

Allied Health Professions UK Public Health Strategic Framework

2025-2030



Collaborating Partners

This is the second UK-wide Allied Health Professions (AHP) Public Health Strategic Framework. This framework has been designed through collaboration with partners across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. It builds on the previous Strategic Framework and Impact Report and other documents applicable to one or more nations, providing a united approach to public health for AHPs across the UK.

This strategic framework was developed in collaboration with:

Office for Health Improvement and Disparities
Scottish Government
Welsh Government
Department of Health, Northern Ireland
AHP Federations of England, Northern Ireland and Scotland
Public Health Agency Northern Ireland
Community for Allied Health Professions Research
Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists
Institute of Osteopathy
College of Paramedics
Royal College of Occupational Therapists
Chartered Society of Physiotherapy
British Dietetic Association
British Association of Art Therapists
British Association of Prosthetists and Orthotists
Royal College of Podiatry

British and Irish Orthoptic Society
Society and College of Radiographers
British Association for Music Therapy
British Association of Dramatherapists
College of Operating Department Practitioners
AHPs4PH
UK Health Security Agency

With support from:

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Faculty of Public Health
Public Health Wales
Public Health Scotland
Wales Allied Health Professions Committee
NHS England

Authors:

Julie Lowe, Public Health Specialty Registrar
Linda Hindle, Office for Health Improvement and Disparities

Development Process

The development process included reviewing evidence about what matters to the public, what works in public health and AHP practice, insights from public health leaders, engagement with AHP professional bodies and AHP leaders, and a survey to the AHP community to seek views about priorities and opportunities. We would like to thank the working group who supported the process and sought to ensure ongoing engagement with AHPs across the UK.



Foreword

Since the last Allied Health Professionals Public Health Strategic Framework in 2019 much has changed. We have seen a growing gap in healthy life expectancy, an increase in demand for healthcare services, a cost-of-living crisis and lived through a global pandemic. What hasn't changed is the commitment of Allied Health Professionals to improve the health of those they work with by using their public health skills to help people to live healthier and happier lives. The focus of Allied Health Professionals to look outside of their job titles and to explore issues such as social justice, climate change and prevention, speaks to a group of people seeking to create a healthier future.

This strategic framework, developed collaboratively by the diverse professional groups that make up Allied Health Professionals, not only reaffirms the importance of Allied Health Professionals but offers a clear roadmap to a healthier future.

In 2025 we face many challenges. Whether the longstanding issues of inequalities and long-term conditions or the growing and emerging issues of climate change and emerging pandemics, creating healthy and happy communities will take coordinated and concerted efforts from everyone to improve health. Through the development of this framework, Allied Health Professionals can be at the front of leading that improvement.

This strategic framework shows both the progress made since 2019 and the work that needs to be done to support Allied Health Professionals to be at the forefront of prevention over the next five years. The breadth and ambition of the strategic framework is welcome, at a time when we need everybody to make Public Health their responsibility. Whatever happens over the next five years, one thing is clear, Allied Health Professionals will be a critical part of creating a healthier, happier, fairer and more sustainable future.

William Roberts
Chief Executive, Royal Society for Public Health

Introduction

This UK-wide Strategic Framework sets out our shared vision for the role of Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) contribution to public health across the UK between 2025 and 2030, along with the goals we aim to achieve to realise our vision. This second framework builds on progress from the [first 2019-2024 Strategic Framework](#) and has contributions from fifteen professions represented by one or more of the Chief AHP Officers across the UK¹.

This framework is designed to help the AHP community deliver impact on public health. By AHP community, we mean the registered AHP workforce, support workers and assistants, student AHPs, Professional Bodies, and organisations including Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), employers, and commissioners.

The framework is written from the perspective of the collaborating partners, so where we have referenced “we,” this refers to the entirety of those partners, though we expect the focus for implementing this framework will differ according to the starting point of each nation and profession. The framework will be of interest to other health and care professions and may be adapted for other uses.

Our AHP Public Health Vision

Our vision is that public health is a core part of all AHP roles and that the positive impact on public health by AHPs is recognised and valued.

This will be achieved by AHPs feeling enabled to develop and deliver health and care services, with communities, that are based on promoting wellbeing; preventing ill health; reducing health inequalities; and ensuring sustainability.



¹Details on the AHPs represented by Chief AHP Officers in each nation can be found using the following links: Wales: [Allied Health Professions \(AHPs\) - HEIW](#) England: [NHS England » Allied Health Professions](#) Scotland: [Allied health professionals - Health workforce - gov.scot](#) and Northern Ireland: [Allied health professionals \(AHP\) | nidirect](#)

Framework Scope and Aims

Scope

- 1 To set the strategic direction for AHPs in relation to public health, across the four nations of the UK over a 5-year period, 2025-2030.
- 2 To outline priority areas to support action by all partners to deliver our vision for AHPs in public health.

