

Director of public health

Directors of public health hold some of the most pivotal strategic and leadership positions.

Overview

Directors of public health are responsible for determining the overall vision and objectives for public health in a local area or in a defined area of public health, such as health protection ^[1]. They are accountable for delivering public health objectives and reporting annually on the outcomes and future work. They may be from any background, but must be qualified specialists in public health ^[2] and registered with the General Medical Council ^[3] or General Dental Council ^[4] or UK Public Health Register ^[5].



[Download transcript](#) ^[6]

Director of public health roles

In England, there are a number of directors of public health in local authorities and in the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities [7].

Bruce Laurence

Director of public health

I know that things are going well when we make a real difference to the health of the most disadvantaged people in the area.

[Read Bruce's story](#) [8]

There are further roles in Health Boards in Scotland and Wales, and in the Public Health Agency in Northern Ireland. The following list doesn't include all of the roles available for directors of public health, but provides examples of the types of roles available.

Directors of public health are responsible for determining the overall vision and objectives for public health in a local area.

- Director of public health working in English local authority
- Centre director working in the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities [7]

Director of public health working in an English local authority

By law, every local authority must appoint a director of public health. The director works across all three main 'domains' of public health [1] (health protection, health improvement, healthcare public health).

Directors are responsible for ensuring that public health is at the heart of their local authority's agenda. Using the best and most appropriate evidence, they determine the overall vision and aims for public health in their locality. They then manage the delivery of those objectives and report annually on their activities.

The role is incredibly varied, challenging and rewarding and can involve:

- commissioning (that is, organising the delivery of) health services that will be both clinically and cost effective
- providing leadership and expert advice to the local authority and organisations that work with the local authority
- establishing effective working relationships with other local agencies to ensure that public health priorities are acted upon
- managing senior staff (eg recruitment, personal development, appraisals, and any disciplinary or grievance issues)
- contributing to training and development programmes

- having responsibility for the local authority's public health budget

Centre director working at the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities

These directors provide oversight and leadership for all activities in a particular region or centre. Their main activity is to lead health protection services (for example the development of regional strategies and plans for protecting the health of the public). In addition, they oversee the systems for: the monitoring of local diseases (eg statistics on cases and distribution); laboratory services (eg for microbiological investigation of diseases); and the investigation and management of incidents (eg a chemical spill or outbreak of e-coli).

You will forge strong links with the directors of public health working in local authorities.

Want to find out more?

- Find out more about entry requirements, needed by directors of public health ^[9]
- Find out more about the skills needed by directors of public health ^[10]
- Find out more about training and development for directors of public health ^[11]
- Find out more about the specific roles and responsibilities of directors of public health ^[12]

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Pay and conditions

Pay and conditions of employment are likely to vary depending on the employer. For more information please view our pay and benefits page ^[13].

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Where the role can lead

Further opportunities for directors of public health include more senior government roles or political consultancy and advisory roles.

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Job market and vacancies

England

In England, there are approximately 130 individuals working at director level. There is

broadly one per county or unitary local authority, although there are some shared arrangements.

There is an increasing trend for directors of public health to be shared between authorities.

Scotland

In Scotland, there are approximately 18 individuals working at director level. There is one for each of the 14 local NHS Health Boards, plus four with equivalent status at national level.

Wales

Directors of public health in Wales are employed by the Health Boards and work closely with Public Health Wales.

Northern Ireland

There is one position for a director of public health in the Public Health Agency ^[14].

Where to look for job vacancies

- Local Government Talent: Jobs (UK) ^[15]
- NHS Scotland recruitment ^[16]
- NHS Jobs (for Wales) ^[17]
- HSC Recruit.com (for Northern Ireland) ^[18]
- Royal Society for Public Health ^[19]

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 ^[20].

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.

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Further information

Faculty of Public Health job descriptions ^[21]

Other roles that may interest you

- Public health consultants and specialists ^[22]
- Public health manager ^[23]
- Public health nurse ^[24]
- Environmental health professional ^[25]

Partner logos

Faculty of Public Health

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

Links

- [1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/careers-public-health/what-public-health>
- [2] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/public-health/public-health-consultants-and-specialists>
- [3] <http://www.gmc-uk.org/> [4] <http://www.gdc-uk.org/Pages/default.aspx> [5] <http://www.ukphr.org/>
- [6] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/resources/transcript-shona-arora>
- [7] <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/office-for-health-improvement-and-disparities>
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