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The core public health workforce

This page provides information about types of 'core' public health roles and the different levels of public health knowledge and skill that they have.



Core public health roles are those where public health is identified as being the main part of the role.

Who works in 'core' public health?

Core public health roles are those where public health is identified as being the main part of the role. It is estimated that around 40,000 people work in core public health roles.

The Career Framework

Core public health roles currently require skills and knowledge at or above level 5 of the nine-level Skills for Health Career Framework [1].

Roles at levels 1-4 of the Career Framework may be considered as part of the wider public health workforce [2] and as a potential step towards developing a career in a core public health role.

- **Levels 1, 2, 3
and 4**

Level 1

People at level 1 are at entry level, and require basic general knowledge. They undertake a limited number of straightforward tasks under direct supervision. They could be any new starter to work in the Health sector, and progress rapidly to Level 2. Sample roles include:

- volunteer worker (eg in breastfeeding)

Level 2

People at level 2 require basic factual knowledge of a field of work. They may carry out clinical, technical, scientific or administrative duties according to established protocols or procedures, or systems of work. Sample roles include:

- dental health worker (schools)
- public health receptionist in NHS unit
- administrator or administrative assistant (eg in drug and alcohol team, community safety unit, public health development unit)
- peer educator
- lay health worker
- childcare worker
- classroom assistant
- creche worker
- refuge worker
- refuse worker
- healthcare assistant
- community pharmacy support staff

Level 3

People at level 3 require knowledge of facts, principles, processes and general concepts in a field of work. They may carry out a wider range of duties than the person working at level 2, and will have more responsibility, with guidance and supervision available when needed. They will contribute to service development, and are responsible for self development. Sample roles include:

- smoking cessation advisor

- substance misuse worker

Level 4

People at level 4 require factual and theoretical knowledge in broad contexts within a field of work. Work is guided by standard operating procedures, protocols or systems of work, but the worker makes judgements, plans activities, contributes to service development and demonstrates self development.

They may have responsibility for supervision of some staff. Sample roles include:

- public health intelligence assistant
- public health statistical assistant
- health trainer [3]

Levels 5, 6 and 7

Level 5

People at level 5 will have a comprehensive, specialised, factual and theoretical knowledge within a field of work and an awareness of the boundaries of that knowledge. They are able to use knowledge to solve problems creatively, make judgements which require analysis and interpretation, and actively contribute to service and self development. They may have responsibility for supervision of staff or training. Sample roles include:

- public health intelligence analyst
- public health senior statistical assistant
- public health research assistant
- health visitor [4]
- registered nurse [5]
- school nurse [6]
- public health nutritionist [7]
- public health practitioner: health improvement practitioner [8]
- public health practitioner: health protection practitioner [8]

Level 6

People at level 6 require a critical understanding of detailed theoretical and practical knowledge, are specialist or have management and leadership responsibilities, or both. They demonstrate initiative and are creative in finding solutions to problems. They have some responsibility for team performance and service development and they consistently undertake self development. Sample roles include:

- public health intelligence analyst
- public health statistician
- health visitor [4]
- school nurse [6]
- occupational health nurse [9]
- public health practitioner: health improvement practitioner (specialist) [8]

Level 7

People at level 7 of the career framework have a critical awareness of knowledge issues in the field and at the interface between different fields. They are innovative, and have a responsibility for developing and changing practice and/or services in a complex and unpredictable environment.

Sample roles include:

- senior public health intelligence analyst
- epidemiologist
- senior statistician
- health visitor [4]
- school nurse [6]
- public health nurse: health promotion nurse [10]
- public health nurse: health protection nurse [10]
- public health nurse: tuberculosis (TB) nurse [10]
- public health nurse: infection control nurse [10]
- midwife [11]
- public health practitioner: health improvement practitioner advanced [8]

Levels 8 and 9

Level 8

People at level 8 of the career framework require highly specialised knowledge, some of which is at the forefront of knowledge in a field of work, which they use as the basis for original thinking or research, or both. They are leaders with considerable responsibility, and the ability to research and analyse complex processes. They have responsibility for service improvement or development. They may have considerable clinical or management responsibilities, or both, be accountable for service delivery or have a leading education or commissioning role. Sample roles include:

- principal public health intelligence specialist
- principal statistician
- senior epidemiologist
- assistant head of public health information
- head of public health information directorate
- public health academic: lecturer in public health [12]
- public health academic: clinical lecturer in public health [12]
- public health consultant and specialist: specialist in public health [13]
- public health consultant and specialist: consultant in public health [13]
- public health consultant and specialist: consultant in dental public health [13]
- public health manager: health protection specialist [14]
- public health manager: health improvement principal [14]
- public health manager: commissioning manager [14]
- public health manager: public health principal [14]

Level 9

People working at level 9 require knowledge at the most advanced frontier of the field of work and at

the interface between fields. They will have responsibility for the development and delivery of a service to a population, at the highest level of the organisation. Sample roles include:

- director of public health [15]
- director of public health: regional director of health protection [15]
- public health academics: head of school of public health [12]

Further information

Find out more about the different levels in the Skills for Health Career Framework [1].

Mapping the core public health workforce. [16]

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

Links

- [1] http://www.skillsforhealth.org.uk/index.php?option=com_mtree&task=att_download&link_id=163
- [2] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/careers-public-health/public-health-workforce-explained/wider-public-health-workforce> [3] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/public-health/health-trainer>
- [4] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/public-health/health-visitor>
- [5] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing> [6] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/public-health/school-nurse> [7] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/clinical-support-staff/nutritionist> [8] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/public-health/public-health-practitioner>
- [9] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing/occupational-health-nurse>
- [10] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/public-health/public-health-nurse>
- [11] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/midwifery/midwife>
- [12] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/public-health/public-health-academic>
- [13] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/public-health/public-health-consultants-and-specialists>
- [14] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/public-health/public-health-manager>
- [15] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/public-health/director-public-health>
- [16] <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mapping-the-core-public-health-workforce>