Public Health England

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AHP Public Health Strategy 2015-2018 Impact Report

Introduction

A strategy to develop the capacity, impact and profile of allied health professionals (AHPs) in public health was published in December 2015. It was produced by Public Health England (PHE) and the Allied Health Professions Federation (AHPF) representing the AHP professional bodies[1].

The strategy set out a vision for the role of AHPs in public health including strategic goals and plans to measure success.

The strategy was intended to help AHPs, their professional bodies and partner organisations, to further develop their leadership in public health, share best practice and embed preventative healthcare into roles and services.

The vision was for AHPs to be recognised as an integral part of the public health workforce, with responsibility for designing and delivering improvements to health and well-being and reducing health inequalities.

Strategic goals agreed in the strategy were:

1. The future AHP workforce will be fully equipped with the skills, knowledge and attributes to promote the health and wellbeing of individuals, communities and populations.
2. AHPs will be able to demonstrate their impact on population level outcomes through robust evaluation and research methods.
3. AHPs will be a go-to public health provider of choice.
4. The excellent relationships that exist between AHPs and strategic public health leaders at local, regional, national and international levels will be fully utilised.
5. Effective leadership at every level will support AHPs to be an integral part of the public health workforce.

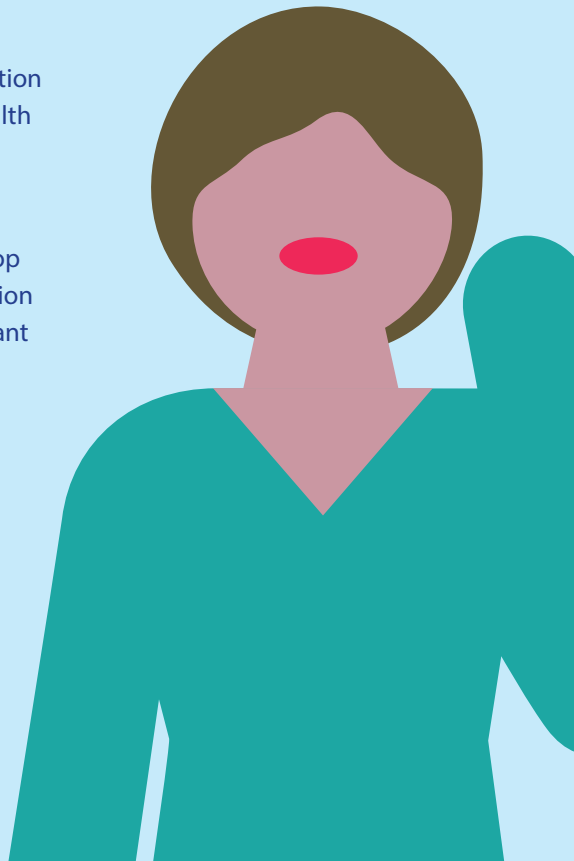
This report describes the actions and impact across the five goals of the strategy.

Implementation

A national board was established to oversee the implementation of the strategy. The board was led by PHE and included representation from all professional bodies as well as the Council of Deans for Health and the Council for AHP Research.

Each professional body undertook a gap analysis to compare their current plans with the goals of the strategy and used this to develop profession-specific implementation plans. A national implementation plan was also developed to take forward actions which were relevant across professions and where it made sense to do something once rather than duplicate effort.

The focus of implementation was on collaboration; working with other organisations and partners, and learning together.



[1] The allied health professions include art therapists, dietitians, dramatherapists, music therapists, occupational therapists, operating department practitioners, orthoptists, orthotists, osteopaths, prosthetists, paramedics, physiotherapists, podiatrists, radiographers and speech and language therapists. AHPF represents 12 of these professions. The strategy impact report applies to all.

