

PUBLIC HEALTH SKILLS AND CAREER FRAMEWORK

Consultation

CONSULTATION GUIDANCE AND QUESTIONS

Welcome to the public health skills and career framework.

The framework is intended as a route map for public health, spanning the three categories of the public health workforce as identified by the Chief Medical Officer, England, in 2001 – specialists, practitioners and the “wider workforce”*. It is multi-disciplinary, UK-wide and applies to the public health workforce wherever they are based or by whomever they are employed.

It will be of use to those:

- working in public health and those who may wish to make career moves horizontally or vertically
- wishing to enter public health
- employing the public health workforce
- planning the public health workforce
- commissioning training of the public health workforce
- delivering the training and education of the public health workforce

The framework spans all nine¹ skills and career levels, starting with direct entry.

The scope of this consultation is the competences and knowledge base at each of the nine levels in the framework:

the public health competences (split between “core” competences, ie those any one working in the public health field will need to have, and “defined” ie competences applying to discrete areas/disciplines of public health – health improvement, health protection, health services and quality, health intelligence, academic public health)

the public health knowledge base behind each competence

The framework has been developed over the past 12 months through a series of multidisciplinary workshops attended by public health consultants, specialists and practitioners from a range of different organisations and groups, across the UK.

Skills for Health, commissioned via DH England, has led the process supported by the Public Health Resource Unit, also funded via DH England, to coordinate and provide public health professional input. Funding and support has also been made available via the Implementing Healthier Choices strategy. The development of the framework has been supported by all the other UK Departments of Health.

Following formal consultation, the framework will be revised and submitted formally the end of September to the four UK Departments of Health ready for implementation. The next stage will be formal sign off by nationally public health standard setting bodies, coordinated by the Faculty of Public Health. Further work will be started later in 2007/early 2008 to develop a work-based assessment framework to support practical implementation. Alongside this, the UK Voluntary Register is undertaking a feasibility study to develop a regulatory framework for practitioner registration across relevant professional organisations

¹ The nine levels of the framework reflect the levels of the NHS career framework. They are not directly linked to, and do not reflect, the NHS Agenda for Change levels.

Other relevant national work underway to support framework implementation includes:

- The development by Skills for Health of national occupational standards for health protection
- Development of the information and intelligence workforce (as part of the “Information Healthier Choices” White Paper implementation)
- Support to the development of the health promotion workforce

We would be grateful if you could please follow the link to the home page of the Skills for Health website (News Items) to complete your consultation on-line or alternatively complete the attached questionnaire and email **by 21 September 07**, to -

phcf@skillsforhealth.org.uk

www.skillsforhealth.org.uk

Skills for Health would also welcome pilot testing of the framework by organisations/teams/groups. If you are interested in doing this, a guide on how to take this forward is posted on the Skills for Health website. Please return the results of pilot testing to the Skills for Health email address **by 14 September 07**.

Please email any queries on this consultation to the address above. Where appropriate your query will be directed on to a member of the framework reference group with specific knowledge of your professional area.

UK PUBLIC HEALTH SKILLS AND CAREER FRAMEWORK

Consultation response form

RESPONSE FROM

Name: Dr Steve George
Job title: Vice-President
Organisation/Group: Faculty of Public Health of the Royal Colleges of Physicians
Contact details: e-mail **pluto@soton.ac.uk**

For individual responses, please give your name and organisation

For organisations or groups, please give the name of the organisation or group from whom the response is submitted and the name of the person submitting the form

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

Please could you cite, where appropriate in your responses, specific page numbers for easy reference

Purpose

1. Is the purpose of the framework clear? Yes No

Suggestions for change:

Presentation

2. Is the layout clear and straightforward to use? Yes No

Suggestions for change:

3. Is the language readily understandable? Yes No

When answering this question please bear in mind that a) the final framework will have a full glossary of terms used, and b) the different terminology used in different UK countries will be reflected in the final version

Suggestions for change:

Content and use

4. Would you use the framework to:

i) identify pathways for skills and career progression

Yes No Not relevant to area of responsibility

ii) assess competence and / or gaps in competence in a workforce

Yes No Not relevant to area of responsibility

iii) inform the nature and type of learning and development needed at different stages and areas of public health development

Yes No Not relevant to area of responsibility

iv) commission education and training

Yes No Not relevant to area of responsibility

v) design education, training, regulation and workforce planning

Yes No Not relevant to area of responsibility

vi) other – please state

5. Is there sufficient information / introductory guidance for you to use the framework?

Yes No

Suggestions for change:

During the development of the framework, a number of specific issues arose on which we would like your views:

Ethical management of self

All public health specialists and practitioners need to work to an ethical code of conduct relevant to their professional group or organisation, or to the Faculty of Public Health Code of Good Public Health Practice.

