



Careers in public health

Caring, compassionate, committed

Make a difference with a career in health

Welcome

A career for you

In contrast to healthcare, which often focuses on the individual, public health tends to work at a bigger scale – at a population level. It aims to protect and improve the public's health and wellbeing and reduce inequalities in health.

In some public health roles, you will be working directly with members of the public, whereas in others contact will be only occasional or rare. Either way, you will be contributing to giving people the best chance to live long and healthy lives.

Public health professionals are employed by a wide range of organisations that recruit people of all ages, backgrounds and levels of experience, including those who have worked in other sectors or who bring life experience from outside work.

The ability to work well as part of a team and in partnership with other organisations is essential.

Values for working in health and wellbeing

You'll need to understand the values that are important to the organisation to which you are applying. You're likely to be asked to show how you think those values would apply in your everyday work.

In the case of local authorities, you can usually find their core values on their website. In the case of the NHS and organisations that provide NHS services, you should become familiar with the values of the NHS Constitution and the 6Cs of compassionate care.

Find out more about the NHS Constitution and the 6Cs at:

 www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/nhsconstitution

 www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/6Cs

Contents

What is public health?	4
Frequently asked questions (FAQs)	5
Which role is right for you?	6
Public health roles at a glance	8
i Director of public health	8
ii Environmental health professional	9
iii Health trainer or health and wellbeing worker.....	9
iv Public health academic	10
v Public health consultant, specialist and specialty registrar	10
vi Public health knowledge and intelligence professional	11
vii Public health manager	11
viii Public health nurse	12
ix Public health practitioner	14
x Public health scientist	15
Real-life stories	16
Getting started in public health	22
Next steps and developing your career	26
Benefits of working in public health	30
Example career routes	33



What is public health?

Public health is the science and art of promoting and protecting health and wellbeing, preventing ill health, and prolonging life through the organised efforts of society.



Public health comprises:

Health protection

Protecting people's health by promoting and administering programmes of immunisation against infectious disease; dealing with infectious disease outbreaks; and addressing the health impacts of unplanned chemical and radiation exposures.

Health improvement

Supporting people to improve their lifestyles (such as by giving up smoking or increasing physical activity) and taking action on the wider influences on health and wellbeing. This can include: reducing poverty and social isolation; ensuring homes are warm and dry; and influencing planning to improve provision of green spaces and cycle routes.

Healthcare public health

Working to get the maximum health benefits for the whole population from health and care services while also meeting the health needs of individuals and groups. This can be done through: efficient use of resources (money, equipment, workers); preventing diseases; improving the design and accessibility of health and wellbeing services; and evaluating the effectiveness of those services.

In reality, many public health roles overlap and may involve working in more than one of these areas.

Current challenges being tackled by public health professionals include: obesity, dementia, mental health, health inequalities and the health effects of climate change. In recent years, public health interventions have achieved: increases in life expectancy, a reduction in the number of people smoking, smoke-free public spaces, reduced levels of teenage pregnancy, reduced salt in foods, prevention of infectious diseases through vaccination programmes, and better uptake of key health services by groups more likely to be affected by ill health.

You can find out more about public health at:
www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/whatispublichealth



FAQs

What would I do in public health?

Public health roles vary greatly, but they all aim to improve people's health, prevent ill health and make a positive difference to people's lives. Working in public health can be challenging but also hugely rewarding.

What can I offer?

Whatever your background, it is possible that you already have some skills and experience that would be valuable in a public health role. If your background isn't in health, you may already make a contribution to public health as a catering assistant, teacher, town planner, housing officer, social worker or in a protective service such as fire and rescue. And if you work in health, you may make a contribution as an allied health professional, nurse, midwife, doctor or pharmacist. Either way, you could undertake additional training to make public health the main part of your role.

How can I get public health experience?

Gaining experience is a way to show that you are genuinely concerned about the health and wellbeing of others. Health

champions and young health champions (14 to 24 year olds) increase awareness of healthy lifestyles, and might progress to become, for instance, health trainers or health and wellbeing workers. Another option is volunteering for charities in a vacation, gap year, in the evenings or at weekends. In addition, you could ask to shadow someone working in a public health role to gain better insight into what they do.

What qualifications and experience do I need?

Since public health is very broad, the qualifications and experience you'll need will depend on the type of public health work you're interested in. You can discover more about the range of roles in this booklet and on the Health Careers website at: www.healthcareers.nhs.uk.

Most paid roles require some kind of experience, training, qualifications or a combination of the three. Qualifications alone are rarely enough to secure a role. For senior roles, the five-year specialty training programme in public health is one way to gain both the academic and practical skills needed.

Which role is right for you?

There are all sorts of career opportunities from entry-level roles right up to senior positions. Whichever area of public health you choose to work in, you'll be making a difference to people's health and wellbeing in some way.

Core public health roles

Core public health roles, in which public health is the main part of the role, include:

- academic roles involving public health research and teaching
- environmental health professionals
- health trainer or health and wellbeing worker
- health visitor, occupational health nurse, school nurse and other public health nurses
- leadership, planning and management roles, including maintaining and raising standards in healthcare and promoting fairness in health for everyone
- public health policy roles within central government departments, notably Public Health England and the Department of Health
- public health practitioners, such as teenage pregnancy co-ordinator, smoking cessation adviser, substance misuse worker and public health nutritionist
- working with data and information to better understand and tackle public health issues at a national, regional or local level

For more information about roles in the core public health workforce, see: www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/corepublichealth

There are short videos about public health careers on our YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/healthcareers

Public health wider workforce

There are also many more roles that make a contribution to public health in some way. These wider public health workforce roles may also interest you.

