



FACULTY OF
PUBLIC HEALTH



GOOD PUBLIC HEALTH PRACTICE FRAMEWORK 2016

DEFINITIONS: WHAT PUBLIC HEALTH PRACTICE IS

The practice of public health is defined by the Faculty of Public Health as “the science and art of promoting and protecting health and well-being, preventing ill-health and prolonging life through the organised efforts of society”.

Public health practice includes organised efforts to improve health outcomes in those at risk of poorer health. It seeks to address health inequalities across society by tackling wider determinants of health and wellbeing as well as protecting the population from hazards to health.

- Public health practice is **population-based**
- It emphasises **collective responsibility** for health, health protection and disease prevention
- It recognises the **key role of the state**, linked to a concern for the underlying socio-economic and wider determinants of health, as well as disease
- Public health practice also emphasises **partnership working** with all those who contribute to the health of the population.

Public health practice comprises the three public health domains of Health Improvement, Health Protection and Healthcare Public Health. It includes three underlying *functions*: public health knowledge and intelligence; academic public health; and workforce development.

This is the second edition of this guidance. It builds on the previous Faculty of Public Health publication *Good Public Health Practice – General Professional Expectations of Public Health Professions* (2008) and its application. It has been reviewed and updated as necessary in line with developments in professional practice and other relevant guidance.

The guidance is divided into four areas, which reflect the structure of parallel professional documents. They are

A: Knowledge, Skills and Performance

B: Safety and quality

C: Communication, partnership & teamwork

D: Maintaining public trust

APPLICATION: THE BASIS FOR GOOD PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

This guidance provides the basis for good professional practice in public health. It applies to all members of the core public health workforce, including public health practitioners and specialists and those training to become practitioners and specialists.

This guidance is designed to:

- Assist the public, public health professionals, colleagues and employers to better understand what good practice in public health should look like
- Guide public health professionals when planning their Continuing Professional Development (CPD)
- Act as a source document for public health professionals in preparing for appraisals and revalidation
- Inform the framework within which public health professionals will be appraised and recommended for revalidation
- Be a reference source whenever a person's registration or professional practice is called into question.

This is not statutory guidance, nor is it intended to be an exhaustive resource. It cannot cover all forms of

professional practice, nor define all forms of misconduct which may bring your registration or professional practice into question. You must always therefore be prepared to justify your actions and decisions.

The standards in this guidance are designed to be complementary to those contained in other professional codes of practice. Doctors regulated by the General Medical Council must meet the standards set out in *Good Medical Practice*. All other professionals must similarly meet their relevant codes of professional practice. It is your responsibility to ensure that you are aware of, and adhere to, other professional codes of practice and conduct as set by other organisations and statutory regulatory bodies with which you may be registered, or which may apply to your work.

It is envisaged that your professional practice will increasingly be linked to electronic recording systems, such as electronic portfolios, CPD records and records needed for appraisal, personal development planning and revalidation purposes. It is intended that these electronic tools will assist you throughout your professional practice in terms of career planning and development, data capture and maintaining, extending and adding to your professional competences.

A: KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND PERFORMANCE

Professionalism in public health practice

- 1. You must be competent in all aspects of your work as a public health professional and retain your competence throughout your working life.** It is first and foremost a personal responsibility to maintain your professional competence and performance. You can do this through regular participation in continuing professional development (CPD); reflection on practice; and such forms of appraisal, personal development planning and revalidation as apply to you and your work.
2. You must recognise and work within the limits of your competence, seeking further advice and consulting with colleagues where this is required. There is clearly a responsibility on your managers and/or commissioners not to require you to work beyond your limits of competence. However, the ultimate decision not to act (in order not to risk public harm) is for you to make: you are expected to say no if necessary. You must be familiar with guidelines and developments that affect your work.
- 3. You must practise within ethical, legal and regulatory limits that apply to your area of public health practice.** Where aspects of public health practice are governed by law or regulated by other statutory codes of practice, you are expected to observe these and keep up to date with changes that may affect your practice.
- 4. You have a duty to monitor, protect and improve the health of populations.** This may include: investigating and acting on risks to health; poor outcomes in particular populations; or providing professional advice to others on emerging health issues, based on the best available evidence of information.
- 5. You must be satisfied that you have valid authority, including consent where informed consent is required for interventions.** Take care to ensure that you are acting in accordance with the appropriate authority for the work you are doing, and that you do not exceed that authority. Remember that in some instances informed consent will be required before

carrying out an intervention –for example, where treatment is to be provided to patients.