Aim

This framework has two main aims for the AHP community:

- 1 To support AHPs to understand their role in the context of public health and how public health principles apply to them, the people and communities they work with, and the wider population.
- 2 To support partner organisations in their work to understand and promote AHPs impact on public health; sustain and increase the AHP contribution; improve evidence of impact and use the skills of AHPs to influence the public health landscape.

Who are AHPs?

AHPs work in all sectors related to health and wellbeing, including health and social care, education, justice, the voluntary and community sector, academia, and in businesses and private practice. Across all nations, AHPs represent a significant proportion of the clinical NHS workforce. AHPs also work in a range of roles including in leadership, management, commissioning, policy and research.

Chief AHP Officers in each of the four nations are responsible for slightly different professions, with a total of fifteen, which are: art therapists, diagnostic and therapeutic radiographers, dietitians, dramatherapists, music therapists, occupational therapists, operating department practitioners, orthoptists, osteopaths, paramedic practice, physiotherapists, podiatrists, practitioner psychologists, prosthetists and orthotists and speech and language therapists. This framework applies to the whole AHP community as described earlier.

Progress and Strategic Context

The [2019-2024 AHP Public Health Strategic Framework](#) was the first UK-wide vision and plan for AHPs, it strengthened collaboration and consistency across the four nations to tackle shared challenges and helped us to work better together to highlight and strengthen the impact AHPs have on the public's health.

[Impacts from the previous strategic framework](#) include achieving a stronger evidence-base and demonstration of how AHPs contribute to improving the health of individuals, communities, and the population through protecting and improving health. We have demonstrated our impact on reducing inequalities in access, experience and outcomes in health services, and our contribution to strengthening the long-term sustainability and resilience of the health and care landscape.

Our new strategic framework builds on this progress and aligns to relevant nation-specific policy context that influences AHP practice and the environment we work in. Nation-specific policy context is outlined below.

Wales:

The [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) ensures that public bodies prioritise well-being in everything they do with a focus on long-term thinking to improve the health of future generations. The long-term plan for health and care delivery, [A Healthier Wales](#), does this by setting out a vision for a whole system approach to health and social care focused on health, wellbeing, and prevention.

A recent [Science Evidence Advice report](#) recognises that AHPs play a fundamental role in meeting the needs of our ageing population through prevention and new service models, and the AHP framework [Looking Forward Together](#) has a renewed focus on population health, health inequalities, prevention, and sustainable health care to ensure AHPs can have maximum impact through leadership, service delivery and workforce development, with actions aligned to this UK-wide strategy.

AHPs in Wales are already addressing the need to 'shift' a greater proportion of our resources into prevention, early intervention and reducing inequalities for individuals, communities, and populations, and for several national public health priority programmes, AHPs play a key role in achieving change.

Northern Ireland:

Making Life Better 2013–2023 is the current public health strategic framework to improve the health and wellbeing of people in Northern Ireland with a focus on a broad range of social, economic, and environmental factors which influence health and wellbeing, bringing together actions at government level and direction for implementation at regional and local level. The framework seeks to create the conditions for individuals and communities to take control of their own lives and move towards a vision of Northern Ireland where all people are enabled and supported in achieving their full health and wellbeing potential and to reduce inequalities in health, and AHPs in Northern Ireland play an essential role in delivering this vision. The framework is enhanced by the recently agreed draft Programme for Government 2024-2027 Doing What Matters Most that outlines priorities including addressing health inequalities and helping to improve the long-term health and well-being of our population, creating further opportunities for a broader appreciation of the public health role and function of AHPs.

England:

The Government has committed to transform the health and care system through a ten-year plan, with a greater emphasis on prevention and early intervention so that people live well for longer. This plan will provide a route to agree and prioritise actions to deliver this mission to improve wellbeing and reduce health inequalities, building on priorities for inequalities and prevention contained within the current NHS Long Term Plan and broadening scope to beyond the NHS.

AHPs are recognised as a critical part of delivering improvements in the health and wellbeing of the entire population and AHPs Deliver 2022-27, the national strategy for AHPs in England, makes a strong commitment to increase consideration of social justice, environmental sustainability, and prevention as part of future AHP practice. AHPs Deliver was developed using crowdsourcing with members of the public and the AHP community and it demonstrates the desire for AHPs to continue to use their skills and opportunities to support the future health of both the population and the planet.



Scotland:

The [Programme for Government 2024-25: Serving Scotland](#) commits to take forward engagement and planning for the transformation required to deliver our vision of a Scotland where people live longer, healthier and fulfilling lives. Our reform will focus on improving population health, prevention, and early intervention, backed by increased productivity, maximising access to quality health and social care services. This vision is supported by four key areas of work: improving population health, a focus on prevention and early intervention, providing quality services, and maximising access.

