

# Impact Report of the 2019-2024 UK AHP Public Health Strategic Framework



# Introduction

The UK Allied Health Professions Public Health Strategic Framework 2019-2024 set out the vision for the role of Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) and their teams in public health over a five-year period, along with five key goals to realise this vision. The framework mapped out how AHP teams, their professional bodies and partner organisations could further develop the AHP role in public health, build on the evidence base and embed the principles of public health across the breadth of AHP work. This strategic framework was the first to cover the UK and all AHP professions; prior to this, England and Wales had separate AHP public health strategies.

## The strategic goals were:

**Goal 1: Education and developing the AHP workforce** - the AHP workforce will have the skills, knowledge and attributes to promote, improve and protect the health and wellbeing of individuals, communities and populations.

**Goal 2: Demonstrating impact** - AHPs will be able to demonstrate their contribution to improved population level health outcomes through robust evaluation research.

**Goal 3: Increasing the profile of the AHP public health role** - AHPs will be recognised as valuable public health experts through ongoing profile-raising of AHP contribution to public health.

**Goal 4: Strategic connections and leadership** - effective relationships will exist between AHPs and system leaders to make best use of AHPs to improve public health and reduce health inequalities.

**Goal 5: Health and wellbeing of the workforce** - the expertise of AHPs will be used to protect and improve the health and well-being of the health and care workforce.

This report describes the actions and impact across the five goals of the strategic framework.

The implementation of the Strategic Framework has progressed and strengthened the contribution of AHP teams to public health. The work has widened the evidence-base, and demonstrated how the AHP community can and is improving the health and wellbeing of communities and population groups through their contribution to:

- reducing inequalities in health outcomes;
- protecting, or preventing people from ill health; and
- strengthening the long-term sustainability and resilience of the NHS.

The AHP Public Health strategic framework covered the period of the COVID-19 pandemic. This period and its aftermath were particularly challenging times for all health and social care professionals. Work on public health, especially health improvement, has on occasion had to be downscaled to prioritise the provision of acute healthcare. In contrast the pandemic amplified the importance of public health and reducing health inequalities and therefore it was essential to maintain progress with the strategic delivery of the goals across the partnership.

