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## The wider public health workforce

Find out more about roles within the wider public health workforce and how they make a difference to people's health and wellbeing.



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We refer to people who contribute to public health in some way through their actions (even if they do not realise it) as the '**wider public health workforce**'.

It is estimated that 15-20 million people in over 170 occupations work in the wider public health workforce. Many people therefore make a contribution to the health and wellbeing of others in their daily lives.

If you do not already work in a public health role (or if you don't think you do), have you thought about how, in your working life, you have an impact on the health and wellbeing of others?

## Health roles with a public health aspect

Here are just some of the roles that can make a difference to public health:

- health trainers [1] working with individuals and communities to support healthy lifestyles such as taking regular exercise, reducing alcohol intake, practising safe sex and stopping smoking
- allied health professionals [2] signposting people to sexual or mental health services or offering brief lifestyle advice on healthy eating
- midwives [3] offering support and encouragement to women to give up smoking during pregnancy or after the birth
- pharmacists [4] providing emergency contraception services by staff who have undertaken additional training and offer advice direct to patients on issues such as giving up smoking and sexual health
- dental team [5] working to improve dental health in the local population, for example outreach work in schools and with community groups
- health informatics staff [6] analysing and implementing systems that can help improve health outcomes for a particular client group or population
- opticians helping to promote good eye health and sight, and ensure equitable access to eye-care services
- doctors [7] assessing the evidence of the effectiveness of interventions programmes and services to improve health and wellbeing
- general practice nurses [8] offering information and advice to elderly patients so that people can maintain their independence
- district nurses [9] helping people to manage their long-term conditions as effectively as possible
- occupational health nurses [10] supporting employees to understand the effect of the work environment on health and wellbeing

## More roles with a public health aspect

Here are just a few examples of how public sector roles can have a positive impact on health and wellbeing.

### Making a contribution to public health on a daily basis:

- **teaching and educational staff**, eg school teachers, educating children about healthy eating and getting them involved in sport and physical activity
- **protective service staff**, eg fire and rescue services, visiting schools and communities to discuss safety issues and risks associated with fires, chemical hazards and waste materials; police officers visiting schools and communities to raise awareness about crime?
- **care workers**, caring for and supporting people to live as independently as possible
- **community support and outreach workers**, eg community support workers and social

- services officers, providing support, advice and guidance about everyday living
- **social workers** working with individuals, families and communities to provide advice, support and protection to the vulnerable
- **welfare and housing staff**, eg housing officers, inspecting accommodation to ensure it is safe and clean to live in; trading standards officers, helping to tackle the supply of fake goods such as tobacco and alcohol
- **sports and fitness staff**, eg leisure centre staff, advising members and visitors about sports clubs, societies and events

### **Making a partial contribution to public health:**

- **architects and town planners**, helping to design energy-efficient homes and green spaces, to reduce traffic and pollution, and to encourage more walking or cycling
- **kitchen staff**, eg school catering staff, planning nutritious meals for children; workplace catering staff, planning nutritious meals for workers
- **cleaning and refuse staff**, eg cleaners, ensuring working environments are hygienic; waste management staff, ensuring that transportation of waste takes place efficiently without contamination

All these roles, and many others within the public sector have an important role in protecting and promoting people's health and wellbeing in some way.

You can find out more about these kinds of roles on the National Careers Service website [11] and the Skills for Health website [12].

### **Further information and links**

- Understanding the wider public health workforce [13]
- Gov.uk - public health [14]
- Office for Health Improvement and Disparities [15]
- UK Health Security Agency [16]

You may also find it helpful to take a look at our career planning [17] and Is a public health career for you? [18] sections to discover more about what you have to offer to the public health profession. You can also view our explore roles [19] section to think more about roles which contribute to people's overall health and wellbeing.

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**Source URL:**<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/working-health/working-public-health/public-health-workforce-explained/wider-public-health-workforce>

### **Links**

- [1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/public-health/health-trainer>
- [2] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals>
- [3] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/midwifery/midwife>
- [4] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/pharmacy/pharmacist>

[5] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/dental-team> [6]  
<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/health-informatics> [7]  
<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors> [8] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing/general-practice-nurse> [9] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing/district-nurse>  
[10] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing/occupational-health-nurse>  
[11] <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk> [12] <http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Care-careers/Think-Care-Careers/Jobs/Job-types-available.aspx> [13]  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/understanding-the-wider-public-health-workforce-in-england>  
[14] <https://www.gov.uk/government/topics/public-health>  
[15] <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/office-for-health-improvement-and-disparities>  
[16] <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-health-security-agency>  
[17] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/career-planning> [18] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/careers-public-health/why-work-public-health/public-health-career-you> [19]  
<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles>