Rewarding Learning

eGUIDE//

Public Health and Health Promotion
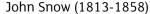Unit A2 4: Public Health

Introduction

Public health has been defined as "the art and science of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health through the organised efforts of society" (Acheson, 1988, cited by WHO, 2020). In simple terms, public health is about protecting the health of a whole population and includes work like monitoring the health status of the population, researching disease, preventing and responding to infectious diseases and educating the public about health, including promoting healthy lifestyles with a view to prolonging life. Whilst the current organisation with responsibility for public health in Northern Ireland, the Public Health Agency, was established in 2009, public health in the UK has a long history dating back to the nineteenth century.

Activity 1

1. You can learn more about the nineteenth century history of public health by researching the contribution of the following key figures.

John Snow (1813-1858)   Edwin Chadwick (1800-1890)

2. BBC Bitesize provides a summary of the history of public health in the UK - click on https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/z9924qt/revision/5 to read this document.
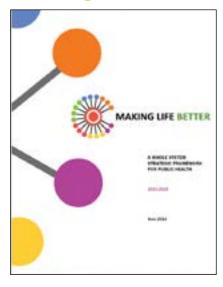
A list of up-to-date public health issues in the UK is published by Public Health England and can be accessed by an internet search for "current public health issues" and selecting the appropriate page at www.gov.uk. At the time of writing (2020), the list includes a whole range of issues such as air pollution, alcohol, bowel cancer, cardiovascular disease prevention, cervical screening, child dental health, dementia, health at work, mental health, obesity and the food environment, physical activity, productive healthy ageing, rough sleeping, stopping smoking and type 2 diabetes. These are only some examples, and the list may change a little from year to year.

The current approach to public health in Northern Ireland is perhaps best understood by examining the work of the Public Health Agency which lists its four key functions as:

• health and social well-being improvement;
• health protection;
• public health support for commissioning and policy development;
• HSC (health and social care) research and development (PHA, 2020).

The document 'Making Life Better, A Whole System Strategic Framework for Public health 2013-2023' sets out the Northern Ireland government's key approaches to public health in Northern Ireland (available at www.health-ni.gov.uk).

Activity 2

1. Access **'Making Life Better'** online and individually skim read Chapter 4 'Vision, Aims, Values and Themes' (p36-40) for an overview of the strategy.

2. Working in a group, share out the key themes:
   - Theme 1: Giving Every Child the Best Start (Chapter 5);
   - Theme 2: Equipped Throughout Life (Chapter 6);
   - Theme 3: Empowering Healthy Living (Chapter 7);
   - Theme 4: Creating the Conditions (Chapter 8);
   - Theme 5: Empowering Communities (Chapter 9);
   - Theme 6: Developing Collaboration (Chapter 10).

Provide a summary as a short handout or PowerPoint presentation for the other members of your class. This should briefly summarise the intended outcomes and give examples of how each will be addressed by different professionals, government departments and other organisations working in partnership.

This document gives a good overall guide to how public health issues are being addressed, but for any particular public health issue, there may also be specific:

- legislation, strategies and policies;
- health promotion and public safety campaigns and activities, and
- other actions by government departments, local councils and voluntary providers.

Some examples relevant to a range of current public health issues (accessed at www.gov.uk, 2020) are listed in the tables below. The examples are listed with links and are current at the time of writing (2020) but will change or be updated over time.

Public health issues	Examples of legislation, strategies and policies in Northern Ireland
Smoking	The Smoking (Northern Ireland) Order 2006
Air pollution	Air Quality Standards Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010
Health at work	Health and Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order 1978
Mental health	Service Framework for Mental Health and Wellbeing 2018-2021
Obesity	'A Fitter Future for All' - framework for preventing and addressing overweight and obesity in Northern Ireland (2012-22)
Productive healthy ageing	Active Ageing Strategy 2016-2021

