

# Public health nurse

Public health nurses are qualified and registered nurses or midwives who have then chosen to gain experience or undertake training to specialise in areas such as health protection or sexual health.

## Working life

Their additional training in public health means that public health nurses play a vital role in promoting and protecting the public's health. This might be by promoting healthy lifestyles and reducing the likelihood of ill-health, supporting people who have long-term illness, or preventing illness through immunisations or screening interventions. They are employed in a variety of settings including the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities <sup>[1]</sup>, local authorities and the NHS.



[Download transcript](#) <sup>[2]</sup>

# Public health nurse roles

The following list doesn't include all of the roles available for public health nurses, but provides examples of the types of roles available.

Public health nurses are employed in a variety of settings including Public Health England, local authorities and the NHS.

- Health promotion nurse
- Health protection nurse
- Tuberculosis (TB) nurse
- Infection control nurse

## Health promotion nurse

Health promotion nurses work with groups in the community and organisations (primary healthcare teams, voluntary and statutory organisations) to identify the health needs of the community and the most appropriate ways of intervening to improve their health. They plan their interventions on a firm evidence-base and then work with their clients in a variety of community settings to meet their needs. Such interventions may include, for example:

- physical activity
- tackling obesity
- promoting self-care for people with long-term conditions
- finding and supporting those most at risk of [cardiovascular](#) <sup>[3]</sup> disease

They also provide information and support to promote and optimise positive health.

The managerial aspects of their role include:

- maintaining good working relationships with partners, colleagues and partner organisations
- completing statistical returns and entering client data onto computer systems
- identifying areas for improving the service
- responding to complaints

Health promotion nurses also have an educational role, helping to support, mentor and train junior staff, participating in clinical supervision, annual staff appraisal, and auditing to ensure maintenance of standards.

## Health protection nurse

Health protection teams are responsible for ensuring that the public are protected from infectious diseases and other non-infectious hazards to health. Nurses working in this field have a crucial role to play in this interesting and varied area. They work with individuals, families and the wider population, which may include taking decisions on behalf of a community or population. The health protection nurse works with a wide range of

organisations, disciplines and agencies to undertake disease surveillance, contribute to the management of incidents, outbreaks and control strategies, as well as leading or supporting the implementation of new directives, guidance and policy to protect the public's health.

The day-to-day role of the health protection nurse may include:

- providing reactive health protection advice, as part of an acute response team, to health professionals, the public or wider stakeholders, following the notification of communicable diseases or other health threats.
- undertaking epidemiological investigations and public health risk assessments.
- working with other stakeholders to prevent or minimise the impact of non-infectious environmental hazards
- emergency planning, working with local resilience fora, undertaking community risk assessments and supporting the planning for biological, chemical, radioactive, environmental and nuclear threats to the public's health.
- public health training, education, and participating in research and audit.

## **Tuberculosis (TB) nurse**

Tuberculosis nurses work in the community or within health protection teams to provide care and support for people being investigated or treated for tuberculosis (TB). They may be involved, with their team, in managing an outbreak. They also visit people at home, ensuring they receive the support that they, as individuals with different needs, require to complete their course of treatment. They provide their clients and other health professionals with information and advice about TB. To help contain the spread of TB, these nurses work to establish who has been in contact with infected clients so they can be traced and offered a check-up and, if necessary, treatment.

## **Infection control nurse**

Infection control nurses establish and maintain effective and efficient systems for the prevention, investigation, control and surveillance of infections in the workplace. Infection control nurses need to provide strong leadership that inspires and motivates others to ensure all infection control policy and procedures are implemented. He or she would normally have the authority, through specialist knowledge, to advise on agreed standards of infection prevention and to control care service delivery to patients, their carers and all hospital staff.

## **?Want to find out more?**

- Find out more about entry requirements for public health nurses <sup>[4]</sup>
- Find out more about skills and interests needed by public health nurses <sup>[5]</sup>
- Find out more about training and development for public health nurses <sup>[6]</sup>

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**Pay and  
conditions**

Pay and conditions of employment are likely to vary depending on the employer. For

more information please visit our pay and benefits page <sup>[7]</sup>.

### **Example salaries:**

Health promotion nurse specialist: £31,249 - £41,155pa (incl. London weighting) (Central London Community Healthcare NHS Trust, 2015)

Senior sister – sexual health improvement: £36,917 - £46,837pa (incl. London weighting) (King’s College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, 2014)

Substance misuse nurse: £21,909- £28,462 (Greater Manchester West Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust, 2016)

- **Where role can lead**

As a public health nurse there are many opportunities to develop skills to work in a variety of areas. Some public health nurses choose to follow an academic career pathway <sup>[8]</sup>, working in higher education or research <sup>[8]</sup>, whereas others may decide to take up senior practitioner or managerial roles. See our training and development page <sup>[6]</sup> for more information.

### **Nursing careers resource**

A careers resource has been jointly developed by the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) and Health Education England (HEE) to help registered nurses and the clinical support workforce plan their health careers effectively. It shows different ways that you can develop your career from a band 5 role with case studies, videos and next steps.

Visit the RCN/HEE careers resource for registered band 5 nurses <sup>[9]</sup>

- **Job market and vacancies**

### **England**

In England, the main employers of public health nurses are local authorities, the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities and the NHS. A public health workforce report (2014) <sup>[10]</sup> estimated that there were between 350 and 750 public health nurses in England. As of June 2014, approximately 340 nurses were employed by Public Health England (the organisation replaced by the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities). At least 200 nurses specialise in TB nursing, mostly in the NHS. Just over

200 nurses across the UK are registered as family health or general public health nurses.