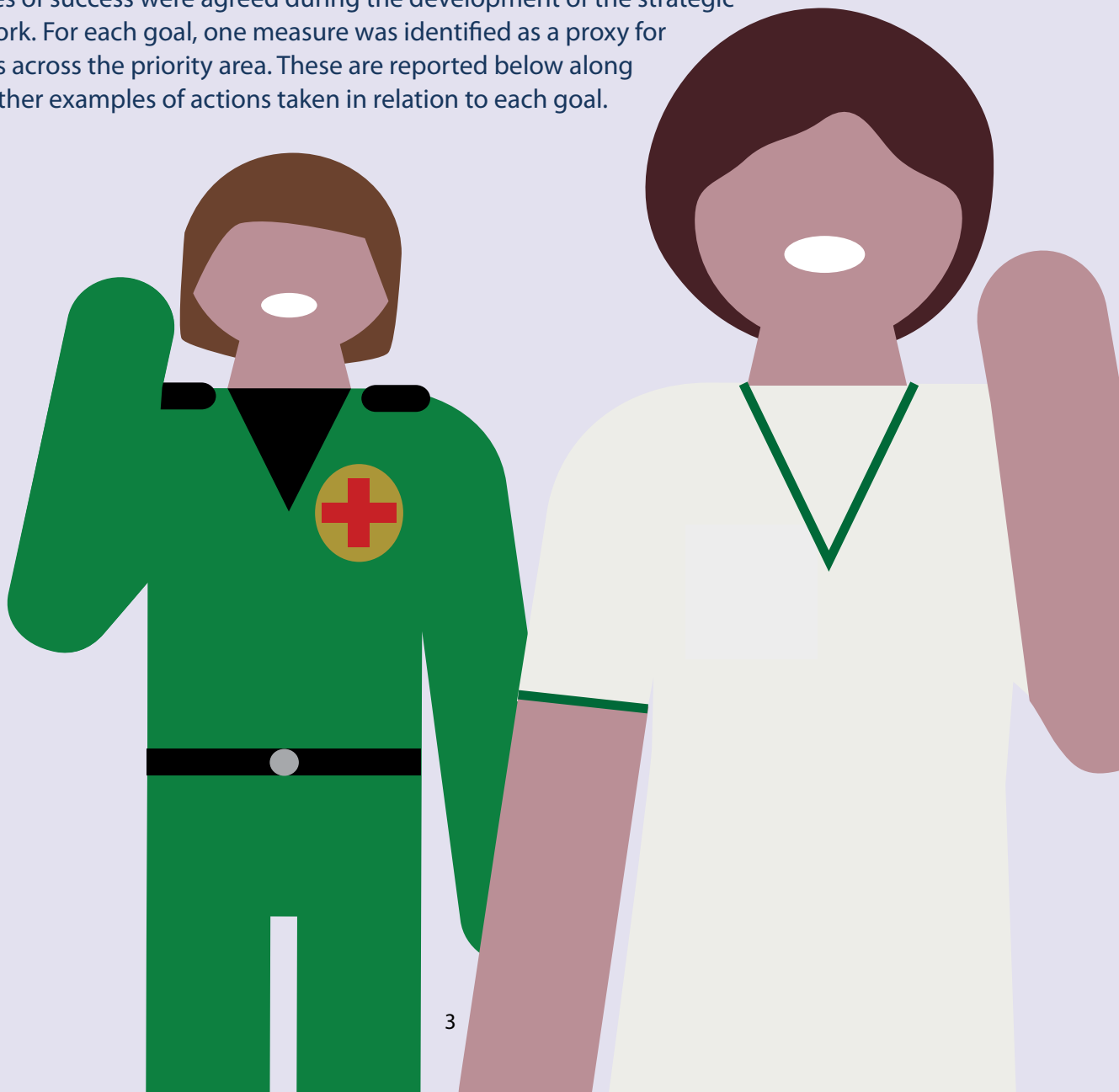
## Implementation

The implementation of the framework was collaborative in nature, driven by a UK AHP Public Health Strategy Board, a steering group of public health representatives from each of the professional bodies, representatives from stakeholders organisations (such as the Community for AHP Research) and representatives from all four UK nations. The Strategy Board has promoted partnership working, amplified and shared evidence and best practice and provided governance and accountability for the implementation of the framework. Each nation has also progressed the work through a nation specific implementation group, place-based work, and the integration of public health within specific national health system and higher education structures and curricula.

In addition to the Strategy Board, key relationships and collaborations were also forged and maintained, including with the Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH), and the World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Public Health Nursing, Midwifery and AHPs.

## Measuring success

Measures of success were agreed during the development of the strategic framework. For each goal, one measure was identified as a proxy for progress across the priority area. These are reported below along with further examples of actions taken in relation to each goal.



## Strategic Framework Goal 1:

### Education and developing the AHP workforce

This goal was focused on ensuring the AHP workforce has the skills, knowledge, and attributes to promote, improve and protect the health and wellbeing of individuals, communities and populations. It included ambitions to enable AHP workforce development at all levels including support workers and advanced practitioners.

How success was defined	How success was measured	The target	Achieve against the target
Public health is embedded in all AHP pre-registration courses including practice-based education	Survey of higher education institution (HEI) AHP course leads	100% HEIs embedding public health in pre-registration AHP training by 2025	A <a href="#">survey of AHP pre-registration courses</a> conducted by the Council of Deans of Health in 2023 has confirmed all courses include public health (79% response rate)
There are defined routes for AHPs and AHP support workers to advance their practice in public health	Number of AHPs enrolled into programmes designed to demonstrate advanced practice and leadership in public health by 2025	Minimum of 50 AHPs enrolled in programmes	<p>21 AHPs have secured population health fellowships</p> <p>12 AHPs have successfully joined or completed the FPH public health training scheme</p> <p>Over 20 AHPs have undertaken public health related clinical fellowships.</p> <p>The pandemic delayed progress with the development of an advanced clinical practice award in public health, however this has now been completed and approved by the Centre for Advancing Practice.</p>



## **What was delivered in relation to this goal:**

In 2021, the Council of Deans of Health alongside national and professional body leads updated the [guidance on public health within pre-registration education for AHPs](#) which supports higher education institutions (HEIs) and professional bodies to incorporate public health within AHP pre-registration courses and curricula.

Expanding public health placement capacity has the dual benefit of exposing AHP students to public health and health inequalities early in their training, as well as supporting the increase in the overall clinical placement capacity. We worked with the Royal Society for Public Health and Health Education England (now part of NHS England) to understand more about the [opportunities for public health placement expansion](#) and to develop a [toolkit to support the development of public health placements for AHPs](#). Work has been developed in each nation of the UK to expand public health placements.

