PUBLIC HEALTH PRACTITIONER STANDARDS FOR REGISTRATION

Development of a regulatory framework for public health practitioners (currently unregistered) aims to protect the public via the development of agreed professional standards which will:

- provide quality assurance of the workforce to a common and agreed standard
- provide quality control of the workforce by placement onto a professional register.

This framework of standards for public health practitioners should become an integral part of the career development pathway and skills escalator, developing the public health workforce and supporting the most effective delivery of the disease prevention and health improvement agenda.

Principles in developing the registration framework
- Robustness
- Simplicity
- Capable of cost-effective implementation
- Clear focus on public health practice linked to the assessment of risk
- Feedback from practitioners and employers as to what is needed to ensure safe practice.

The standards have been developed using the Public Health Skills and Career framework as the source document. They have also drawn from both the Knowledge and Skills framework used in the NHS, and the National Occupational Standards for Public Health. The standards have been subject to two rounds of extensive consultation and we are grateful to all who have contributed to this process.

Upon final publication links will be provided between the standards for registration and all three source documents.

Areas of Public Health Practice for registration as a public health practitioner
Required skills and knowledge have been framed around four areas of practice on which a practitioner needs to provide evidence to be registered as a public health practitioner.

1. Professional and ethical practice – this should be at the heart of everything a public health practitioner does.

2. Technical competencies in public health – covers the essential knowledge and skills that anyone working in public health needs to have.

3. Application of public health competencies to public health work – this relates to the specific functions that public health practitioners undertake

4. Underpinning skills and knowledge – needed by all public health practitioners to act effectively and achieve improvements in population health and wellbeing.

These four areas can be thought of as:
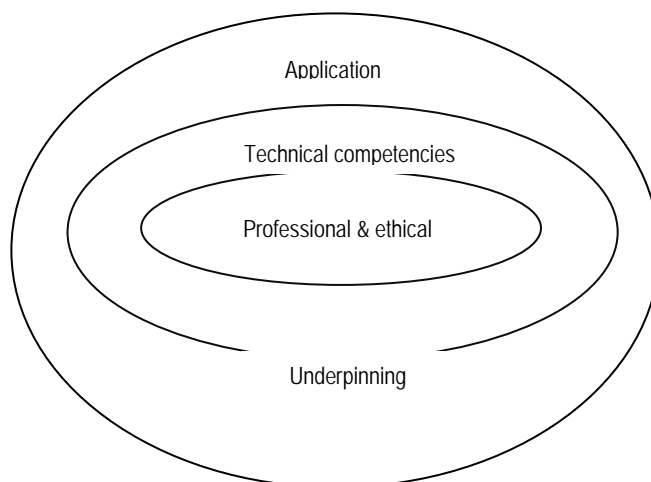
Each area is then further described by indicators of effective practice.

Assessors will seek evidence of effective practice and the associated application of knowledge from the individual's work. Where it is not possible to identify sufficient public health knowledge from the work presented, further evidence of public health knowledge will be sought separately.

The indicators do not necessarily repeat the phrase 'own area of work' in each statement as it is assumed that the applicant will be demonstrating / providing evidence from their own area of practice.

Advanced practice in Public Health

During the scoping, development and consultation phases of this work, the need for both practitioner and advanced practitioner registration 'levels' was identified. In the latter part of the development, work on advanced practice registration was suspended in light of the national work being undertaken by CHRE on advanced practice in regulation. The report from that work has now been received[1].

The purpose of the CHRE work was to establish whether 'advanced practice' is a regulatory issue. Although relevant to the UKPHR its focus was on the statutory healthcare regulators. CHRE emphasised the need for regulators to focus on the core of regulation, ensuring fitness to practice, and warned that much of what is currently called advanced practice represents career progression within a profession and not such a fundamental break of practice such that risks to the public are not adequately captured by existing standards of proficiency and ethics. Robust and well-enforced CPD requirements targeted to relate to a professional's current scope of work, together with organisational governance frameworks, provide mechanisms to ensure safe practice as professionals develop their professional knowledge, skills and behaviours beyond initial registration levels.

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[1] Advanced Practice: Report to the four UK Health Departments 17/2008 July 2009 Council for healthcare regulatory excellence

The UKPHR will for the time being, focus attention on practitioner registration and will look to the review of regulatory frameworks applied to public health professionals, scheduled for autumn/ winter 2009 and led by the English Department of Health, to consider this further.

