



Foundation Programme in Public Health

Annual Report 2025



BARNSTABLE
Metropolitan Borough Council

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Executive Summary

2025 has been a year of consolidation, learning and steady progress for the Foundation Programme in Public Health. The programme continues to play a valuable role in building prevention capability across the wider workforce, supporting learners to develop practical public health knowledge, confidence and skills that are applied directly in day-to-day practice.

While overall registrations in 2025 were lower than in 2024, this did not translate into reduced engagement or delivery. In fact, the programme achieved a 13% increase in total attendances and learning hours compared to the previous year. This reflects strong commitment from learners, high booking and attendance rates across both levels, and increased progression from Level 1 into Level 2. The data suggests a shift towards fewer, more engaged learners rather than reduced demand.

A full programme evaluation undertaken in 2025 provides strong assurance of quality and impact. Learners consistently described the programme as accessible, relevant and engaging, with clear evidence that learning is being translated into practice. Participants reported increased confidence in using public health knowledge, applying systems thinking, and addressing inequalities within a wide range of roles and settings. The programme was also identified as a springboard for progression, with many learners inspired to pursue further development, learning or roles in public health.

Quality assurance remains embedded throughout delivery. The programme was re-accredited by the Royal Society for Public Health in February 2025, confirming continued alignment with national standards. Ongoing session-level evaluation and learning from the full programme evaluation have informed continuous improvement throughout the year.

Alongside core delivery, the programme extended its reach through additional learning offers, national webinars and strengthened partnership working across the system. Income generation activity outside the region, while modest in scale, demonstrated demand for the offer and provided valuable learning to inform future sustainability discussions.

Overall, the Foundation Programme enters its next phase from a position of strong delivery, clear evidence of impact and continued relevance to national prevention and population health priorities.



About the Foundation Programme

The Foundation Programme in Public Health is designed to provide foundation level skills and knowledge to the wider public health workforce. Funded through NHS England it is hosted by Barnsley Council and works in partnership with the School of Public Health for Yorkshire and the Humber, the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, the University of Leeds and other stakeholders across the region.

Initially developed in response to the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan, the Foundation Programme supports the ambitions of the new 10 Year Health Plan by building prevention capability across the wider workforce. By equipping colleagues with a shared understanding of population health, health inequalities, systems thinking and prevention-focused approaches, the programme enables everyday practice to shift upstream. This supports sustained change, supporting a move away from reactive treatment towards prevention, early intervention and action on the wider determinants of health.

Delivered entirely online the programme is free of charge for learners who work in the Yorkshire and the Humber and North East and North Cumbria regions. It is made up of 2 levels with Level 1 covering the fundamentals of public health and level 2 is for learners who want to take their learning further.

The programme has been running since January 2023 and this report provides a narrative of progress in 2025.



2025 Key Achievements

Programme Evaluation

An in depth evaluation of the programme was carried out by Barnsley Council research staff in 2025. It demonstrates that the Foundation Programme continues to be a highly effective and well received offer for the wider public health workforce. Using a robust mixed-methods approach including session evaluations, an online survey and focus group discussions, the evaluation shows consistently high levels of learner satisfaction. The programme was consistently described as engaging, accessible and relevant, with facilitation, content quality and administration all rated extremely positively.

Crucially, the evaluation shows that the learning on the programme is translating into practice. Around two-thirds of respondents reported regularly applying what they have learned in their current role, and most reported feeling confident using public health knowledge in real-world contexts. Learners reported applying systems thinking, equity focused approaches and practical public health tools to strategy development, service redesign, community projects and workforce development. The programme also acts as a clear springboard for progression, with 83% of respondents inspired to pursue further public health learning, initiatives or roles.

Taken together, the findings confirm the programme's value in building capability across the wider workforce and strengthening capacity for prevention and early intervention, while also highlighting opportunities to further extend its impact. The full evaluation report can be accessed below.



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Income generation

Over the course of 2025, a deliberate focus was placed on income generation from outside the North East and Yorkshire region to support the sustainability of the Foundation Programme. From June to December, an additional trainer was commissioned to release the manager's capacity from delivery and create protected time to explore and develop income opportunities. This shift enabled a more strategic approach to business development, allowing the programme to move beyond reactive promotion and instead focus on building relationships, articulating the value of the programme, and testing different routes to market across the health and care system. As part of this work, dedicated branding for the programme was commissioned and developed to further professionalise the offer and support clearer positioning with external audiences.