Measuring success

Goal 1 – The workforce

Goal	**The future AHP workforce will be fully equipped with the skills, knowledge and attributes needed to promote the health and wellbeing of individuals, communities and populations.**
How success was defined	An increased proportion of AHP undergraduate courses are excelling in public health education.
How success was measured	Survey of AHP undergraduate programme course directors
The target	The number of courses with a strong public health component to increase from 28% to 50% by end of 2017
Achievement against the target	In a 2018 survey 100% respondents agreed public health and prevention is included in their course compared to 52% in 2015 48% would self assess the public health content of their course as strong compared with 28% in 2015

What was delivered in relation to this goal

In September 2017 the Council of Deans for Health along with PHE, professional bodies, Health Education England and the Health and Care Professions Council published Guidance on the Public Health Content within the Pre-Registration Curricula for Allied Health Professions

The All Our Health Framework has been used to support frontline AHPs with evidence and guidance to carry out the prevention and population health elements of their roles; AHP leaders to develop services that give the best health outcomes for the populations they serve; AHP educators to prepare students for their roles in population health; and researchers to provide evidence for research questions based on local and national priorities.

AHPs4PH, a community of practice for AHPs with an interest in public health has been established to enable AHPs to network, promote development opportunities and share good practice. The community of practice is a closed Facebook group with over 2,400 members of which at least half are active.

In addition, continuous professional development opportunities have been promoted through professional bodies and public health was featured in the national conferences and publications of all professional bodies as well as the Chief AHP Officer's annual conferences.

The Faculty of Public Health has recognised the public health role of AHPs and opened membership opportunities to AHPs, which provides opportunities for local networking and learning.

Goal 2 – Evidence and Impact

Goal	**AHPs will be able to demonstrate their impact on population level outcomes through robust evaluation and research methods.**
How success was defined	There is a growing evidence base to demonstrate the impact of AHPs on public health
How success was measured	A follow up 'rapid review' of international literature further to the study competed in 2015 and published - Reference; Fowler Davis, S., Enderby, P., Harrop, D., & Hindle, L. (2016). Mapping the contribution of Allied Health Professions to the wider public health workforce: a rapid review of evidence-based interventions. Journal of Public Health, 39(1), 177-183.
The target	Published evidence of AHP impact on a minimum of 2 additional public health priorities (compared to the baseline evidence mapping report 2015)
Achievement against the target	Good evidence was found on; 1. The effectiveness of lifestyle interventions including physical activity, risk prevention advice for adults with a range musculoskeletal conditions; preventing further disability when delivered as health care interventions 2. Health improvement dietetic interventions effectively prevented weight gain or enabled weight reduction in young adults. Publication forthcoming in 2019.

What was delivered in relation to this goal

In collaboration with the Royal Society for Public Health, a toolkit was developed to support AHPs and other health care professionals to record and measure the public health impact of their everyday interactions. This toolkit uses a logic model approach, it has supported AHPs to expand their prevention activity as well as recording what they do.

Individual professional bodies have undertaken return on investment analyses to show the economic impact of specific public health interventions:

- The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy developed a falls economic modelling tool which was included in the PHE menu of preventative interventions
- The Royal College of Occupational Therapists Improving Lives Saving Money campaign reports showcase how occupational therapy is improving lives and saving money in a range of preventative contexts in prisons, with older adults, in collaborations with fire and rescue services and in mental health services
- The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapy commissioned an economic analysis of the Stoke Speaks Out Programme, an initiative to tackle the high incidence of delayed language in young children in Stoke-on-Trent. The analysis suggests a £1.19 return for every £1 invested, based only on the associated fiscal savings of improved school readiness at age five
- The College of Podiatry report - Driving value, Improving outcomes outlines the impact of podiatry in keeping the population active, saving lives and saving limbs

The Council for AHP Research, PHE and AHPs4PH have collaborated to increase the emphasis on public health research by AHPs, including running a national award.

