

Video transcript

Ben Cooper

Public health development worker for healthy workplaces

My name is Ben Cooper, I'm from Derbyshire County Council, Public Health Department, my job title is public health development worker for healthy workplaces and I'm based in Chesterfield in north Derbyshire where I cover the whole of the county.

What is the purpose of your role?

So we're trying to engage businesses with public health messages, specifically those businesses with high levels of sickness absence rates and businesses with high levels of, err, manufacturing employees for example and other routine and manual jobs, because we know that those workers in those fields have got worse public health outcomes in terms of mental health, healthy eating, smoking cessation and alcohol consumption.

What do you do in a typical week?

We engage businesses directly. We speak to senior managers and do a lot of consultation with employees on the front line who are being adversely affected by particular issues with health. So for example if we are running a mental health intervention, we might offer training for managers on how to manage staff with mental health issues as well as providing the organisation with policies and procedures to do with managing staff with poor mental health outcomes, and we may run campaigns within businesses and within groups of organisations around mental health awareness.

What are the challenges and rewards?

The interesting thing about my job is being able to engage with a wide range of different people and seeing those mechanisms and those support structures that you've put in place actually having a beneficial effect on the wider population and those groups of people that you are working with,

whether that's getting people more physically activity or helping people to access mental health services or whether they've engaged with their weight management service and they've started to lose weight and feel the benefit of that, that's the thing that really excites me about public health. The key challenges that I face are engaging with people initially, people are sometime wary about what this might mean to them, and opening up conversations and having relationships with a wide range of different people helps us to overcome that key barrier.

The most rewarding part of my job is seeing people actually make beneficial changes and actually make positive changes to their lives and being able to witness that on a daily basis is something that adds a lot of value to the job because that's why you go into public health to make a difference to everyday normal people, and to see people make those changes is something that is really rewarding.

What interests me and what gets me up in the morning is making sure that everybody in society can lead a healthy and fulfilling life.

What skills and qualifications are required?

I left university with a degree in sport and exercise science, I got a job working in health promotion within children centres and I realised that if I wanted to move up in public health, actually training is a really important aspect of that, so I obtained a Master's degree in nutrition with public health management, which was key to increasing my knowledge base and skill set, but actually it was more than that, it's about getting out there and actually working with as many different people as possible and getting as wide a range of experiences as possible within the field of public health.

What will you do next?

Within public health there's a vast range of different opportunities because there's a vast amount of, err, work that is undertaken within public health, whether it's a specific health promotion role right the way through to commissioning different services. So where I see myself in a few years' time is actually leading a service across a county, err, and managing that service and hopefully doing training to become a public health registrar as well.