6. **You are expected to improve and develop your practice continuously.** Accessing educational, training, mentoring and audit opportunities and reflecting on how these will improve your practice is a key element of professional improvement. You are expected to participate in regular appraisal, continuous professional development and revalidation as appropriate to your professional background.
7. **You must be able to receive and act upon feedback on your practice and performance, both positive and negative.** Where concerns have been raised in relation to your practice you have a professional responsibility to address these and cooperate with any related investigations. Where positive and constructive feedback is given, you should reflect on how to respond.
8. **You must take care to delegate responsibility to others safely.** Where a task or area of work is delegated by you to someone else, you must be satisfied that the person to whom you delegate has the qualifications, experience, knowledge and skills

to complete the task required. You retain overall management responsibility through delegation of the task; people to whom you delegate will be accountable for their own decisions and actions.

9. **You must keep records of important decisions, actions and consequences.** You have a personal responsibility to keep records: these should be clear, accurate, secure and contemporaneous. Records should report the relevant findings, the decisions made, the process and who was involved, the information given to colleagues and the public, the resulting action and/or any follow-up. Documentation relating to your work should be held securely, shared appropriately, and accessible to others who may later need to refer back to it or may require access under legislation including the Freedom of Information Act. Any documentation that contains confidential information (including emails) should be held securely, and should only be shared in line with organisational and national guidance on information governance.

B: SAFETY AND QUALITY

- 10. You have a duty to safeguard and protect the health and wellbeing of your population,** with particular attention to vulnerable groups within your population. Vulnerable groups may include (but are not limited to) children and young people, people with physical and/or mental health issues, older people and people in disadvantaged communities. You should be aware of the needs and welfare of vulnerable groups when you work with them, including people who care for vulnerable individuals (such as parents, partners/spouses, and children). Be aware also of any individuals or groups who may represent a danger to vulnerable groups.

Take especial care when seeking vulnerable people's consent and consult with them or their advocates in appropriate ways so as to be clear whether consent is being given or withheld. You should offer assistance to vulnerable individuals or groups, including where necessary advocating on their behalf if you have reason to think that their rights have been abused or denied.

When communicating with vulnerable individuals or groups you must:

- Treat them with respect and listen to their views
- Answer their questions to the best of your ability
- Provide information in a way they can understand.

- 11. Your duty to vulnerable groups extends to their relatives, carers and partners.** When dealing with matters concerning vulnerable individuals, you must be considerate to relatives, carers, partners and others close to the person, and be sensitive and responsive in providing information and support. In doing this, you must follow the guidance in relation to confidentiality, information governance and data protection (the Caldicott principles¹).

- 12. You must plan and act in accordance with available evidence and use resources effectively and efficiently.** You should ensure that any actions you take or recommendations that you make in the course of your work

¹ http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+www.dh.gov.uk/en/publicationsandstatistics/publications/publicationspolicyandguidance/browsable/dh_5133529

are based on a clear analysis of the available intelligence and evidence. You are expected to pay due regard to efficacy, and to effective use of resources across partnerships, including:

- Formulating policies and interventions only when you have adequate knowledge of the population's health, and are satisfied that the policies and interventions serve the population's needs
- Formulating effective policies and interventions based on the best available evidence
- Take steps to monitor, evaluate and review the impact of a given course of action where the evidence is unclear or does not exist.

13. You must be professional and ethical in your public health practice at all times. You must not allow your personal views in regard to lifestyle choice, culture, belief system, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability, marital or parental status, age or social or economic status to affect negatively or to prejudice the professional services you provide or arrange. You must not refuse or

delay action that is otherwise justified because you believe that an individual's or population's actions have contributed to their situation. You should challenge colleagues and partners if their behaviour does not comply with this guidance.

You must not express to individuals and groups you work with your personal beliefs, including political, religious or moral beliefs, in ways that exploit their vulnerability or that are likely to cause them distress.

14. You must make sure that you and other professionals are able to be professional and ethical in your and their public health practice. You must take part in systems of quality assurance and quality improvement to promote safe systems and improved quality of your work. If you have management responsibilities, you should ensure that mechanisms are in place through which colleagues and partners can raise, in confidence, concerns about risks to the public. You must contribute to adverse event recognition and reporting systems. Those public health professionals with additional professional registrations should also pay due regard to relevant codes of conduct.