In September 2023, the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) revised their standards of proficiency for all AHP professions to include [standards related to promoting public health and reducing ill health](#). This provides a clarity about the public health practice and continuing professional development requirements of all AHPs.

One of the commitments of the strategic framework was to ensure AHPs have opportunities to develop the skills required for advanced public health roles; in response to this a public health advanced practice credential has been developed with the support of the Faculty of Public Health. The credential has been endorsed by the Centre for Advancing Healthcare and is available [here](#). Plans are underway to commission this as a continuous professional development opportunity for current advanced clinical practitioners and develop and pilot this as a new ACP module. In addition, universities such as the University of Salford are starting to offer MSc modules in public health specifically for AHPs.

A [guide to embedding public health in practice for AHP support workers](#) was published in 2022 to support educators and AHP professional leads to develop the public health role of AHP support workers, this includes examples of roles and how to frame public health expectations in job descriptions.

Prevention, protection and public health are integral to sustainable healthcare: by preventing illness, or reducing exacerbation of illness, we will decrease the need for intensive healthcare interventions, and in doing so reduce the environmental impact of health and social care. AHPs are part of the movement to sustainable healthcare and in 2023 we worked with the Council of Deans of Health, UK nations and professional bodies to develop [curricula guidance for sustainable healthcare for AHPs](#).

Several reports, research, case studies and other publications discussed later in this document are also relevant to the development of public health capability for AHPs.

### Professional Body specific examples:

- Several professional bodies have Public Health Specialist Interest Groups or networks, including the College of Paramedics, the British Dietetic Association, The Royal College of Podiatry and The Society of Radiographers.
- The British and Irish Orthoptic Society have a dedicated public health role for the organisation and the Society of Radiographers employ radiation protection officers.
- Professions and nations have their own public health workforce development tools, such as the College of Paramedics, who have launched a Public Health Essentials for Paramedics textbook and have an e-learning programme (Introduction to public health for paramedics); the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists who have developed their own health inequalities resources, including an audit tool for their profession and the Wales e-learning module 'Health Inequalities and me as an AHP' for pre-registration AHP students.
- Several professional bodies have reviewed their curricula to increase inclusion of public health and health inequalities.
- Some professional bodies such as the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy have included health inequalities as a strategic objective and developed guidance for members.



## Strategic Framework Goal 2:

### Demonstrating impact

This goal sought to expand the evidence base for the public health impact of AHPs.

How success was defined	How success was measured	The target	Achieve against the target
Demonstrable impact of the role of AHPs on public health outcomes through a growing evidence base	Publication of research	Minimum of 3 published reviews outlining the impact of AHPs on public health priorities by 2025	Four evidence reviews and one study were commissioned and completed (see details below)

#### What was delivered in relation to this goal:

We have further developed and shared the evidence base for the AHP contribution to, and impact on, public health and health inequalities through four commissioned evidence reviews, one study, one Churchill Fellowship Report and other academic collaborations.

- A modified e-Delphi study was conducted to explore [AHP public health research priorities in the UK](#). This was used to inform the commissioning of evidence reviews and influence the AHP research community.
- A rapid review of the [impact of allied health professionals on health inequalities](#)
- [The impact of Allied Health Professionals on the primary and secondary prevention of obesity in young children: A scoping review - Griffiths - 2023 - Clinical Obesity - Wiley Online Library](#)
- [Public mental health and wellbeing interventions delivered by allied health professionals \(AHPs\): mapping the evidence and identification of gaps. A systematic review | Emerald Insight](#)
- [Embedding public health practice amongst Allied Health Professionals: A rapid scoping review of international approaches](#)
- [Exploring the potential of AHPs in reducing health inequalities](#) – Churchill Fellowship Report

A strategic objective was to increase recognition of public health by AHP researchers; therefore, we supported the development of the [Allied Health Professions' Research and Innovation Strategy for England](#) and the [Allied Health Professional education and workforce policy review in Scotland](#) and advocated for further public health research within the AHP research community.

The impact of AHPs has also been recognised in publications such as [NHS England » A community rehabilitation and reablement model, Rehabilitation and recovery: a person-centred approach - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#), the [All Wales rehabilitation framework: Principles to achieve a person-centred value based approach](#), the [AHP Dementia Framework for Wales](#) and [Evaluation of the Wales Nutrition Skills for Life programme](#) (pending publication).

#### Profession specific examples:

- The Institute of Osteopathy funded a [research programme on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion](#) issues, and their effect on workforce health at the pre-registration level.
- The Society of Radiographers has undertaken work to identify [profession specific research priorities](#) including in relation to public health.

