

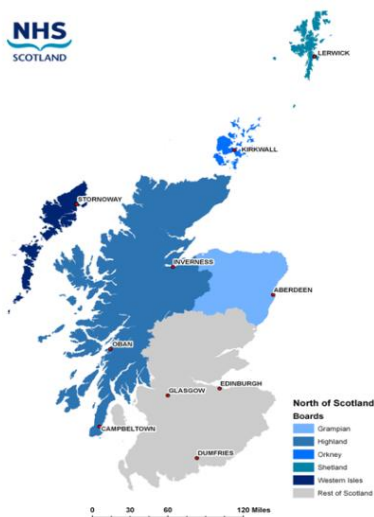
Training and working in Public Health within the North of Scotland

Public Health

Whereas clinical medicine involves the health of individual patients, public health is often described as being concerned with the ‘bigger picture’. This involves a collective approach to population health which has a strong emphasis on the socio-economic and wider determinants of health such as housing, education and employment.

If a career in public health sounds like it could be for you then you may be interested in having a look at a [leaflet](#) on public health training produced by registrars in Scotland.

North of Scotland



The North of Scotland Public Health Network (NoSPHN) is a collaboration between NHS Grampian, NHS Highland, NHS Orkney, NHS Shetland and NHS Western Isles. The area covered by the NoS boards covers approximately 40,000 km², almost 50% of Scotland’s total land surface, and a population of just under 900,000. It includes a diverse range of areas from the city of Aberdeen to small island communities and offers some of the most breathtaking scenery and opportunities to enjoy the great outdoors. In addition to key national public health priorities, the North of Scotland faces particular challenges arising from the geography of the region.

“We would be delighted to hear from you if you are up for the challenges and opportunities that working in the North of Scotland brings.”

Pip Farman, North of Scotland Public Health Network Coordinator

What is it like to train and work within the North of Scotland?

Professional networks and opportunities for professional development

Teams working within Public Health Departments in the North of Scotland are comparatively small and therefore tend to provide close-knit and supportive working environments. The same can be said for partner organisations and agencies which tend to foster closer partnership working. In addition to providing a supportive working environment, working within a smaller board affords many opportunities for registrar involvement which enables breadth and depth of experience and a high degree of professional responsibility and autonomy. Examples highlighted by current registrars include working directly with senior board members, chairing meetings and liaising with the media.

Awareness of remote and rural issues

Working in the north of Scotland provides opportunities to gain insight into the issues involved in promoting and protecting health within remote and rural communities, the challenges surrounding the provision of equitable access to healthcare and the development of transferable skills.

Working in the region

Local geography dictates that the distances involved in travelling to meetings or training events may be considerable. There are a growing range of options for overcoming this challenge. Video and teleconferencing facilities are well established and more recent technology, and web based solutions such as WebEx, is increasingly used by the NoS boards.



The distances involved mean that attachments in the North of Scotland require short-term relocation and the associated cost and personal logistics have been identified as barriers to undertaking attachments here. Various options are possible for addressing this including providing a package for prospective registrars on placement, timing placements to coincide with school holidays or offering the opportunity to work on NoS issues whilst based remotely.

Academic links

The University of Aberdeen runs a Public Health Research MSc course and has close links with NHS Grampian Public Health Department. A number of the Consultants in Public Health also hold shared posts between the NHS and the university and registrars are encouraged to undertake academic attachments.

In comparison to our central belt counterparts, the links with academic institutions may not be perceived to be as strong within the North of Scotland as a whole. There are a number of other academic institutions based in the NoS with whom we are aiming to strengthen our links and we would welcome discussion regarding the development of these networks.

Peer support and networks

Working within a smaller board brings many advantages although it can mean that some registrars may potentially feel more isolated. The close-knit nature of the registrar group within Scotland, in addition to the introduction of registrar ‘buddies’ for new registrars, aims to ensure colleagues are supported throughout their training.



Fantastic quality of life

It goes without saying that if you enjoy the outdoors it's a great place to be! There are also many opportunities to get involved in local music, craft, language and cultural activities across the region.

Opportunities for working in the North of Scotland

Public Health training positions

There are currently six training numbers across the North of Scotland; these are held by NHS Grampian, NHS Highland and NHS Shetland. The next available position is likely to be with NHS

Highland in August 2016. Both NHS Grampian and NHS Highland have recently provided Locum Appointment for Training (LAT) positions which are temporary training appointments of variable length. Undertaking a LAT post not only provides valuable public health experience but the experience can also usefully inform future application choices.

“I really enjoy working in the North of Scotland both from a personal and professional perspective. In the public health department in Grampian we are involved with both urban and rural communities. Factors such as the oil, fishing and farming industries, Aberdeen harbour and international airport provide a unique combination of public health issues. There are usually cases and issues to deal with when on call for health protection but not overwhelmingly so, so there is time to think through problems. Support is readily available from senior colleagues while at the same time trainees are given freedom to deal with problems, if they feel comfortable to do so. At a personal level, my family and I are fortunate to live close to the sea and to the countryside, with plenty of opportunities for hill walking. The greatest disadvantage is being that little bit further away from Edinburgh and Glasgow which means national meetings are less accessible. Nonetheless, in the three years I have been in Grampian, I have seen great improvements and increased usage of videoconferencing facilities.”

Emily Stevenson, Public Health Specialty Registrar, NHS Grampian

Training attachment or placement

In addition to specific training positions there are a variety of opportunities for short-term attachments or placements with North of Scotland boards. Placements can be adapted to suit the interests and training needs of registrars but are likely to be between three and six months in length. However, more flexible options such as short residential placements to fit with school holidays combined with protected time at your base of origin (rather than on placement) in order to enable you to complete pieces of work.

Further information

For further information on training and working within the North of Scotland please visit the [NES website](#) or contact:

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Useful web links

[NoSPHN](#) [NHS Grampian](#) [NHS Orkney](#) [NHS Highland](#) [NHS Shetland](#) [NHS Western Isles](#)

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