Marketing activity during this period centred on raising the profile and credibility of the programme rather than direct sales alone. This included a presence on LinkedIn, delivery of open webinars to showcase the programme offer, and the publication of articles via the NHS Hub. These activities helped to reach a wider audience, particularly beyond the programme's traditional footprint, and supported conversations with new organisations. This approach resulted in a total income of £21,080 during the year, with places commissioned across both Level 1 and Level 2. While modest in scale, this income demonstrates demand for the



programme and provides clear learning about where future growth efforts are most effective. The programme attracted paying customers from local authorities, the NHS and the VCSE.

Additional learning delivery

The following training sessions were developed and delivered in 2025:

Taster Session: Introduction to Health Inequalities

The taster session offered a clear and accessible introduction to health inequalities for 66 participants from across England, spanning the NHS, local government, VCSE and academia. The one-hour format supported a shared understanding of the causes and impacts of inequality and supported participants to recognise their role in addressing it. The session increased confidence to engage in public health conversations and acted as an effective gateway into further Foundation Programme learning.

What Makes Us Healthy Webinar (OHID)

Delivered on behalf of the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, this webinar reached 158 NHS health and wellbeing champions from across England. The session strengthened understanding of the wider determinants of health and supported a shift towards prevention-focused, population health thinking. Participants reported greater confidence to apply these principles within workplace wellbeing and local initiatives, demonstrating national reach and impact in practice.

Population Health Module – Enhance Programme

The Foundation Programme supported the population health module for colleagues in Bradford and Craven through a half-day, face-to-face development session delivered locally and co-facilitated by a public health registrar. This tailored session drew on core public health principles embedded in the Foundation Programme to strengthen participants' population health understanding and practice. It provided a practical development opportunity for the registrar, enhancing their skills in both training and delivery while embedding public health learning within a local system context.

Partnership Working

Our commitment to partnership working has been instrumental in the continued success of the Foundation Programme. This year we have collaborated with key stakeholders including:

- *Workforce Development Roadshows* – Foundation Programme staff worked with colleagues from across the School of Public Health, OHID and the University of Leeds to design and deliver a workforce development roadshow which aims to increase knowledge of learning opportunities and promote the Foundation Programme, and to develop relationships between the school and local authority public health teams.
- *University of Leeds* – collaboration to ensure that Foundation Programme learners are aware of additional workforce development opportunities through the UKPHR Practitioner Programme and Core Programme – the impact of this work can be seen in the fact that over 50% of the UKPHR Practitioner Programme 2025 intake had previously undertaken the Foundation Programme
- *Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH)* - RSPH re-accredited the Foundation Programme in February 2025



- *ICBs (West Yorkshire, North Yorkshire and Humber)* - Foundation Programme is delivered as the knowledge component of Health Equity/Improving Population Health Fellowship Programmes
- *Leeds/Bradford Paediatrics* – Foundation Programme is provided as Public Health training for Year 2 and Year 6 Paediatrics Registrars



2025 Data

Data was collected throughout the year on learner demographics, their attendance and their evaluation of the programme.

2025 Registrations

Total registrations 2025	636
Total registrations 2024	775
Total registrations 2023	615

A total of 636 new learners registered with the programme in 2025 an 18% decrease on 2024. Registrations for 2025 break down as follows:

Standard registration process (North East and Yorkshire region learners)	512
Fellowship registrations (ICB Health Equity fellowship learners)	59
Income generation registrations (Paid for places from outside NEY region)	65
Total	636

2025 Bookings and Delivery

Once a learner is registered on the programme they can access POD - the Barnsley Council learner management system - to manage their own bookings. They can book and cancel sessions to suit their own commitments.

In 2025 73% of level 1 learners went on to attend one or more Level 2 sessions.

Level 1 Bookings and Delivery

Number of sessions delivered	60
Total number of places available (40 places per session)	2400
Total number of places booked	2036
Level 1 booking rate	85%
Total number of attendances	1920
Level 1 attendance rate	94%

Level 2 Bookings and Delivery

Number of sessions delivered	55
Total number of places available (25 places per session)	1375
Total number of places booked	1289
Level 2 booking rate	94%
Total number of attendances	1179
Level 2 attendance rate	91%



Despite lower registrations in 2025, overall attendance increased compared to 2024 – 13% increase. This indicates stronger learner commitment and higher engagement among those registering:

Total places attended 2025 (Levels 1 & 2)	3099
Total places attended 2024 (Levels 1 & 2)	2753

Learning hours

Each session is 3 hours in length. In 2025 the programme delivered a total of 9297 learning hours (Level 1 – 5760 and Level 2 – 3537), a 13% increase on 2024.