Goal 3 – Raising the profile of AHPs in public health

Goal	**AHPs will be a go-to public health provider of choice.**
How success was defined	AHPs are able to show how they add value to public health.
How success was measured	Collate and publish robust case studies and return on investment figures
The target	A minimum of 50 case studies
Achievement against the target	Case studies have been collected by partner organisations and are published in a variety of places. In preparing this publication we put out a call for case studies and received over 60 from across the AHP professions. As a result we are developing a central repository for case studies with the Royal Society for Public Health and we will start to publish case studies there.

What was delivered in relation to this goal

Public health awards have been developed as part of the Advancing Health Care Awards and the Chief AHP Officers Awards; this has supported sharing of good practice by AHPs in public health.

There has been collaboration with public health organisations and health think tanks to support sharing of AHP public health contributions, for example:

- Faculty of Public Health - involvement in special interest groups, joint work starting to explore the potential for advanced clinical practice curricula and joint sponsorship of awards and blogs
- Royal Society for Public Health – joint publications, blogs, case studies
- Kings Fund conference – AHP public health contribution profiled in Kings Fund conferences
- The AHP contribution to public health has been profiled in the PHE Public Health Matters blog studies.

A multi-professional process for peer reviewing AHP public health case studies has been established along with a repository on the Royal Society for Public Health web site to support sharing of quality case studies.

Profession specific campaigns have been developed to raise the profile of the work AHPs do to improve the public's health, for example:

- The British Dietetic Association made "Dietitians do Prevention" the focus of their annual Dietitians Week, promoting the role of dietitians in public health and prevention to a significant public audience including a number of case studies. This forms part of the association's wider Chairman's Theme of Public Health and Prevention between 2017-2020.
- The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy's successful Love Activity Hate Exercise campaign used insights from patients and members across the profession, including physiotherapists with expertise in physical activity and behaviour change, to help identify barriers that prevent patients from being more active. The campaign aims to empower health care professionals particularly physiotherapists to maximise the opportunities to discuss the benefits of physical activity and any barriers to it with patients, making exercise more accessible to a wider range of people. Over 2,000 members signed up to the 2018 campaign and 4,000 physiotherapists and support workers signed up to receive information about the 2019 campaign. The film developed as part of this campaign, 'Never Too Late', received over 450,000 views during the run up to Christmas 2018 and appeared in social media feeds more than a million times. The film prompted 10,000 click-throughs to the society web page featuring exercises for people to improve their balance with the public spending up to 6.5 minutes on the relevant self-care promotion pages.

Goal 4 – Strategic Relationships

Goal	**The excellent relationships that exist between AHPs and strategic public health leaders at local, regional, national and international levels will be fully utilised.**
How success was defined	There is evidence that AHPs are engaged strategically in shaping the public health agenda at local and national level.
How success was measured	Collect and publish examples of involvement and impact
The target	A minimum of 10 case studies
Achievement against the target	15 examples of how AHPs have shaped public health agendas are given below

What was delivered in relation to this goal

Falls Prevention - The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, Royal College of Occupational Therapists, College of Paramedics, British and Irish Orthoptists Society, College of Podiatry and British Dietetic Association are part of the National Falls Prevention Coordination Group. This group was formed with the aim of coordinating and supporting falls prevention activity in England. As part of the group AHPs have contributed to the development of the national falls consensus statement.

Vision screening guidance – in 2017 new child vision screening materials and guidance were published by PHE to help reduce inequality and improve consistency and quality of sight tests for children aged 4-5 years in schools. Early detection of reduced vision means that effective treatment, such as glasses or patching, can be quickly offered. Vision screening for 4 to 5-year-olds is part of the healthy child programme, and the new materials summarise best practice for commissioners and those who carry out the tests, including school nurses, to ensure orthoptic-led screening is of a consistent high-quality across schools. Orthoptists were instrumental in the decision to develop this guidance and the development of the suite of resources. The guidance has been valued by commissioners, providers and the public.

The Arts Therapy Professions have worked in association with the Faculty of Public Health to establish an **Arts and Health Special Interest Group** which is facilitating conversations between the professions and the public health community.

