



The Association of Directors of Public Health

Practice Improvement in Public Health: 2024/25 Annual Report

This report provides an overview of the Practice Improvement (PI) activities undertaken by local public health teams in England from May 2024 to April 2025, encompassing regional efforts coordinated by the English ADPH networks, the Commissioners' Groups, and the national work carried out by ADPH in collaboration with partners.

Introduction

All 11 ADPH networks across England are actively involved in the PI Programme, contributing to and drawing from shared learning and examples of good practice. Engagement takes place through a range of channels, including themed webinars and workshops, regular monthly network meetings, and our dedicated virtual members' space, [WeDPH](#).

Across the regions, PI activity has advanced priorities in tobacco control, suicide prevention, behavioural science, climate resilience, and workforce development. Campaigns, conferences, and training have catalysed collaboration and shared learning, while new reports, frameworks, and practical tools have strengthened evaluation, inclusion, and implementation. Together, these efforts demonstrate the breadth of activity and the collective commitment of networks to driving public health improvement. ADPH has been instrumental in driving national practice improvement by fostering the exchange of learning, encouraging regional perspectives, and offering support where needed.

Each region has established a set of priorities, with many choosing to focus on similar themes including:

- Tobacco and smoking.
- Health protection.
- Workforce development.
- Children and young people.
- Climate and sustainability.
- Health inequalities.
- Gambling and commercial health.

Key Practice Improvement activities 2024/25

The English ADPH networks and Commissioners' Groups have demonstrated a commitment to engaging in PI 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 (CoI).

The Commissioners' Groups

ADPH hosts and provides secretariat for the [English HIV and Sexual Health Commissioners' Group \(EHSHCG\)](#), the [English Substance Use Commissioners' Group \(ESUCG\)](#), and the [English Infants Children and Young People Commissioners' Group \(EICYPCG\)](#). The groups support their members by sharing learning and good practice, working collectively to drive forward commissioning approaches throughout England.

Key PI activities from the groups include the following:

- ESUCG
 - Worked with OHID on the development and review of the [Commissioning Quality Standards](#) and commissioning practice.
 - Supported the [Addiction Healthcare Goals Programme](#) through membership of the Advisory Group.
 - Continued to build effective working relationships with the [Joint Combating Drugs Unit](#) in Government to support the development of local [Combating Drugs Partnerships](#).
 - Continued to maintain links to, and work closely with, Dame Carol Black in relation to the ongoing implementation of the recommendations in her [report](#) on the sector, and the identified need to develop the quality in commissioning and treatment agendas.
 - Published its [2024/25 impact report](#), providing an overview of national impact and member experience.
- EHSHCG
 - Engaged with stakeholders to inform key public health policy, including contributing to the development of the next phase of the [HIV Action Plan](#) and upcoming Syphilis Action Plan.
 - Provided [oral evidence](#) at the Health and Social Care Committee parliamentary event on Sexual Health Services in England.
 - Continued commissioner representation at national stakeholder meetings.
 - Published its [2023/25 impact report](#), providing an overview of its key achievements, priorities, and information on the executive committee.
 - Hosted four national webinars, receiving up to 158 attendees.
- EICYPCG
 - The group was and launched at our DPH Workshop and AGM in May 2025.
 - A stakeholder mapping exercise was carried out to engage and further develop effective working relationships with key 0-19 stakeholders.

Successes

What Good Looks Like (WGLL) series

The [WGLL series](#), first co-produced in 2019 with Public Health England, set out to provide practical guidance for local population health programmes, drawing on evidence of what delivers results in practice. We are refreshing this series in collaboration with UKHSA and OHID to ensure it remains relevant and evidence based. The renewed WGLL will remain a flexible, evolving collection of guidance, supporting peer learning, service redesign, and continuous improvement.

Network Connections newsletter

Our monthly newsletter, Network Connections, shares key communications relevant to the Network Coordinators and their region. This includes member engagement opportunities (including representation requests, surveys, and elections), operational updates for the Network Coordinators, news to the members cascaded from the national teams, and a collection of requests and shared resources among the coordinators.

Practice sharing webinar

In December, we hosted a virtual webinar on sharing good practice and local approaches taken to address good health at work. The webinar offered DsPH an opportunity to share insights and learning from their areas, and members heard local approaches from Cornwall, Derbyshire, and Southampton. Members also heard from Emily Andrews, Deputy Director for Work at [Centre for Ageing Better](#), who shared insights based on their recent [State of Ageing 2023/24 report](#).

PI Programme Board

The PI Programme Board develop and promote an understanding of PI for public health across local authorities, the NHS, and the wider public health system across the four nations and dependent territories. Across three meetings, the Board reviewed updates from Network Coordinators, Network PI Leads, and commissioners' groups, alongside discussions with [LGA](#).

Network meetings

Network Coordinators met regularly throughout the year where they discussed organisational priorities and work updates. Meetings also covered quarterly reporting and updates, and the [PI narrative](#). Networks shared updates from their regions and explored WGLL for prevention. Coordinators also engaged with the PI Programme Board, practice sharing, and peer review sessions. In addition to these regular meetings, coordinators met face-to-face on two occasions.

PI campaigns and events

Recent PI events across the regions include campaigns, conferences, workshops, and targeted training that advanced tobacco control, mental health, suicide prevention, behavioural science, and workforce development.

