



The Association of Directors of Public Health

Practice Improvement in Public Health: 2023/24 Annual Report

This report provides an overview of the Practice Improvement activities undertaken by local public health teams in England from May 2023 to April 2024, encompassing regional efforts coordinated by the English ADPH networks, the two Commissioners' Groups and the national work carried out by ADPH in collaboration with partners.

Context

Over the past year, public health improvement activities have progressed organically within the sector, with sustained engagement with all 11 regional ADPH networks. Regional Practice Improvement leads and Network Coordinators have been key enablers of coordinating practice improvement locally and regionally. They have also contributed to sharing learning nationally, via ADPH events such as the ADPH/UKHSA Climate Change Webinar. Regional coordination plays an important role in strengthening the impact of practice improvement efforts, a theme evident in key areas of work within this report. This highlights the continued commitment of all networks in delivering practice improvement in public health.

ADPH has played an important role in coordinating national practice improvement work by facilitating the sharing of practice across the country, amplifying local and regional voices, and providing additional support as needed.

Key Practice Improvement activities 2023/24

The English ADPH networks and Commissioners' Groups have demonstrated a commitment to engaging in practice improvement activities, through a variety of methods including:

- sharing of practice and learning
- peer to peer support activities
- utilising self-assessment tools
- coordinating work through thematic networks and Communities of Improvement

Successes

All English ADPH networks have engaged with the ADPH Practice Improvement Programme, sharing or adopting good practice and learning at the national level. Our channels for this include topic-specific webinars and workshops, monthly network meetings and our virtual members' platform, [WeDPH](#). We have highlighted a snapshot of activities the regional ADPH networks and Commissioners' Groups support and deliver to demonstrate the continuous efforts being made to improve public health practice.

The regional networks have continued to host regular meetings and events for DsPH and their teams, which have enabled regions to share learning, support collaboration and build partnerships. For example:

- North West Cumbria and Lancashire hosted a joint [workshop](#) in January 2024 to discuss screening and immunisations and identify collaborative priorities.
- Greater Manchester (GM) Public Health Leadership Group, LGA and NHS GM Integrated Care ran two GM-wide workshops to share good practice on tuberculosis infection prevention and control.
- Cheshire and Merseyside (C&M) Public Health Collaborative brought together professionals to develop the C&M Smokefree Framework, whereby 60 colleagues took part in the [event](#).
- South West hosted Action Learning Sets (ALS) with regional public health teams, Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and NHS colleagues.
- London ran two peer-to-peer workshops for DsPH on the Public Health Grant and Section 114 allowing colleagues to discuss challenges and explore solutions.
- North East encouraged sharing of practice and guidance for Start for Life/Family Hubs to support public health engagement.
- East and West Midlands jointly formed the Midlands-wide Public Health Workforce Board to collaboratively deliver on the workforce strategy and action plan.
- Additional regions, including the South East, East of England, Yorkshire and Humber and West Midlands, hosted successful conferences that showcased case studies, facilitated workshops and hosted learning sessions.

Networks continue to build on existing structures to establish topic-based networks to support local public health activities. Forums such as thematic sub-networks and Communities of Improvement/Practice use practice improvement approaches to support work programmes on key areas that benefit from the collaborative approach.

The use of self-assessment tools have been adopted by a number of regions, including:

- The LGA/ADPH Public Health Strengths and Risks [tool](#) which is being used in six ADPH networks.
- A Childhood Immunisation self-assessment tool and ICS Health Impact Assessment tool from the South East.
- A bespoke self-assessment tool developed by the North East to support uptake and quality of NHS Health Checks.

The Commissioners' Groups

ADPH hosts and provides secretariat for the English HIV and Sexual Health Commissioners' Group (EHSCHG), English Substance Use Commissioners' Group (ESUCG) and English Healthy Weight Commissioners' Group (EHWCG). The groups are committed to advancing effective commissioning practices across England and actively share good practice and learning with their members.

Key practice improvement activities from the groups include:

- National webinars which bring together commissioners across England to share practice, discuss key topics and showcase work across organisations.
- The first joint masterclass between the EHSCHG and ESUCG on Chemsex, which had 272 attendees.
- ESUCG [Working Groups](#) which focus on improving specific areas within substance use commissioning.
- Ongoing joint webinars with OHID and ESUCG Good Practice in Commissioning Working Group.

Challenges

Networks continue to experience challenges at both regional and local levels, with funding and capacity remaining key issues. Consistent and adequate funding for local authorities and regional ADPH networks is crucial for ensuring long-term sustainable improvement activities. Further challenges include issues around public health workforce capacity, particularly DsPH capacity and turnover, as well as succession planning and retention of regional coordination capabilities. Changes to regional structures significantly affect network operations and, consequently, the delivery of practice improvement activities.

Looking forward

We continue to advocate for and support practice improvement activity at local, regional and national levels through maintaining strong links with the English ADPH networks and by supporting colleagues across the four countries and dependent territories (4CDT). ADPH aims to advance the dissemination of a clear and impactful narrative on practice improvement in local public health, working towards a shared understanding across the public health system. We are committed to providing strong national leadership, exploring national priorities for practice improvement, and celebrating the successes of DsPH and their teams to maximise the sharing of good practice.

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