



FACULTY OF
PUBLIC HEALTH

Public Health Practitioners

www.fph.org.uk



1. Introduction – public health practitioners

Public health practitioners are a vital part of the overall public health workforce and have a huge influence on the health and wellbeing of individuals, groups, communities and populations.

The term 'public health practitioner' is used to describe about 10,000 members of the core public health workforce who work in various areas of public health, including health improvement, health protection and healthcare public health. They may work in the public, private and voluntary and community sectors. Although they work in a range of different areas of public health, public health practitioners all contribute to public health outcomes and improving health and wellbeing.

Public health practitioners have tremendous influence on the health and wellbeing of individuals, groups, communities and populations. They work across the full breadth of public health from health improvement and

health protection, to health information, community development and healthcare public health. They work in all settings: public service, voluntary and private sectors. They work in commissioning and management roles, engage communities in capacity building and link through to the wider workforce. Across the UK, thousands of practitioners work to protect and improve the health and well-being of communities and individuals and reduce inequities. They are responsible for some of the most important health and social gains in the UK. Their roles are multidisciplinary and they are responsible for individual and population level interventions including sensitive and deeply personal issues.

2. Where do public health practitioners work?

Public health is a wide and varied profession and public health practitioners work in many places and in many different settings. For example, they may support healthy lifestyle programmes, helping individuals and groups to stop smoking and take more exercise. They may work on immunisation programmes and screening, based in local communities or in public health teams specialising in health protection. Some public health practitioners may play an important role in national and local health campaigns. Others may work in the public health knowledge and intelligence teams in local government organisations and Public Health England (PHE).

Public health practitioners work with people from a range of organisations in the public, voluntary and private sectors to promote and support the health of the public. Examples of the types of roles public health practitioners perform include:¹

- Teenage pregnancy co-ordinator;
- Smoking cessation advisor;
- Substance misuse worker;
- Public health nutritionist;
- Health improvement practitioner;
- Advanced health improvement practitioner;
- Health improvement practitioner (specialist);
- Health improvement practitioner (advanced); and
- Health protection practitioner.

1. <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/public-health/roles-public-health/public-health-practitioner>

3. Entry requirements for public health practitioners

There are no set entry requirements to become a public health practitioner. Many roles do not have clearly defined training routes and, currently, registration as a 'practitioner' with the UK Public Health Register (UKPHR) is voluntary though strongly recommended. At present you can only apply to register as a public health practitioner with UKPHR through a local assessment and verification scheme.

An example entry route would be to get a qualification and experience working in a public health-related area. Depending on the specific practitioner role, related qualifications could include a first level degree in public health or related area, nursing, environmental health, or sport and exercise. Experience might include working with communities or groups, or working in a knowledge and intelligence role. For more senior posts a Master's Degree in Public Health (or equivalent experience) or registration with the UKPHR is often a requirement.

The Faculty of Public Health is strongly supportive of practitioner schemes leading to registration and is united with the UKPHR in the belief that a registered public health practitioner workforce and its continued professional development are crucial for the delivery of effective public health outcomes.²

2. <https://ukphr.org/practitioner/>

4. Training and development

Public health practitioners generally have a relevant degree or equivalent experience, and it is now possible to undertake a public health practitioner degree via a level 6 apprenticeship. As their career progresses, public health practitioners may move into line management or senior management roles, and will often undertake project management training or work towards a Master's degree.

Practitioners can also undertake specialty training in public health to qualify for specialist posts, such as consultants and directors of public health. Others may decide to follow an academic pathway, teaching and researching on public health issues.

The Faculty welcomes public health practitioners as members if they belong to a regulated profession or have obtained registration with a professional body, have a graduate degree relevant to public health, and have three years of experience working in core public health.

Practitioners are encouraged to keep a portfolio or record of evidence of their training and experience. The portfolio may be submitted to the UKPHR for registration as a practitioner.

Training and development is also underpinned by the public health skills and knowledge framework. The framework describes the functions carried out by the wider public health workforce. The framework can be used by employers to identify strengths or gaps in their capabilities as teams and organisations to design job descriptions for recruitment.³

3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-health-skills-and-knowledge-framework-phskf>

5. How does the FPH support public health practitioners?

FPH supports public health practitioners in a number of ways, through [membership](#) of the Faculty, the provision of continuing professional development (CPD) activities, for example those provided by the Faculty's [Special Interest Groups](#), and by the provision of a comprehensive series of [practitioner masterclass](#) workshops.



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