For more information about roles in the wider public health workforce, see: www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/widerpublichealth

In fact if you work in any career related to health or social care, part of your role will be a responsibility to protect and improve people's health and wellbeing, as well as to treat or support those who are unwell.

Employers

In England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, public health roles make a significant contribution to addressing inequalities in health and improving the health of the population. Depending on the role that you choose, you could be employed by one of many organisations including: local authorities (especially in England); the NHS; central government departments and agencies such as the Department of Health and Public Health England; culture and leisure trusts, community-based third sector

organisations; universities; private sector organisations (which are often commissioned to provide health services); pharmaceutical and vaccine companies; the armed forces; and international development organisations, such as the World Health Organization or the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control.

A key skill for any role within these organisations is the ability to work collaboratively to ensure that everyone is able to contribute fully to achieve positive outcomes with regard to health and wellbeing.

Find out more about employers of public health staff at www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/publichealthemployers

Career planning

You may find the career planning section on our website useful www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/careerplanning

If you have any questions, you can call our helpline on **0345 60 60 655** or email advice@healthcareers.nhs.uk



Public health roles at a glance

You can find more detailed information about all the roles described in the following pages on the Health Careers website at www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/publichealthroles

The way in which public health roles are named and designed is evolving rapidly. Job titles and descriptions given here are representative, and you should look at recruiters' websites for up-to-date information.



Director of public health

A director of public health is a statutory appointment in local government in England. In other parts of the UK the director is employed by the NHS or public health agencies. Directors hold a strategic leadership role and have responsibility for overseeing all public health functions within a defined geographical area.

This varied and challenging role can include commissioning services, managing senior staff, providing expert advice and having responsibility for a public health or wider budget. It also includes working with other organisations and communities to improve and protect the health of the population.

There are other director-level roles in organisations such as Public Health England and NHS trusts. Some people with public health specialist qualifications take on other strategic leadership roles, for example as medical directors in hospitals or directors in NHS commissioning organisations, where their public health skills add value to their role.

You could be from any background but you would need to be registered as a specialist in public health with the UK Public Health Register (UKPHR), General Medical Council (GMC) or General Dental Council (GDC). This is often achieved by completing the public health specialty training programme, but is also possible through a portfolio route. See the public health consultant role for more information.

Find out more at www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/directorpublichealth



See **real-life stories** of people working in public health at the end of this section



Environmental health professional

Environmental health professionals work in the private and public sectors in areas such as environmental pollution, food inspection and assessing risks to the public's health in the workplace or from poor housing.

They work to ensure legal regulations in these areas are followed to protect or improve people's health and wellbeing.

Good communication and problem-solving skills are essential for advising and influencing individuals and businesses.

Environmental health professionals usually have a degree accredited by the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH), but there are other roles in enforcement and compliance where a degree may not be required.

Find out more at www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/environmentalhealthprofessional

Health trainer or health and wellbeing worker

Health trainers and other health and wellbeing workers help people set behavioural goals for improving their health and provide practical support to help them change their lifestyle - for example, advice and support on physical activity, healthy eating, weight management or stopping smoking.

They often work for private businesses or voluntary organisations rather than within council public health departments or the NHS. The training and qualification requirements vary between different areas and organisations. Entry-level jobs usually need a qualification at level 3 such as City and Guilds or NVQ. You would generally need work experience with community groups or experience in nutrition, exercise or gym instructing and be able to demonstrate numeracy and literacy skills at level 2.

Find out more at www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/healthtrainer



Public health academic

Public health academics research public health issues and their work informs policy-makers in tackling them. Some work as lecturers (also known as assistant professors), senior lecturers (associate professors) or professors, teaching students in a university and undertaking research. As well as academic research skills, you would need good communication skills, for teaching and presenting research findings.

You could start as a research assistant working as part of a team to collect and analyse data and information, review academic literature and write research papers and reports for academic journals. This sort of project work usually involves a short-term contract and may also contribute towards your own work for a higher degree, such as a Master's or Doctorate.

To progress into a formal academic role you would need to show a strong aptitude for research or teaching, or both, and obtain a doctoral degree. Senior public health academics (those working as senior lecturers and professors) frequently work in 'split posts' where their research and teaching activities are supplemented by or combined with some service work as a public health consultant.

Find out more at www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/publichealthacademic

Public health consultant, specialist and specialty registrar

Public health consultants and specialists provide specialist advice and support to develop health policies and strategies. They also contribute to projects to improve and protect health, reduce health inequalities, and improve quality, safety and cost-effectiveness of health and care services. Their responsibilities span one or more of the three main areas of public health: health protection, health improvement and healthcare public health. Consultants and specialists may have a medical, dental or other background.

Some people undertake a five-year specialty training programme as a specialty registrar. Having passed your examinations, completed your training, and registered as a specialist in public health you are eligible to apply for consultant posts. Alternatively, if you have spent some years gaining experience in different areas of public health, you may apply for public health specialist registration by submitting a portfolio detailing your experience, education and training. Once accepted on the specialist register, you may apply for public health consultant roles.

Find out more at www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/publichealthspecialist



Public health knowledge and intelligence professional

Public health knowledge and intelligence professionals gather, analyse and interpret information for the protection and improvement of people's health. For example, they may provide rapid response advice to the public about infectious diseases or conduct long-term collection and interpretation of data about chronic diseases, such as heart disease.

