

## Armed Forces

This page provides information about public health roles available in the Armed Forces and where you can find out more.

The primary role of the Defence Medical Services [1] (DMS) is to deliver healthcare and prevent disease. Many services within the DMS make a contribution towards public health but only public health specialists [2] are totally focused on it.



The practice of public health offers a varied and challenging career in the defence medical services.

Our armed forces are more effective with a healthy workforce, which is why improving public health is so crucial.

For public health professionals, the DMS offers a varied and challenging career. It provides an opportunity to support the direction of the armed forces and how it employs its personnel. It is also intellectually stimulating and professionally satisfying.

To work in the armed forces, you'll need to be patient and take a longer view on life than sometimes fits into the military culture.

- Selection, training and assessment

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### **Selection and training**

Training in public health usually takes five years of full-time study. One year is spent either full time or part time on academic training with the remaining four years spent in higher specialist training posts.

There is scope for the employment of about six public health consultants in the Armed Forces. Most of the consultants are military personnel, although there are two civilian consultants who are contracted to work in military public health. The military consultants are more focused on health protection, which includes operational deployments.

Training is mainly in-house as the majority of the core public health competences can be attained working in military public health. However, to complete the full range of training objectives (as also required by civilian counterparts on the same specialty training programme) you will spend a period of time outside, and this might be in:

- a local authority
- Public Health England

As for civilian applicants, the public health specialty training programme is open to those from both medical and other backgrounds. Applicants must meet the person specification. Find out more about applications for specialty training in public health [3]. In order to apply for training, you must first satisfy the postgraduate dean that you are suitable. Doctors [4] must have completed Foundation Stage 2 training, although in the DMS a trainee usually enters training after spending a period of time in a clinical specialty either in primary or secondary care and may even be accredited as a GP or Consultant.

You must have had a successful initial interview with the single service consultant adviser in public health before you apply, as they will advise the dean and his medical director general, as well as give you access to the application forms and help you complete them.

With the dean's support, you will then follow the national application process, which consists of numerical and critical reasoning tests, a situational judgment (scenario-based) test as well as a formal interview. Whilst military candidates are not in competition for the same jobs, this system ensures that military candidates meet the standards required of their civilian counterparts.

If you are successful, the dean will issue a DMS National Training Number and you will be allocated a suitable training post.

## Assessment

Training is described in terms of three phases. Progression between these phases is determined by success in Part A and Part B examinations, which reflects your progression from basic knowledge and understanding to independent public health practice.

Part A is a knowledge-based written examination taken within the first 12 to 18 months. Part B is an oral exam based on public health scenarios, and tests a candidate's ability to apply knowledge, skills and attitudes gained in the first two to three years of training.

Find out more about the training programme for public health specialty registrars [5].

Once you have completed your training, you are able to apply for a training completion certificate. You will then be able to apply via the dean for an Armed Services Consultant Appointment Board (ASCAB).

- Opportunities after training and CPD

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### Opportunities after training

Whilst service need dictates where an individual is posted, there are opportunities to practise public health in a range of environments and focus on one or more specialist areas. Some consultants/specialists will remain as generalists in public health and others will sub-specialise in the areas of health protection or health information. You may use public health as a stepping stone to command and staff roles in the DMS.

In addition to the day-job, public health opens opportunities in teaching, lecturing and training of all medical officers.

As the Armed Forces finds itself embroiled in 'humanitarian' type missions, it is likely that the operational role will become more formalised. This may mean deploying to provide advice to the civil-military cooperation activities and playing a significant part in health reconstruction. Or it may involve short but rapid deployments to manage outbreaks or conduct local needs assessments to inform missions. For example, in recent years consultants have been deployed to Afghanistan to investigate disease outbreaks.

### Continuing Professional Development

Training does not finish with your appointment as a consultant and posting to a suitable post. Public health involves lifelong learning and the specialty is committed to Continuing Professional Development (CPD). To remain in good standing as a consultant, a record of CPD is required of each consultant and is submitted to the Faculty of Public Health [6] (FPH) annually. CPD is also a vital part of annual appraisal and revalidation.

- Environmental health roles

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The catastrophic consequences of poor sanitation and environmental health conditions on military campaigns of the past are well documented. For that reason, the Defence Medical Services [1] (DMS)

place a significant emphasis on preventive medicine and medical force protection, ie conserving the fighting potential of a force so that it is healthy and fully combat capable.

This includes the efforts of environmental health practitioners [7](EHPs) in assessing the physical, chemical and biological factors in the military environment and advising commanders on how to correct, control and prevent those factors from adversely affecting the health or survival of personnel or from reducing operational capability.

The Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force each employ environmental health qualified personnel. Opportunities for EHPs within each of the Armed Forces vary and enquiries should be made in the first instance through local Armed Forces Careers Information Offices [8].

- Further information

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- ?Armed Forces Careers Information Offices [8]
- Army [9]
- Royal Air Force [10]
- Royal Navy [11]

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**Source URL:** <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/working-health/working-public-health/employers-public-health-staff/armed-forces>

### Links

- [1] <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/defence-medical-services>
- [2] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/public-health/public-health-consultants-and-specialists>
- [3] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/public-health/public-health-consultants-and-specialists/entry-requirements-public>
- [4] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles>
- [5] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/public-health/public-health-consultants-and-specialists/training-and-development>
- [6] <http://www.fph.org.uk/>
- [7] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/public-health/environmental-health-professional>
- [8] <http://www.armedforces.co.uk/armedforcescareerinformationoffices.php#.VV86ZdJTP6I>
- [9] <http://www.army.mod.uk/join/join.aspx>
- [10] <http://www.raf.mod.uk/careers/>
- [11] <http://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/careers/>