Public health issues	Examples of health promotion and public safety campaigns and activities in Northern Ireland
Preventing STIs HIV testing	Sexual Health NI https://www.sexualhealthni.info (PHA health promotion campaign)
Safety at work	'Stop and Think Safe' https://www.hseni.gov.uk/farmsafe (HSENI farm safety campaign)
Physical activity obesity	'Choose to live better' https://www.choosetolivebetter.com (PHA health promotion campaign)
Mental health	'Minding Your Head' https://www.mindingyourhead.info (PHA health promotion campaign)
Bowel cancer	'Be Cancer Aware' https://www.becancerawareni.info (PHA health promotion campaign)
Smoking	'Stop Smoking NI" https://www.stopsmokingni.info (PHA health promotion campaign)

Public health issues	Examples of other actions by government departments, local councils and voluntary providers in Northern Ireland
Physical activity	Local councils' provision of leisure and sports facilities and activities e.g. http://derrystrabaneleisure.com
Cervical screening	Screening Matters a newsletter produced by YPAST (Young Person and Adult Screening Team) for the health professionals involved in Northern Ireland cancer screening programmes, and published on the PHA website.
Rough sleeping	NI Housing Executive advice and services for people experiencing homelessness https://www.nihe.gov.uk/Housing-Help/Homelessness/What-do-we-mean-by-homelessness
Productive healthy ageing	U3A http://u3ani.info/u3a-in-northgern-ireland/
Dementia	Public awareness campaign 'I'm still me' https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/dementia
Cardiovascular disease prevention	Northern Ireland Chest Heart and Stroke https://nichs.org.uk/how-we-can-support-you/
Type 2 diabetes	Community services provided by HSC trusts e.g. integrated care partnerships Desmond Project supports people with type 2 diabetes - https://www.hscboard.hscni.net/integrated-care-partnerships-desmond-supports-peope-with-type-2-diabetes/

Bowel cancer	Northern Ireland Bowel Cancer Screening Programme http://www.cancerscreening.hscni.net/Overview_Bowel_Programme.htm
Alcohol	Addiction services provided by the HSC trusts e.g. http://www.northerntrust.hscni.net/services/addictions-service/
Preventing infections and reducing antimicrobial resistance	On-line Regional Infection Prevention and Control Manual for Northern Ireland https://www.niinfectioncontrolmanual.net
Physical activity	Maps produced to encourage walking in forests https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-public-forests-trail-maps
Preventing drug misuse deaths	Have Your Tomorrows (HURT Northern Ireland) https://hurtni.org.uk

Activity 3

Choose one current public health issue and make a list of at least 4 sources of information that contribute to understanding how it is being addressed in Northern Ireland.

Health promotion

Health promotion has been described by WHO as follows:

"Health promotion enables people to increase control over their own health. It covers a wide range of social and environmental interventions that are designed to benefit and protect individual people's health and quality of life by addressing and preventing the root causes of ill health, not just focusing on treatment and cure" (WHO, 2016).

In Northern Ireland, the Public Health Agency is responsible for health promotion, and as part of this responsibility it runs health promotion campaigns, which are large-scale multi-media campaigns aimed at improving the health of the population. The PHA employs a whole range of media to get their messages across, for example television and radio advertising, posters, leaflets, campaign websites and online platforms like Twitter. Some examples of health promotion campaigns by the PHA in 2020 are listed in the second table above, though it is important to note they are regularly updated.

Activity 4

1. Select a current health promotion campaign run by the PHA and identify what its objectives are (i.e. what it set(s) out to achieve).
2. Complete the table on next page as you familiarise yourself with the methods and materials used for the campaign - note all the methods and materials highlighted in the table may not be relevant for your chosen campaign. You should use the second column to briefly describe the content where appropriate.

Name of campaign:	
Methods and materials	**Description**
Website	
Television advertising	
Radio advertising	
Newspaper and magazine advertising	
Poster(s)	
Leaflet(s)	
Social media	

Events e.g. roadshows	
Other activities	

3. Read the eGuide for AS 3: Health and Well-Being as a reminder of the following approaches used in health promotion campaigns:

- medical approach;
- social change approach;
- educational approach;
- behaviour change approach;
- use of fear arousal.

Now identify the approach or approaches used in the campaign you have just described in part 2 of this activity and use the table below to show where in the campaign there is evidence of the approach or approaches being used. You will only need to complete one row for each approach you have identified, so you can reduce or add to the rows in the table as needed.