Public health knowledge professionals manage libraries of information resources. Public health intelligence professionals gather and analyse information and produce statistics and reports.

Apprenticeships are available in health informatics, and Public Health England employs trainee public health intelligence analysts.

Find out more at www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/publichealthK&Iprofessional

Public health manager

Public health managers use business administration skills and strong public health knowledge to support: the commissioning of services; health improvement programmes; and the response to national and international emergencies. They are likely to manage teams of people, provide expertise to organisations and manage budgets.

Public health managers usually work in local government but can also work for the NHS, Public Health England or the voluntary sector. In some organisations, they are based in a dedicated public health department; in others, they have an over-arching role in an integrated health service department.

The role of public health manager varies considerably across the public health sector.

Increasingly public health employers are looking for a degree-level qualification and several years of senior experience in a relevant field. If they come from a non-public health background, newly appointed managers may be offered public health training.

Find out more at www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/publichealthmanager



Public health nurse

Some qualified and registered nurses and midwives choose to undertake additional training as specialist community public health nurses (SCPHN) to become health visitors, occupational health nurses, or school nurses.

Other nurses and midwives make a specific contribution to public health by gaining experience and qualifications in a particular area.

Health visitor

Health visitors work with children from birth to five years, their families and the older population to promote good health and prevent illness.

They may help families with parenting skills, advise on behavioural management techniques, assess a young child's growth, or support children with special needs. Health visitors need to be able to work independently and have the flexibility to support people with a range of needs.

Health visitors work in people's homes, in clinics and in community settings.

Find out more at www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/healthvisitor

Occupational health nurse

Occupational health (OH) nurses are specialists in workplace health and have direct contact with employees. They work both independently or within multidisciplinary teams. Many are self-employed.

OH nurses deal with health-related issues affecting work. They are in a unique position between the workforce and management and can support changes in the workplace to improve health, wellbeing and the quality of working lives. They also undertake assessments of employees' ability to perform daily tasks, support employees with rehabilitation plans, and advise on workplace adjustments.

Find out more at www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/occupationalhealthnurse



School nurse

School nurses may carry out vision and hearing tests, run immunisation clinics, and give health advice and support.

They may be based in a school, doctor's surgery or health centre or work in a team with community nurses and nursery nurses. A wide variety of opportunities may emerge for school nurses as the education system continues to develop.

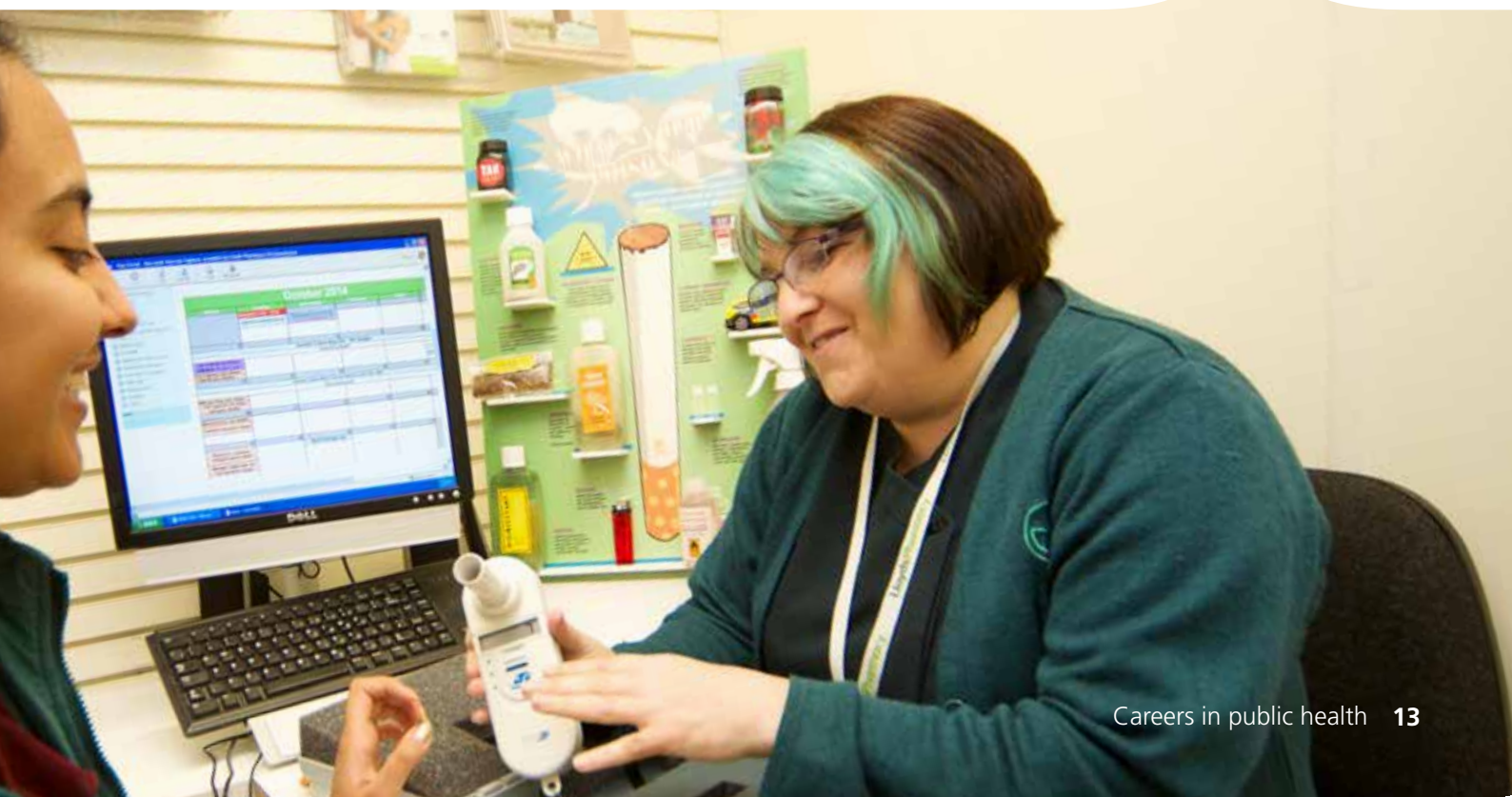
Find out more at www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/schoolnurse

