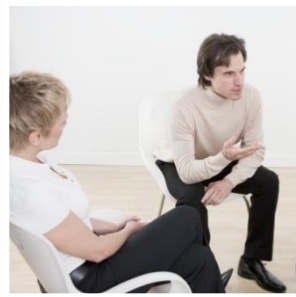


practitioner
professional
accreditation
publichealth
recognised
valued
benefits
important
registration
competent

Practitioner Registration Support Scheme



Kent, Surrey and Sussex
Interim Evaluation Report
February 2014

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Contents

		Page (s)
Summary		1
Introduction	Introduction to the scheme	2
	Scheme infrastructure	3
Evaluation	Evaluation of the Practitioner Registration	4
	Support Scheme	
	Evaluation headlines	5
Practitioner Benefits	Challenges & benefits facing the workforce	6-9
Employer Benefits	In what ways does the scheme benefit employers?	10
Next steps	What next?	11

Summary

EVALUATION HEADLINES

- Registration both demonstrates professionalism and provides low-cost quality assurance.
- Registration improves the effectiveness of practitioners.
- Registration strengthens the real and perceived professionalism of the practitioner workforce.
- Public health professionals, line and senior managers tell us the scheme is worth it; what now matters to practitioners is that Registration increasingly features in job adverts and commissioning of services.

4 main benefits

- Being part of a community of practice.
- Increased professional confidence in competence.
- Quality assurance for managers and employers.
- Professional authority and positioning.



Introducing the Kent, Surrey and Sussex Practitioner Registration Support Scheme

Scheme Background

- The scheme commenced in 2011 in Kent and Medway – it was one of the four UK pilot sites for piloting practitioner registration.
- The scheme was based upon a ‘fast track’ application method in which applicants could demonstrate their commitment and ability to complete their portfolio within 6 months of joining the scheme.
- A separate scheme was launched in Surrey and Sussex in March 2012.
- From April 2013 the two schemes merged to become the Kent Surrey Sussex (KSS) Public Health Practitioner Registration Support Scheme.

One standardised scheme across the region ensures:



Geographical Reach of the Scheme



Funding of the scheme

The scheme is currently funded by the 6 Directors of Public Health across KSS, the KSS Public Health England Centre Director and Health Education KSS.



Scheme Infrastructure

Registered Practitioners



Note 1: The larger numbers of registered practitioners in Kent and Medway reflect the scheme's earlier start in these areas.

Note 2: The 33 practitioners include people who registered after we started the evaluation and were therefore not part of our sample

Co-ordination

- 1 x Scheme Co-ordinator (0.4 wte)
- 1 x Project Support Officer (0.6 wte) – commencing April 2014

Honorary Roles

- 34 x Trained and active UKPHR accredited assessors
- 20 x Trained and active UKPHR accredited verifiers
- 13 x Trained and active UKPHR accredited mentors

Current applicants on scheme

- 62 x applicants (formally assigned to a portfolio development group)
- 22 x applicants (of those in the portfolio development groups also assigned an assessor)



Evaluation of the Practitioner Registration Support Scheme

Total Improvement Process Ltd were commissioned mid-2013 to undertake an evaluation of the Practitioner Registration Support Scheme across Kent, Sussex and Surrey. The evaluation approach focused on the aim of embedding standards across what has become an increasingly fragmented Public Health workforce.

Qualitative research methods were used to facilitate telephone interviews with:

- *Registered practitioners (who had successfully completed the scheme);*
- *Line Managers of completed practitioners (those who actively line-managed a practitioner while they were going through the registration process)*
- *Senior Managers (Senior public health workers including Directors of Public Health, Public Health Specialists and Public Health Consultants working within Kent, Medway, Surrey and Sussex).*

Evaluation Aim

To establish the actual and potential benefits of registration with the UKPHR Public Health Register in the light of current demands and challenges facing Local Authorities, the Public Health community of practice and Registrants.

Objectives

- Facilitate and document a series of group conversations with groups of Registrants about what they see as the current challenges facing them and current and potential benefits of registration to themselves, their employers and the population.
- Undertake and document group and individual conversations with employers in KSS about what they see as the current challenges facing them and the current and potential benefits to local authorities and their populations of practitioners registering with UKPHR.

