



Contents

1 New avenues open UK public health practitioners

2 Creating standards across the board

3 Overview of the process for practitioner

UKPHR
Public Health Register

Chadwick Court
15 Hatfields
London
SE1 8DJ
E-mail: register@cieh.org

New avenues open for UK public health practitioners

Public health practitioners are key members of the professional public health workforce and can have a huge influence on the health and wellbeing of individuals, groups, communities and populations. It is vital that these professionals are competent in, and accountable for, what they do.

Practitioners work across the breadth of public health in a wide range of settings from the NHS and local government to the voluntary, and private sectors. Although they carry out key public health roles, many public health practitioners remain unregulated.

Since 2003, the UK Public Health Register (UKPHR) has provided public protection by ensuring that only competent public health professionals, at specialist level, are registered and that high standards of practice are maintained. In April 2011, the register opened for practitioners and, in June, the first two practitioners from Public Health Wales were admitted. In this issue of the newsletter we give some insights into what this means to public health practitioners and their employers across the UK.



Who are public health practitioners?

“Over 200 practitioners are working towards registration”

“Although they carry out key public health roles, many public health practitioners remain unregulated.”

The opening of the practitioner route to the UKPHR in April 2011 is a significant development. Up until then the Register had only offered routes for those at specialist level, practicing in general or defined areas of public health.

The term ‘public health practitioner’ is designed to describe a level of practice – not a specific job role or type of job. The UKPHR has taken the broad definition of a ‘public health practitioner’ as someone who has autonomy in specific areas of public health work, continually developing their area of work and supporting others to understand it.

Developing standards

In 2006, the 4 UK countries commissioned the UKPHR to look at the possibility of developing a regulatory framework for public health practitioners.

Extensive UK-wide consultation during 2008/2009, supported the development of practitioner standards for registration.

Initially, both practitioner and advanced practitioner registration ‘levels’ were identified. However, the Council for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence (CHRE) found that much of what is called ‘advanced practice’ represents an individual’s career progression and should be recognised through professional accreditation rather than through regulation. The UKPHR therefore decided to progress with a single level of practitioner registration.

Assessment against the standards is the basis for four local assessment and verification pilot schemes supported by the UKPHR.

Registration is designed to assure public, employers and commissioners that public health professionals are appropriately qualified and competent, providing confidence in the service.

Professional regulation increases the recognition of the professions that it covers while registrants can demonstrate their commitment to high professional standards. Employers have clarity in the competence they can expect at different levels of the workforce and are provided with assurance of conduct

“It allows the world to know that we are ‘up to scratch’, that we are fit for purpose” [Practitioner]

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

The UKPHR sets standards for registration that are recognised throughout the UK. It requires registrants to meet these standards, to maintain competence through CPD and revalidation, and to adhere to a code of conduct. This provides significant public protection from unprofessional or unethical behaviour as well as enhancing recognition for the public health professional.

From pilot to mainstream

The 4 pilot schemes, now have over 200 practitioners working towards registration (see page 4 for details). All the schemes have practitioners who are well advanced in preparing for, or who have achieved, registration. Given the success of the pilot phase, the schemes are now recruiting more applicants and assessors. So we are entering an exciting phase as we move from pilot scheme to mainstream implementation in these areas of the UK

Creating standards across the board

Requirements to become registered

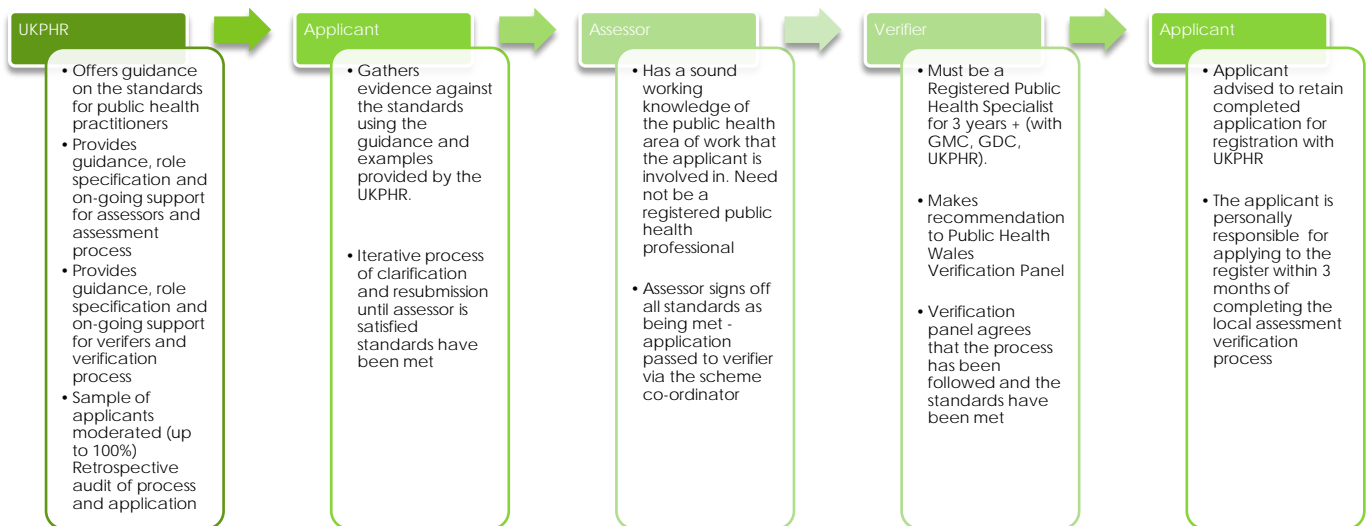
At present you can only apply to register as a public health practitioner with the UKPHR through a local assessment and verification scheme.

Currently, there are only four schemes in the UK and you need to work in the areas the schemes cover in order to participate.

Individuals cannot apply directly to UKPHR. However, they can get involved in setting up a scheme locally or regionally. This will require some funding (which UKPHR has kept as low as possible to cover only essential costs) and local resource to co-ordinate and support the scheme. The UKPHR provides the training and quality assurance for the assessors and verifiers who are recruited locally. The UKPHR would be delighted to have more local schemes. Find further information can also be found at on the website www.publichealthregister.org.uk

Pilot scheme coordinators are also very happy to share their experiences and support others to develop schemes and to this end a national group has already been established.

Process for practitioner assessment



Setting up a scheme requires funding for:

- Adaptation of guidance documents and training materials
- Initiation meeting
- Introductory day for applicants
- Training for assessors (two days)
- Training for verifiers
- Moderation, including attendance at two verification panels
- Support and audit for one year
- Plus costs of learning and development support for applicants

Current UK schemes:

- **NHS South Central**
Joanna Chapman Andrews
http://www.workforce.southcentral.nhs.uk/about-us/public_health_development.aspx
- **Public Health Wales**
Claire Barley
<http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/888/page/49062>
- **NHS West Midlands**
Sally James
<http://nhslocal.nhs.uk/story/west-midlands-accreditation-scheme-top-uk>
- **NHS Kent and Medway**
Sylvia Beacham
sylvia.beacham@nhs.net