Other public health nurses

Some qualified and registered nurses and midwives choose to specialise in areas such as health protection, sexual health, tuberculosis, infection control, health promotion, or health protection. They have experience, qualifications, or both, in these particular areas of public health.

They work in a range of settings including Public Health England, local authorities and the NHS.

Find out more at www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/publichealthnurse





Public health practitioner

Practitioners work in many different roles relating to health protection, health improvement, and health and social care quality. They also work in a variety of work settings.

For instance, you might be a smoking cessation adviser in an NHS-provider organisation, a teenage pregnancy co-ordinator in a local authority, a member of a screening and immunisation team in NHS England, or a health protection practitioner in Public Health England. Often, practitioners have experience in broad areas such as young people, sexual health or substance misuse.

Public health practitioners in local government may also work across a range of areas within councils, including housing, neighbourhood and community development, urban planning, adult and children's services and social care. For these roles, you may need some experience in relevant areas.

You could work as a smoking cessation adviser if you have relevant work experience. However, some posts may also require qualifications in counselling, education or social work.

To work as a substance misuse worker you would need to complete relevant training and demonstrate that you meet the Drug and Alcohol National Occupational Standards (DANOS).

A public health nutritionist would need a degree in nutrition or dietetics.

To be a screening and immunisation co-ordinator, you would need experience in overseeing NHS work programmes. In addition, an understanding of clinical issues would be helpful.

Health protection practitioners usually work in Public Health England's Health Protection teams and provide advice and support for managing outbreaks and incidents relating to infectious diseases and other health hazards. A clinical, microbiology or environmental health background is useful.

Council public health departments may encourage or require their practitioners to undertake the UK Public Health Register's practitioner programme to develop their public health knowledge and skills.

Find out more at www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/publichealthpractitioner

Public health scientist

Public health scientists include laboratory-based staff providing diagnostic tests to identify and describe the characteristics of infectious disease, as well as laboratory- and field-based scientists investigating both environmental risks to the population, such as risks from chemicals and radiation, and population behaviour.

The data generated by scientific researchers can often be used to influence national guidance on the improvement and protection of the public's health. Many scientists are office-based, including bioinformaticians, statisticians, data analysts and epidemiologists. By analysing and

manipulating data, they provide essential surveillance of diseases and emerging hazards in the environment, and support for the management of local or national outbreaks.

Entry requirements vary for each discipline, ranging from GCSEs to PhD. Most scientific careers require a Bachelor's degree and, in some cases, completion of formal training, for example in clinical and biomedical science, and registration with a professional body.



Real-life
Stories



**“I enjoy the variety
each day brings.”**



Name

Bruce Laurence

Job title

**Director of public health,
Bath & North East Somerset Council**

Entry route

Paediatrics

How I got into the role

I worked as a junior doctor in paediatrics before starting a ten-year career in international medical relief work. My experience abroad, working for Médecins Sans Frontières, Oxfam and Merlin led me towards a career in public health. I saw at first-hand how many factors beyond health services affected people in emergencies. Back in the UK, I became less focused on clinical work and increasingly interested in the distribution and causes of ill health in communities, and in strategies for improving and protecting health.

I became the director of a public health team for a small primary care trust (PCT) that later became part of Derbyshire PCT. There, I was a consultant, deputy director and finally acting director. In 2013, I moved to Bath & North East Somerset Council.

What I do

I have a general responsibility for the health and wellbeing of the population of Bath and North East Somerset and, overall, the role is about trying to

prevent illness, promote good physical and mental health and reduce health inequalities through any possible means.

I work across the three broad areas of health improvement, health protection, and healthcare public health. The role is extremely varied with many different elements: strategic planning, management, commissioning, leadership and networking. I also supervise public health trainees, lecture in global public health and teach on a Master's course in international health. I have a significant commissioning remit, and a £9 million budget for services. There really is no typical day.

The best bits

I know that things are going well when we make a real difference to the health of the most disadvantaged people in the area. I enjoy the variety each day brings, working with a very dedicated team, and helping to start new collaborations between different groups that will bring benefit to the population.



Name

Lorna Robinson

Job title

**Senior environmental health officer,
Rossendale Borough Council**

Entry route

Degree and work placement

**“I really do enjoy my job.
I’m still as enthusiastic
and happy as I have
always been.”**



How I got into the role

When I was doing A-levels, I went to a careers event where an environmental health officer talked about his job. I knew then it was what I wanted to do. I got the required grades in my exams and was accepted on a degree course in Environmental Health in Manchester. I also succeeded in obtaining a student training place at Manchester City Council, where I worked in the holidays and for the two mandatory six-month work experience placements. After graduating, I got jobs at Manchester City Council, Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council, East Devon District Council and then at Rossendale Borough Council.