Interviewed Sample

17 registered practitioners

- 13 now work for provider organisations
- 4 now work for commissioning organisations
- 3 are line managers

4 line managers

- 2 line managers interviewed are also assessors on the scheme
- 3 work for provider organisations
- 1 works for a commissioning organisation

8 senior managers

- 3 of the senior managers interviewed were also assessors on the scheme
- 4 were verifiers on the scheme
- All senior managers interviewed worked for commissioning organisations.

17 people interviewed currently work in local authorities, and 12 people interviewed work in the NHS

Evaluation headlines



Headline 1

Registration both demonstrates professionalism and provides low-cost quality assurance

The evidence suggest that Practitioner registration offers two responses to the challenges faced by public health practitioners and employers; it is a means to demonstrate the distinctive professionalism they bring to improving the health of their local populations whilst it simultaneously provides a very low-cost quality assurance of cost-effective public health services.

Headline 2

Registration improves the effectiveness of practitioners

The evidence indicates that meeting the demands of registration strengthens Practitioners' capabilities. Professional positioning has been a key benefit to practitioners. Whilst they have found the process of gaining registration hard and time-consuming, they value the empowerment gained from a process that relates their specific roles to applying the broader disciplines and obligations of being a public health practitioner.



Headline 3

Registration strengthens the real and perceived professionalism of the practitioner workforce

The feedback clearly indicates that the UKPHR standards offers employers an opportunity to have an independent register testify to the professionalism of their workforces, ensures its practitioners make and sustain a commitment to continuing professional development and enables recruitment of practitioners who can apply what they know.

Headline 4

Public health professionals, line and senior managers tell us the scheme is worth it; what matters to practitioners is that Registration increasingly features in job adverts and commissioning of services

Practitioners, line managers and senior managers highly value the registration scheme and recognise the actual and potential benefits, but Registrants are keen to see Registration become "currency" in securing and improving their job prospects. The indications are that this pilot will assist in helping a wider roll-out nationally, one that needs to happen quickly.



Local political leadership is delivering a new focus on improving health and reducing health inequalities. In each of the six local authorities across the region, the six Directors of Public Health are leading on delivering these public health functions for their local authority, and supporting the political leadership. Evaluation feedback suggests that integrating NHS Public Health teams into the 'DNA' of local authorities is likely to take time to bed-in:

“...understanding what the new differences are and integration into a more political organisation. We have to involve more partners and there's been a lot of organisational change...”

Public Health Manager, September 2013

The benefits of Practitioner Registration in the new public health environment

Demands and Challenges

Feedback from practitioners interviewed indicates that they too are still getting to grips with the changes that the transition of public health services has generated and understanding what this means in relation to their practice. The demands and challenges they are facing can broadly be placed into three main categories:



“...I only recently moved to the local authority and I’m still learning about what that means and the way we work. As part of this team transition...identifying what our roles are; new responsibilities; partnership approaches; key players. And learning about becoming a local authority officer instead of an NHS employee.”

Practitioner, September 2013



The benefits of practitioner registration in addressing some of the challenges

Whilst the process of registration is demanding, there is strong evidence that achieving registration is valued among the successful practitioners. One reason seems to be the active voluntary involvement of senior Public Health staff as assessors; which we think is a key reason why the process is both low cost and highly-regarded professionally. Their feedback highlights 4 main benefits:

1. Being part of a community of practice

Being part of a widening community of practice which gives Public Health staff an ‘umbrella’ of professional identity which is defined by shared standards and core values. Perhaps this opportunity has been particularly welcomed during a time of transition when there is a sense of needing to communicate their purpose and ‘prove’ their worth.



“The network of people I can talk to. It brings us together as a community of people...it made me more confident and gave me the boost to move up.”

