

Working life (public health intelligence)

This page describes more about the working life of public health intelligence professionals, example roles and where you could work.

Working life

Very broadly, the activities of intelligence professionals include:

- data entry
- analysis of data
- information interpretation
- reporting results of data analysis
- [epidemiology](#) ^[1]
- statistics

You could begin a career within public health intelligence as a trainee, progressing to more senior levels through experience and further training. At more senior level, you'd hold a more strategic role, looking out for new approaches to gathering and analysing data about people's health, and influencing how health services develop.

public health intelligence professional at desk

Public health intelligence roles

The following list doesn't include all of the roles available for public health intelligence roles, but provides examples of the types of roles available. The roles are listed in ascending order of seniority from trainee to principal analyst. Further roles include health economist role and field epidemiologist.

- [trainee public health intelligence analyst](#)
- [public health analyst](#)
- [senior public health intelligence analyst](#)
- [principal public health intelligence analyst](#)
- [head of public health intelligence](#)
- [health economist](#)
- [field epidemiologist](#)

Trainee public health intelligence analyst

As a trainee public health intelligence analyst, you'll initially undertake a range of tasks and projects to gain the skills necessary to work as a public health intelligence analyst. As you gain more experience, you'll analyse, present and interpret statistical data to support the aims of the organisation you're working in. You may also begin to provide advice and guidance to public health intelligence projects, including acting as the first point of contact for colleagues.

Following training and development, you will be able to:

- analyse and interpret complex data
- interpret statistics appropriately
- introduce, adapt and improve information systems within your area of work
- investigate data anomalies and make corrective action as required
- work with colleagues to develop information needs and priorities
- present findings of your analyses to a range of people
- provide advice to colleagues on statistical techniques to be used

Formal training opportunities are provided by the [Office for Health Improvement and Disparities](#) [2]. Similar entry-level roles may be available in local authorities, although the training will not be as formal. You can also find out more information about similar entry level roles in public health intelligence on our [entry requirements page](#) [3].

You could begin a career within public health intelligence as a trainee, progressing to more senior levels through experience and further training.

Public health analyst

Working as a public health analyst involves working with colleagues to deliver high-quality intelligence services. You'll help to provide analyses of data that improve understanding of health and the factors that influence health. You'll also be working in partnership with other organisations to influence the way information is used in policy and strategy development. Other aspects of your day-to-day work could include:

- planning and managing public health databases and related projects
- responding to requests for intelligence and providing expert advice in the use of the information
- analysing public health data including identifying trends
- presenting data in the most effective ways, for example in written reports and verbally
- providing training to others, for example in statistical methods
- supervising and managing staff

In a public analyst role, you're likely to have a first or higher degree in a relevant subject and suitable experience gained from previous roles.

Senior public health intelligence analyst

Senior public health intelligence analysts have similar responsibilities to public health analysts. However, the advice and support you'd be providing would be at a much higher level of expertise. Equally, your skills in analysis, statistics and epidemiology [1] would be much more specialised. Depending on your specific role within the organisation you are working, your work could include:

- planning and managing projects involving complex data
- responding to complex data queries
- communicating the meaning of highly complex data analyses in the most effective ways to different audiences
- development and training of other public health intelligence staff for example, in particular public health policies, strategies or priorities
- managing other analytical teams

As a senior public health intelligence analyst, you may hold a postgraduate qualification in public health or a related field, or may have significant equivalent experience.

Principal public health intelligence analyst

As a principal public health intelligence analyst, you'll hold a senior position within the organisation you work for. You'll be ensuring that data is available, that it is appropriately interpreted, and that it is used to make decisions that could have a positive impact on health.

Some of your day to day work could also include:

- planning and managing projects and research
- supporting the planning of health and wellbeing services
- supervising analytical work including quality monitoring
- communicating intelligence findings, both verbally and in writing
- leading and managing a team

Working as a principal public health intelligence analyst, you'll hold a Master's qualification in public health or a related field, or have equivalent experience. It's also likely that you'll have further qualifications or equivalent experience in statistics or related subject.

