All four partners (Community and Public Health [C&PH], Christchurch City Council [CCC], Environment Canterbury [ECan] and Partnership Health, Canterbury [PHC] of CHIAPP had their lives and workplaces interrupted significantly by the events of the February 22, 2011 Canterbury earthquake.

Three of the four partner organisations were relocated out of the Central Business District (CBD) to new premises, or in the case of the Community and Public Health, staff worked from their own homes in 2011. The impact on the day to day operations of the scheduled activities saw a shift in focus from planned activities (such as completing HIAs) to a greater involvement in recovery work.

Prior to the earthquakes, Environment Canterbury had one centrally located headquarters. Since the earthquakes, they have been scattered to various temporary premises in Christchurch and in Lincoln.

In the initial aftermath of the earthquakes, many Christchurch City Council staff were pulled into the central emergency operation centre operating in the Art Christchurch Gallery.

Partnership Health was dissolved. Ngai Tahu became the fourth CHIAPP member.

While the earthquakes created uncertainty and disruption to the project, they also created opportunities to understand the importance and influence of urban design and planning on a community’s health and wellbeing as part of the earthquake rebuild. In addition, the ability to produce work such as the Integrated Recovery Planning Guide (IRPG), input into the Inquiry by Design master planning process for Lyttleton, Sydenham and Redwood and the opportunity to ensure that the determinants of health are included in future planning for the city, were timely.

What were some of the negative impacts on the CHIAPP Steering Group (SG) and Project work?

The main negative effects of the earthquake on CHIAPP work were interruptions, inability to access key staff, uncertainty around priorities, and opportunities lost for capacity building and training. Other impacts of the earthquake included:

- New focus of work – different priorities and new locations. Staff were challenged to rethink how HIA applies to earthquake situations.
- Difficult for Steering Group to meet and stay cohesive
- Work of the project became much more reactive and not proactive.
- Timing of milestones was impacted as earthquake recovery work took precedence.

C&PH was reconfigured after the February 22, 2011 earthquake and a new Health in All Policies (HIAP) policy team was formed. There were many challenges around cohesion, communication and purpose for the new HIAP team in 2011. Working remotely in a mobile virtual team also presented difficulties.

What were some of the positive impacts on the CHIAPP Steering Group and Project work?

These were opportunities presented by a) the need to do a huge amount of planning in a very short time span and b) the ability to develop tools and have active roles that have a positive influence on the redevelopment of Christchurch. As one CHIAPP member said “this is a once in a lifetime opportunity to get input into what would take 25 years planning but will need to be completed in 5 years”.

Let’s work together
What were some of the perceived potential threats for CHIAPP?

The biggest perceived threats in mid 2011 to the work of the CHIAPP were a) the possibly of funding being reallocated to fund earthquake recovery, b) the lack of organisational commitment to HIAP given all the other priorities, c) the resource availability (staff and time) to carry out HIAP work and d) there was high staff turnover in all organisations as staff were seconded to recovery work.

What are some of the lessons from the recovery for CHIAPP?

Members of the CHIAPP Leadership Group in 2011 highlighted the importance and value of effective communication and relationship building; getting involved at the beginning of policy project work cycles and the need to consult with the community about their wellbeing.

Other comments were:

- Community wellbeing considerations need to be in all policies and planning.
- Relationships with partner organisations need to be continually built on.

What are some key HiAP messages post earthquake?

- The goal for Health in all Policies (HIAP) is that it leads to a better environment for everyone.
- The work is focused on the systematic embedding of HIAP in the partner (and other) organisations
- The HIAP approach uses Health Impact Assessment (HIA) as one of its tools to achieve a better, healthier area for all.
- HIAP is an on-going, useful and valid way of working considering health determinants and is not just a one off project.
- The focus is to educate and re-orientate health and other sectors around a health determinants focus.
- The understanding is that HIAP work is a long term process and takes a lot of energy to maintain collaborative partnerships but is a worthwhile and valuable pursuit for better health outcomes for the people of Canterbury.