The [Scottish AHP Public Health Strategic Framework Implementation Plan: 2022-2027](#) sets the direction for AHPs and public health in Scotland, with an established AHP Public Health Oversight Group working to ensure collaboration across all stakeholders over the duration of the plan. The [Scottish Government's National Performance Framework](#) sets out a vision for collective wellbeing, with many National Outcomes linked to the health of the population, and taking action to improve population health is vital to achieving these outcomes.



Why do we need a framework?

The UK has made significant advances to health and wellbeing with prolonged life expectancy, improvements in health and care, and in policies to tackle wider determinants of health such as reducing smoking in the population. However, in the face of growing challenges including population change, widening inequalities, and climate change, there is more we can do to make a difference to the health and wellbeing of the population, both now and for future generations.

The Challenge – Population Change and Health Inequalities

The UK has an ageing population. Whilst many people experience good mental and physical health in older age; large numbers of people are living with preventable diseases, long-term conditions and disabilities that accumulate over time. Other groups experience persistent and widening inequalities in health due to systematic variation in social, economic, and environmental factors, the 'wider determinants' of health. This impacts on life expectancy, quality of life, as well as how people access and experience healthcare.

The Challenge – Climate Change and Sustainability

Climate change is one of the biggest threats to the health of our planet and population, undermining the core foundations of good health and contributing to increased levels of cardiovascular disease, dementia, asthma and cancers, and these impacts are most likely to be felt by population groups who already experience inequalities in health. Contributing significantly to carbon emissions, the NHS and other UK health and care organisations need to be part of the climate solution to ensure healthcare is delivered sustainably, without compromising the ability of the next generation to do so.

Opportunities

The size and diversity of our workforce means that the AHP community is well placed to make a big contribution to population health. By working together with other professions and across sectors we can take stronger, collective action to ensure people can live more years in good health, both through the way we work with individuals and communities and by influencing and leading change at population level.

A key opportunity for AHPs is including prevention in all pathways. By shifting towards an 'upstream' model of supporting people's health across the range of settings and roles that AHPs work in, we can prevent illnesses from occurring and reduce re-occurrence and disease exacerbation and embed high quality preventive activity as the norm. Prevention also benefits sustainability of services through reduced reliance on intensive healthcare interventions lessening the environmental and economic impact.

This Framework aims to ensure that the contribution of AHPs continues to be known, valued, and expanded to meet our future population needs and create a healthy world for our current and next generation.

Public Health and AHP Practice

AHPs work with people across the entire population from before conception through to end of life. AHPs contribute to public health through interventions affecting the physical, mental, and social wellbeing of individuals, communities, and populations. They lead and undertake evidence-based interventions which promote health and wellbeing, prevent ill-health from occurring and re-occurring, and protect against infectious diseases and health hazards as part of their everyday practice. Though AHPs work across distinct roles, they apply a common set of principles within these roles.

AHPs reflect on their practice and, in the scope of their role, identify opportunities for improvement. This includes advocating for reducing inequalities in service access, experience, and outcomes for different population groups, thus ensuring the needs of their communities are met. AHPs also use co-production methods to develop services and interventions with the population and personalise these to individuals, empowering them to have choice and control over their health. As they do this, they should be conscious of the environmental impact of their work and make decisions that are sustainable in the context of UK health and care.

More detail on how AHPs do this across the life course is outlined further in this strategic framework, but regardless of their role, AHPs work to give our population opportunities to lead healthy and well lives in communities where people feel positive, connected, purposeful and valued. These ways of working are summarised in Figure 1 adapted from the Faculty of Public Health domains below.

Figure 1 **Domains of Public Health for AHPs**



Achieving the AHP Public Health Vision

Our vision is that public health is a core part of all AHP roles and that the positive impact on public health by AHPs is recognised and valued.



Strategic Goals

Each of the 5 co-developed goals are described with agreed actions to achieve each goal. We will work collectively across the UK and within our individual nations and professions to develop implementation plans for 2025-2030.

Two of our strategic goals: addressing health inequalities and delivering sustainable healthcare, are also 'threads' that run throughout the other goals. This means that our implementation plans to achieve our goals will consider inequalities and sustainability at every stage.



1 Developing the AHP Workforce

The current and future AHP workforce will have the skills, knowledge, competence, and behaviours to promote, improve and protect the health and wellbeing of individuals, communities, and populations. AHPs will be equipped to embed public health and prevention within the culture of organisations and services they work, including workforce health and wellbeing.

This strategic goal is a continuation of goal 1 from the 2019-2024 AHP Public Health strategic framework.

