

WHAT IS PUBLIC HEALTH NUTRITION?¹

Public health nutrition is a specialism in nutrition. Public health nutrition is the application of nutrition and physical activity to the promotion of good health, the primary prevention of diet-related illness of groups, communities and populations (not the health care of individuals).

WHAT DO PUBLIC HEALTH NUTRITIONISTS DO?

Public Health Nutritionists work with groups, communities and/ or populations, in nutrition-related health promotion, in the health service, in consumer organisations, in the food industry or trade associations, in local, regional, national and international government departments and agencies, in tertiary education and professional vocational training, and in research in public health nutrition.

REGISTRATION AS A PUBLIC HEALTH NUTRITIONIST

The requirements for Full registration as a Registered Public Nutritionist are:

a. Competence in nutrition

Individuals must possess suitable qualifications that provide proficiency in nutrition science, underpinned by the biosciences (see The Nutrition Society's **Course Accreditation Pack** for guidance on public health nutrition courses).

b. Specialist education and training in public health nutrition

Formal and/ or experiential professional training develops specialist core competencies in public health nutrition and articulates with the national standards for Public Health Specialists and / or Public Health Practice.

¹ This definition should be read alongside the definition, purpose and areas of Public Health in the National Standard for Specialist Practice in Public Health: an Overview (www.healthwork.uk.com, November 2001, replaced by www.skillsforhealth.uk.com in April 2002).

(i) A BSc degree with honours or postgraduate degree awarded by a university or institute of higher education after satisfactory completion of a course of study accredited by The Nutrition Society (*essential for registration as an Associate Public Health Nutritionist*).

Or

(ii) Completion of a PhD in public health nutrition, nutritional epidemiology or an appropriate area, at a university or higher education institution.

Or

(iii) Assessment of suitability for registration e.g.

- ç Other formal education or training in public health nutrition;
- ç Evidence of competency in public health nutrition through professional experience in relevant projects or placements undertaken during training or practice.

c) Appropriate Experience

(i) Three years of professional experience in the past five years, with achievements and development of skills after graduation relevant to public health nutrition.

Or

(ii) Evidence to satisfy the Registration Committee that, based on substantial professional experience (seven years of an appropriate nature and level), the requirement for (i) may be waived.

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE IN PUBLIC HEALTH NUTRITION

Relevant experience in public health nutrition facilitates the development of specialist competencies in public health nutrition. Examples include employment attachments or work-based learning in public health nutrition in one or more of the roles:

- a. Food and Health Coordinator or advisor; Sure or Early Start Nutritionist, Five-a-day Coordinator, Public Health Trainee or other role, in a Primary Care Trust, Health Authority or Health Board, Health Development or Health Promotion or Community Dietetics department.
- b. Community or Public Health Nutritionist providing or overseeing technical or humanitarian assistance in food security, and nutrition or nutrition-related health or development.

OR

Responsibilities for planning, managing, coordinating, assessing, monitoring, supervising or implementing, the practice of public health nutrition in:

- a. Public health observatories or departments;
- b. Health or medical or scientific organisations or agencies;
- c. Consumer or public interest organisations concerned with public health or nutrition;
- d. Food industry or trade associations;
- e. Local, national, regional or international government departments or agencies;
- f. Statutory bodies or non-governmental organisations or charities.

OR as a

- g. Researcher in public health nutrition or nutrition epidemiology or the manager of such research (in an academic department or research institute);
- h. Lecturer or course director responsible for and providing professional training in public health nutrition.

SPECIALIST COMPETENCIES IN PUBLIC HEALTH NUTRITION

Registrants provide evidence that they are competent in the following core specialist competencies in public health nutrition that complement generic competencies in public health. The Society is working to establish Defined Specialists. It is envisaged that those with appropriate competencies in public health nutrition and in public health will be eligible for dual registration with the Society and the UK Voluntary Register for Public Health Specialists (see www.skillsforhealth.uk.com).

Therefore, these specialist competencies will be further revised in 2005 to match the ten key areas of public health.

