



Public Health
England



FACULTY OF
PUBLIC HEALTH



Multi-disciplinary teams in public health

For more than ten years there has been a commitment to multi-disciplinary public health teams. The opening up of the profession to non-medically qualified public health specialists, operating on the basis of equality with medically qualified specialists, has enriched public health, bringing people from a range of clinical and non-clinical backgrounds into the profession. As we work together to improve the public's health it will be important to have an open mind about the breadth of skills which will be needed to deliver the transformation in health outcomes and reductions in inequalities to which we are all committed. Councils are the new leaders of the local public health system and will need to make their own judgements about the use of the public health grant to ensure that they have the right people to help them meet the challenges which they face. The purpose of this note is to signal a piece of work which PHE and the LGA are leading, together with the Faculty and ADPH, to support local government in making those judgements.

PHE, the Faculty, ADPH and LGA will work together to develop good practice guidance on the skill mix which Councils may want to consider in a local public health team. This guidance will include specific advice about the employment of doctors who make up around 50% of staff currently in training. It will address issues around staff mobility and the benefits this brings to the wider system, as well as the criteria which Councils may wish to take into account when they are considering employing doctors, including equal pay considerations. The aim is to publish this guidance in early 2014.

It is important to emphasise that all organisations remain firmly committed to multi-disciplinary public health teams but this is not to say that the individual's professional background is unimportant; indeed the strength of a multi-disciplinary team often lies in the breadth of experience which individual staff bring. There are countless examples across the country of highly successful public health specialists from a range of different backgrounds. This is reflected in the growing number of directors of public health who come from non-medical backgrounds. Nonetheless it remains the case that doctors can add critical value to successful public health teams particularly, but not solely, in the area of healthcare commissioning and it is therefore important that they are employed when appropriate in Councils as well as in other parts of the new public health system. The guidance will seek to assist Councils and other employers in considering the right skill mix for their particular area.

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