economic Development Strategy, London Health Commission. www.london.gov.uk/lhc/docs/publications/hia/mayor/ecdev.pdf

Health impact assessment for regeneration projects. Volume II Selected Evidence Base. East London and the City Health Action Zone www.bcahealth.co.uk/docs/download/east_lon_guide_vol_2.pdf

Energy

Health Impact Assessment – Draft Energy Strategy, London Health Commission. www.london.gov.uk/lhc/docs/publications/hia/mayor/energy.pdf

Pollution

Health impact assessment – Draft Ambient Noise Strategy, London Health Commission. www.london.gov.uk/lhc/docs/publications/hia/mayor/noise.pdf

Health Impact Assessment – Draft Air Quality Strategy, London Health Commission. www.london.gov.uk/lhc/docs/publications/hia/mayor/air.pdf

Rural issues

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) – impact assessments and regulatory impact assessments, also guidance and templates: www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/policy/regulat/impact-assessment/index.htm

Spatial planning

Health impact assessment – Spatial planning (report), London Health Commission. www.london.gov.uk/lhc/docs/publications/hia/mayor/spatial.pdf

Health impacts of spatial planning decisions (report), King's Fund. www.apho.org.uk/resource/view.aspx?RID=77518

Spatial planning, Healthy Urban Development Unit (HUDU), NHS London – reports, specialist knowledge, advice and support www.healthyurbandevlopment.nhs.uk

Transport and travel

A report of a health impact assessment of the mayor's Draft transport strategy by the London Health Commission www.london.gov.uk/lhc/docs/publications/hia/mayor/transport.pdf

Health Impacts of Transport – The Institute of Public Health in Ireland. www.publichealth.ie/publications/healthimpactsotransportareview Report contains a sources of information list.

Transportation Research Information Services (TRIS) online – the largest online bibliographic database of transportation research www.tris.trb.org

Transport and health study group (THSG) – an independent society set up to study the links between transport and health; includes reports, project database and news: www.stockport.nhs.uk/thsg

Waste and waste management

Waste – evidence base. WHO International www.who.int/hia/evidence/doh/en/index5.html

Health Impact Assessment – The Mayor's draft Municipal Waste Management Strategy, London Health Commission. www.london.gov.uk/lhc/docs/publications/hia/mayor/waste.pdf

Waste Management with particular reference to incineration (report) – The Institute of Public Health in Ireland www.publichealth.ie/files/file/Waste_Management_and_Health_report.pdf

3. Qualitative information, stakeholder experience and expert opinion

3.1 Qualitative Information

Qualitative information is available from many of the sites listed above, and will be included in published health impact assessments, other related reports and some systematic reviews. The resources listed below include qualitative research in a variety of subject areas, and provide a starting point for a search of qualitative information.

ESDS Qualidata, University of Essex – provides access and support for a range of social science qualitative datasets. The data supported include in-depth and semi-structured interviews; focus groups; field notes and observations; personal documents and photographs. www.esds.ac.uk/qualidata

Forum: Qualitative Social Research (FQS) – FQS is a peer-reviewed multilingual online journal for qualitative research established in 1999. It is an open-access journal, so all articles are available free of charge. www.qualitative-research.net

Intute: Social Sciences (formerly Social Science Information Gateway), Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) – a free online service that helps you to find web resources for your studies and research. The resources are reviewed and evaluated by subject specialists. Subjects include Anthropology, Economics, Government policy, Hospitality and catering, Politics, Social welfare, Sociology, Sport and leisure practice, Statistics and data, Travel and tourism and Women's studies www.intute.ac.uk/socialsciences

The Association of Public Health Observatories publishes a range of health data, including the Health Profiles for England which give a snapshot of health for every local authority area. www.apho.org.uk

The National Library for Public Health www.library.nhs.uk/publichealth provides access to the public health evidence base, including guidelines, strategies, policies and systematic reviews.

The King's Fund works with individuals and organisations to shape policy, transform services and bring about behaviour change in the health system in England. www.kingsfund.org.uk

Qualitative Research Resources on the Internet, Nova Southeastern University, Florida – list of webpages and journals dedicated to qualitative research www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/qualres.html

Types and quality of knowledge in social care, **Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE)** – this report proposes a classification of social care knowledge based on its sources: organisations, practitioners, the policy community, researchers and users and carers. It also deals with 'quality' and identifies some of the standards that should be used in assessing the very different sources of knowledge that inform social care. www.scie.org.uk/publications/knowledgereviews/kr03.pdf

3.2 Accessing expert opinion

A thorough search is likely to reveal a great number of experts able to help with both the exposure assessment, and the dose-response assessment. Experts of all sorts will need to be consulted for the exposure assessment. For some issues, economists will be able to help, for others it will be necessary to go to engineers or other scientists. It will often be epidemiological experts who are consulted about the dose-response assessment. They are qualified to take a view about, for example, how likely a smoker is to get lung cancer, or how many people exposed to some specific type of radiation will get leukaemia.

It is important to canvas a wide range of expert opinions, as this will sometimes reveal whether the available information is reliable, particularly when pressure groups are involved. Accessing many views about matters on which there is little hard information can sometimes improve the assessment of the answers.

4. Matrix of available evidence

Matrix 2: Other data

Type of information about or for HIA										
Source	Guidance	Guides and guidelines	Reports and case-studies	Evaluation	Policy	Evidence	Training/ capacity building	Other impact assessments	Other	
Department of Health	X			X						
Association of Public Health Observatories		X	X	X	X	X			Tools	
Better Regulation Executive								X		
DCLG								X		
DEFRA						X		X		
Equality & Human Rights Commission	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
London Health Commission		X	X	X		X				
NW HIA Capacity Building Programme			X				X			
Scottish HIA Network		X	X	X		X	X			
Welsh HIA Support Unit			X			X				
Institute of Public Health in Ireland	X		X			X				

Type of information about or for HIA										
Source	Guidance	Guides and guidelines	Reports and case-studies	Evaluation	Policy	Evidence	Training/ capacity building	Other impact assessments	Other	
Australia – HIA Connect	X		X			X				
Finland – STAKES		Human IA	Human IA							
USA – CDC			X			X			X	
IAIA		X	X					X	X	
WHO International	X	X	X			X	X	X		
WHO Europe		X				X			X	
WHO Bonn		X				X			X	
WHO Rome			X			X			X	
WHO Venice					X	X			X	
World Bank		X				X			X	
CIEH		X								
Faculty of Public Health		X					X			
Joseph Rowntree Foundation						X				
King's Fund						X				
National Library for Public Health	X	X	X	X	X	X				

Type of information about or for HIA										
Source	Guidance	Guides and guidelines	Reports and case-studies	Evaluation	Policy	Evidence	Training/ capacity building	Other impact assessments	Other	
New Economics Foundation						X				
Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI)		X	X			X				
Healthy Urban Development Unit (HUDU)			X							
Deakin HIA Research Unit			X							
IMPACT		X	X				X			
UCLA HIA Clearinghouse		Methods	X						Tools	



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