- 15. You must maintain financial rectitude in all your public health practice dealings.** You must make sure that the funds you manage and/or receive for use in connection with your public health practice are used for the purpose for which they were intended. If you have responsibility for managing finance, you must ensure that there are processes in place to provide financial assurance and that these are followed.
- 16. You must declare any relevant commercial or financial conflicts of interests you may have.** In any professional setting where your sphere of influence could lead to an actual or a perceived beneficial financial or commercial advantage, you must be completely transparent and accountable in the decisions you make, and the decisions you withdraw from making. This includes keeping records and publishing these records to relevant audiences. It is essential that any relevant interests you have do not affect and are seen not to affect your professional judgement of standards of practice.
- 17. You must not allow your own health and wellbeing to affect adversely your professional practice.** If you know or suspect that you have a condition which could harm colleagues or communities you come into contact with, or which could impair your professional judgement or performance, you must inform a suitably qualified individual. You must act on the advice that you are given as to what action needs to be taken.
- 18. You must have in place arrangements to compensate anybody who may suffer as a result of deficiencies in your work or that of your team.** You must check whether your employer or commissioner has appropriate insurance cover and you must take out adequate insurance including professional indemnity cover for any part of your practice not covered by such insurance in the interest of all individuals and groups you work with as well as your own.

19. You must conduct research (including designing, organising and carrying out research) with honesty and integrity. If you take part in or arrange clinical trials, or other research involving the public, you must make sure that the individuals concerned give written consent to take part and that the research is not contrary to an individual's interests. You should always seek further advice where your research involves individuals who are not able to make decisions for themselves. You may also benefit from additional advice where your research involves children. You must check that the research protocol has been approved by a properly constituted research ethics committee. In all cases:

- Put the protection of the participants' interests first
- Follow all aspects of the research protocol
- Follow the appropriate national research governance guidelines
- Ensure that your conduct is not influenced by payments, gifts or other gratuities

- Accept only those payments approved by a research ethics committee
- Always record your research results truthfully and at all times maintain accurate records
- When publishing results, you must not make unjustified claims for authorship
- You have a duty to report evidence of fraud or misconduct in research to an appropriate person or authority.

C: COMMUNICATION, PARTNERSHIP & TEAMWORK

Collaborative working: organisational, community and individual

- 20. You must work in, and manage, partnerships and teams effectively and with due consideration of others.** Public health professionals will be expected to manage, develop and foster relationships with colleagues, across organisations, and with communities, the wider public and sometimes individual patients. Successful relationships depend on trust, openness, transparency and good communication. Elements of effective and successful relationships include: listening to and respecting the views of others; responding honestly; using accessible and appropriate language and media for the audience; understanding the implications of sharing information with wider audiences; and respecting confidentiality. When you are on duty you must always be readily accessible.
- 21. You must make sure that relevant information is shared.** This includes a duty of candour: you must ensure that information

is not withheld, where it may affect a decision or course of action that would have an impact of health. When working with communities, information should be shared and sought in ways that is truthful and meaningful. Appropriate steps should be taken to ensure that all communities (including marginalised and minority groups) are able to: contribute to the design of services and interventions; co-produce interventions and services where appropriate; assist in identifying and utilising community assets effectively; and help monitor outcomes so as to protect health and improve health and wellbeing. It is a key principle of public health practice that you should work with and mobilise communities and individuals to facilitate and support them to develop solutions to address their health and wellbeing needs (including advocating for them where necessary) through community development models of practice.

22. You must make sure information to be shared is meaningful. You must share with the public, in a way they can understand, the information they want or need to know about their health and health care and the health options available to them, including associated risks and uncertainties. You should respond to the public's questions and keep them informed about the progress of interventions aimed at improving their health.

23. You must respect the right of people to decline to take part in interventions, initiatives, teaching or research even if it may be of benefit to them. Respect for human rights, for freedom of choice and for the preferences individuals and groups may have is key to public health practice. Where you believe that individuals are making decisions harmful to their own (or others') health and wellbeing: consider the effect on others; be sure to provide relevant information; leave the door open to reconsideration later; and return to the issue from time to time later. Consider if others within their community may be able to exercise helpful influence.

24. You must maintain your focus on the effectiveness of interventions. Focus on health impacts of your professional contribution when designing, working on and evaluating interventions – including collaboratively across partnerships. Population-based **and** individual-based outcomes are at the core of the public health contribution. Where a given course of action has potential to increase health inequalities, public health professionals must highlight this, and where necessary advocate for actions that will avert any adverse impact.

25. You must treat colleagues, individuals and communities fairly and with respect. You must work collaboratively with colleagues, respecting their skills and contributions. You must not subject them to bullying or harassment, or unfairly discriminate against them by allowing your personal views to affect adversely your professional relationship with them. You should challenge colleagues if their behaviour does not comply with this guidance. Where colleagues are experiencing health or performance problems, you should be supportive of them. However, this support should not compromise or be at the expense of public safety.

