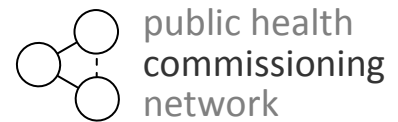


Developing a public health commissioning network (PHCN) for England



The problem

At present there are a number of deficiencies in the organisation of commissioning services for public health:

- Primary Care Trusts
 - there is massive unknowing duplication of effort between Primary Care Trusts (PCTs), with no database to consult to see if another PCT has tackled a similar commissioning problem;
 - public health professionals often have to act in isolation, facing patient groups, clinicians, and the press
- Local government
 - the ability to share knowledge on commissioning topics relevant to both local government and public health (e.g. housing, transport) varies widely around the country, and there is little sharing between regions
 - local authorities' existing expertise in the commissioning process, and PCTs' knowledge of evidence-based decision making, are often not widely shared between organisations in the same area
- there is no routine system to access individuals with special interests within the public health community, or any system to develop specialist areas of knowledge and expertise
- the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and World Class Commissioning processes require improved knowledge-sharing between PCTs and local authorities, and would benefit from an infrastructure to share and learn from experiences widely throughout the country

The solution

These issues can be addressed through the development of a formal national public health commissioning network:

- public health professionals, Directors of Commissioning, and Directors of Adults' and Children's Social Services, involved in NHS commissioning eligible to join
 - local colleagues encouraged to join simultaneously – e.g. Director of Public Health and Director of Adult Social Services join PHCN together, to encourage joint working
- members encouraged to specialise in particular commissioning topics, including the 'Big 50' clinical conditions, programme budget categories, particular population groups (e.g. BME communities, older people) (see attached list); one or two individuals lead on each topic
- the latest evidence, appraisals and service specifications to support commissioning in each topic area are shared nationally by members through a secure internet-based discussion forum and document store, accessible from any web-enabled computer

The result

- more efficient commissioning by NHS organisations and local government, with a reduction in unnecessary duplication between organisations, and greater availability of expertise on specific commissioning topics
- more comprehensive, rapid and evidence-based appraisals of new services, treatments, service redesign and disinvestment decisions
- support for organisations in meeting World Class Commissioning competencies and carrying out JSNA
- expansion and maintenance of knowledge, skills and capacity among professionals involved in NHS commissioning

How is it being developed?

- a national Project Board was convened in October 2007 and a draft specification for a Network completed in March 2008
- it is anticipated the Network will be DH-funded, and start in Q3 2008
- a small core staff will facilitate the Network nationally

If you are interested in joining PHCN please contact tomporter@nhs.net, including your job position, and the name of your local PCT(s) and council(s).

Appendix. Draft list of commissioning specialities

Population groups (Total = 9)		
Asylum seekers, refugees and new migrants BME communities Children	Homeless/poor housing Individuals with long-term conditions (incl. disability) Looked-after children	Offenders Older people Women of reproductive age
Individual / lifestyle risk factors (Total = 17)		
Alcohol Cholesterol Education Home and leisure accidents Hypertension Illicit drugs	Iron deficiency Motor vehicles Occupational health incl. stress Overweight / obesity Physical inactivity Poor diet (incl. fruit & veg intake, and saturated fat intake)	Poverty and unemployment Sexual behaviour Smoking (incl. passive) Social network/loneliness Toxic agents (e.g. pollutants)
Programme budget categories (Total = 22)		
Blood disorders Cancers & tumours Circulatory problems Dental problems Endocrine, nutritional and metabolic disorders Eye/vision problems GI system problems	GU system disorders Healthy individuals Hearing problems Infectious diseases Learning disability problems Maternity and reproductive health Mental health problems (all ages)	Musculoskeletal system problems (excl. trauma) Neonatal conditions Neurological system problems Poisoning Respiratory system problems Skin problems Social care needs Trauma/injuries
Specific conditions (Total = 47)		
Allergy Antenatal and pregnancy care Asthma Bowel cancer Breast cancer Chest pain & coronary disease COPD Deafness & tinnitus Dementia incl Alzheimer's Depression and suicide Diabetes Disability Drug & alcohol dependence Dysmenorrhoea and menorrhagia Eczema Epilepsy	Failure to cope in old age Glaucoma Headache Healthcare Acquired Infections Heart failure Hepatitis, cirrhosis & liver failure HIV/Aids Incontinence Inflammatory bowel disease Learning disability problems Lung cancer Neonatal conditions Neurotic disorders Osteoporosis Oral and dental health	Osteoarthritis Parkinson's disease Poisoning Prostate hypertrophy/cancer Psoriasis Renal failure Rheumatoid arthritis Schizophrenia Sexual health Skin cancer Spinal disease Stomach cancer Stroke TB Trauma/injuries Visual failure
Specific services (Total = 9)		
Adult intensive care Assistive technologies Genetics	Imaging Microbiology Neonatal & paediatric intensive care	Pathology Prescribing/pharmacy Screening
Commissioning processes and procedures (Total = 3)		
Judicial review Clinical exceptions protocols	Using the Map of Medicine	

Notes

- Members will be expected to liaise with those overseeing related topics once the Network is running
- Members for topic titles with the most granularity (e.g. 'stomach cancer' in Specific conditions) would be expected to lead on that topic, rather than those responsible for overarching topics (e.g. 'Cancers and tumours' in Programme Budget categories), although the latter would be expected to signpost information from the other groups, and fill any gaps which are not covered elsewhere on the Network
- Topics include joint (health/local authority) partnership working wherever relevant, but exclude (though should link to) those covered by the National Specialised Commissioning Group
- Suggestions for new topics are welcome