Public Health England

Protecting and improving the nation's health

Public mental health leadership and workforce development framework
Executive summary

Confidence, competence, commitment

About Public Health England

Public Health England exists to protect and improve the nation's health and wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities. It does this through world-class science, knowledge and intelligence, advocacy, partnerships and the delivery of specialist public health services. PHE is an operationally autonomous executive agency of the Department of Health.

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Executive summary

Making mental health everyone's business requires ensuring that many diverse sectors are competent in delivering that business. This includes system leadership where people at all levels demonstrate shared leadership to improve mental health for all. It also requires more expertise within the public health specialist workforce and increased capability within the wider workforce.

The challenge of creating genuine parity of esteem for mental health means staff and leaders need to develop an integrated mental and physical health approach at every level of health improvement, prevention, treatment, care and recovery. Public health leadership and capability within the mental health service workforce is key to reducing health inequalities.

The purpose of this framework is to inform and influence the development of public health leadership and the workforce in relation to mental health. The aim is to build the capacity and capability of leaders and a workforce that is confident, competent, and committed to:

- promoting good mental health across the population
- preventing mental illness and suicide
- improving the quality and length of life of people living with mental illness

The No health without mental health implementation framework and Closing the gap documents set out Public Health England's commitment to the government's mental health strategy. This includes our priority to:

Help build capacity and capability across the wider and specialist public health workforce in understanding and integrating mental health and wellbeing into public health.

The overall recommendation is a call to action for partners responsible for workforce development, including leaders, commissioners, providers, managers and professional bodies, to use the competencies and priorities to guide action within their work plans.

The six ambitions for achieving this, focussed on three key groups, are:

Leaders:
1. Our leaders advocate for the mental health of citizens as a valuable resource for thriving communities and economies.

Public health specialist, consultant and senior workforce:

2. A public health specialist workforce that has expertise to lead mental health as a public health priority

Public health practitioners and the wider workforce:

3. A local workforce working with communities to build healthy and resilient places
4. Frontline staff are confident and competent in communicating with people about mental health and supporting them to improve it
5. Frontline staff are confident and competent in recognising signs of mental distress and supporting children, young people, parents and adults appropriately
6. The health and social care workforce has the knowledge and skills to improve the health and wellbeing of people with a mental illness and reduce mental health inequalities

There are 12 core principles across the ambitions that identify the common knowledge, beliefs and skills required by the entire workforce to improve mental health (table 1). In addition, specific key competencies have been mapped to each of the six ambitions (table 2).

Table 1. Core Principles for mental health across the workforce

Know	Believe	Act
1. Know the nature and dimensions of mental health and mental illness	5. Understand your own mental health, what influences it, its impact on others and how you improve it	9. Communicate effectively with children, young people and adults about mental health
2. Know the determinants at a structural, community and individual level	6. Appreciate that there is no health without mental health and the mind and body work as one system	10. Integrate mental health into your own area of work and address mental and physical health holistically
3. Know how mental health is a positive asset and resource to society	7. Commitment to a life-course approach and investment in healthy early environments	11. Consider social inequalities in your work and act to reduce them and empower others to
4. Know what works to improve mental health and prevent mental illness within own area of work	8. Recognise and act to reduce discrimination against people experiencing mental illness	12. Support people who disclose lived experience of mental illness

Table 2. Key competencies for leaders, public health specialists and frontline staff

Leaders	PH specialists, consultants and senior staff	Frontline staff			
		Working with communities	**Improving mental wellbeing**	**Intervening early in distress**	**Improving health and wellbeing of people with mental illness**
Integrate mental health within all policy and take action to mitigate any negative impacts of policy on mental health and wellbeing	Assess and describe the mental health and illness needs and assets of specific populations and the inequities experienced by some populations, communities and groups	Identify the existing resources and strengths within a community and the expertise within the voluntary and community sector	Encourage and enable individuals and families to identify the things that are affecting their mental health, now and in the future, and the things they can do to improve it	Recognise when someone may be experiencing mental distress, including self harm and suicidal thoughts and intentions	Support people experiencing mental illness to make and maintain informed choices about improving their health and wellbeing as part of recovery, including:
Promote the value of mental health and wellbeing and the reduction of inequalities across settings and agencies	Translate findings about mental health and illness, and needs and assets, into appropriate recommendations for action, policy decisions and service commissioning/delivery/ provision^{Error! Bookmark not defined.}	Offer appropriate support to change, development and capacity building in the community, based on asset approaches	Use appropriate tools and approaches that support people to build their skills and confidence in staying mentally well	Judge risks and follow appropriate procedures and guidelines	- health behaviour and physical health - mental health and resilience - control and participation - welfare support, eg, financial management, benefits uptake, employment, housing
Advocate for mental health^{Error! Bookmark not defined.} and address mental illness as central to reducing inequalities and creating thriving communities and economies	Influence political/ partnership decision making to maximize the application and use of evidence in achieving change	Enable communities to develop their capacity to advocate for mental health and wellbeing	Help people to develop and implement* a personal or family action plan to improve their mental health	Apply an early intervention or suicide intervention model	Deliver care holistically, through integrating physical, psychological, spiritual and social factors within all care pathways
Create organisations that nurture and sustain the mental health of employees	Set strategic direction and vision for mental health and communicate it effectively to improve population health and wellbeing	Engage, empower and work alongside volunteers, lay workers, community leaders and community members, especially the most marginalised and excluded	Enable people to get hold of up to date appropriate information and advice when they need it. and access opportunities in their community	Link people to appropriate sources of support, especially to address social causal factors	Support individuals and communities in the articulation of their priorities and advocating for health and wellbeing
	Advise strategic partners to determine priorities and outcomes to achieve improvements in quality and cost-effectiveness of treatments for mental illness and associated co-morbidities		*especially for extended interventions, to support people in implementing action		

Implementation

PHE will work with partners to provide leadership, support and direction. The framework has been endorsed by fourteen leading national organisations (see 'Call to action'). We will explore specific action to:

1. Work with the national Public Health Workforce Advisory Group to oversee implementation of this framework.
2. Integrate the priorities into our work to build the capacity and capability of the wider workforce.
3. Inform the review of the UK Public Health Skills and Knowledge Framework.
4. Apply and develop the principles and key competencies.
5. Demonstrate and build leadership in the competencies within our organisation.
6. Build system leadership for wellbeing and mental health through a support programme.
7. Shape the narrative on public mental health, engage partners in conversation and strengthen our role in advocating, championing and influencing.
8. Work with the relevant colleges, faculties and boards overseeing professional training to include mental health within public health curricula, training and CPD.
9. Develop networking, communication and collaboration between localities and our 15 centres and national programme.
10. Build mental health intelligence capability through the National Mental Health Intelligence Network.
11. Support the development of best practice in mental health brief intervention and 'making every contact count'.
12. Support increased access to a range of mental health promotion training for frontline public health practitioners and the wider workforce.
13. Disseminate evidence and support best practice in working with communities and asset-based approaches.
14. Build public health competence among the mental health workforce, through curricula, CPD and practice guidance.
15. Build the capability of our own organisation to improve employee mental health and support to staff with mental health problems.
16. Support other organisations and businesses to take action to improve employee mental health and support staff with mental health problems.