Occupational Therapy led Work and Health Champions Programme - The Royal College of Occupational Therapists working in partnership with PHE and supported by the Council for Work and Health have trained 60 occupational therapists to act as Health and Work Champions. Health and Work Champions aim to create culture change in health and social care so it is routine practice for all health and care professionals to be able to talk about employment with the people they work with. They use peer to peer training sessions to encourage their colleagues to routinely ask and support people with their employment aspirations. The NHS alone, for example, has a million individual contacts with people every 36 hours and many of these are opportunities to talk about the health benefits of good work. Health and Work Champions are training colleagues who work with people across multiple health and care settings. Evaluation has shown a statistically significant improvement in recipients' knowledge and confidence to talk about employment in their clinical services.

Northwest AHP network work within the Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership (GMHSCP) - The North West AHP network coordinated by Health Education England is in the process of strengthening the offer to and joint work with sustainability and transformation boards and integrated care systems across the North West. The network provides GMHSCP with access to over 3500 AHPs in the North West to contribute to and advise on work streams and to represent AHPs in decision making forums. The North West AHP workforce lead provides leadership and coordinates the work of the network in collaboration with the other network leads, including the Lead for Public Health and Prevention. Key areas of focus to date have been frailty, first contact roles in primary care and addressing AHP workforce and placement supply. Northwest AHP network also work with Greater Manchester Combined Authority

College of Paramedics and ambulance consensus - The College of Paramedics are a major partner in the national consensus statement Working together with ambulance services to improve public health and wellbeing. The partners in this consensus statement have agreed to work together to better support people to live longer, healthier lives through a more integrated approach to enhanced public health and prevention; in particular, to engage with the most vulnerable people in our communities, to improve or maintain their physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Royal College of Occupational Therapists work with fire and rescue services (FRS) - FRS have been working in partnership with health and social care for many years and now several occupational therapists work within or alongside FRS to support delivery of safe and well visits which aim to reduce the risk of fire and improve health, wellbeing and independence. The value of occupational therapy working with FRS is highlighted in the Royal College of Occupational Therapists 'Improving Lives, Saving Money' campaign report. An economic evaluation of the role of occupational therapy within the Nottingham fire service identified a return on investment of £7.16 to every £1 spent. A fire, health and social care communities of practice and repository to host information has been established and is hosted by the National Fire Chiefs Council

AHP leadership within the Physical Activity Clinical Champions Programme (PHE and Sport England); which provides peer-led training and practical resources to support healthcare professionals to implement the NICE guidance on physical activity. This national network of GPs, nurses and AHPs has delivered training to over 20,000 healthcare professionals in England. This has helped to support a culture change of embedding physical activity promotion into healthcare; the programme continues to grow and to gain momentum.

As a result of the 'Love Activity Hate Exercise?' campaign the **Chartered Society of Physiotherapy** has been invited by Sport England and Centre for Ageing Better to lead a piece of public profile work to promote the new Chief Medical Officer's strength guidelines.

The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy and Royal College of Occupational Therapists have collaborated with NHS RightCare and more widely to increase patient access to rehabilitation to improve health and wellbeing across whole populations.

The British Dietetic Association works with partners to highlight the importance of nutrition and hydration in older people and provide advice and guidance on how to improve nutritional status. They also worked in 2018 with the British Association of Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition and The Malnutrition Task on the first ever Malnutrition Awareness Week, which highlighted the often-hidden issue of malnutrition and encouraged more health services to undertake screening and evaluation.

Reducing the word gap: The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists has worked in partnership with PHE and the Department for Education to develop a programme of work which aims to support children's early language and communication. The programme includes the development of a speech, language and communication pathway, a new assessment tool and a training package for health visitors to improve early identification and support for children with speech, language and communication needs. The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists has been part of the expert advisory group for all three areas, drawing on the expertise of its members, and has worked closely with both PHE and the Institute of Health Visiting to inform the content of the health visitor training.