Completions

2025 saw an increase in completions on level 2. Coupled with the increased attendance rates, this pattern suggests a shift towards fewer but more engaged learners with higher completion, attendance and progression rates.

	2025	2024
Number of learners completing all level 1 sessions	467	469
Number of learners completing all level 2 sessions	277	204

Knowledge increase and impact

A development in 2025 was the request for learners to self-report their knowledge of public health on a scale of 1 to 10 before beginning the programme and on completion.

Knowledge before the programme	4.5/10
Knowledge after the programme	8.1/10

This represents a 3.6 point increase on a 10 point scale, equivalent to an 80% increase from the baseline.

On completion of each level learners are asked how they anticipate they will use the knowledge and skills gained on the programme.

Across both levels of the Foundation Programme, participants reported a substantial strengthening of their public health knowledge, confidence and practical capability. They described gaining a clearer understanding of core public health principles, developing the skills to use data and evidence more effectively, and feeling better equipped to recognise inequalities, ask the right questions and apply prevention focused approaches in their day to day work.

Learners noted that the programme helped them think more systemically, collaborate more effectively, and bring a public health perspective into service design, community work and organisational decision making. The tools and models covered, such as systems thinking, behavioural insights and structured intervention design, were seen as immediately applicable and beneficial for improving outcomes and shaping more equitable practice.



Many participants also reported being inspired to continue their professional development through further study, fellowships or new responsibilities, positioning the programme as a strong foundation for ongoing growth and impact within the wider system

2025 Demographics

Geographical spread

Comparison of learner location data between 2024 and 2025 shows a redistribution of participation across regions. In the absence of any targeted engagement activity, the increased representation from West and South Yorkshire appears to reflect organic demand and local workforce dynamics rather than programme led intervention. At the same time, representation from Humber and North Yorkshire and North East and North Cumbria has reduced proportionally, suggesting that growth has been stronger in other areas rather than indicating disengagement.

ICB Region	2025	2024
Humber and North Yorkshire	16% (97)	25% (194)
North East and North Cumbria	17% (108)	24% (186)
South Yorkshire	23% (146)	17% (132)
West Yorkshire	35% (220)	24% (186)
Other	9% (55*)	10% (77)

*10 income generation customers registered in 2024 so their demographic data is not included in the 2025 data

Place based data showed that:

- The majority of learners from Humber and North Yorkshire came from Hull, Grimsby, Scunthorpe and York.
- The majority of learners from North East and North Cumbria came from Newcastle, Middlesbrough, Sunderland and Northumberland.
- The majority of learners from South Yorkshire came from Rotherham, Sheffield, Doncaster and Barnsley.
- The majority of learners from West Yorkshire came from Leeds, Wakefield and Bradford.

Those learners accessing paid for places were widely distributed across England including:

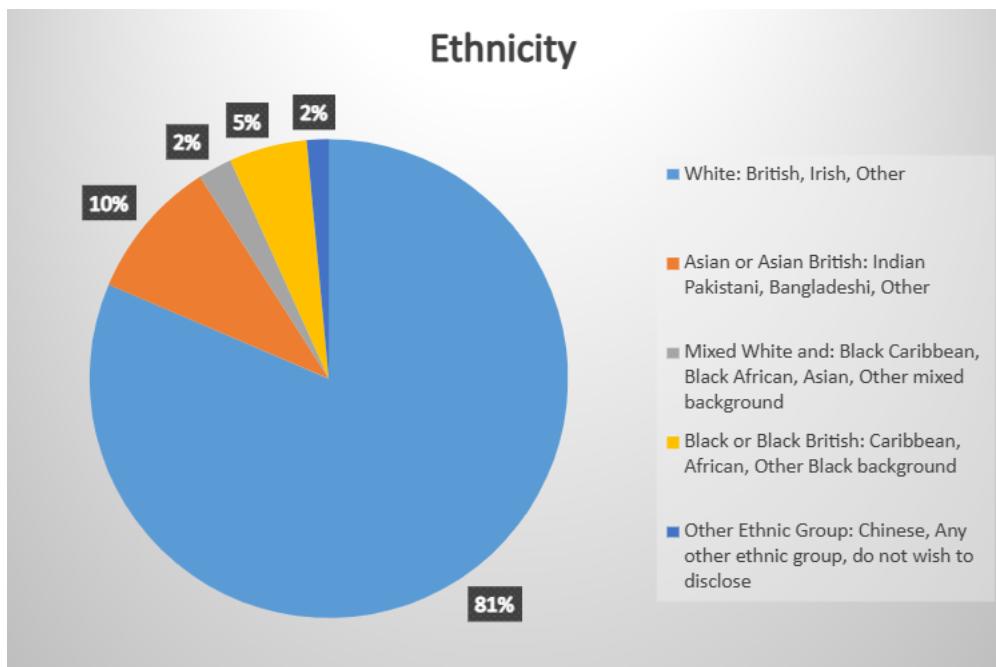
- East of England
- Midlands
- London
- Greater Manchester
- Portsmouth



Equality, diversity and inclusion

Ethnicity

Attendees on the programme represent the ethnically diverse population of the regions served. (Yorkshire and the Humber has a population of 84% white and North East and North Cumbria 94% white). Ethnicity shows no significant change to the 2024 breakdown.



