

Developing a pipeline of Public Health Intelligence Specialists for Yorkshire and Humber

Leon Green, Principal Public Health Intelligence Analyst, North East and Yorkshire Local Knowledge and Intelligence Service
 leon.green@dhsc.gov.uk

1. Background

High quality Public Health Intelligence (PHI) is integral to many public health programmes. Yorkshire and Humber (Y&H) has around 50 PHI analysts working at 15 local authorities plus the regional function, dealing with increased demands for PHI, including from NHS Population Health Management, COVID-19 recovery and strategic needs assessment. Historically, some analysts have moved from one organisation to another, passing the analytical shortfall around the region and between employers, without maintaining or increasing analytical capacity.



2. Establishing the programme

Although the idea had been gestating for a while, the Public Health Intelligence Community of Interest (CoI) approached Yorkshire and Humber DsPH in November 2020, formally proposing an analyst apprenticeship. All 15 local authorities (LAs) in Y&H agreed to participate, with apprentices undertaking a level 4 data analyst apprenticeship. Four LAs (Hull, Leeds, Sheffield and Wakefield) would act as recruiting hubs, each with 2 apprentice places.

A year later, a common job description, salary, advert, shortlisting criteria, interview exercise and questions were agreed between all four employing LAs. The Local Knowledge and Intelligence Service (LKIS) would provide overall management of the scheme at zero cost. Recruitment adverts were posted in January 2022 and trainees were recruited on 2-year fixed-term contracts at four employing LAs and have two 1-year placements at different LAs. Salary costs were contributed equally by participating LAs while apprenticeship costs were funded through levy by the employing authorities.

A procurement process identified an apprenticeship provider from a field of seven, with the trainees undertaking a Level 4 Data Analyst apprenticeship. PHI managers at LAs provided management and supervision. The Local Knowledge and Intelligence Service (LKIS) from the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities provided overall management of the scheme, supported by the ADPH network.

3. Learning delivery

Arch, the apprenticeship provider, delivered the Level 4 Data Analyst taught modules through online learning. Apprentices attended virtual training blocks and then put into practice their learning at their work placements, building a portfolio of their learning.

This generic data analyst training was supplemented by two programmes from LKIS: firstly trainees undertook the online, self-directed Foundations for Public Health Intelligence; secondly they attended the modular Core Skills for Public Health Intelligence training as part of a larger cohort. These supplemented the apprenticeship and brought that generic learning into a public health focus.

Further support is provided, whereby quarterly workshops are held and the eight apprentices meet face-to-face for personal development, public health learning and team building activities. The apprentices have also been offered mentors, typically apprentices who are further on through their learning or employed PHI analysts. This mentoring can offer support for work-based or apprenticeship matters.



4. Next steps

This first cohort of apprentices have fixed-term contracts up to May 2024 and are due to enter the permanent workforce in the coming months. DsPH are actively considering more permanent analytical roles within the system in the coming months.

The programme was always intended to provide a pipeline of suitably trained and qualified public health intelligence analysts. Discussions are underway for a second cohort. This may differ and could include other partners (e.g. NHS); offer apprenticeships at different levels and may not include all LAs in each cohort.

5. Acknowledgements

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Apprentice	Employer	Placement 1	Placement 2
April Glenn	Hull City Council	North Lincolnshire	North East Lincolnshire
Robbie Lucas		Hull	East Riding
Jessica Thomson	Leeds City Council	York	North Yorkshire
Rafael Wortmann		Leeds	LKIS (York)
Freyja Cummings	Sheffield City Council	Sheffield	Barnsley
Ruth Porter		Rotherham	Doncaster
Alana Firth	Wakefield Council	Wakefield	Bradford
Diane Weedy		Kirklees	Calderdale