What I do

My current role involves pollution, housing and public health. I mainly deal with people and domestic property. The scope of the work is vast, including neighbour noise complaints, private rented property condition complaints, immigration inspections, filthy and verminous property, anti-social

behaviour, air quality management, and public funerals. I am out of the office at some point most days doing things such as assessing planning applications, installing noise equipment, carrying out property inspections, surveying the district for nuisance etc. I work with a wide range of people and organisations including the Police, Fire Service, Environment Agency, Social Services, United Utilities. Networking is a very important part of the job.

The best bits

Since gaining my first job, I have never looked back. I know I’m in the minority and am lucky enough to be able to say genuinely that I really do enjoy my job. I’m still as enthusiastic and happy as I have always been.

The thing I like most about the job is the variety of work on a day-to-day basis and making a difference to people’s lives. I also really like the fact that I have been able to move around the country working in different local authorities.



Name

Daniel Flecknoe

Job title

**Specialty registrar in public health,
Public Health England**

Entry route

**Background in nursing and
humanitarian aid work**

**“I take on projects
across the spectrum
of public health.”**



How I got into the role

After doing an undergraduate philosophy degree, I entered nursing training and gravitated strongly towards A&E nursing. I spent ten years in A&E and took advantage of the skills and experience I was developing to work overseas, doing some ship-board medicine, and working as an expedition medic in South East Asia. I later worked as a medical team leader for Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) in Darfur. It gave me an invaluable outside perspective on the NHS, and the things that both positively and negatively affect population health. Having returned to the UK, I enrolled on a public health MSc programme. I then heard about the non-medical application route for becoming a public health registrar, and thought it might be a good idea to apply.

What I do

As a public health specialty registrar, I currently work at Public Health England in Nottingham. I take on projects across the spectrum of public health, including health improvement, health protection and

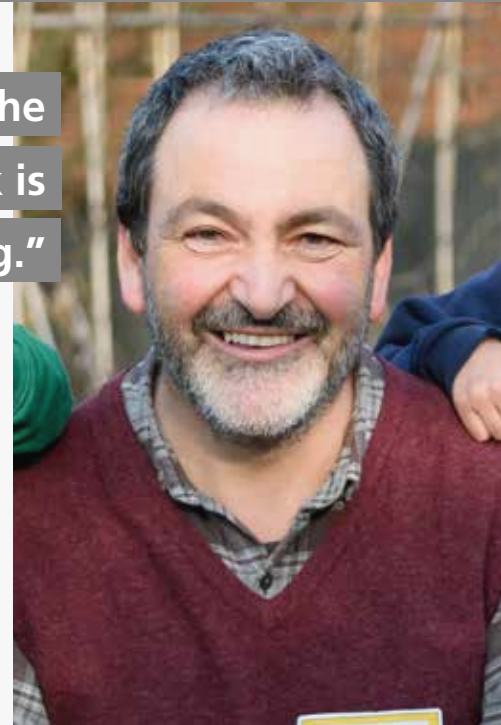
healthcare public health. I have worked on Ebola airport screening, researched for reports on prison health and participated in major incident exercises for chemical, biological and radioactive threats. I have also conducted literature reviews on hepatitis, liver disease and violence prevention, and I teach medical students and junior doctors when I have time.

The best bits

The training programme is fantastic: it gives you both the opportunity to experience a lot of different sorts of public health work and also a certain freedom to pursue your personal interests. Consequently, I have been able (with my supervisor's involvement) to set up projects on topics that I am deeply personally motivated by, such as suicide prevention. I get to contribute to improving the health of the public, follow my own interests and advance myself professionally. It's a win-win-win!



“No two days are the same and the work is really rewarding.”



Name

Bret Willers

Job title

**Programme development manager,
Soil Association**

Entry route

**Joint honours degree in plant
science and zoology**

How I got into the role

As an ecologist by training I have always had an interest in how environmental factors and human activity interconnect to influence health and wellbeing. I've worked in a variety of roles, which have given me a good understanding of public health issues related to the environment. Most of this work focused on addressing factors affecting health, such as unemployment, crime, housing and the environment, as well as helping to shape the delivery of accessible health promotion and clinical services in partnership with the NHS.

What I do

I am responsible for the development of Food for Life programmes in London. The programme aims to improve the quality of food provided in institutions, mainly schools, but also children's centres, care homes and hospitals. It aims to change attitudes and raise awareness about the ways in which our food is grown and what constitutes a healthy diet, and to provide young people and families with the skills and knowledge to be able to grow, cook and

eat fresh food that is produced in an affordable and sustainable way. I encourage new partners to adopt the programme, provide advice and support, and use my influence to get the principles of Food for Life included in local and national policy. I spend a lot of time in meetings with health professionals and senior managers from a variety of organisations. The purpose may be to develop strategy, agree performance indicators or produce progress reports.

The best bits

No two days are the same and the work is really rewarding, especially when one sees children and families changing their dietary behaviour, purchasing locally sourced sustainable organic food and having the confidence to prepare and cook fresh meals.



“The positive contribution I make to a family’s physical and emotional wellbeing is really satisfying.”



Name

Richard Montague

Job title

**Health visitor,
Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust**

Entry route

Nursing

How I got into the role

I met an ex-colleague who was studying towards a health visiting qualification. He was one of only a few men on a health visiting course and his passion for the role really inspired me. I was working as a psychiatric nurse and ward manager so I did some work experience with a health visiting team to see what it was like. After this, I knew it was the career for me. I qualified as a health visitor in 1995 and haven’t looked back.