Gender

Gender breakdown of participants on the programme:

	2025	2024
Female	81.6%	86.0%
Male	17.7%	13.4%
Non-binary	0.5%	0.2%
Prefer not to say	0.2%	0.2%
Prefer not to self-describe	0%	0.1%

The gender profile of participants remains stable across 2024 and 2025 and reflects the wider health and care workforce. Female participation decreased slightly, while male participation increased, though overall uptake by males remains much lower. Representation from non-binary participants and those preferring not to disclose remains very small and consistent across both years. Overall, the data is indicative of workforce demographics rather than programme-specific access issues.

Disability

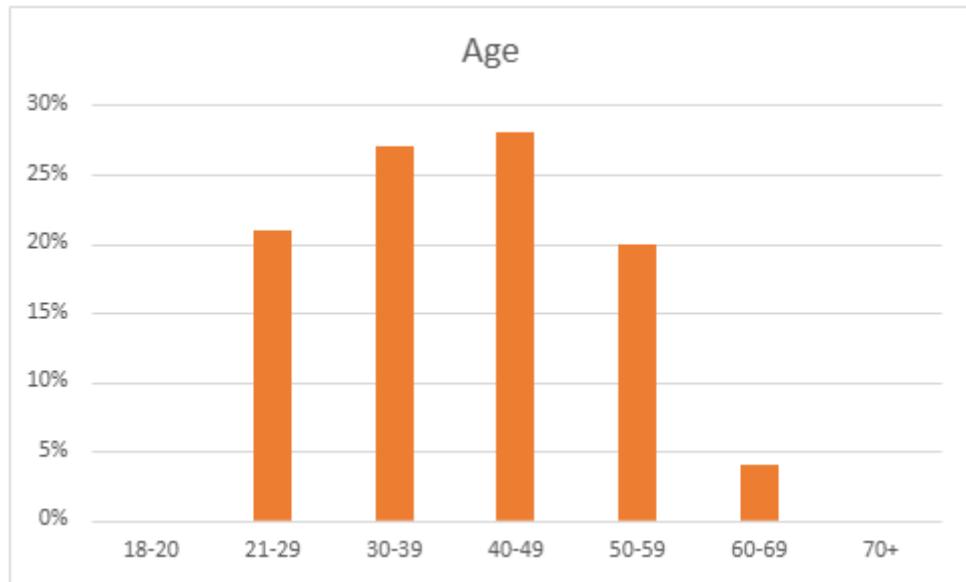
We ask the following question about disability: Do you have a physical or mental health condition which has a substantial and long-term impact on your ability to do normal day to day activities?



	2025	2024
Yes	9%	7%
No	87%	90%
Prefer not to say	4%	3%

Age

Age distribution for foundation programme learners in 2025:



About the participants

Breakdown of sector and job roles

Approximately 50% of learners work within the NHS. Around 26% work within Local Government and 23% within the VCSE and other organisations including academia.

Job roles analysis

In 2025, the Foundation Programme continued to attract a highly diverse range of job roles from across the public health system and beyond. There was significant participation from clinical and health focused staff such as doctors, registrars, paediatricians, nurses, community matrons and clinical support workers, reflecting a growing appetite for applying population health approaches within clinical settings. Local authorities and community based programmes were also well represented, with project managers, community champions, partnership managers, social workers and housing officers highlighting the cross sector collaboration that is central to tackling health inequalities.

Engagement extended strongly into the voluntary and community sector, with programme managers, directors of community organisations and outreach workers contributing to the breadth of perspectives within the programme. We also saw promising participation from those early in their careers (including national management trainees and apprentices), reinforcing the programme's role in strengthening the future public health workforce pipeline.



We saw strong engagement from core public health professionals, including Public Health Officers, Practitioners, Health Promotion specialists and Public Health Intelligence Analysts, demonstrating the programme's ongoing relevance for those seeking to deepen or broaden their public health expertise.