Key Area 1: Surveillance and assessment of the population's health and well being

- ç Public Health Nutritionists will be expected to show leadership² in nutrition and nutrition-related issues and the determinants of dietary and food aspects of health and well-being.

² Specialists would be better able to provide such leadership over a wider range of issues with less supervision than non-specialists in public health nutrition.

This includes being able to:

- ç Perform, apply and evaluate the theory and methodology of assessment of nutritional status at **group, community, and population** levels in order to research and practice public health nutrition;
- ç Assess diet, food, and nutrient intake and the consumption of food constituents in **groups, communities** and at **population** level;
- ç Apply this knowledge to identify markers of nutritional status, in order to plan, modify, implement, and evaluate nutritional surveillance, at **group, community** and/ or **population** levels.

Public Health Nutritionists will also be sufficiently competent in public health to be able to collaborate effectively with specialists in other areas or contexts.

Key Area 2: Promoting and protecting the population's health and well being

- ç Public Health Nutritionists will be expected to show leadership³ in nutrition and nutrition-related issues and the determinants of promoting and protecting the population's health and well-being.

This includes being able to:

- ç Apply knowledge to translate the science of public health and of nutritional requirements into nutrition guidelines, targets and food-based advice, to formulate, modify, and evaluate progress towards achieving food-based and nutritional guidelines or goals at **group, community, and / or population** level, to promote health and prevent disease;
- ç Apply knowledge and understanding of food safety to support research and practice in public health nutrition (e.g. the metabolic effects of anti-nutrients, toxicants, additives, pharmacologically active agents (drugs) and other constituents of foods and the diet; nutrient-nutrient interactions).

Public Health Nutritionists will also be sufficiently competent in public health to be able to collaborate effectively with specialists in other areas or contexts.

Key area 3: Developing quality and risk management within an evaluative⁴ culture

- ç Public Health Nutritionists will be expected to show leadership in nutrition and nutrition-related issues and the determinants of dietary and nutritional aspects of quality and risk management³.

³ Specialists would be better able to provide such leadership over a wider range of issues with less supervision than non-specialists in public health nutrition.

⁴ Note (1) above is essential for (3.1) assessment of risk and (3.3) improving the quality of health and healthcare services and interventions through audit and evaluation.

This includes being able to:

- ç Measure physical activity and assess lifestyle and health status, the extent and effects of interactions among measures of health status with measures of nutritional status, genetic and other risk factors in **groups, communities, and/or populations**.

Public Health Nutritionists will be sufficiently competent in public health to be able to collaborate effectively with specialists in other areas or contexts.

Key Area 4: Collaborative working for health and well being

- ç Public Health Nutritionists will be expected to show leadership in nutrition and nutrition-related issues and the determinants of dietary and nutritional aspects of health and well-being.

This includes being able to:

- ç Work with others to design, implement, manage, and evaluate programmes at **community** or **population** level.

To meet national standards, training should entail:

- ç Collaborative work with peers;
- ç Developing communication skills including the ability to engage in debate in a professional manner with a range of audiences (lay, peer, technical, academic); producing detailed and coherent written and oral reports supported with audio-visual aids in lucid grammatical style, making appropriate use of literature cited appropriately;
- ç Using Information Technology and computers;
- ç Developing organisational skills and the ability to work in teams.

Public Health Nutritionists will be sufficiently competent in public health to be able to collaborate effectively with specialists in other areas or contexts. This means they will:

- ç Have knowledge of the roles of other Public Health Practitioners/ Specialists;
- ç Have knowledge of the context in which the practitioners of public health function.

Key Area 5: Developing health programmes and services and reducing inequalities

- ç Public Health Nutritionists will be expected to show leadership in nutrition and nutrition-related issues and the determinants of dietary and nutritional aspects of health and well-being.

This includes being able to:

- ç Apply knowledge of psychological, social, and cultural factors that influence food, dietary and lifestyle choices, and how to effect behavioural change through modification of these, in research, surveillance and programme planning, at **group, community** and/or **population** levels;
- ç Design, implement, manage, and evaluate projects and programmes at **group** and/ or **community** levels;
- ç Design and manage projects and programmes; monitor and evaluate effectiveness and efficiency, including the management of data and some aspects of resource management.

