New skills framework launched for public health profession

On Tuesday 15 November, a cross-section of the public health community gathered in London to launch the newly revised Public Health Skills and Knowledge Framework [1].

With endorsement from across the public health system, the revised framework aims to reflect the prevailing public health landscape, ensuring the public health workforce continues to develop the skills and competences needed both now and in future.

Ultimately, the aim is to present the new framework on an easy-to-navigate digital platform.

Shirley Cramer, chief executive of the Royal Society for Public Health, opened the event by praising the skills of the UK public health workforce as among the best in the world and
recognising the importance of the framework as a benchmark for individuals and employers to ensure they are prepared for the public health challenges of the future. Shirley thanked the authors and those responsible for bringing the framework to publication.

Presenting the framework itself, Claire Cotter, programme manager for PHE, discussed the extensive consultation and development work which saw high levels of engagement from the workforce.

The framework was provisionally published in August. This allowed for the launch event to showcase some strong examples of the framework being used practically by service providers and by those developing qualifications. In addition, Dr Adrian Viens, Associate Professor in Law at Southampton University, identified an ethical dimension running through the framework and explained the importance of ethics throughout public health work.

Duncan Selbie, PHE chief executive, spoke of the importance of the framework in creating a mobile workforce with a common language. Duncan took a seldom-used example of someone working as a nutritionist in a private food manufacturing company, looking at issues like product reformulation to reduce sugar. Such people, he contended, should be able to see their public health skills reflected in this framework and be able to present their skills when applying for public health positions in local authorities and vice versa. By moving around the system and sharing our skills we make the public health workforce stronger and better prepared to tackle the public health challenges of the future.

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