Name of campaign:	
Approach used	**Evidence of this approach in the campaign**

4. Finally, go back to the eGuide for AS 3 and remind yourself of the strengths and weaknesses of the approaches you have identified in the selected PHA campaign. For each approach, complete a table as follows to evaluate the particular campaign. (The table provided suggests considering three strengths and three weaknesses, but you can add or delete rows as needed).

Name of campaign:	
Approach used:	
Strengths of this approach	How this point can be applied to the campaign
Weaknesses of this approach	How this point can be applied to the campaign

Small-scale health promotion activities by students

One way students can learn more about health promotion is to design, carry out and evaluate an activity of their own.

Some examples of small-scale activities are:
- carrying out a classroom based presentation on healthy eating for younger students in their own school;
- visiting a primary school class in the local area to promote physical activity in younger children;
- organising a healthy eating week in school or college promoting healthy choices in the canteen and/or tuck shop;
- designing and distributing material such as leaflets and a poster to a local group e.g. about bowel cancer to the local U3A or about child immunisations to a parent and baby group;
- engaging the help of a professional such as a nurse to do a health promotion activity on alcohol for students in a school or college;
- visiting a day centre for adults with learning disabilities to promote dental hygiene
- visiting a youth club or a day centre for older people to raise awareness of mental health;
- setting up a stall at a local community event to encourage participation in smoking cessation programmes;
- making a video promoting participation in school or college based extra-curricular physical activities like sports and playing it on screens in school or college.

Getting Started - choosing an issue and a target audience

The starting point for students planning a health promotion activity, whether working individually or in a group, is to decide on a public health issue to focus on and also on a specific target audience for the activity. The choice of issue could be based either on personal interest or on reading and research about public health and health promotion. For health promoters, the choice of the target group is based on need - the evidence for this might come from research and/or from published government strategies and targets, for example. For small-scale student activities, the accessibility of the target group will also need to be considered.

An important consideration for students deciding on a health promotion activity with any particular target group is ethical issues. To behave ethically is to act in a principled way with a clear focus on respecting others and avoiding any harm to participants. This means thinking about issues like respecting the rights of others to make their own choices in terms of their lifestyles and so, for example, the focus of the activity should be on empowering participants to make informed decisions, rather than shaming them or dictating to them. Working ethically also means students need to recognise their own limitations e.g. that they are not equipped to deal with disclosures about mental illness or distress about health issues that could arise in the course of some health promotion activities, so disclosures like these should not be part of the activity. Activities that encourage participants to disclose illegal behaviours like under-age drinking, under-age sex or illegal drug-taking are also inappropriate for student-led health promotion activities.

Deciding on the aim and objectives

At the initial stages, the aim and objectives must be established. The aim is the overall goal of the activity – it is a single broad statement of the intention of the activity.

Examples might be:
'To promote breastfeeding by new mothers in the local area';

'To encourage participation in physical activity amongst teenage girls in a youth club';
'To raise awareness of positive mental health in older people at a day centre'.

Note that each of these aims makes reference to a particular target audience. Small-scale student health promotion activities cannot realistically target the whole population.

The objectives in contrast are very specific goals to be achieved as part of delivering the stated aim. The objectives should be specific enough that they can be used to measure the success of the activity when it has been completed. A good way to think about objectives is that they should be SMART- specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time bound (i.e. they can be achieved within the time allowed for the activity). The objectives can relate to improving the knowledge and understanding of the target group, providing them with skills for change, and changing their attitudes and/or changing their behaviours.

Examples of objectives for a campaign aiming 'to improve dental hygiene in young children who attend a local parent and child group' might be:

1. To improve parental skills in supporting young children to clean their teeth effectively;
2. To develop parents' knowledge of the potential damage of sugary foods and drinks;
3. To reduce the amount of sugary foods and drinks that parents give their children.

Note that each of these could be measured when evaluating the success of the campaign e.g. by giving out questionnaires to measure knowledge before and after the activity and to assess behaviour change at a later point after the activity.