## Strategic Framework Goal 3:

### Increasing the profile of the AHP public health role

This goal focused on AHPs being recognised as valuable public health experts through ongoing profile-raising of the AHP contribution to public health.

Goal	How success was measured	The target	Achieve against the target
AHPs can demonstrate their added value to public health	Number of published case studies on the RSPH AHP Hub	Minimum of 100 case studies published by 2025	We have curated and promoted evidence-based case studies of AHP initiatives that contribute to public health and address health inequalities. There are currently 87 published on the <a href="#">RSPH web site</a> or due for publication plus 8 published by <a href="#">AHPs Scotland</a> , and 10 relating to <a href="#">public health placements</a> published by NHS England as well as further case studies published by the professional bodies and <a href="#">Advancing Healthcare Awards</a>

#### What was delivered in relation to this goal:

@AHPs4PH is a social media community of practice established to promote collaboration between AHPs with an interest in public health. The AHPs4PH team have maintained a social media presence on X and delivered an 'AHPs4PH' podcast series on the role of AHPs in public health.

In collaboration with the Royal Society for Public Health and AHP professional bodies we have developed [profession specific descriptors of public health for each AHP profession](#).

All AHP professional bodies have included a focus on public health and health inequalities within their annual conferences and publications.

We have published blogs and articles, hosted webinars and supported national awards for AHPs who have demonstrated outstanding contributions to public health. Examples include the [Scottish AHP blog site](#) and the [RSPH AHP hub](#).

We have presented our collaborative approach at international conferences such as the International Conference of Integrated Care (Belfast 2024) and the Singapore AHP conference.



### Profession specific examples:

- The British Dietetic Association and the Royal College of Podiatry have published public facing fact sheets on public health issues such as foot health, childhood nutrition, sustainable diets and healthy weight.
- The British Dietetic Association coordinates the successful 'lets get cooking' programme, a network of school and community-based clubs developed to help children and their families gain the skills and knowledge to cook healthy meals from scratch.
- The benefits of Music Therapy for people with dementia (PWD) and their families has helped make Music Therapy an integral part of dementia care, creating positive impact for PWD by improving their neuropsychiatric symptoms.
- The Society of Radiographers supports public health messaging around attending national cancer screening appointments.
- The Royal College of Occupational Therapists ran a campaign for the public Lift Up Your Everyday to support anyone who would like to overcome new or existing challenges and ultimately continue to do the things they love and need to do on a day-to-day basis.
- Occupational therapists in forensic mental health in Scotland developed guidance to support those with a criminal conviction to return to work, education or volunteering roles.
- The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists have developed anti-racism resources and training as part of a wider programme of work around equality, diversity and inclusion and reaffirmed their commitment to work towards the normalisation of anti-racism in the Speech and Language Therapist profession.



## Strategic Framework Goal 4:

### Strategic connections and leadership

This goal aimed to support effective relationships between AHPs and system leaders to make best use of AHPs to improve public health and reduce health inequalities.

How success was defined	How success was measured	The target	Achieve against the target
Evidence that AHPs are strategically engaged in shaping the public health agenda locally and nationally	High impact publications (such as national frameworks, guidance or vanguard sites/systems demonstrating best practice)	Minimum of 20 high impact examples by 2025	There are over 25 high impact examples of AHPs leading or contributing to public health priorities at a national level. These are briefly outlined below.

#### What was delivered in relation to this goal:

Since 2019, AHP groups have collaborated on, led and supported the development of multiple high-impact national publications, policies and frameworks.

In collaboration with The King's Fund, '[My role in tackling health inequalities: a framework for allied health professionals](#)' was published in 2021. This has become a seminal document for framing health inequalities in AHP practice.

The [Early Years Health Inequalities Toolkit for AHPs](#) aims to help AHPs who work with children and their families to identify and maximise ways to improve health and tackle health inequalities as individuals and teams.

A report outlining how the work of [AHPs supports with the CORE20Plus5](#) national NHS England approach to reducing healthcare inequalities.

Addressing Health Inequalities across Allied Health Professional (AHP) Services: [A guide for AHP system leaders](#) This guide which was developed with AHP leaders, focuses on what AHP leaders need to know and what actions they can take at a system level to address health inequalities. It emphasises using a population health approach and leading change at scale, focusing on the breadth of AHP services rather than individual services or professional groups.

The College of Paramedics has worked closely with the Association of Ambulance Chief Executives and others to develop a [consensus of the role of ambulance services in reducing health inequalities](#). An implementation toolkit has been developed to support this.

