

HIA : Impartial or Advocacy Tool

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HIA - Advocacy

- HIA goes beyond just providing information – the aim of HIA is to achieve changes in policies and proposals so that they support better health and reduce health inequalities.
Many HIAs therefore overtly aim to influence the decision-making process.
- Taylor L, Gowman N Quigley R (HDA) Influencing the decision-making process through health impact assessment 2003



HIA - Impartial

- Health impact assessment should not be used as a form of advocacy, either for or against the proposal. The HIA should be done impartially and the recommendations should be based on the evidence of health impacts rather than on a pre-existing stance.
- Health Scotland Scottish HIA network - how to HIA guides Website reviewed 10-4-10



Scholarly discourse or Politicised debate?

- Scholarly [HIA] discourses are typically portrayed as impartial and authoritative [informed], being based on evidence and expertise [understanding]
- rather than politicised debate about societal values, visions and governance norms.

Cashmore et al Environmental Impact Assessment Review 2010 : 30; 371-379



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“HIA can and should aim to provide tools that can capture the most deep seated systematic and global economic and environmental crimes in which humankind is complicit.”

O’Keefe E., Scott-Samuel A.
Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics (2002) 30:734-738



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Politics

Who gets what, when and how?

HD Laswell 1935



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Why people want an HIA

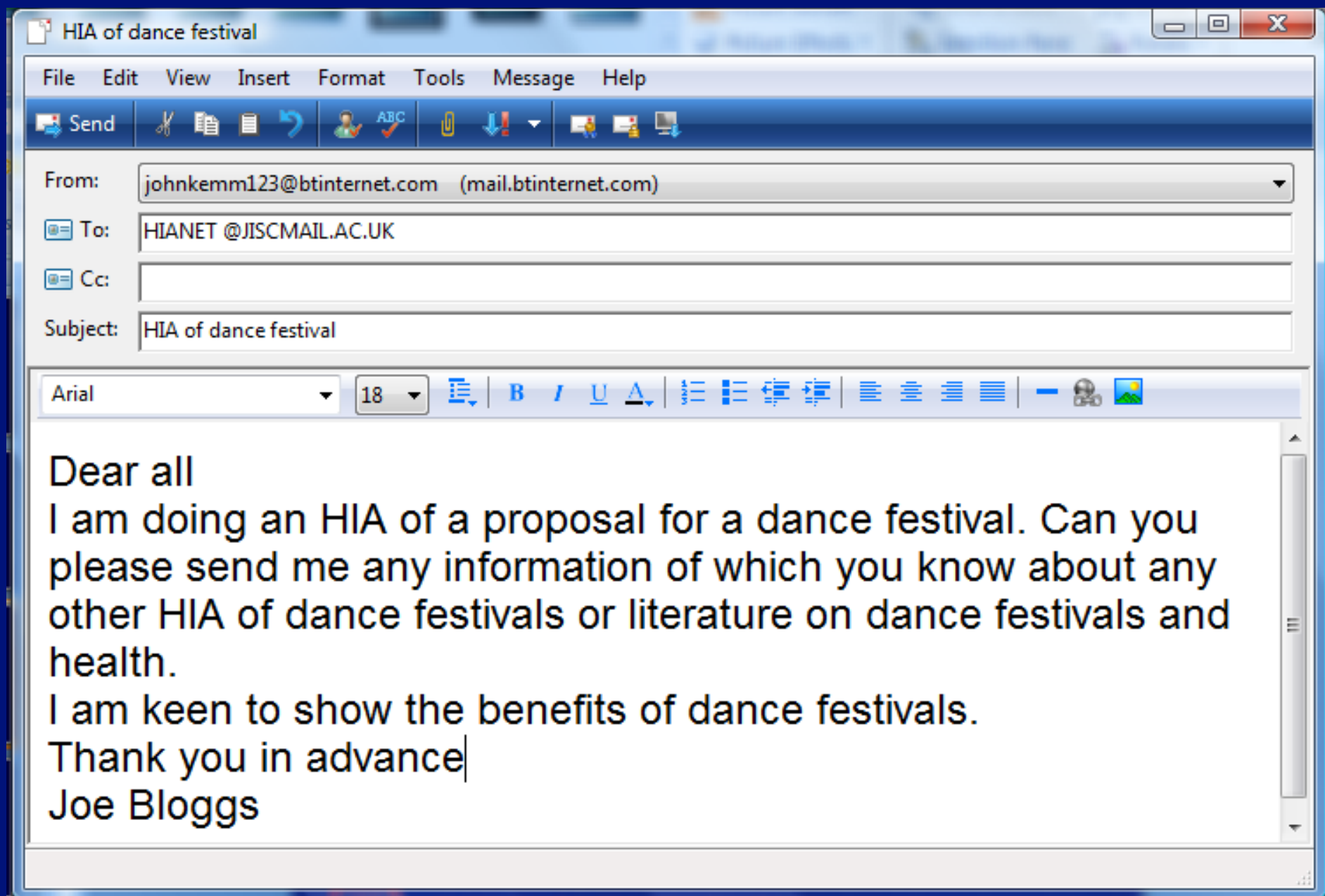
- To demonstrate the decision they have already taken is right
- To stop something happening
- To support the case for doing something
- To inform a decision
- To produce recommendations for mitigation and enhancement



The problem with advocacy

- Taking on role of decision maker
- Mandate
- Paternalism/maternalism
- Deciding which voices to hear (voice of the voiceless)
- Selective use of evidence





HIA values (Gothenburg)

- **Democracy**
 - the right of people to participate in a transparent process for formulation of policies that affect their life
- **Equity**
 - HIA is interested not only in the aggregate impact of the policy but also on the distribution of the impact
- **Sustainable development**
 - Both short and long term are taken into consideration
- **Ethical use of evidence**
 - Use of quantitative and qualitative evidence has to be rigorous and based on scientific disciplines



Contribution of HIA to equity

- Describe inequalities and distribution - Yes
- Describe inequities and prescribe distribution - No



HIA by commercial firms

When someone commissions HIA what are they buying?

What are duties of health impact assessor

- to person paying for HIA?
- to decision making body?
- to public?



Thank you for listening



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The arrogance of science

- Actors who want to participate in impact assessment must adopt scientific conventions for knowledge claims in order for their contributions to be viewed as legitimate.

Cashmore et al Environmental Impact Assessment Review 2010 : 30; 371-379



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The dangers of HIA

- Subverts into technical and analytical considerations issues that are quintessentially political
- Imposes on society a particular representation of policy issues ignoring alternative public meanings
- Conceals multiple dimensions of ignorance by giving prominence to a restricted range of tractable uncertainties
- Systematically exaggerates the capabilities and potential of Science HIA
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- Cashmore et al Environmental Impact Assessment Review 2010 : 30; 371-379



Who's side are you on?

- Equity is key principle of HIA
- Public health sympathetic to “voice of the voiceless”
- Participative or representative democracy – alliance with community
- What is your mandate from any group?
- Paternalism /maternalism
- Assessors are meant to be impartial

