

# The evidence for public health employers' attitudes towards practitioner registration

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# Acknowledgements

- Research conducted with and co-authored by Christina Gray, now DPH, Bristol City Council
- Ongoing research with Katie Porter, Principal Public Health Specialist, Bristol City Council

# Background

- PH workforce conventionally defined as specialists, practitioners or wider workforce
- ‘PH practitioner’ not well defined
- National policy (UKPHR, Health Education England, Public Health Wales etc.) encourages practitioner registration
- Uncertainty whether PH employers encourage or support registration
- No previous research on this issue

# Research questions

- What are the range of roles advertised for public health practitioners in the UK?
- To what extent is registration an essential or desirable criterion for PH practitioner posts?
- Is registration more common as a criterion with some practitioner roles than others?
- What is the relative importance place on registration compared to educational or professional qualifications?

# Methods

- Survey of all practitioner posts advertised on NHS and local government jobs websites
- Repeat searches March and Sept 2018
- ‘Search term ‘public health’
- Excluded nursing, scientific, knowledge, intelligence and admin staff
- Structured data extraction from job descriptions and person specifications
- Descriptive statistics & narrative analysis

# Search results

<b>Date</b>	<b>Initial hits</b>	<b>Excluded</b>	<b>Duplicates</b>	<b>Included</b>
March 2018	832	798	2	32
Sept 2018	826	802	-	24
Total	1658	1600	2	56

# Practitioner job categories

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number (%)</b>
Manager	16 (29%)
Practitioner	13 (23%)
Officer	8 (14%)
Worker	4 (7%)
Coach	4 (7%)
Lead	3 (5%)
Specialist	2 (4%)
Trainer	2 (4%)
Principal	1 (2%)
Assistant	1 (2%)
Supervisor	1 (2%)
Facilitator	1 (2%)
Total	56 (100%)

# Essential and desirable criteria

	Essential n (%)	Desirable n (%)
MSc Public Health specifically	0 (0%)	2 (4%)
Postgraduate qualification relevant to public health or equivalent experience	12 (21%)	8 (14%)
Relevant degree or equivalent experience	34 (61%)	1 (2%)
UKPHR registration or working towards registration	1 (2%)	0 (0%)
Willingness to work towards UKPHR registration	2 (4%)	0 (0%)
Professional registration (e.g. with UKPHR, NMC etc.)	13 (23%)	4 (7%)
Evidence of CPD	34 (61%)	0 (0%)

# Discussion

- Employers flexibility re essential criteria
- Where registration included, flexibility over which register
- Experience and skills more prominent than qualifications or registration
- Evidence CPD highly valued
- Findings consistent with evaluations of practitioner registration schemes
  - Registered practitioner value status but uncertainty over employer attitudes

# Limitations

- Snap shot in time (2018) but field of registration changing rapidly
- Based on analysis of published job descriptions only
- Excluded nursing, scientific, knowledge, intelligence and admin staff
- No data on actual employer attitudes, policy and practices

# Informal follow-up

- Discussions with small number of employing managers in the SW
- Local authorities' desire for inclusion means formal qualifications and registration avoided in recruitment criteria if possible
- Even when registration (or MSc) not a formal requirement, valued in subjective assessments and decision-making

# Further research

- Continue job description data collection in 2019 and beyond to assess changes over time
- In-depth qualitative study of employer attitudes, policy and practice

# Conclusions

- Continued uncertainty over employers attitudes towards registration
- Need for further research
- Registered practitioners value registration
- Registration can help meet employer expectations regarding demonstrating knowledge and skills, and CPD

# Reference

- Evans D, Gray C. (2019) How important is public health practitioner registration to UK public health employers? *Public Health* 171: 1-5.

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