

# The Public Health Career Framework

## What

Work is in progress to develop a coherent, flexible public health career framework for use across the UK. For the first time public health competences, underpinning knowledge, training and qualification routes, registration requirements and a database of job descriptions across nine career levels are being brought together in a user friendly format. The aim is to create a framework that can be used as a route map for careers in public health regardless of starting and intended end points. The flexibility and versatility of the framework means that it can be used alongside existing professional routes in public health. It is not intended to be a driver in public health career development, rather an information source to draw on.

It will initially be a document but the intention is to develop the product as an interactive web-based tool.

## Why

Widening health inequalities, interest in health improvement and major public health issues, including climate change, are examples of challenges that demand a collective, strong response from the public health workforce. This workforce spans different organisations, different professions and operates at every strategic, service and operational level. There is urgent need for a mechanism that facilitates collaboration and coherency across this diverse workforce, in order to maximise their collective contribution and underpin the influence of public health in the UK. The public health career framework can provide this through ensuring rigour and consistency of skills, competence and knowledge at all levels, regardless of professional background, and enabling flexible public health career progression.

## Who for

The framework is for those already working in any field of public health now, and for those wishing to enter. It is for those involved in commissioning, organisation and delivery of public health training; for those involved in workforce planning; and for employers. The key professional groups that have been involved in the development of the framework are those working in environmental health, health improvement, academic public health, pharmacy, nutrition, health psychology, public health nursing, health protection and health economics. However, the aim is to have an inclusive tool that anybody working in any aspect of public health can use, for example those working in oral health, sexual health, sport and exercise etc. The framework will facilitate horizontal, vertical and diagonal movement across public health careers that are in keeping with an increasingly flexible approach to all career progression.

## How

The framework is being developed and populated through “bottom-up” multidisciplinary and multi-professional stakeholder workshops run by Skills for Health, working with the Public Health Resource Unit, on behalf of DH England. The project is accountable to the Health Improvement Workforce Programme Board. Practitioners and specialists from the main sectors

of the public health workforce have participated in the development. Two-day workshops were held in July and October 06 in the south and north of England respectively, and a one day workshop was held in Wales in December. A one-day workshop focussing specifically on the public health intelligence workforce was held in October 06. The work draws upon the extensive range of materials already developed by different professional groups and organisations and aligns closely with the wider work of Skills for Health on other career frameworks and their links with other sector skills councils.

## **Principles**

The competences in the framework are divided into core, what all those working in the field of public health need to have, and non-core - applying to specific broad domains. Each competence, and the knowledge needed to underpin it, is described at nine levels of application. The workshops have drawn upon materials from different professional groups, e.g. the Faculty of Public Health proposed new specialist curriculum, health trainer competences, Skills for Health National Occupational Standards, the NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework, and the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health curriculum. Key principles of the career framework are that it should be easy to use, simple, widely applicable and useful. To this end the descriptions of the competences at each of the nine levels captures the essence of the competence, not the detail. The descriptions are backed by discipline specific more detailed work, for example the extensive work that has already taken place on health promotion competences and is currently taking place on public health information competences.

## **Next stage**

The framework is very much work in progress. Refinements to the framework scheduled to take place in December include checking the competences at each level for completeness and duplication; ensuring knows how and shows how are linked and consistent at each level; and checking against the KSF and public health national occupation standards. Further detail will be added to the training and qualifications section of the cube in December and January. It is anticipated that the detail in training and qualifications, and in the registration section, will be much informed by the project being lead by the UK Voluntary Register for Public Health to scope the benefits of UK wider regulatory frameworks for public health practitioners. A completed draft of the framework will be piloted with a range of professional groups, disciplines and public health provider systems in January to March 2007, followed by extensive consultation in the spring / summer of 2007. The framework will be central to the public health workforce ‘talking point’ that will be delivered at the UKPHA conference in March 07.

The attached “cube” sets out in visual form what the framework is aiming to do.

## **Where to get more information**

For more information, or if you would like to be involved in the phases of piloting and consultation as the framework develops, please contact Emma Heughan at Skills for Health, email: [Emma.Heughan@skillsforhealth.org.uk](mailto:Emma.Heughan@skillsforhealth.org.uk)

Updates on progress will be posted on the website: [www.publichealthdevelopment.org.uk](http://www.publichealthdevelopment.org.uk)

# Multi-disciplinary/multi-agency Public Health Career Framework

## The PHRUBIK Cube