Activity 5

Working in a small group, write three objectives for a health promotion activity that aims *'To encourage participation in physical activity by sixth form students in a school'.*

Remember, the objectives can focus on knowledge, attitudes, skills and/or behaviours. Also be mindful that the objectives should be able to be used to measure the success of the activity when it has been completed, so it is a good idea to think about how they could be measured at this stage. Thinking about evaluating objectives at this early stage can really help students to scale down over-ambitious objectives!

Selecting the approach(es)

Three of the approaches previously identified are regarded as suitable for small-scale health promotion activities by students. These are:
-   the behaviour change approach;
-   the educational approach;
-   the use of fear arousal.
One or more of these approaches may be used.

Activity 6

1. Imagine you are planning a health promotion activity that aims to promote healthy eating in Key Stage 3 pupils in your school. Complete the table below to suggest how each of the three approaches could be used.

Approach	How it could be used in a health promotion activity aiming to promote healthy eating
The behaviour change approach	
The educational approach	
The use of fear arousal	

2. Which approach(es) would you actually select and why? (Hint - refer back to your previous work on the advantages and disadvantages of each of the approaches).

Deciding on the delivery methods and materials

The choice of delivery methods and materials for any small scale health promotion activity will be influenced by the issue and target audience, the aim and objectives and the approaches already considered. Some examples are:

- posters;
- leaflets;
- video clips;
- demonstrations; and
- talks.

This list is not exhaustive by any means; some other innovative approaches may include:

- drama/theatre-based activities;
- playing games, doing quizzes or word searches;
- craft/art activities.

It is usual to use more than one of these in a health promotion activity, for example a talk on healthy eating might be aided by a PowerPoint presentation specifically designed for the activity with embedded video or audio material. Similarly, a drama workshop could be followed up with an information leaflet.

Students can make use of existing resources (for example posters, leaflets, videoclips or other website materials, advertising materials from the PHA, the Department of Health in Northern Ireland or England, the NHS or a voluntary organisation).

Some advantages of using existing materials are:

- it saves a lot of time and effort;
- they have a professional appearance;
- they have usually been designed by people who are knowledgeable about the issue and skilled in health promotion.

On the other hand, it may be hard to find up to date materials on the issue or it might be the case that the materials are not suitable for the target group, for example in terms of the level of language used.

Some advantages of students designing their own materials are:

- they may enjoy the opportunity to be creative;
- they may be able to use the materials to meet the requirements of other subjects they are studying e.g. English, ICT, Moving Image Arts, Art and Design, Digital Technology or Performing Arts;
- they can tailor the materials specifically to the target audience and the chosen activity.

On the other hand, the design process for the materials can be very challenging, time-consuming and expensive and the end product may not look as professional as ready-made health promotion materials designed by others with greater knowledge and expertise and probably a significantly larger budget!

Other aspects of planning an activity

Permissions - Students need to seek permission for the activity as appropriate, depending on both the nature of the activity and the make-up of the target audience. This might involve, for example, seeking permission from a school principal or classroom teacher or the manager of a day centre or youth club. They should check whether they are allowed to use any equipment and should agree to adhere to any relevant policies and protocols e.g. health and safety and confidentiality. They should have a very clear vision of the nature of the proposed activity before seeking permission, so that informed consent is sought.

Venue and Equipment - Students carrying out a health promotion activity need to identify a venue for the activity and check it out in advance to make sure it is suitable for what they plan to do. Any necessary adjustments can be planned at this stage e.g. changing seating arrangements for a talk if that is their chosen method. They also need to check on the availability of any equipment they will need e.g. a whiteboard, tables, display boards, paper and pens, materials to use in a demonstration, a computer or computers with an internet connection.

Time management - Students need to think about the time they have available to plan, carry out, evaluate and write up their report. To keep a small-scale health promotion activity on track, it will be useful to set out a time-line or use a diary to determine the timescales for all aspects of the process. They should also think carefully about the timings for the activity itself e.g. the timings for setting up a stall, interacting with the target audience and clearing away if they are running a stall at a community event or the timings for each aspect of a presentation/activity they will do in a classroom.