Publication of [Easing the Pain](#) health inequalities in rehabilitation report by the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy. The report outlines how people in marginalised groups and communities, such as those from ethnic minorities, are not only more likely to live shorter lives but spend a greater proportion of their lives struggling with health difficulties and disabilities.

The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapy and Public Health England (PHE) [Best start in speech, language and communication \(SLC\) Guidance \(2020\)](#) to help improve speech, language and communication in the early years.

Welsh Government's Talk With Me: Speech, Language and Communication Delivery Plan was developed with AHP leadership. This also led to the development of an All Wales speech, language and communication pathway for childcare providers; a review of early language screening for children under 5 years to inform the development of an early language screening tool and publication of a report reviewing evidence for screening as a means of reliably identifying children who are likely to have persistent language needs.

Speech and Language Therapists in the Public Health Agency in Northern Ireland have led a regional 'Swallow Aware' project which won a prestigious Advancing Healthcare Award in Public Health 2021.

The Scottish Government commissioned Public Health Scotland to review available data on children's speech, language and communication development and to examine the potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings were published in a series of three related reports. Following this a team of speech and language therapists were appointed to provide strategic oversight, national leadership and operational support as part of the National Early Language and Communication (NELC) Project.

Music therapists and speech and language therapists won the overall Advancing Healthcare Award category in 2023 for their collaborative work in Northern Ireland using music to improve parent child connections, mental wellbeing of parents and early years language development.

A national service specification for the child vision screening programme (2019) was developed with the British and Irish Orthoptic Society (BIOS).

Educational psychologists in Wales developed a model to take a population approach to supporting pre-school children and their families to access early advice and support to facilitate development, learning and wellbeing.

National guidance on breast screening for mammographers (2020), developed by Public Health England with The Society of Radiographers.

Moving Healthcare Professionals is a national programme led by the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) and Sport England and is endorsed by the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, with many physiotherapists being physical activity clinical champions.

Dietitians play a key role in collaboration with Public Health Wales and Primary Care to deliver the All Wales Diabetes Prevention Programme, incorporating the Wales Nutrition Skills for Life TM programme.

AHPs attended round table discussions to support the development of the Chief Medical Officer annual report 2023 – Health in an Ageing Society (England).

Public Health England Guidance for Healthier weight conversations: support for professionals (2019) was developed with input from the British Dietetic Association (BDA).

AHPs in Wales have contributed to the Healthy Weight Healthy Wales Obesity Strategy and implementation resources, e.g. MECC Level 1 & 2 Having Healthy Weight Conversations.

The Scottish Government, NHS Health Scotland and the BDA developed - Standards for the delivery of tier 2 and tier 3 weight management services for children and young people (2019).

Various AHP professional bodies form part of The National Falls Prevention Coordination Group which is made up of 40 organisations involved in the prevention of falls and care of fall-related injuries in England. It published the [Falls and Fractures Consensus Statement](#), an evidence briefing on [Multifactorial falls-prevention interventions](#) and a [progress report](#).

Many of the AHP professions are part of the [Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Alliance](#) which has produced work on health inequalities in relation to musculoskeletal health.

The Society of Radiographers contributed to the [All-Party Parliamentary Group on Osteoporosis](#) (APPG) attending meetings, providing evidence and delivering briefings to the APPG, which influenced a government response offering additional support for bone density scanning services.

The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, Sport England and the Centre for Ageing Better have co-developed [Stronger My Way](#), a campaign to encourage people with a health condition to develop strength.

In England, AHPs have developed the [Greener AHP programme](#) which supports the NHS net zero ambition. The Greener AHP programme makes explicit the [connection between protecting the health of the population, reducing health inequalities and planetary health](#). In Wales, AHPs have developed [The AHP Green Guide](#), a practical tool developed to help all AHPs start to think about how they can embed sustainable practice into their daily work.

The College of Operating Department Practitioners are working closely with the NHS to [support Net-Zero Carbon Emissions in Healthcare](#) particularly supporting Greener Theatres (2021).

The Royal College of Podiatry has developed guidance on 'Increasing opportunistic detection of [atrial fibrillation](#) by the podiatric workforce to prevent avoidable strokes. The College produced [Improving Diabetic Foot Care: A Guide for Commissioners](#), to enable early detection and prevention of foot ulceration.

The [Enhanced Healthcare in Care Homes framework](#) (2019) highlights the importance of AHPs in preventing falls, malnutrition, dehydration and choking.