We have included the competences of ethical management of self as an integral part of the core competences rather than having a separate section.

6. Do you agree with this? Yes No

Suggestions for change:

A philosophical argument can be had over the difference between competence and moral rectitude. However, the Faculty removed “ethical management of self” from its curriculum structure as it was difficult to view all of the elements of “good public health practice” as being *assessable* competences, requiring the construction of validated assessment tools.

Relationship between levels of competence across core and defined areas

CORE

7. Should there be an exact read across of the levels of knowledge and competence between core and defined areas? i.e. in principle should someone working at, for example, level 5 in a defined area be at level 5 also for:

i) all core competences Yes No

Suggestions:

ii) all core knowledge Yes No

Suggestions:

DEFINED

- 8. In principle should there be flexibility over levels of competence and knowledge achieved in all the other defined areas, depending on area of practice and level.**

Yes No

Suggestions: If appropriate please cite the constituency / discipline for which you are responding here.

Using the framework competences for the wider workforce

- 9. Do you agree that those working at a *strategic level* with an ability to influence the public's health (e.g. chief executive of a council or a PCT) should have core public health knowledge and/or competences and if so, at what level?**

a) Knowledge: Yes No

Level(s) - please state:

This is not a question to which a straightforward response can be given. Whilst it is likely that a chief executive will need and have some public health knowledge and, more likely, public health competences, particularly in the areas of strategic planning, leadership and management, it is less likely that they will have, or need, core knowledge and competences in those areas which do not overlap with other professional groups outside public health, such as surveillance and assessment of the population's health and well-being and assessing the evidence of effectiveness of health and health care interventions. These are areas where specialist input will be required.

b) Competences Yes No

Level(s) - please state:

As 9 a) above

- 10. Do you agree that those working in *practical roles* with an ability to influence the public's health (e.g. catering assistant) should have core public health knowledge and/or competences and if so, at what level?**

a) Knowledge: Yes No

Level(s) - please state:

At an appropriate level.

b) Competences

Yes

No

Level(s) - please state:

As 10 a) above.

11. In your opinion, if adopted will the skills and career framework help to develop a stronger public health workforce?

Yes

No

Comments:

But see comments below.

Finally

12. Are there any other comments you would like to make on the framework?

The document is an impressive piece of work, and the Faculty of Public Health is generally supportive of it. However, there are some areas where we feel that more emphasis should be given. These are summarised below.

1. The impression of public health work given is in some ways too reactive, and this might discourage some people thinking about working in the area. The order of priorities should be re-considered to give a more positive and confident 'feel' about public health.
2. Some emerging areas of public health (e.g. social marketing) have been missed, but this may reflect the Faculty's curriculum.
3. The Faculty is a multi-disciplinary organisation, and includes people from a wide range of professional backgrounds, including medicine. The opening of the Faculty to those from non-medical backgrounds does not mean that there is no further need for doctors in public health however, and a statement that there is a need for people from a variety of backgrounds, including medicine, in the future of public health would reassure some.
4. There is, broadly, a logical sequence to the levels and certainly in the early levels, and this provides a clear route for career progression through promotion within the NHS and elsewhere. We recognise that working on training is still underway, and ask merely that specific five year training programmes, run by Deaneries, are not forgotten in the process.
5. There is currently discussion underway over the use of the term "nurse consultant" (commonly appointed at level 5, using nursing criteria) and its confusion with public health specialists (currently appointed at level 8 or level 9) with a nursing background. It is clear that there is a difference, and that a nurse consultant, as currently appointed, is not equivalent to a medical or non-medical public health consultant in terms of training or experience. This needs to be revised.

Thank you very much for completing this consultation response.

Please now email the form to:

...@skillsforhealth.org.uk