Responsibilities - Where students are working in a group, part of the planning should be the sharing out of tasks. It is useful to have meetings at which the distribution of tasks and the timescales for tasks are agreed and recorded. Review meetings can also be planned to check group members are adhering to the agreed responsibilities and timescales. Minutes of meetings and a table, such as the one below, may be useful for recording this.

Group member	Task	Completion date

Evaluation - Evaluation is about making a judgement on the value or worth of something. For a health promotion campaign, this involves reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses of both the ongoing processes and the final outcome(s) of the campaign. Evaluation helps to highlight and justify possible improvements.

Activity 7

The Public Health Agency announcement entitled 'Good news- smoking rates are declining' published in October 2017 makes reference to an evaluation of the PHA's previous health promotion campaign on smoking, which was called the 'One in two' campaign.

1. Access the PHA announcement by clicking on the link below
    https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/news/good-news-–-smoking-rates-are-declining

What were the key findings of the campaign evaluation? Do these findings focus on the process or the outcomes of the campaign?

2. In a small group, discuss the following:
    -   Why do you think health promoters need to evaluate their campaigns?
    -   What methods could they use to do this?
    Share your ideas in a class discussion.

Just as professional health promoters evaluate the large-scale multimedia health promotion campaigns they run, it is important for students to evaluate the success of their small-scale activities. Students need to be thinking about how they could evaluate their activity right from the outset when they set out their objectives, as previously stated. The evaluation tools they design should focus on helping them to evaluate how well the original objectives have been met (outcome evaluation) and the quality of the activity/ how well it went overall (process evaluation).

Examples of commonly used evaluation tools are:

Pre- and post-test assessments - These are designed to measure knowledge or awareness both before and after the activity. They are therefore a good way of assessing whether any learning has taken place. For example, teenagers could be tested on their knowledge of fatty and sugary foods before and after a classroom presentation on the topic. These types of assessment need to be drawn up with care to make sure the questions are appropriate, clear and a good test of the participants' knowledge (i.e. that they are a valid measure). If time allows they could be piloted (tested out on a few members of the target audience in advance) to check how well they work.

Comment cards - These are a quick and easy way of getting feedback on the quality of the activity from the target audience. They can be blank cards on which participants can make any comments on the activity that they wish, or they can be designed with prompts highlighting some aspects of the activity to comment on e.g. the resources used, the quality of the presentation or their enjoyment of a participative activity. Feedback on comment cards can also take the form of rating scales, such as frowny/smiley faces, stars or numerical ratings.

Self, peer, participant, teacher or observer questionnaires - Questionnaires are lists of written questions to be answered on paper, although they can also be electronic, designed using appropriate software packages. Like pre and post-test assessments, questionnaires that set out to assess the process or the outcome of the activity, or both, need to be very carefully designed. Well-designed questionnaires take a bit of time to develop and may need to be drafted and redrafted a few times before using them to improve their validity. When thinking about what questions they want to ask and how to ask them, students should consider:

-   What aspects of the activity they are setting out to evaluate e.g. is it the process of doing the activity and/or the outcomes in terms of meeting the original objectives or both?
-   If they are evaluating outcomes, do the questions address all the original objectives clearly? What are they trying to find out about - attitudes, knowledge or behaviour?

- Who is the questionnaire going to be for - themselves as a group for their own reflections, peers or teachers who watched them carry out the activity, or other observers such as youth club leaders or centre managers, for example?
- Will the questions asked make sense to those answering them? (Aspects like the age and level of understanding of respondents may be important here as well as the clarity of the questions themselves).
- What is an appropriate number of questions? (Repetition should be avoided and there shouldn't be so many questions that respondents lose interest or concentration).

The questions can be closed, with a fixed range of responses or rating scales for respondents to choose from, or open, allowing them to write answers in a bit more detail. Questionnaires can consist of one of these types of questions or of a mixture of the two types. Students also need to think carefully about the timing of the questionnaire, for example if they wish to measure behaviour change, they may need to leave some time between the activity and the questionnaire. Again, a pilot of the questionnaire may be useful to test out its validity.

Once students have evaluated their activity, they should be in a position to make realistic recommendations to improve both the process of the activity and its outcomes.

References

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