

Practitioner Regulation

The UK Public Health Register (UKPHR) provides public protection by ensuring that only competent public health professionals are registered and that high standards of practice are maintained.

The UKPHR is working in collaboration with key partners in public health in developing the Public Health Register to include public health practitioners and public health advanced practitioners as well as specialists. The development draws from the recently published Public Health Skills and Career Framework (PHSCF - see www.phru.nhs.uk).

Why do Public Health Practitioners need to be registered?

At present a significant number of the Public Health Workforce are working without any form of professional regulation in a wide range of different agencies (e.g. local authorities, the voluntary sector, the private sector and the NHS). Other members of the public health workforce have registration linked to their primary profession, which may or may not directly relate to their work in public health. The work that public health practitioners undertake has a direct impact on the public – often in large numbers - and it is vital that individuals are competent in, and accountable for, what they do.

The overall purpose of regulation is to protect the public by ensuring that individuals are fit to practice and that they meet and maintain the standards outlined by the register whilst registered.

Regulation also brings benefits for practitioners as it shows their commitment to high professional standards and it brings recognition to the professions that it covers.

Regulation will also benefit employers as it will clarify the standards that they can expect at different levels of the

workforce and provide assurances of conduct and competence at different levels.

How will regulation achieve this?

A set of draft standards has been developed for the two levels of registration, these set out what has to be achieved to gain entry to the register at a particular level.

As well as the standards for entry, there will be other aspects to regulation:

- A Code of Conduct which sets out the ethical framework to which registrants need to work
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD) requirements which registrants need to meet to stay on the register
- A system for removing registrants from the register if they are found to be unfit to practise.

All of these different aspects of regulation provide assurances for the public and employers as to a practitioner's (registrant's) fitness to practise.

What is meant by practitioner registration?

At present the UKPHR has one category at specialist level which has two arms of equivalent status – generalist and defined.

The development of practitioner regulation means two further levels will be introduced. Practitioner level is broadly set at level 5 of the PHSCF and Advanced Practitioner is broadly at level 7 of the PHSCF.

To date we have the following draft definitions for these two levels:

Public health practitioners have responsibility for specific areas of work, continually develop their area of work and support others to understand it. Practitioners are likely to contribute to multi-agency / multi-disciplinary programmes of work. Generally practitioners will work as part of a larger team led by someone working at a higher level.

Advanced public health practitioners have responsibility for and expertise in, areas of public health and provide leadership in their area of expertise. Practitioners will normally contribute to multi-agency / multi-disciplinary programmes of work.

I work in public health but am already on a statutory register, how will this affect me?

The priority for the UK Public Health Register is to develop registration for those who currently have no form of registration. The Register is also working with statutory and other regulators to explore different

approaches to regulation and what each can learn. The PH Register is a voluntary register and is not intended to replace or substitute for a statutory register. One possibility that is being explored is whether some form of dual registration might be appropriate for practitioners who are already on a statutory register. No decisions have yet been made as the UKPHR is exploring with other regulators the best way forward for their own registrants.

I think I am likely to meet the standards set, what would I need to do to get on the register?

The exact registration process is still being developed. The first thing that needs to be done is to determine the standards for entry to the register. Once this has been done the ways in which they can best be assessed will need to be determined both for those who think they already meet the standards and those who would like to develop to this level. When further work has been undertaken, we will let you know what you need to do get on the register. In the meantime, we are interested in finding out from practitioners how they are assessed / demonstrate their competence currently.

I am interested in developing a career in public health, how will I be able to get registration?

As well as developing approaches to registration for individuals who are already working as practitioners in public health, we are looking at how the registration standards can be used in education and training programmes that enable people to develop their public health skills and knowledge. This will

be one of the routes to registration – known as the prospective route.

How does this work relate to the practitioner development work programme at the Faculty of Public Health (FPH)?

We are working closely with the FPH on the practitioner development work programme. With other major stakeholders the FPH is focusing on the education training and assessment mechanisms for public health practitioners, both retrospective and prospective. Any gaps in provision will be identified as will opportunities for Continuing Professional Development. The FPH is also exploring the potential for practitioner professional membership. The UKPHR is focusing on regulation as this is its sole purpose. As the two are closely inter-linked joint work is taking place and the findings of each shared as the work proceeds.

When will practitioner and advanced practitioner registration be available?

We are currently at an early stage of development. Draft standards have been developed at the two levels – practitioner and advanced practitioner – and are being tested with individuals likely to be working at these levels. This initial testing phase will continue from now until the end of June. After this we will review findings and learning to date and improve the standards.

Between September – December 2008 we will be carrying out more extensive piloting of the draft standards. After this further consideration will be given to the exact forms of assessment to be used – informed by the work of the Faculty of

Public Health. It is intended that the registration for practitioners will come into place at some point in 2009 although no firm decisions on timing have been made to date. This is because there are a number of aspects to explore including ensuring that there is sufficient capacity to cope with demand.

Who is overseeing the work?

The Register Board of the UKPHR has set up a Practitioner Sub-committee to oversee the development work relating to practitioners and a Regulators' Forum to discuss issues of mutual interest. The Practitioner Sub committee includes representatives from across the UK, different agencies and different professions with an interest in this work. The sub-committee will make recommendations to the Register Board who will make the final decisions on standards, processes and approaches in practitioner regulation.

How can I get involved?

If you would like to be involved or kept up to date with the developments please send your details and interest to.

zoe_clark_po@hotmail.com

PLEASE FORWARD THIS NEWSLETTER TO ANYONE WHO MIGHT HAVE AN INTEREST IN THIS DEVELOPMENT. THANK YOU

UKPHR
Public Health Register