Assessment

Considerable constructive feedback has also been received during the consultation on the proposed devolved method of assessment for registration. The UKPHR will be testing out the details of this process, including training for both assessors and verifiers, in the New Year following the publication of the DH led review on public health regulation.

Area 1: Professional and ethical practice

1. Recognise and address ethical dilemmas and issues - demonstrating:

    a. Knowledge of existing and emerging legal and ethical issues in own area of practice

    b. the proactive addressing of issues in an appropriate way (eg challenging others' unethical practice).

2. Recognise and act within the limits of own competence seeking advice when needed

3. Act in ways that:

    a. acknowledge and recognise people's expressed beliefs and preferences

    b. promote the ability of others to make informed decisions

    c. promote equality and value diversity

    d. value people as individuals

    e. acknowledge the importance of data confidentiality and disclosure, and the use of data sharing protocols

    f. are consistent with legislation, policies, governance frameworks and systems.

4. Continually develop and improve own and others' practice in public health by:

    a. reflecting on own behaviour and practice and identifying where improvements should be made

    b. recognising the need for, and making use of, opportunities for personal and others' development

    c. awareness of different approaches and preferences to learning

    d. the application of evidence in improving own area of work

    e. objectively and constructively contributing to reviewing the effectiveness of own area of work.

Area 2: Technical competencies in public health practice

5. Promote the value of health and wellbeing and the reduction of health inequalities - demonstrating:

   a. how individual and population health and wellbeing differ and the possible tensions between promoting the health and wellbeing of individuals and health and wellbeing of groups

   b. knowledge of the determinants of health and their effect on populations, communities, groups and individuals

   c. knowledge of the main terms and concepts used in promoting health and wellbeing,

   d. knowledge of the nature of health inequalities and how they might be monitored

   e. awareness of how culture and experience may impact on perceptions and expectations of health and wellbeing.

6. Obtain, verify, analyse and interpret data and/or information to improve the health and wellbeing outcomes of a population / community / group - demonstrating:

   a. knowledge of the importance of accurate and reliable data / information and the anomalies that might occur

   b. knowledge of the main terms and concepts used in epidemiology and the routinely used methods for analysing quantitative and qualitative data

   c. ability to make valid interpretations of the data and/or information and communicate these clearly to a variety of audiences

7. Assess the evidence of effective interventions and services to improve health and wellbeing – demonstrating:

   a. knowledge of the different types, sources and levels of evidence in own area of practice and how to access and use them

   b. the appraisal of published evidence and the identification of implications for own area of work

8. Identify risks to health and wellbeing, providing advice on how to prevent, ameliorate or control them - demonstrating:

   a. knowledge of the risks to health and wellbeing relevant to own area of work and of the varying scale of risk

   b. knowledge of the different approaches to preventing risks and how to communicate risk to different audiences.

Area 3: Application of technical competencies to public health work

9. Work collaboratively to plan and / or deliver programmes to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for populations / communities / groups / families / individuals – demonstrating:

   a. how the programme has been influenced by:
      i. the health and wellbeing of a population
      ii. the determinants of health and wellbeing
      iii. inequalities in health and wellbeing
      iv. the availability of resources
      v. use of an ethical framework in decision making/ priority setting.

   b. how evidence has been applied in the programme and influenced own work

   c. the priorities within, and the target population for, the programme

   d. how the public / populations / communities / groups / families / individuals have been supported to make informed decisions about improving their health and wellbeing

   e. awareness of the effect the media has on public perception

   f. how the health concerns and interests of individuals groups and communities have been communicated

   g. how quality and risk management principles and policies are applied.

   h. how the prevention, amelioration or control of risks has been communicated

Area 4: Underpinning skills

10. Support the implementation of policies and strategies to improve health and wellbeing outcomes – demonstrating:

    a. knowledge of the main public health policies and strategies relevant to own area of work and the organisations that are responsible for them

    b. how different policies, strategies or priorities affect own specific work and how to influence their development or implementation in own area of work

    c. critical reflection and constructive suggestions for how policies, strategies or priorities could be improved in terms of improving health and wellbeing and reducing health inequalities in own area of work

    d. the ability to prioritise and manage projects and/or services in own area of work.

11. Work collaboratively with people from teams and agencies other than one's own to improve health and wellbeing outcomes – demonstrating:

    a. awareness of personal impact on others

    b. constructive relationships with a range of people who contribute to population health and wellbeing

    c. awareness of:
        i. principles of effective partnership working
        ii. the ways in which organisations, teams and individuals work together to improve health and wellbeing outcomes
        iii. the different forms that teams might take

12. Communicate effectively with a range of different people using different methods.