## Scotland

The main employers of public health nurses in Scotland are local NHS Health Boards and NHS National Services Scotland (primarily within Health Protection Scotland). A report on the public health workforce in Scotland (2015) <sup>[11]</sup> estimated that there were 640 (570 full-time equivalent) public health nurses working in the NHS in Scotland, of which about 550 (490 fte) were at [Agenda for Change](#) <sup>[12]</sup> Band 5 or higher.

## Job vacancies

- ◉ [Civil Service Job Search \(Gov.UK\)](#) <sup>[13]</sup>
- ◉ [Universal Jobmatch \(Gov.UK\)](#) <sup>[14]</sup>
- ◉ [Local Government Jobs \(UK\)](#) <sup>[15]</sup>
- ◉ [Scottish Local Government Jobs](#) <sup>[16]</sup>
- ◉ [Local Government Jobs in Northern Ireland](#) <sup>[17]</sup>
- ◉ [Welsh Local Government Jobs](#) <sup>[18]</sup>
- ◉ [NHS Jobs](#) <sup>[19]</sup>
- ◉ [NHS Scotland Recruitment](#) <sup>[20]</sup>
- ◉ [NHS Education for Scotland](#) <sup>[21]</sup>
- ◉ [Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland](#) <sup>[22]</sup>
- ◉ [Public Health Wales \(NHS\) Recruitment and Employment](#) <sup>[23]</sup>
- ◉ [Public Sector Jobs in Wales](#) <sup>[24]</sup>
- ◉ [Royal Society for Public Health](#) <sup>[25]</sup>

## Recruiting for values

If you're applying for a role either directly in the NHS or in an organisation that provides NHS services, you'll be asked to show how you think the values of the NHS Constitution apply in your everyday work. The same will be true if you are applying for a university course funded by the NHS.

Find out more about NHS values <sup>[26]</sup>

If you're applying for a job in a local authority, each has its own set of core values underpinning its recruitment exercises, which can usually be found in the recruitment section of its website.

## Job titles

Note that terms such as 'practitioner', 'manager', 'specialist' and 'consultant' may have different meanings in different job titles. Therefore, they do not necessarily reflect the role category that the job really belongs to. It is important to check the person specification of the role to fully understand the skills and knowledge required.

### Further information

- Community Practitioners' and Health Visitors' Association [27]
- Royal College of Nursing [28]
- Royal College of Nursing sexual health career stories and case studies [29]
- Unite [30]
- Gov.UK: Public Health Contribution of Nurses and Midwives [31]

## Other roles that may interest you

- Adult nurse [32]
- Occupational health nurse [33]
- Learning disability nurse [34]
- Mental health nurse [35]

## Partner logos

Royal College of Nursing

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Local Government Association

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**Source URL:** <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/public-health/roles-public-health/public-health-nurse>

### Links

- [1] <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/office-for-health-improvement-and-disparities>
- [2] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/resources/transcript-nigel-fletcher>
- [3] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Cardiovascular>
- [4] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/public-health/public-health-nurse/entry-requirements-public-health-nurse>
- [5] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/public-health/public-health-nurse/skills-and-interests-public-health-nurse>
- [6] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/public-health/public-health-nurse/training-and-development-public-health-nurse>
- [7] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/working-health/pay-and-benefits>

- [8] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/career-planning/developing-your-health-career/clinical-academic-careers>
- [9] <https://www.rcn.org.uk/nursingcareersresource>
- [10] <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mapping-the-core-public-health-workforce>
- [11] <http://www.healthscotland.com/documents/25602.aspx>
- [12] [https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Agenda\\_for\\_Change](https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Agenda_for_Change)
- [13] <https://www.civilservicejobs.service.gov.uk/csr/index.cgi>
- [14] <https://www.gov.uk/jobsearch>
- [15] <http://www.lgjobs.com/>
- [16] <https://www.myjobscotland.gov.uk/home/>
- [17] <https://www.localgovernmentjobsni.gov.uk/>
- [18] <http://www.wlga.gov.uk/jobs>
- [19] <https://www.jobs.nhs.uk/>
- [20] <https://jobs.scot.nhs.uk/>
- [21] <http://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/recruitment.aspx>
- [22] <http://www.hscni.net/>
- [23] <http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/888/page/46729>
- [24] <https://uk.jobted.com/?l=wales>
- [25] <http://www.rsph.org.uk/en/resources/jobs/>
- [26] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/working-health/nhs-constitution>
- [27] <http://www.unitetheunion.org/how-we-help/list-of-sectors/healthsector/healthsectoryourprofession/cphva/>
- [28] <https://www.rcn.org.uk/clinical-topics/public-health>
- [29] <https://www.rcn.org.uk/clinical-topics/public-health/sexual-health/sexual-health-career-stories-and-case-studies>
- [30] <http://www.unitetheunion.org/>
- [31] <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/developing-the-public-health-contribution-of-nurses-and-midwives-tools-and-models>
- [32] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing/roles-nursing/adult-nurse>
- [33] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/public-health/roles-public-health/occupational-health-nurse/occupational-health-nurse>
- [34] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing/roles-nursing/learning-disability-nurse>
- [35] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing/roles-nursing/mental-health-nurse>
- [36] <http://www.rcn.org.uk>
- [37] <http://www.local.gov.uk/>