

Frequently Asked Questions

Public Health Foundation Programme

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BACKGROUND

1. [What is the Public Health Foundation Programme?](#)

A: The Public Health Foundation Programme is aimed at new graduates with limited work experience who are considering a postgraduate degree or career in Public Health. The post provides the opportunity to gain first-hand experience in a fast-moving Public Health team in a local government setting.

2. [How did the programme come about?](#)

A: Beginning in 2018, we identified a gap in entry-level training opportunities in Public Health, as the industry offers few formal entry-level opportunities for those with a Degree or Master's in Public Health but lacking relevant work experience. The team frequently receives requests to experience Public Health in a local government setting and we identified the need to streamline these requests in an equitable, systematic way.

RECRUITMENT

3. [When does recruitment take place?](#)

A: Two Public Health Programme Assistants are hired for a six-month fixed-term placement. Positions typically start around the summer and winter each year.

4. [I am currently enrolled in a Master's programme, can I apply?](#)

A: If you are currently enrolled on a Master's programme, you are eligible to apply, but should give careful consideration as to whether you can feasibly work five days per week alongside your academic commitments. If currently enrolled in a recognised education or training programme, suitable references from personal tutor or programme leader will be required. The programme has an intake every six months, so it may be better to consider applying for a later intake. We consider academic placements for people undertaking a Master's in Public Health (or related) if their topic is locally relevant.

5. [Is my degree relevant?](#)

A: There is no one size fits all in Public Health. Our specialists working in Southwark have a range of undergraduate degrees across social sciences, geography, natural sciences, the arts, medicine, nursing and social work. The diversity of backgrounds is one of the things that makes Public Health so interesting.

6. [Can I apply if I don't have a Master's degree?](#)

A: Yes. We welcome applications from people with an undergraduate degree in a relevant subject.

7. [I am a medical doctor thinking about moving into Public Health, can I apply?](#)

A: The foundation programme is an entry-level position aimed at new graduates with limited work experience and as such is not suited to medical graduates. It is also possible to undertake a placement here during F2 of your medical training. If you already have significant work experience or have already completed your foundation training, applying to the [Public Health specialty training](#) may be more appropriate in this case.

8. [What are my chances of getting on?](#)

A: Since its inception in early 2018, the foundation programme has proven extremely popular with candidates looking to secure initial experience in Public Health. Each intake has received in excess of 80 applications. Unfortunately, due to the high volume of applications it is not possible to provide feedback to those who applied for a position but were not shortlisted for interview.

INTERVIEW

9. What can I expect at interview?

A: If you are shortlisted for interview you will be asked to prepare a presentation on a Public Health issue relevant to Southwark. You will be given six minutes to present and the panel will ask questions about the presentation, before moving on to a series of structured interview questions. You will typically be interviewed by a diverse panel of three to four people.

10. What can I do to prepare for interview?

A: Apart from preparing your presentation, it will be useful to read through our [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment](#) pages, including the Annual Public Health Report.

WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

11. Is there flexibility around starting salary?

A: There is no flexibility around starting salary – the salary is fixed at the first pay point in the scale.

12. Do you support flexible working?

A: The expectation is that successful candidates will work from Southwark Council offices. However, successful candidates will be afforded the opportunity to request a flexible working pattern, including the ability to work from home for up to 50% of working time. Flexible working arrangements must be approved by line manager in advance, to ensure arrangements do not have negative impacts on the service, individual, or the wider team. Managers will also ensure that any requested work pattern supports the new starter being present for the purposes of training and integration into the division and organisation.

13. Are there opportunities to work part-time?

A: The roles are advertised as full-time positions, however part-time arrangements may be considered.

14. Is there a definitive start date?

A: Start dates are agreed jointly with candidates, but we typically aim for new starters to be in post as soon as possible from the interview date.

PUBLIC HEALTH FOUNDATION PROGRAMME

15. What sorts of projects do Public Health Programme Assistants typically work on?

A: In the past, Public Health Programme Assistants have contributed to infographic development for a children and young people's strategy, coordination of a borough-wide cooking class to support disadvantaged communities to eat healthier meals, and STATA analysis of the association between alcohol-related London ambulance call-outs and licensed premises. Public Health Programme Assistants working in health intelligence will work on JSNA products and may be assigned to support the analysis of raw data, update demographic pages on the Southwark JSNA, and support the delivery of the Annual Public Health Report. Examples of previous projects include updating the intelligence section of the Suicide and Self-harm JSNA and working on a new 'Early Years' JSNA.

While Public Health Programme Assistants are assigned a specific role in one team within the Public Health Division, they are encouraged to learn about the roles and projects undertaken by colleagues in other Public Health teams. Public Health Programme Assistants will have the opportunity to attend the meetings of Public Health teams other than their own team, and will also be advised to arrange induction meetings with the various Heads of Programmes.

16. Other than the training offered for the assigned role, are there any specific learning opportunities offered on the programme?

A: Public Health Programme Assistants can expect to receive training on applications and software used for various projects such as Excel and mapping software. Public Health Programme Assistants will also be expected to attend the division's 'lunchtime learning' sessions that occur monthly, where members of

the division and our wider colleagues volunteer to deliver a 1-hour session on various Public Health aspects, such as basic project management.

Public Health Programme Assistants may also be invited to attend external events if relevant learning opportunities are offered. For example, previous Public Health Programme Assistants have attended events held by Public Health England including introductory sessions on health protection.

NEXT STEPS

17. What have previous Public Health Programme Assistants gone on to do?

A: The Public Health Programme Assistant programme is still relatively new – so far, previous Public Health Programme Assistants have taken up Public Health opportunities in Southwark, in other local councils and for an NHS trust.

18. Will Public Health Programme Assistants have the opportunity to apply for a permanent position in the Public Health Division after the programme ends?

A: The foundation programme runs for a fixed-term period of six months. If a vacancy becomes available, Public Health Programme Assistants are welcome to apply if they have the appropriate experience and qualifications.

19. As well as the Public Health Programme Assistant post, I have seen other Public Health roles advertised by Southwark currently. Should I apply for the Public Health Programme Assistant post, or another position within the team?

A: If you are unsure of whether you are eligible to apply for other posts within our team, you are encouraged to review the person specification for each post and consider whether your knowledge, experience and skills meet the criteria.

We have tried to cover as many topics as possible here, but if you still have a question, you can contact the team at publichealth@southwark.gov.uk

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