The Royal College of Occupational Therapists published a workforce strategy positioning more occupational therapists into community and primary care services to deliver public health interventions and to address population health needs [Workforce Strategy - RCOT](#). Each country is now developing an action plan to realise this approach. Wales has already published [Occupational therapy workforce strategy action plan – Cymru-Wales - RCOT](#).

AHPs worked closely with the Royal Society for Public Health to support their work on the [wider public health workforce](#) including maintaining the [AHP public health hub](#).

The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy and the Royal College of Occupational Therapists have worked with the Department of Work and Pensions and the Department of Health and Social Care to support the work and health agenda including the use of fit notes and the [work as a health outcome champions programme](#).

AHPs were part of the World Health Organization Collaborating Centre (WHOCC) for Public Health Nursing, Midwifery and AHPs between 2019 and 2024. This collaboration involved developing and promoting internationally relevant AHP facing public health resources, sharing case studies and providing technical advice to other countries when requested by the WHO.

## Strategic Framework Goal 5:

### Health and wellbeing of the workforce

How success was defined	How success was measured	The target	Achieve against the target
Demonstration of AHPs skills and expertise for improving the health and wellbeing of the workforce	Publication	Publication	Development and publication of AHP Framework for workplace and workforce health

#### What was delivered in relation to this goal:

AHP public health leaders and the RSPH collaborated to develop a framework for allied health professionals in relation to workplace and workforce health both within and outside of the health sector.

There is also demonstration of AHP involvement and influence in country level work, health programmes and policy including input into Welsh Government's plan for employability and skills and the Wales Work and Health AHP Subgroup.

In 2022 occupational therapists and physiotherapists were given the authority to certify fit notes. This has supported the AHP's to use their professional skills to undertake work conversations within primary and secondary care and to use the 'may be fit for work' option on the fit note to develop person-centred approaches to aid a return to work.

The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists have led a UK-wide communication access initiative to support the health and wellbeing of the workforce. This includes training for employers and has had over 20,000 sign-ups.

The British Dietetic Association developed a 'Work Ready' programme, which helps keep the workforce healthy and well at work (Workplace Health Work Ready (bda.uk.com)).

OHID and the College of Paramedics have worked with NHS England and the Association of Ambulance Chief Executives to develop and implement a suicide prevention consensus and toolkit for the ambulance sector. This included a mental health continuum to support staff to monitor their mental wellbeing and know when to seek or offer help and mental health and wellbeing resources for pre-registration and newly qualified paramedics.

In Scotland, national funding of over £2.5m has been committed to support the wellbeing of health and care staff in 2024/25. This funding covers confidential mental health care and treatment for registered staff through the Workforce Specialist Service as well as psychological therapies and interventions for all staff. The National Wellbeing Helpline which provides 24/7 compassionate listening service and the National Wellbeing Hub which offers a range of self-service resources for staff also continue to be available for 2024/25

#### Profession specific examples:

- The Society and College of Radiographers developed the Radiate Wellbeing Programme to support the health and wellbeing of the radiography workforce.
- Most professional bodies have developed dedicated health and wellbeing resources for their members. The College of Paramedics (CoP) developed a specific mental health programme and a dedicated webpage for both CoP members and non-members.

## Additional benefits

The UK AHP Public Health Strategic Framework is a unique public health strategy in its reach and scope; collaboration across the four nations and all AHP professional bodies has enabled the AHP community to agree overarching priorities for public health, share knowledge, provide peer support and galvanise action on prevention, health inequalities, health improvement and other facets of public health. The strategy has also provided a 'north star' for each of the nations to work to, and measure success against. The work of the strategy, including case study identification and promotion, has also enabled wider recognition of smaller professional groups.

## Conclusion

The overarching aims of the strategic framework have been met and this is testament to the ongoing collaboration between the organisations involved. We have endeavoured to make the most of our resources by doing things once on behalf of all wherever possible.

The current strategic framework has supported the drive to focus on public health and this was demonstrated by the professional bodies and their national initiatives with a public health focus. The work overall has increased resources and access to resources which support AHPs to incorporate public health and optimise their current contribution to it.

There is a need to continue the momentum and review the priorities and direction of travel for AHPs in this field. The 2025 UK AHP Public Health Strategic Framework will provide the vision and commitment to continue to develop the capacity, capability and profile of AHPs in public health.

### Corresponding author

**Linda Hindle** [linda.hindle@dhsc.gov.uk](mailto:linda.hindle@dhsc.gov.uk)

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