Priority Actions:

- Work with AHP educators to ensure AHP learners understand the relevance of public health and reducing health inequalities to their practice and can incorporate prevention and behaviour change interventions in accordance with professional standards².
- Advocate for public health principles to be included as part of AHP career development programmes at all levels including support worker development, preceptorship, enhanced, advanced and consultant level practice.
- Promoting pre-registration placements across the wider health and care landscape to make an impact on public health
- Support AHP leaders to optimise the public health contribution of the AHP workforce.
- Support the development of career pathways in public health for AHPs and their teams.
- Encourage organisations to include public health expectations as part of the service plans, work roles and job descriptions of all AHP teams.

²HCPC standard of proficiency 15 [Standards of proficiency](#)



Addressing Health Inequalities

AHPs will ensure individuals and communities have equitable access to health and care services without discrimination and prejudice. They will co-produce services with people, including marginalised communities and vulnerable groups, and work collaboratively with individuals to empower them to have choice and control over their health and wellbeing.

The principles of equality, diversity and inclusion and reducing inequalities should underpin all other actions taken because of this Framework.

Priority Actions:

- Support increased awareness across AHPs of what social justice, health inequalities, and equality, diversity and inclusion mean in the context of their practice.
- Articulate and amplify the benefits to the health of the population of diversity within the workforce, anti-discriminatory and inclusive practice.
- Enable AHP teams to understand their population demographics and the impact of the wider determinants on health, and design services which ensure equity of access, experience, and outcomes.
- Develop and promote examples of good AHP practice to reduce health inequalities, both within services and more broadly on the wider determinants of health.





Deliver Sustainable Healthcare

AHPs will deliver services and interventions that are economically and environmentally sustainable, including minimising negative impacts on the environment and making effective use of resources to generate long-term stability for the current and next generation.

Though sustainable practice is a stand-alone goal, the principles of sustainability should underpin actions taken because of this Framework.

Priority Actions:

- Amplify the links and relevance between public health, health inequalities, climate change, planetary health, and environmental sustainability through publications, learning materials, blogs, and conferences.
- Develop a self-assessment tool for AHP teams to enable them to assess their current position in relation to sustainable healthcare and develop local action plans to increase impact.
- Collect and share examples of good practice of AHPs contributing to environmental and economic sustainability with particular focus on prevention as a vehicle to reduce demand in the healthcare system.





4 Promoting Evidence, Innovation, and Improvement

AHPs will be able to demonstrate their contribution to improved outcomes from individual to population level through delivering evidence-based practice. They will use data and intelligence from evaluation and research to guide decision-making, design new models of care and show impact.

Priority Actions:

- Work with the National Institute for Health and Care Research, the Community for Allied Health Professions Research and other national public health and research agencies to support increased focus on population level outcomes and health inequalities as part of AHP research.
- Review research priorities for AHP public health research.
- Develop a collection of evidence-based, high-impact public health interventions for AHPs.
- Work with the Royal Society for Public Health to maintain and develop the AHP public health hub.
- Champion good public health practice by AHPs through awards and conferences.
- Continue to collect and publish AHP public health case studies.





5 Leading and Influencing in Public Health

AHPs will be empowered to lead and influence across the entirety of the health and care landscape to improve health outcomes for individuals, communities, and populations through developing leadership at every stage in their career.

Priority Actions:

- Increase the visibility of AHP leadership for public health, prevention, and in tackling health inequalities.
- Develop a network of AHP public health leaders including public health consultants and registrars with an AHP background.
- Articulate the AHP role in major public health priorities, including health and wellbeing of the workforce.
- Increase connections between national public health leaders and organisations with AHP counterparts to encourage collaborative working.
- Encourage organisations that employ AHPs to work together to act on public health priorities, for example, in service redesign to incorporate prevention.
- Champion the importance of workforce wellbeing to ensure AHPs are themselves supported and to enable the skills of AHPs in workforce wellbeing to be optimised.



Next Steps

AHPs have made significant progress in relation to their engagement with the public health agenda. This has been championed and supported by all UK nations, professional bodies, educators, AHP leaders and partner organisations. We know there is more to be done to improve the health and wellbeing of the population and support the future sustainability of the health and care system. The engagement in the development of this strategic framework has demonstrated the enthusiasm of AHPs to play a part in the public health agenda.

This framework builds on the success of the last UK AHP Public Health Strategic Framework and will continue the progress in relation to developing knowledge and skills, evidence and profile of AHPs in public health. It also paves the way for more emphasis on reducing health inequalities, improving sustainability and strengthening public health leadership in public health.

We will develop nation-specific and joined up implementation plans to embed this strategic framework across nations and professions. The implementation plans will include how we will measure success in relation to each goal. We will work together in a four nations partnership alongside the AHP professional bodies and other partners.