Head of public health intelligence

Heads of public health intelligence hold one of the most senior positions in the organisation. You'll work with many groups in the NHS, government and other sectors to ensure that the importance of health intelligence is understood. Depending on where you work, your responsibilities could include:

- planning and managing national projects
- initiating and managing research
- leading and performance managing a team
- providing training and development
- developing and implementing innovation in health intelligence

As a head of intelligence, you'll be an experienced professional and bring significant experience from previous roles. You'll also hold suitable qualifications such as a Master's in Public Health and Statistics or related field. You'll also be experienced and skilled in managing

change and developing strategy and policy that can positively influence health and wellbeing.

Health economist

Working as a health economist, you'll be involved in various public health projects to provide your expertise on their overall cost effectiveness. It's likely you'll be working with a range of other professionals such as other health economists, public health analysts, and researchers and with directors of public health to make the economic case for making changes that aim to improve health and prevent ill-health. Some of your specific responsibilities could also include:

- providing support in the development of new projects, advising how to make the best use of evidence and techniques in health economics
- describing how an intervention could be more cost effective or help to reduce pressure on other health services
- using economic methods, tools and evidence
- using complex statistical techniques and methods

As a health economist, you're likely to have a postgraduate qualification in health economics and significant experience of applying that knowledge to service development or delivery. You'll also have detailed knowledge of a range of economic theory and knowledge of epidemiological measures and analysis.

Field epidemiologist

As a field epidemiologist you could have a role in examining outbreaks of infectious diseases such as meningitis, measles, flu, or food poisoning. Or you could be monitoring the health effects from exposures to things like radio waves from mobiles and telephone masts. Your day-to-day work could also include:

- interviewing people or administering surveys (for example to those who have become ill during an outbreak)
- developing ideas and explanations about possible causes (hypotheses) and then testing these
- using the results of microbiological and environmental investigations (such as blood, water or airborne samples)
- informing what needs to be done to control spread of an infection or minimise harm (such as the closure of a restaurant in a case of food poisoning or the removal of a product from the market)
- monitoring the effect of actions taken
- informing the development of policies associated with infectious diseases or environmental hazards

The [Office for Health Improvement and Disparities](#) [2] runs a two-year postgraduate training programme for health professionals who have a keen interest in applied health protection epidemiology [1] and who wish to develop specialist skills in field epidemiology [1].

Where will I work?

As a public health intelligence professional, you could work in a range of locations and organisations in the UK:

• England

At a national level you could be working for example, at the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities [2], NHS England [4] or the Government Statistical Service [5].

At a local level, you could be working within a local authority within a public health team or a council's intelligence team. You might also work within NHS commissioning support units [6], which means that you might be providing expertise to a clinical commissioning group [7] about services they provide to a local area. Some roles are also available in the third sector [8].

• Scotland

In Scotland, the main employers of public health knowledge and intelligence professionals are:

- Scottish Public Health Observatory [9]
- NHS National Services Scotland [10]
- local NHS Health Boards [11]

? [11] Some roles are also available in the third sector [8].

• Wales

In Wales the main employer of public health knowledge and intelligence professionals is the Public Health Wales Observatory [12]. Some roles are also available in the third sector [8].

• Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, the main employer of public health knowledge and intelligence staff is Ireland and Northern Ireland's Population Health Observatory [13]. Some roles are also available in the third sector [8].

Partner logos

Local Government Association_ [14]

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Links

[1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Epidemiology> [2]
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/office-for-health-improvement-and-disparities> [3]
<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/public-health/public-health-knowledge-and-intelligence-professional/entry-requirements> [4] <http://www.england.nhs.uk/> [5] <https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/> [6]
<https://www.england.nhs.uk/commissioning/comm-supp/csu/> [7] https://www.healthcareers.lampuat64-3.room.net/glossary#Clinical_Commissioning_Group [8] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/careers-public-health/employers-public-health-staff/third-sector> [9] <http://www.scotpho.org.uk/> [10]
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