The overall profile demonstrates very high role diversity, with substantial leadership representation and strong clinical public health crossover. Community engagement roles and a smaller but significant analytical workforce also underline the programme's reach across the wider system and its contribution to building capability at multiple levels.

2025 Learner Evaluations

All learners are asked to complete an evaluation after each session. In 2025 evaluation forms were accessed by learners via MS Forms instead of the POD system. This made it easier for learners to access but has resulted in a decreased completion rate compared to 2024. 2025 evaluation completion was 63% compared to 91% in 2024.

Quantitative data

	Level 1	Level 2
The aims and objectives of the session were clearly stated and met.	99% Agree or Strongly Agree	99% Agree or Strongly Agree
The session content was informative and interesting.	99% Agree or Strongly Agree	99% Agree or Strongly Agree
The facilitator was effective and engaging.	99% Agree or Strongly Agree	100% Agree or Strongly Agree
The facilitator enabled participation of group members.	100% Agree or Strongly Agree	100% Agree or Strongly Agree
Questions were addressed and answered well.	97% Agree or Strongly Agree	98% Agree or Strongly Agree
Communication leading up to the event was timely, clear and helpful.	99% Agree or Strongly Agree	98% Agree or Strongly Agree
The administration of the session was well planned and useful.	99% Agree or Strongly Agree	98% Agree or Strongly Agree
I now have a better understanding of the subject of today's session.	98% Agree or Strongly Agree	99% Agree or Strongly Agree

Qualitative feedback

A selection of comments from learners on each session throughout 2025 can be found below:

Level 1	
Introduction to public health	'I liked how the facilitators started with talking about their personal experience as to how they became interested in public health as I found this was an engaging way to start the session.'



Prevention and a life course approach	'Really good session, everything was broken down in a way that is easy to follow/understand. Look forward to using the approaches in my day to day work'
Tackling inequalities and the wider determinants of health	'Another really interesting session which has really opened my eyes to health inequalities and the impact this has on the population.'
Health protection and healthcare public health	'I find the videos used in the session really useful to help bring the topic to life. Loved the scenario we were given to work on in our breakouts and find the pre-reading really useful'

Level 2	
Systems leadership	'Fantastic session, very insightful and great activities to get involved in and broaden our thinking in practical ways.'
Introduction to epidemiology	'I really enjoyed the session, and the group tasks were excellent for reinforcing the information discussed throughout.'
Designing, delivering and evaluating public health interventions	'Really interesting discussions as part of the final exercise and showed that the different perspectives offered by different organisations is invaluable'
Behavioural insights toolkit	'Incredibly interesting and gave me an insight into what goes on behind the scenes in Public Health'



Quality Assurance

Our approach to quality assurance continues to be practical, proportionate and closely connected to delivery. It is embedded throughout the life of the programme and informs ongoing development and decision-making.

The Foundation Programme was re-accredited by the Royal Society for Public Health in February 2025. This external review confirmed that the programme content and structure continue to meet national standards for public health education, and offered helpful confirmation that the programme remains fit for purpose for a diverse and evolving workforce.

Alongside this, session-level evaluation remains a core part of how the programme is run. Attendees are routinely invited to share feedback following delivery, and this is actively reviewed and used to make small but meaningful adjustments over time. This includes changes to content emphasis, pacing, and facilitation approaches in response to what participants tell us they find most valuable.

In 2025, quality assurance was further strengthened through the full programme evaluation. Findings from this fed directly into quality discussions and future planning, ensuring that development of the programme is evidence-informed and grounded in participant experience.



Future Plans

At the time of writing (January 2026), we are pleased to have received confirmation that NHS England will continue to fund the Foundation Programme through to 2027. Delivery plans for the next phase of the programme are currently being finalised and will be shared with stakeholders in due course.

As the NHSE funding is now drawn from a national allocation rather than a North East and Yorkshire-specific pot, the programme may be opened to participants working anywhere in England from April 2026. While this creates an opportunity to widen access and reach, it also means the programme will be fully reliant on NHSE or other infrastructure organisations for future funding, rather than continuing to develop its own sustainability model.

Subject to funding and capacity, plans remain in place to explore a Foundation Plus offer. This enhanced model would build on the programme through access to project or placement experience, mentorship, peer support, and further skills development, with the aim of supporting progression into public and population health roles.

Further development areas include strengthening progression pathways beyond the programme, improving alumni connections, and continuing work to ensure the programme remains accessible to those from non-traditional public health backgrounds. We are also keen to develop a community of practice in partnership with the Health Equity Network, providing an ongoing space for shared learning and connection focused on health equity.