Podiatry and Cardiovascular Disease Leadership Forum The College of Podiatry have been an active member of this PHE forum, and have encouraged podiatrists and podiatry services to raise cardiovascular disease (CVD) risk awareness and implementation of the key CVD ambitions over the next 10 years along with all the other CVD partners in healthcare provision. The College has been highlighted the role podiatrists play in stroke and heart attack prevention through early Atrial Fibrillation detection and management of peripheral arterial disease.

The Society and College of Radiographers ensures radiography representation on all national screening programmes e.g. Breast, AAA, Bowel and foetal anomaly screening programmes. They are also working with the Care Quality Commission and other national stakeholders to develop guidance for radiation protection.

The British Association of Prosthetists and Orthotists has worked with national charity Limb Power to create a guide to ensure service users get the most out of their rehabilitation potential and increase physical activity.

Goal 5 – Leadership to embed public health into practice

Goal	**Effective leadership at every level will support AHPs to be an integral part of the public health workforce.**
How success was defined	AHPs believe that public health is part of their role and can describe how they contribute to it.
How success was measured	Collect survey data at conferences and via online channels
The target	50% of AHPs agree to this statement by 2017
Achievement against the target	2016 survey data (n= 1772) indicate 86.6% of AHPs believe public health is a core part of their practice with 45% reporting public health is included in their job description

What was delivered in relation to this goal

In 2017 the AHPs4PH developed an initiative to support AHPs to deliver a service improvement (SI) project related to public health using recognised quality improvement (QI) techniques within their service. The rationale for this development was to encourage implementation of small-scale public health improvement projects and build capacity for quality improvement and leadership in public health. Eleven quality improvement projects were supported.

In 2018, NHS Improvement supported the expansion of this initiative into a formal improvement collaborative in which a further 15 projects were supported

Regional events hosted by NHS Improvement enabled conversations with AHP strategic leaders in NHS provider organisations to support them to deliver prevention focused AHP services.

Additional benefits

Since the publication of the AHP public health strategy, there has been a tangible increase in focus on public health and prevention across the allied health professions, this was demonstrated during the development of AHPs into Action, the national AHP strategy. AHPs into Action was developed through crowd sourcing, there were over 16,000 contributions from AHPs and others about the transformative potential of AHPs. Improving the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities was one of the four main impact statements demonstrating a shift in emphasis towards public health.

Professional bodies have led the changing narrative and practice within their own professions as well as contributing to the collective effort. Some examples of individual profession actions include:

The British Dietetic Association has developed a public health champions network to embed the principles of public health and prevention into clinical dietetic teams across the UK.

The British and Irish Orthoptists Society have funded a national lead to drive improvements in public health within the Orthoptic profession including developing a public health strand within each of their clinical advisory groups and a network of public health champions across the profession.

The Society and College of Radiographers have established a special interest group for radiographers, educators and students interested in health improvement and public health provision within diagnostic and therapeutic radiography practice. The aims of this group are to share good practice and assist with overcoming barriers to brief public health interventions within radiography; support innovation; and sharing and networking relating to public health.

Conclusion

There has clearly been progress in AHPs involvement in public health since the publication of this strategy. AHPs are better equipped with the knowledge and skills to support improved public health, there is a growing body of evidence of impact, examples of changing practice and improved strategic connections to enable the best use of AHP expertise in public health.

This is just the start of the journey and we now need to ensure that public health is embedded into the roles of all AHPs and that AHPs can advocate for and evidence the benefits of upstream interventions within their services.

There is further opportunity to develop AHP leadership in relation to prevention and public health both to support service re-design and innovation and to provide career pathways for AHPs in public health.

The AHP professions call on the public health community to continue to value and utilise the unique skills and expertise of AHPs as part of the national focus on prevention.

In summer 2019 the next AHP public health strategy will be published as a UK wide document.

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