What I do

Health visiting is a wide-ranging role that involves a variety of tasks, such as new-birth visits, protecting and safeguarding vulnerable children and educating new parents on issues such as breastfeeding and oral health. I might need to refer a mother with post-natal depression to a psychiatric counselling service,

for example, or a child with a learning disability to an early years centre providing specialist services and support. I am one of the very few male health visitors in the area so I also offer specialist support to fathers. I get to work with a variety of people, including other highly skilled and motivated healthcare professionals and agencies.

The best bits

Where I work is very deprived so I deal with many families from poor socio-economic backgrounds who often feel vulnerable and isolated. By assessing their health needs, I can provide advice on accessing various services within the community or signpost them to specialist workers. Lots of people dread going to work but I can honestly say that I love my job. The positive contribution I make to a family’s physical and emotional wellbeing is really satisfying, particularly when they need that extra support they wouldn’t receive without us.



**“My knowledge-base
is forever expanding.”**



Name

Vanessa McFarlane

Job title

**Health improvement co-ordinator,
Nottingham CityCare Partnership**

Entry route

Degree

How I got into the role

I studied for a degree in Social Policy and Administration and I think this was a useful subject area for my role. I knew in university that I was interested in social issues such as health, race and education so when a friend told me about a job in health promotion I applied and was successful.

What I do

My work is targeted at the sexual health of vulnerable young people and I work closely with the school nursing service to reach them. I spend quite a lot of time developing and providing training to other professionals on sexual health issues so that they are equipped to deal with issues as they arise in their day-to-day work.

I cover the age range of 5 years to 25 years so every day can be very different. Making sure that adequate resources are available is part of what I do, but creating services that meet the needs of vulnerable young people is key to them accessing the service and this is the priority.

The best bits

I love the fact that my job is diverse and that although my day-to-day focus might change, it all still comes under the umbrella of sexual health. This means my knowledge-base is forever expanding and I get a lot of job satisfaction.

I'm proud of the training I have developed and delivered. I ran a project for 12 years called 'Awaradressers', which involved the distribution of condoms via barbers' shops and hairdressers' across the city. The project brought sexual health to groups of people who often would be reluctant to access mainstream services.

Getting started in public health

If you have an interest in a career in public health, there are a number of ways you can get started.



Work experience and volunteering

Volunteering or arranging a work placement is one of the best ways to find out if a career in health is right for you. Public health roles involve a wide range of people and can be based in a variety of settings. Therefore, volunteering, including shadowing, can provide useful and varied insights and experience. In addition, if you are a carer for a friend or relative this may provide valuable experience.

If you already work in health, part of your role may include health protection or improvement, and you may find you have skills and experience that you can transfer to a different area. In addition, many other areas of work have a public health aspect, and can provide valuable experience: for instance, care work, teaching, social work, sport and fitness.

You may find the Public Health Skills and Knowledge Framework (PHSKF) useful to identify relevant skills.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-health-skills-and-knowledge-framework-phskf

Find out more about gaining experience at www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/experience

You could consider being a:

Health champion

Health champions are people who, with training and support, volunteer to use their own life experience and ability to relate to people to transform health and wellbeing in their communities. They signpost and refer people into health and wellbeing services. All health champions receive the national level 2 Understanding Health Improvement Award accredited by the Royal Society for Public Health.

Young health champion (YHC)

Young health champions are volunteers aged 14 to 24 who promote positive health messages and help get young people talking about health. YHCs are trained in how to increase awareness of healthy lifestyles and encourage involvement in activities to promote good health across community and educational settings. All young health champions receive a national level 2 certificate, which is equivalent to a GCSE at grade A-C. It is an exciting role for young people who really want to make a difference by increasing the accessibility of health services for young people.

Find out more at www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/younghealthchampion

Apprenticeships

Although a specific public health apprenticeship isn't available yet, there are many apprenticeships that can be relevant to developing a public health career, and new developments are expected over the next few years. Some organisations offer apprenticeships in health and social care, enabling apprentices to gain valuable experience at support worker level and the opportunity to gain a relevant vocational qualification. This could also get you to the appropriate level to study for a degree, such as in nursing or midwifery, which may lead to roles such as school nurse and health visitor.

If you are interested in working in public health intelligence, apprenticeships are available in health informatics, intelligence analysis, and libraries and information management services.

Visit www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/apprenticeships

Support workers and assistants

In many public health and social care professions, there are opportunities for people to work in assistant-level posts, for example as healthcare assistants, clinical support workers, social work assistants, and community support workers. In some instances there may be no set requirements for entry but employers will usually want experience gained from voluntary work, as well as enthusiasm and a commitment to working with people. Working as an assistant can provide good experience for many roles in public health.



Entry-level roles

The way public health works in different localities varies considerably, as do the routes into a public health career. In England, the role of council public health departments is generally to commission (buy) services from 'provider organisations', which may be private businesses or voluntary organisations. Jobs in council public health departments often require a higher level of qualification and experience than those in the organisations that directly deliver services.

Front-line roles such as a health trainer or health and wellbeing worker do not necessarily need a high level of qualification, though it is likely that you will need some relevant experience. These roles involve training for a certificate at level 3, and the employer may fund the training.

There are also opportunities for joining public health at a more senior practitioner or project manager level. For these roles, you would need extensive experience in an area relevant to the job role. In local authorities, this may mean experience working at a senior level in another part of the council such as housing, neighbourhoods or environmental health. Some public health departments offer formal public health training for these roles, such as the UK Public Health Register's (UKPHR) practitioner programme or a Master's in Public Health.