Public Health Nutritionists will be sufficiently competent in public health to be able to collaborate effectively with specialists in other areas or contexts.

Key Area 6: Policy and strategy development and implementation to improve health and well-being

- ç Public Health Nutritionists will be expected to show leadership in nutrition and nutrition-related issues and the determinants of nutritional, dietary and food aspects of health status and well-being.

This includes being able to:

- ç Apply understanding of the social theory of institutions, organisations, groups, communities; food, public health and social welfare systems; programmes and policies, to promote evidence-based effective planning and formation of policy in public health.

Public Health Nutritionists will be sufficiently competent in public health to be able to collaborate effectively with other practitioners and specialists in other areas or contexts.

Key Area 7: Working with and for communities to improve health and well-being

- ç Public Health Nutritionists will be expected to show leadership in nutrition and nutrition-related issues and the determinants of nutritional, dietary and food aspects of health status and well-being.

This includes being able to:

- ç Apply knowledge and understanding of principles and key components of the practice of nutrition-related health education and nutrition-related health promotion, to help others to design health promotion programmes for **groups, communities** and / or **populations**;

- ç Apply understanding of the aetiology of major public health problems within social and historical contexts, to work with **groups** and/or **communities** and/or at **population** level, to develop, implement and evaluate nutrition health education and nutrition health promotion programmes;
- ç Develop skills of effective advocacy and animation as well as the technical competence required for community development approaches [e.g. where concerns about diet and nutrition that may not be the client group's or community's or employer's priorities].

Public Health Nutritionists will be sufficiently competent in public health to be able to collaborate effectively with others and with specialists in other areas or contexts. This means they will:

- ç Have knowledge of the roles of other public health practitioners/ specialists who work with communities; in urban or rural areas or in Primary Care;
- ç Have knowledge of the context in which public health practitioners function in communities; in urban or rural areas or in Primary Care;
- ç Have knowledge and understanding of nutrition-related community health and development, rural or urban areas or neighbourhoods, or in Primary Care.

Key Area 8: Strategic leadership for health and well being

- ç Public Health Nutritionists will be expected to show leadership in nutrition and nutrition-related issues and the determinants of nutritional, dietary and food aspects of health status and well-being.

This includes being able to:

- ç Developing interactive inter-personal and group skills so that the learner can interact effectively within a group; can recognise or support leadership or be proactive in leadership; can negotiate in a learning / professional context, manage conflict and is able to convene and manage a group and chair meetings.

Public Health Nutritionists will be sufficiently competent in public health to be able to collaborate effectively with others and with specialists in other areas or contexts.

Key Area 9: Research and development to improve health and well being

- ç Public Health Nutritionists will be expected to show leadership in nutrition and nutrition-related issues and the determinants of nutritional, dietary and food aspects of health status and well-being.

This includes being able to:

- ç Design, undertake, interpret and use research methodology in the practice or application of research in public health nutrition;
- ç Develop research protocols and calibrate methods of investigation, at **group, community** and/or **population** levels;
- ç Use nutritional and other relevant data and databases, applying understanding of statistical issues: sampling, study size and power; appropriate analytical techniques for designing monitoring and evaluating effectiveness and efficiency at **group, community** and/ or **population** levels.

Public Health Nutritionists will be sufficiently competent in public health to be able to collaborate effectively with others and with specialists in other areas or contexts.

Key Area 10: Ethically managing self, people and resources to improve health and well being

- ç Public Health Nutritionists will be expected to show leadership in nutrition and nutrition-related issues and the determinants of nutritional, dietary and food aspects of health status and well-being.

This includes being able to:

- ç Design and manage projects and programmes; monitor and evaluate effectiveness and efficiency. This includes competency in the management of data and some aspects of resource management.

Public Health Nutritionists will develop an understanding of and commitment to abide by guidance on ethical aspects of managing self and others, as set out in the **Code of Ethics and Statement of Professional Conduct** (2004).