

**Is a career in public health for you?**

In broad terms there are 6 main areas that people may work within public health:

* Improving people’s health
* Protecting people’s health
* Working with information
* Teaching and researching
* Maintaining and raising standards
* Leadership, planning and management

The list above will hopefully give you an idea of whether there are certain aspects of public health work that appeal to you more strongly than others.

To work out where to start, think about what you are interested in, what you’ve enjoyed learning about and what you would like to learn about.

**Improving people’s health**

**You're interested in...**

Working actively to improve people’s health and wellbeing. This can involve working with individuals to give advice about healthy changes to their lifestyle (such as healthy eating or regular exercise) or with communities and the media to promote health campaigns (such as safer sex) or to advocate changes to public policy.

**You've enjoyed learning about...**

* education
* sociology
* psychology
* marketing
* communications
* anthropology

**What sorts of roles are available?**

People working in health improvement or promotion have a range of responsibilities, from designing programmes that will improve health and wellbeing in communities (eg local media campaigns to encourage safe sex), to delivering one-to-one support for individuals to change their behaviour (eg stopping smoking).

There are many different kinds of roles that take on these responsibilities, for example:

* public health practitioner
* health visitor
* public health nurse
* school nurse
* public health consultant and specialist

**Protecting people’s health**

**You're interested in...**

Protecting people's health can involve promoting safety in the workplace (such as fire safety or the safe handling of goods) or the safety of the wider population (such as ensuring the safety of food, or protecting people from infectious diseases and environmental hazards, like noise, chemicals or radiation).

**You've enjoyed learning about...**

* biology
* chemistry
* epidemiology
* environmental health
* infectious diseases
* laboratory techniques
* health screening
* emergency response
* engineering

**What sort of roles are available?**

People working in health protection are responsible for protecting the health of populations from infectious diseases and environmental hazards related to chemical or radiation exposures.

The roles include:

* environmental health professional
* public health scientist
* health visitor
* public health nurse
* school nurse
* public health consultant and specialist

**Working with information**

**You're interested in...**

Collecting, understanding, explaining, and communicating information about health. This information can be about the general health and wellbeing of the whole population, or about the health risks and health needs of a particular social group (such as an age group or an ethnic group).

**You've enjoyed learning about...**

* maths
* statistics
* epidemiology
* basic sciences
* computer sciences
* database management

**What sorts of roles are available?**

People working in health intelligence and information are involved in collecting, analysing, interpreting, synthesising and communicating health intelligence. This information relates to assessing, measuring and describing health and wellbeing, as well as health risks, health needs and health outcomes of different populations.

Specific roles include:

* public health knowledge and intelligence professional
* public health consultant and specialist

**Teaching and researching**

**You're interested in...**

Investigating public health issues or teaching about public health. This can involve teaching about public health in a university or college, or setting up research projects to investigate specific public health issues (such as obesity, hospital cleanliness, climate change), and publishing the results.

**You've enjoyed learning about...**

* education
* research methods
* epidemiology
* evidence based policy and practice
* monitoring and evaluation

**What sorts of roles are available?**

People working in academic public health are involved in teaching about, and doing research into, the whole range of public health areas. Roles include running Schools of Public Health, managing academic public health programmes, lecturing and research.

Specific roles include:

* public health scientist
* public health academic

**Maintaining and raising standards**

**You're interested in...**

Raising the standard of health and care services provided to the public, and in making sure that these services are safe, effective, efficient and accessible by all. This might include developing specifications and setting priorities for others to provide particular services, as well as commissioning services.

**You've enjoyed learning about...**

* business
* economics
* public policy
* project management
* clinical governance
* service audit and quality

**What sorts of roles are available?**

People working in health and social care quality may be involved in a number of different roles, ranging from clinical governance to working on issues related to safeguarding children. They might also be responsible for priority-setting in their organisation, using the best available evidence to help decision makers allocate their resources in the most effective and efficient way possible.

Specific roles include:

* public health manager
* director of public health
* public health knowledge and intelligence professional

**Leadership, planning and management**

**You’re interested in...**

Leading work to improve the health and wellbeing of the population, in developing initial policy, the strategies to put the plans into action, overseeing implementation and in measuring the impact that policies and strategies have on the quality of health and wellbeing services and the outcomes for individuals and communities.

**You've enjoyed learning about...**

* public policy
* health services management
* health scrutiny

**What sort of roles are available?**

Individuals working in leadership functions are generally at the top end of their public health career, working at Board level. They may be Directors of Public Health, Health Protection, Environmental Health or Heads of Adult Social Care and Health. These individuals provide the leadership and direction for the service they run, and influence commissioning of services and the work of others to create healthier communities. Public health leaders in the UK are responsible for setting policy priorities, and ensuring these priorities, such as reducing health inequalities, are implemented.

Specific roles include:

* director of public health
* public health manager

Most of these roles can be found on the ‘explore roles’ section of the health careers website

You may also find it helpful to take a look at our ‘career planning’ section to discover more about what you have to offer a public health career