

# RCN Public Health Forum

## Update February 2012

A number of key projects on behalf of Public Health Forum members have been delivered. These include:

- publication of the revised [Occupational Health Nursing: Career and Competence Development guidance](#)
- publication of new [guidance for occupational health technicians](#)
- steering the development of a complex [multidisciplinary public health conference to take place in London on 17 February](#)
- publication and launch at the conference of a new [document highlighting the role and contribution of nurses in the public health agenda](#)
- launch of a new Learning Zone resource [Sexual Health for Non-experts](#).

More to come:

The next 12 months is also set to become a busy time for the forum chair and steering group, who will be meeting in March to discuss and agree work streams for the coming year. Work already scheduled includes:

- revision and publication of two sexual health publications relating to lesbian, gay and transgender care
- revision and publication of the travel health competency framework and guidance
- a new publication for TB case management
- A response to the Department of Health consultation on the public health workforce strategy and commenting on policy papers throughout the year.

### **Public health reforms in England**

In December, more details were published of the design of the new public health system, including the role and responsibilities of local government in public health, the operating model for the new executive agency Public Health England and an overview of how the whole system will work.

The factsheets, which aim to help the partner organisations and staff involved to understand and implement these reforms, are:

- overview  
a summary [\[The New Public Health System: Summary\]](#) of the public health system reforms and key points on the design of the new system
- public health in local government  
these factsheets detail the roles and responsibilities of local authorities in the new public health system, including local authority public health functions, the role of the director of public health and commissioning responsibilities:

[Public Health in Local Government \(all factsheets\)](#)

[Local Government Leading for Public Health](#)

[Local Government's New Public Health Functions](#)

[The Role of the Director of Public Health](#)

[Commissioning Responsibilities](#)

[Public Health Advice to NHS Commissioners](#)

[Professional Appraisal and Support, and Capacity Building](#)

- Public Health England's operating model

These factsheets detail the design of Public Health England:

[Public Health England's Operating Model \(all factsheets\)](#)

[Mission and Values](#)

[Functions](#)

[Organisational Design](#)

[Status and Accountability](#)

[Next Steps – Establishing Public Health England.](#)

The new public health system, due to be implemented from April 2013, will see local authorities take the lead for improving health, co-ordinating local efforts to protect the public's health and ensuring health services promote population health.

At the same time, Public Health England will be created to deliver a range of services, including health protection, providing information and intelligence, and supporting the development of the public health workforce.

Further operational details – including a public health outcomes framework and details on public health funding and workforce issues – were announced by Health Secretary Andrew Lansley on 23 January 2012. In addition, as we prepare this e-newsletter, we eagerly await the publication of the Department of Health consultation on the public health workforce strategy, due at the end of January.

The Department of Health has published documents detailing the role and responsibilities of local government in public health, the operating model for the new executive agency Public Health England and an overview of how the whole system will work. To download factsheets from the DH website, please follow the link [here](#)

### **RCN View on PH reforms**

We still await operational information regarding the public health outcomes framework, along with other key documents on funding and the launch of the public health workforce strategy consultation.

The RCN is concerned that significant changes are being made to public health staff, in the absence of the guidance promised by the Government. At this moment in time thousands of nurses are left in limbo, seeing changes on the ground but with no real news or updates from the people making them.

In the Update and Way Forward policy statement in the middle of July, the Department of Health committed to producing updates on the five key areas of reform during the autumn. Just to be clear, this set of work is an overhaul to the way we

tackle public health issues, it isn't a list of mere tweaks and small changes. In case you aren't aware, the five areas are:

- public health outcomes framework
- Public Health England operating model
- public health in local government and the director of public health
- public health funding including shadow local authority allocations for 2012-13
- public health workforce strategy consultation

Here at the RCN, we understand that the shadow budget allocations and consultation on the workforce strategy may not be released until 2012. What's more, there is no sign of updates on the remaining three areas as 2011 draws to a close; meanwhile, RCN members are being affected right now.

Back in early November, the RCN welcomed the Health Select Committee's report on Public Health; it recommended that uncertainty around the future structure and focus of public health in England must be resolved as quickly as possible. You can understand then, why we're now concerned.

At the time, the RCN Chief Executive & General Secretary, Dr Peter Carter, commented that "Many public health nurses are currently in a state of limbo as they wait to see how proposed transfers to local authorities will affect their jobs and the services they offer to the public."

Whilst we understand that the issues requiring consideration are significant, nursing staff need clarity and deserve answers. On behalf of public health staff everywhere, I very much hope that 2012 provides us with more information, not only for the benefit of staff, but the patients who are so dependent on the care that they provide.

Read Jan Maw's message appearing on the blog of the Faculty of Public Health "Better Health for All" [here](#), together with contributions from other key public health stakeholders.

Changes to the funding, commissioning and delivery of public health services in England have been proposed by the Government in the [White Paper Healthy Lives, Healthy People: Our Strategy for Public Health in England](#).

The RCN has been promoting the role of nursing in discussions at every stage of the consultation process, please see below for the chronology of developments with most recent developments at the top.

- The Future Forum published "interim advice" on 17 November 2011 to inform the 2012/13 NHS Operating Framework and the plans around a new public health system. The final report on all four consultation areas including Public Health is due early December. The interim advice can be read [here](#)
- The RCN hosted a Future Forum listening exercise for Professor Steve Field's team on 15 November 2011 at Cavendish Square. A number of Public Health forum members were invited to participate to put forward the nursing view on proposed changes to Public Health.

- The Health Select Committee Inquiry into Public Health produced its [report](#) on 2 November 2011. You can read the RCN response [here](#)
- RCN published its [response to NHS Future Forum consultation](#) on 18 October 2011. You can read the RCN response [here](#)
- The RCN has launched a survey of members linking to the wider RCN Frontline First Campaign to identify members at risk of compulsory transfer or redundancy.  
Please go [here](#) for more information
- On 14 July the DH published [Healthy lives, healthy people: update and way forward](#), the initial response to the White Paper consultation. Please see the [RCN's press release](#) on this issue
- On 13 May the Commons announced a [Health Select Committee Inquiry into Public Health](#)
- The RCN responded to this enquiry but the evidence has not yet been placed in the public domain
- On 6 April, the Government announced that it would "pause, listen and reflect" to improve the Health and Social Care Bill and established the NHS Future Forum chaired by Professor Steve Field as an independent advisory panel. Please see the [letter from Dr Peter Carter to Professor Steve Field](#)
- On 13 June the NHS Future Forum published its [recommendations to Government](#)
- On 20 June the Government responded to the NHS Future Forum report including the proposed establishment of Public Health England as an executive agency of the Department of Health. Please see the [RCN's press release](#) on this issue
- On 30 November 2010 the DH published the [White Paper Healthy Lives, Healthy People: Our Strategy for Public Health in England](#).
- The RCN produced a [summary of this document](#) explaining how the proposed changes might affect members
- The RCN launched an extensive consultation exercise with members including a [podcast](#), a webcast, and a survey
- After collating the views of members, the RCN issued the following Executive summary and response to the white paper consultation as well as responses to the complementary consultations on [Transparency in Outcomes, Proposals for a Public Health Outcomes Framework](#) and the funding and commissioning routes for public health.