26. You have a professional responsibility to support trainees and colleagues in your work environment, through formal supervision, formal and informal mentoring, and modelling professional public health practice. This includes providing honest and objective assessment of performance, and supporting trainees or staff you manage with appropriate levels of supervision. Be prepared to raise concerns about competence where unsatisfactory standards of practice are evident. Communities and the public may be put at risk if you confirm the competence of someone who has not met the required standard of practice.

D: MAINTAINING PUBLIC TRUST

Probity and protecting the public

27. You must ensure at all times that your standards of practice justify the public's trust in your work, and in the work of the wider public health profession. Probity is the cornerstone of good public health practice. The components of probity are:

- **Integrity:** Put your service obligations above your personal interests
- **Honesty:** Be truthful and open
- **Objectivity:** Base advice and decisions on rigorous analysis of evidence
- **Impartiality:** Act solely according to the merits of a case without prejudice.

28. You must disclose professionally facts which may have a bearing on your professional performance. You must always be honest about your experience, qualifications and position, particularly when applying for posts.

You must inform your regulator and professional body without delay if, anywhere in the world: you

have accepted a caution; been charged with or found guilty of a criminal offence; or if another professional body has made a finding against your registration as a result of fitness to practise procedures. If you are suspended from a post (or have restrictions placed upon your practice) because of concerns about your standard of practice, performance or conduct, you must inform any other organisations for whom you undertake similar work. Independently of such organisations, you must also inform individuals, communities or populations that you work with, if the advice or services you provide are within the area of concern relating to the suspension or restriction.

29. You must be vigilant about issues concerning data confidentiality and data protection.

When handling information about individuals or communities, you must ensure that information is handled in a sensitive way and confidentiality is maintained where required. This may include seeking the consent of individuals prior to sharing

information. Exceptions to this may occur where there is a balance of greater risk to the population through non-disclosure. Such cases may require further specific clinical or legal advice.

- 30. You must respond to concerns and complaints.** You must be open and honest when things go wrong. Individuals or populations who raise concerns or complain about services they have received (or not received) have a right to expect a prompt and appropriate response. Your response should be constructive and honest and should include an explanation, and if necessary an apology. You should co-operate fully with any complaints procedure that applies to your (or a colleague's) work. You must not allow an individual's (or community's) complaint to prejudice the advice you give, or interventions you may arrange for them.
- 31. You must be honest and objective when assessing the performance of those you have supervised, trained or worked with.** Your duty of candour extends to your assessment of colleagues, locums and students. Communities and the public may be put at risk if you confirm

the competence of someone who has not reached or maintained a satisfactory standard of practice.

- 32. You must be honest and trustworthy when writing reports, and when completing or signing references, forms, reports and other documents.** You must do your best to make sure that any documents you write or sign are not false or misleading. This means that you must take reasonable steps to verify the information in the documents, and that you must not deliberately leave out relevant information. If you have agreed to prepare a report, complete or sign a document or provide evidence, you must do so without unreasonable delay.
- 33. You must co-operate with legitimate requests for information from official organisations monitoring public health.** As a general rule, you should respond to requests for information from official sources with due regard to your duty not to disclose confidential information without consent. However, there are situations where the official request for information may override your duty of confidentiality. In cases of doubt or uncertainty,

you should seek professional and/or legal advice before responding to any part of a request where confidentiality is an issue.

You must disclose to anyone entitled to ask for it any information relevant to an investigation into your own (or a colleague's) conduct, performance or health. You must co-operate fully with any formal inquiry into the treatment of a patient or the public, and with any complaints procedure that applies to your work. You must take part in and/or contribute to confidential inquiries and critical incident reporting, to help reduce the risk to communities and the public. You must assist a coroner or procurator fiscal in an inquest or inquiry by responding to their enquiries and by offering all relevant information. You are entitled to remain silent only when your evidence may lead to criminal proceedings being taken against you.

If you are asked to give evidence or act as a witness in litigation or formal inquiries, you must be honest in all your spoken and written statements. You must make clear the limits of your knowledge or competence.

34. You must respond, when and where you are able, in emergencies. In an emergency, wherever it arises, you must offer assistance, taking account of your own safety, your competence, your training and professional abilities and the availability of other options for care.

35. Your advertising of your services must be truthful, honest, legal and decent. If you publish or broadcast information, the information must be factual and verifiable. It must be published in a way that conforms with the law and with the guidance issued by the Advertising Standards Authority. If you publish information about specialist services, you must still follow the guidance. You must not make unjustifiable claims about the quality or outcomes of your services in any information you provide to the public. Information you publish about your services must not put pressure or undue influence on people to use a particular service, for example, by needlessly arousing concerns or fears about future health and wellbeing.



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