

UK PUBLIC HEALTH NETWORK: year 2 impact report 2016

Introduction

The UK Public Health Network was formed out of a meeting of Chief Executives and Board members on 8 October 2014. The decision of that summit was that the public health profession needed a more unified voice in order to share knowledge and provide consistent advice on the priorities for improving the public's health and wellbeing. Following a successful first year, the Network has continued its development through biannual summits to share learning, knowledge and experience.

How have we done?

The past year has been marked by significant political change. This has had a positive effect on the Network. All the original 18 member and observer organisations have remained in touch with each other during the year with very high levels of participation in Network events. Members report finding value in the Network through:

- a focus on strategic issues.
- the unique way in which statutory and non-governmental organisations work together.

Although still early days, there is a greater sense of alliance and cohesion – demonstrated most notably in initiatives such as a joint bid to host the 2020 World Congress in the UK.

The Network invited two new organisations to join during the year: The Health Foundation joined as a member and the Kings Fund joined as an observer. Between them, these organisations bring respected policy and analytic expertise to the Network.

The CEOs Group, comprising the Association of Directors of Public Health, Faculty of Public Health, Royal Society for Public Health and the UK Health Forum, continues to provide valuable direction and support for the Network. The Group was delighted to be awarded contributory funding to support the post of Network Coordinator during 2017-18. Providing staffing for the Network during 2016 has been instrumental in organising meetings and teleconferences. It has also enabled background desk research to be carried out on the Network's topics of interest.

The Network's Business plan focusses on four areas. The following table shows the outcomes and impacts of deliverables from those priorities during year two.

How will we improve?

During 2017 the Network will continue to develop its programme of knowledge sharing with one of its meetings to be held in Scotland to investigate the human rights approach to health. Further opportunities to meet in other parts of the UK will be explored.

Topics previously discussed by the Network continue to be of high priority to the public health system and will merit further attention over the next year. In particular, further work is anticipated around investment in public health as well as issues arising from Brexit and the implications for public health and wellbeing in the UK. Project funding will be sought to support this further programme of activity.

Priority 1	Promote a common and collective agenda to tackle the overarching system issues in improving public health and wellbeing in the UK.
Delivered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivered two summits: securing investment in public health (May 2016) and making the most of Brexit (October 2016). Maintained quarterly teleconferences between policy leads across member and observer organisations. Joint publication of a report Taking a new line on drugs between the Royal Society for Public Health and the Faculty of Public Health.
Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following the Brexit summit, four Network members collaborated on a joint response to the Health Select Committee call for evidence to its inquiry into Brexit and health. The CEOs Group wrote to the Public Health Minister, seeking assurances that existing health protections and public health collaborations would not be lost on leaving the EU and that health would be considered in trade negotiations.
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High levels of participation in summit meetings demonstrate a continuing interest in sharing experience on the issues of common strategic importance across the public health system. Network meetings held in 2016 attracted high-quality speakers, both nationally and internationally, all of whom welcomed the opportunity to engage with public health system leaders. This is leading to an ongoing relationship with speakers that will add value to the Network's influencing ability. Work shared in advance via the policy leads is leading to fewer "surprises" for the public health system on publication. Although this is still early days for the Network, it is clear that responses to, and support for, each other's work are fostering closer links between organisations.
Priority 2	Become a thought-leader for best national practice in addressing health and wellbeing across the UK
Delivered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extensive investigation into the areas of current legislation that are of particular concern to the Directors of Public Health in England.
Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A proposal was submitted to the Law Commission in October 2016 to review legislation affecting the delivery of the public health function in England, to bring this in line with other UK jurisdictions.
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Harmonising legislation across the UK is challenging because of the differing situations in each jurisdiction. However, sharing experience from Scotland's planning laws and the Future Generations' Act in Wales demonstrates the willingness of organisations within the public health system to learn from other. The outcome of the submission to the Law Commission is expected by summer 2017.

Priority 3	Promote the value of health and wellbeing as a key asset for the UK economy.
Delivered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set of resources investigating the potential for trade to impact on public health and wellbeing.
Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising awareness of need for the public health system to engage with government to advise on health protections that will be needed in trade and investment agreements. • Established valuable links with international experts in the field of trade.
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing the health impacts of trade and investment agreements collectively will strengthen the voice for public health in an area where public health does not often have representation. This issue has the potential to be of huge importance to the public's health and wellbeing across all UK jurisdictions. The Network's position in crossing both government and non-government organisations creates a significant opportunity to speak with authority, coherence, and consistency. • The Network plans to build on the October 2016 summit through roundtable discussions to develop greater understanding of the impacts of trade and investment agreements. The aim is to engage with trade negotiators prior to the UK leaving the EU.
Priority 4	Change the narrative around the public's health from a focus on the impact of behaviours to the determinants of health.
Delivered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly consultation scan. • Maintaining a public face of Network via Twitter. • Joint bid to host the 2020 World Congress in Liverpool.
Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing willingness to work together, aligning responses to consultations, submitting joint bids and publishing joint pieces of work.
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doing things once on behalf of the Network helps improve capacity by reducing duplication of effort. Closer working is resulting in increasing levels of confidence between organisations. Sharing templates for responding to consultations is an important way of delivering consistency of message. This will be a gradual process, based on increasing trust between public health partners across the system. • Twitter followers have increased steadily since the Network's account was set up in October 2015; as at 21/2/17 @ukphnetwork has 305 followers. Engagement rates average 0.9% (ie someone did something with the tweet, such as retweeting etc). Although this is below the average of 1.6% for non-profit organisations, it indicates that relevant tweets are being posted and that there is a wider audience interested in engaging with the Network.

About the Network

The UK Public Health Network provides a unique forum for public health professionals in the UK to agree priorities for improving the health of the public and to speak with one voice. It works collaboratively and in partnership with the UK's umbrella and membership public health organisations, including the statutory agencies across all four countries.

Composition of the UK Public Health Network: 2016

Members

Academy of Medical Royal Colleges

Association of Directors of Public Health (UK) (including Association of Directors of Public Health in Wales and Scottish Directors of Public Health)

Chartered Institute of Environmental Health

Faculty of Public Health

Health Foundation

Institute of Public Health in Ireland

Royal Society for Public Health

Society for Social Medicine

UK Health Forum

UK Public Health Register

Observers

Chief Medical Officers for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

Kings Fund

Local Government Association

NHS Health Scotland

Public Health Agency NI

Public Health England

Public Health Wales

Contact us

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