Registered Practitioner, September 2013

community of practice

2. Increased professional confidence in competence

Practitioners across the pilot schemes have highlighted that there is a boost to their personal and professional self-esteem from completing what they felt was quite a difficult process (due to the time commitment required and some confusion over meeting the competency criteria). This boost also comes from 'seeing it through to the end', as well as successfully matching their work against professional standards; a matching which is independently endorsed, verified and formally recognised. Feedback from practitioners during this evaluation indicates that their confidence increased in two key areas:

- Confidence in their own knowledge and expertise in their field of work;
- Confidence to seek promotion.

"I think it provided me with confidence that I am capable...it made me think I am good at what I do. It made me realise I want to go all the way..."

Registered Practitioner, September 2013



Public Health practitioners feeling uncertain about their future and 'the competition' (from other professionals) in light of the expanding public health environment

Practitioners experience increased confidence and self-esteem, which seems to have a positive impact on the way they think about their future in public health.

3. Quality assurance for managers and employers

As a quality assurance tool, UKPHR registration enables employers to ensure that public health practitioners retain an umbilical connection to the public health community of practice.

Employers need to balance the delivery of high quality public health services under the new reforms, with economic efficiency at a time of austerity

Practitioner registration offers local authorities a low-cost quality assurance system and a professional commitment to CPD which cements joint approaches to tackling Health Inequalities

4. Professional authority and positioning

One of the emerging benefits for practitioners who have achieved registration appears to be feeling a stronger professional standing in their dealing with other professions. Practitioners interviewed talked about “credibility with partners”. In common with registered colleagues across the UK it has strengthened their confidence to add value by questioning, contributing and improving interventions from a rigorous population and evidential perspective.



What does their feedback tell us are the benefits of going through the *process* of registration?

- Encourages reflective practice – ties theory to practice
- Cements professional credibility
- Demonstrates commitment to personal and professional development
- Consolidates knowledge and skills
- Increased confidence in skills, experience and professionalism
- Enables practitioners develop a deeper understanding of the Public Health agenda
- Helps develop different perspectives when working with others
- Provides a benchmark for Public Health practice
- Assists practitioners in organising, planning, marketing and evaluating programmes

“I think it was especially beneficial moving into the local authorities. It shows you are a Public Health practitioner at a certain level and shows that Public Health is a profession.”

Registered Practitioner, September 2013

“For staff without a background in Public Health – their understanding does deepen...they see where they fit in that puzzle – work definitely changes and improves as they do it.”

Public Health Manager, September 2013

In what ways does the scheme benefit employers?

In response to this evaluation question, practitioners and managers seemed to be very aware that the transition of public health services provides both an opportunity and a need to 'shape the professional workforce' in a recognisable way that is underpinned by a shared set of core values and standards. This 'professional positioning' rests alongside the hope that registration becomes 'currency' in terms of recruitment and promotion.

What does registration tell employers about the practitioner?

Managers interviewed acknowledged the tremendous amount of work practitioners have undertaken in order to complete the registration process.

They told us that registration tells them a Public Health practitioner :

- Is thorough and methodical
- Has the shared ethos, drives and goals
- Is able to speak the 'Public Health language'
- Is looking for long term benefits rather than short term gains
- Is consistently demonstrating how they apply knowledge in practice
- Is committed to CPD
- Is recognised as a professional



"For employers it provides clarity about the role description, expectations, standards of practice and CPD..."

Director of Public Health, November 2013

What next?



“Practitioner registration is currently living hand-to-mouth. It would be really helpful for practitioners confidence to know this was gaining national focus.”

Public Health Manager, September 2013

Directors of Public Health, managers and practitioners we have interviewed as part of this evaluation process, are all supportive of the registration scheme. The benefits achieved by the Kent, Surrey & Sussex scheme are now directly influencing take-up in London and beyond.

Practitioners who have led the way and achieved Registration are encouraged by the way commissioners and providers are beginning to feature possession of, or work towards, Registration in job adverts. Registrants need to see more of that in the South East and see signs that a national roll-out is beginning. They need to see that the currency of Registration is beginning to spread nationally. Directors of Public Health in Kent, Surrey and Sussex have shown a unique professional leadership in taking this pilot forward. Others are now following their lead in other parts of the UK. That is what Registered Practitioners now want to see.