Degrees and professional training

For roles above entry level, it is likely that you will need a degree relevant to the area of health in which you intend to work (such as nursing), although some associate and apprenticeship training schemes are currently being developed.

Additional postgraduate training as a specialist community public health nurse may be needed to become a health visitor (almost always), school nurse (often), occupational health nurse (desirable), or public health nurse (sometimes).

For most senior public health roles, a postgraduate qualification, such as a Master's in Public Health is likely to be needed. Entry to consultant roles is frequently through the five-year public health specialty training programme, which usually includes one year of academic study at Master's level, although a portfolio route is also available.

Find out more about specialty training in public health at www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/publichealthspecialistentry

Good Public Health Practice

If public health is the main part of your role, you're expected to follow the Good Public Health Practice Framework 2016 as well as any other relevant professional codes of practice and conduct.

Find out more about the Framework at www.fph.org.uk/good_practice

Registration

Public health specialists (including consultants and directors of public health) with a medical or dentistry background, occupational health nurses, school nurses, health visitors, and other public health nurses must be registered with the General Medical Council (GMC), General Dental Council (GDC) or Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC). Public health specialists from backgrounds other than medicine, nursing and midwifery must register with the UK Public Health Register (UKPHR), and environmental health practitioners must register with the Environmental Health Registration Board (EHRB).

Continuing professional development (CPD) is needed to remain on the register to prove to clients and patients that your skills remain at a consistent professional standard. For some roles, such as public health practitioner, registration is voluntary but advantageous as evidence of competence.

To read more about regulation and registration, see: www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/publichealthregistration



Remember that if you're applying for a health role, you need to understand the values that are important to the organisation to which you are applying. You're likely to be asked to show how you think those values would apply in your everyday work.



Next steps and developing your career

If you want to work in public health, it's important to find out as much information as possible about the qualifications you need and the opportunities that are available.

The diversity of public health careers means that there are many entry-points. If your preferred role requires an academic qualification in public health you can search for a degree at www.ucas.com. You can also search for degree and postgraduate courses leading to a selection of careers in health by using the Health Careers course finder at www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/courses. Look at individual university websites for more details about courses and entry requirements. For a place on a degree course, you usually need to apply through UCAS.

Where to look for jobs and trainee posts

- For jobs in local government, visit www.lgjobs.com
- For central government, visit www.gov.uk/jobsearch
- For the Civil Service, visit www.civilservicejobs.service.gov.uk/csr/jobs.cgi
- For jobs in the NHS, visit www.jobs.nhs.uk
- For jobs in larger provider organisations, look at national and regional job sites and local media
- For jobs in smaller provider organisations, look in local media. By visiting the council's public health website, you will find the details of the local provider organisations; you can then look at their websites for job opportunities
- For academic roles, visit www.jobs.ac.uk

Opportunities for progression

With experience and further training and qualifications, you could move into senior service management and development, academic roles or become a consultant.



If you have any questions, you can call our helpline on **0345 60 60 655** or email advice@healthcareers.nhs.uk

Here are some things you can be doing, depending on where you are right now:

Where are you now?	What should you do now?	Who can help?
<p>Studying for your GCSEs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Check what your likely exam grades/results will be. ➤ Explore routes into your chosen career – will you need a degree or other qualification before you join, or will the employer train you on the job? Can you start as an assistant? Are apprenticeships available in your area? ➤ Are there any particular skills or experience that will improve your chances of getting into your chosen career? ➤ Enquire about volunteering or work experience. ➤ Find out if you need any specific A-levels, or equivalent qualifications at level 3. 	<p>Subject teachers Your careers adviser Professional bodies Health Careers</p>
<p>Studying for A-levels or another course at your school or a local college</p>	<p>As GCSEs, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ If you need to study a particular degree, investigate which universities offer it. ➤ Investigate any further qualifications you might need for your chosen role. ➤ Find out if you are eligible for financial support. ➤ Look at employer websites and contact employers to get an idea of current vacancies. ➤ Consider the option of an apprenticeship. 	<p>Subject teachers Your careers adviser Health Careers National Careers Service UCAS Professional bodies Universities Job websites Employer websites</p>
<p>At university</p>	<p>As A-levels, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ If you're doing a degree in a subject not relevant to public health, investigate your options for switching courses, or going on to do a postgraduate course approved by the relevant regulatory body. 	<p>University careers service Health Careers Professional bodies Regulatory bodies Job websites Employer websites</p>
<p>Looking for a new career</p>	<p>As A-levels, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Find out if you will need to retrain before you apply for new roles, or if the employer will train you while you are working. 	<p>Your careers adviser Health Careers National Careers Service Jobcentre Plus Professional bodies Job websites Employer websites UCAS</p>



Fulfil your potential

Most public health employers offer development and learning opportunities for their staff. No matter where you start, you should have access to extra training and be given every chance to progress within the organisation. You'll usually receive an annual personal review and development plan to support your career progression.

However, because public health roles can be found with such a wide range of employers, development opportunities may vary so it's a good idea to discuss potential career progression with any employer you are considering.

Public health roles in local government can also give you a chance to move into other types of work, because local councils are actively trying to bring the services that focus on communities closer together.

You may find the Public Health Skills and Knowledge Framework (PHSKF) useful to identify the skills and knowledge you would need to progress. www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-health-skills-and-knowledge-framework-phskf



Benefits of working in public health

If you choose to work in public health, you will be helping people to live longer and healthier lives.

Opportunities in public health range from roles that involve working face to face with people and communities to senior roles where you are influencing services for a whole population.

