

0341 INJURY PREVENTION – A STRATEGIC PRIORITY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH?

D H Stone*, G Morris *Correspondence: Paediatric Epidemiology and Community Health (PEACH) Unit, Yorkhill Hospital, University of Glasgow, Glasgow G3 8SJ, UK*

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Injury results from the acute transfer of energy from the environment to human tissue. It is thus, ipso facto, an environmental health issue par excellence. In this paper, we argue that injury consequently deserves consideration as a major strategic priority by environmental health professionals. Two international agreements concerning children's health and the environment have major implications for safety. The Children's Environmental Health Action Plan for Europe (CEHAPE) and the European Environmental Health Strategy (SCALE) refer to the need for improved evidence and greater co-operation between the environmental and health sectors. CEHAPE is particularly relevant to safety as it focuses on four regional priority goals, the second of which refers to the prevention and reduction of health consequences from injuries by promoting safe, secure and supportive human settlements for all children. The natural strategic home for injury prevention may therefore lie within environmental health, a domain from which it has generally been excluded. In support of this assertion, we cite

Scotland's recent policy initiative on environment and human health Good Places, Better Health where injury in children up to 8 years of age is one of four child health priorities being tackled during its initial implementation. An important test of the initiative may be its capacity to inform policy, practice and research in the field of injury prevention and safety promotion. If successful, it will help to validate the environmental health approach to a field that remains relatively neglected by public agencies, policy makers, practitioners and researchers.