Across the networks, there has been a drive to strengthen tobacco control. The [CHAMPS](#) network launched the ['Smoking Ends Here'](#) campaign, East of England colleagues hosted a 'Smoke Free Generation' stakeholder event, and Cumbria and Lancashire colleagues hosted the [Smoke Free Places Conference](#), with follow-up activity including a [Smoke Free Strategy Strategic Group](#) workshop and a 'Smoke Free Deep Dive' to prioritise actions such as mandatory [Very Brief Advice \(VBA\) training](#) for front-line staff.

Climate and sustainability have also been a shared priority across the networks. East of England colleagues held their inaugural sustainability network meeting, and the Cumbria and Lancashire network established a Climate and Health CoI, followed by a joint 'Climate Change and Our Population's Health' [workshop](#) with the ICB Population Health team to share good practice.

Suicide prevention has been a central theme across networks. The CHAMPS network shared suicide prevention and bereavement work at two national conferences, and suicide cluster training was delivered by the North East and South West networks.

Conferences have served as catalysts for dialogue, learning, and coordinated responses to pressing issues:

- The West Midlands [regional conference](#) focused on early years, pregnancy, addictive behaviours, workplace health, ageing, and mental health.
- The North East regional [conference](#) attracted over 170 colleagues and included work on health protection, [community water fluoridation position statements](#), and [gambling-related harms](#) collaboration.
- The Yorkshire & Humber [annual conference](#), with over 200 attendees, discussed good practice across the region and identified future challenges across data and intelligence, workforce, children and young people, health protection, and climate.
- The South West region hosted a behavioural science conference with over 100 attendees.
- The West Midlands convened a [Reducing Disability Inequalities Summit](#) which identified barriers, shared learning, and developed actionable strategies.

Practice Improvement reports and frameworks

Recent PI reports and frameworks provided strategic direction, evidence, and tools to standardise delivery, evaluate impact, and prioritise prevention across priority areas.

Work on equality and inclusion was advanced in Cumbria and Lancashire, where [the Trans and Gender Diverse Health Needs Assessment](#) led to a subsequent [report](#) of recommendations. Assurance frameworks also progressed, with the East Midlands finalising the [Health Protection Assurance Framework](#) which is now being implemented into each LA.

Climate, risk and system resilience emerged as another area of focus. The South East network completed a climate and health survey supported by task-and-finish groups and convened an LGA strengths and risk assessment workshop to identify priority areas and an action plan.

Tobacco control and smoking cessation featured prominently across the networks. South East colleagues delivered a Stop Smoking 'Share and Collaborate' session, and the Greater Manchester network launched the [Making Smoking History Strategic Delivery Framework](#), preparing evaluation and delivery plans for social housing stop-smoking pilots developed with academic partners. Meanwhile, the South West conducted a smoke-free homes survey and drafted an [evaluation report](#)

Emerging health needs were also addressed, particularly around gambling. The North East published a regional [Gambling Health Needs Assessment](#) alongside several local Health Needs Assessments. The network also established a research arm with a recruited public health researcher to support evaluation and new projects

Data and evaluation work underpinned these efforts. The North East began standardising local reporting following a data management workshop earlier in the year, and South West colleagues compiled Real Time Suicide Surveillance (RTSS) self-assessment results into a [regional report](#), whilst [cardiovascular disease](#)

[prevention](#) was prioritised through new monitoring frameworks. South East colleagues also hosted DsPH experience-sharing on [Care Quality Commission Adult Social Care inspections](#).

PI tools

Practical tools across the regions support implementation, workforce development, evaluation, and engagement. Greater Manchester rolled out a co-designed [Smokefree Hospital Toolkit](#) for NHS trusts and launched the [Smoke Free App](#), with now has over half a million users.

The North East focused on gambling harms, producing a suite of resources including a [‘How to Guide’](#) for LAs, the ‘Words Can Hurt’ [language guide](#), and a Making Every Contact Count (MECC) module to support conversations about gambling harms. Their capacity for research and evaluation has also been expanded through the recruitment of a public health researcher.

In the South West, behavioural science has been a priority, with [webinar recordings](#) shared via the [NHS Futures Platform](#), the continuation of a [Behavioural Science Hub](#), and the distribution of RTSS self-assessment tools and local response templates to strengthen suicide cluster preparedness.

The West Midlands has translated outputs from the Reducing Disability Inequalities Summit into toolkits and guidance, meanwhile the Yorkshire and Humber network has allocated small grants to COIs to enable to development of tools, pilots, and dissemination materials.

Challenges

Regional networks continue to be constrained by inconsistent and inadequate funding, which limits forward planning and the continuity of programme development and delivery. Ongoing lobbying and influencing work aims to secure stable funding for regional networks, but many programmes remain dependent on short-term grants or local authority contributions.

Capturing and evidencing outcomes in a way that convinces stakeholders is a persistent challenge, which in turn affects the ability to justify further investment. There is clear value in face-to-face partnership activity for quality and relationship-building, but practical barriers across large geographic area reduce accessibility and increase delivery complexity. Additionally, workforce issues remain a pressing priority, with retention, resilience, and wellbeing of the public health workforce affecting capacity to deliver and sustain programmes.

Looking forward

We will continue to advocate for and support PI activity across regional and national levels through maintaining strong links with the regional networks and commit to strong national PI leadership through the ADPH PI Programme Board.