

"I can see positive changes in staff and I can see them enjoying themselves."

Linda started her working life as a trained ballet dancer, teaching dancing for several years before going into the pub trade with her husband. Little did she know that the skills she was learning would lead to a career in public health.

Linda Saxe

Workforce health and wellbeing project manager

Employer or university

Derbyshire community health services (DCHS) NHS foundation trust

Salary range

£30k-£40k

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**How I got into
the role**

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Originally I trained as a classical dancer and taught dance for a number of years. When I met my husband we became publicans. After having a family I became a classroom assistant for young people with severe learning difficulties. From there, I went on to work for the NHS as a rehabilitation support worker, working as a health care assistant on the wards. Then I became a technical instructor in an Amputee Service. I also worked as an out-of-hours district nurse escort.

In 2004 I saw a job advertised in the Health Promotion Service for a project manager for health promotion in pubs. It was a partnership project between local authorities, public health and the Tobacco Control Alliance, and it was to implement the Smoke-Free Pubs agenda. In that role I worked across Derbyshire. Working in partnership was of huge

importance, and I had a desk in every local council. I'm really proud to say that Derbyshire was one of the first counties to implement the Smoke-Free Pubs agenda.

In 2009 I was successful in getting a role with Derbyshire Community Health Services (DCHS) to implement a Health-Promoting Workforce project. The project evolved and was renamed Making Every Contact Count. Initially the role was about making sure that staff understood that they have a crucial part to play in promoting the health and wellbeing of everyone around them. That role has evolved into what I do today.

I have done some training in relation to public health including the Open University 301 Health Promotion module and a degree in Health and Social Care. I have an education and training award and have completed a management training course. I am also a Fellow of the Royal Society of Public Health (RSPH).

Being a classical dancer helps in all sorts of ways in every a part of life your life. It teaches you dedication, perseverance and discipline. Also, teaching dancing has helped lot with having the confidence stand up in front of people and to deal with all sorts of issues.

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What I do

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My job is to develop projects and initiatives that help staff to improve their own health and wellbeing and that of those around them. There are over 4000 staff in the organisation and they are spread across 133 sites in Derbyshire and beyond. I work within DCHS, alongside the Health Promotion Service and in partnership with colleagues in public health and the local authorities.

I set up new projects and steer existing ones. I deliver training and presentations and I attend all sorts of different events. I respond to requests from managers, staff and external organisations and I prepare papers for and attend meetings etc. I develop resources and do all of the associated administrative work with the help of a coordinator. I am mainly office based but travel around the county on quite a few occasions.

My organisation now has 76 workplace health champions. These are staff who have done their RSPH Level 2 Understanding Health Improvement training. We co-ordinate and support the Health Champion Network which has regular meetings to feedback what it is doing, and we invite external speakers to ensure they stay up to date.

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The best bits

and challenges

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The best bit about my role is making a difference to staff. I can see positive changes in staff and I can see them enjoying themselves. If our staff are happy and feel supported and well cared for, then that can only impact positively on how they care for others, and that in turn, can only improve the quality of the services that we provide.

Staff are now beginning to recognise the benefits of my role, and whole teams now benefit from what I do. For instance I am currently coordinating a Pedometer Challenge. We had 68 teams enroll with up to 10 people in each team.

The main challenge is that I get very little funding and have to find it wherever I can. For example, the prizes for the Pedometer Challenge are being donated, and Derbyshire Sport has donated some of the pedometers. The other challenge, one I think everyone working in Public Health faces, is that outcomes are often difficult to measure and can be a long time coming. People want instant results but it has taken a long time to get to where we are today and I have had to argue our corner all along the way.

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Career plans and top tips for others

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I am getting towards the end of my career now, but I don't intend stopping altogether, I will find something else to do but I don't have anything planned as yet. I love reading and salsa dancing; I am sure another opportunity will come my way.

Take every opportunity that presents itself, building on your strengths. There is a role for everyone in the public health or health promotion field. It doesn't matter where you have been or what you have done there will be a role for you.

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