As well as gaining public health skills and knowledge, you can gain experience from working with people in various roles in many different organisations, including the NHS, council departments (housing, social care, environmental health), the police, the fire service, the voluntary sector and local businesses.

Public health will equip you with a wide range of knowledge, skills and experience that will be useful in many different job roles, and will be attractive to potential employers when you are looking to move on in your career.

Find out more about employers of public health staff at www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/publichealthemployers





Pay and benefits in local government

Pay is set nationally on a broad scale but job design and grading are decided by each council. If you work in a public health role and are an employee of a local government, voluntary or community sector organisation, it is possible that National Joint Council (NJC) terms and conditions will apply to you. You can, however, expect local differences.

Find out more at www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/paylocalgovernment

The Local Government Pension Scheme is a long-established and nationwide scheme: www.lgpsmember.org/

Pay and benefits in the NHS

The Agenda for Change (AfC) pay system applies to all NHS staff except doctors, dentists and very senior managers. The NHS job evaluation system determines a score for any role, and this is used to match jobs to pay bands and determine levels of basic salary. Each pay band has a number of pay points. Staff normally progress to the next pay point annually until they reach the top of the pay band.

For more information on pay bands and the most up-to-date salary information in your chosen career, visit www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/pay.

As a new NHS employee you'll automatically become a member of the pension scheme, unless you opt out.

Get more information about the benefits of the NHS pension scheme at www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/payandbenefits

Pay and benefits in central government and the Civil Service


Each Civil Service department and agency has its own pay, grading and performance management and pension arrangements.

You can find out the benefits of working for Public Health England at: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england/about/recruitment.

Health and wellbeing at work and your work-life balance

Many employers in both the public and private sectors have programmes to support their employees' health and wellbeing. Most organisations also offer flexible working to allow, for example, for childcare arrangements. The details will vary according to the individual employer, so it's important to check.





Example career routes

The diagram on pages 34 and 35 has been designed to provide examples of how staff can progress through their career in health.

It gives an illustration of a range of health careers and how someone could progress through different levels. It is not exhaustive; details on other careers can be found in the relevant Health Careers booklets and on the Health Careers website.

The real-life story on page 18 describes how Daniel Flecknoe has progressed within public health. You can follow his career path in the white boxes on the diagram, alongside other potential paths in the different areas of health.

	Initial entry level jobs	Support workers	Senior healthcare assistants/technicians	Assistant practitioners/ Associate practitioners
Allied health professions		Therapy clinical support worker	Occupational therapy rehabilitation assistant	Assistant practitioner in occupational therapy
Ambulance service team		Patient transport service driver	Emergency medical dispatcher	Control room duty officer
Dental care team		Dental nurse	Student dental technician	Assistant dental technician
Health informatics	Health records assistant	Support desk assistant	Medical records clerk	Helpdesk adviser
Healthcare science		Phlebotomist	Newborn hearing screener	Critical care technologist
Management				General office manager
Midwifery		Healthcare assistant (maternity)	Maternity support worker	
Nursing	Nurse cadet	Healthcare assistant (nursing)	Senior healthcare assistant	Community care assistant
Pharmacy	Pharmacy porter	Medicines counter assistant	Senior pharmacy assistant	Pharmacy technician
Psychological therapies		Healthcare assistant (mental health)	Care support worker (mental health) Mental health support worker	Assistant clinical psychologist Trainee psychological wellbeing practitioner
Public health	Young Health champion	Health champion	Health trainer	Stop smoking adviser Health trainer team leader
Wider healthcare team	Porter	Maintenance assistant	Security officer	Medical secretary

Practitioners	Senior practitioners/ specialist practitioners	Advanced practitioners	Consultant practitioners	More senior staff
Occupational therapist	Senior occupational therapist	Advanced occupational therapist (team leader)	Consultant occupational therapist	
Paramedic	Specialist paramedic	Advanced paramedic	Consultant paramedic	Clinical director of service
Dental technician	Senior dental technologist			
Web developer	Special projects manager	Head of communications	Access, booking and choice manager	Director of information management and technology
Cardiac physiologist	Senior biomedical scientist	Specialist respiratory physiologist	Consultant clinical scientist (medical physics)	Director of regional genetics services
Payroll manager	Projects manager	Head of accounts	Maxillofacial laboratory manager	Director of human resources
Midwife	Community midwife	Head of midwifery	Consultant midwife	Director of maternity services
Staff nurse	Senior staff nurse	Clinical charge nurse	Nurse consultant in stroke	Director of nursing
Pre-registration pharmacist	Pharmacist		Lead pharmacist for admissions	Director of clinical support services
Psychological wellbeing practitioner Trainee clinical psychologist	High intensity therapist Psychotherapist		Consultant clinical psychologist	Assistant director - clinical professional practice
Health improvement practitioner	Senior health improvement practitioner	Specialty registrar in public health Advanced health improvement practitioner	Public health consultant	Director of public health
Catering manager	Chaplain	Head of estates		

**For further copies of this
booklet please contact:**

Health Careers
PO Box 27079
Glasgow G3 9EJ
Tel: 0345 60 60 655
email: advice@healthcareers.nhs.uk
www.healthcareers.nhs.uk

NHSCB14 July 2017

 [@HealthCareersUK](https://twitter.com/HealthCareersUK)

 [/healthcareersuk](https://www.facebook.com/healthcareersuk)

Health Careers would like to thank Public Health England for the use of a number of images reproduced in this booklet.

Local 
Government
Association