

# Public Health Longitudinal Integrated Foundation Training (LIFT) Program: A Junior Doctor's Experience

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## The Experience

Public health encompasses health improvement, health protection, and healthcare services. It adopts a population-centric approach to address social determinants of health and create equitable societies. The Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board is the local health board responsible for serving North Wales. Public Health Wales is a national agency of the NHS Wales established in 2009 as part of a major restructuring of the health service in Wales. The health board works closely with PHW to implement and operationalize public health initiatives tailored to the needs of communities regionally.

I participated in a one-year public health Longitudinal Integrated Foundation Training (LIFT) program at Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board. This program is introduced by Health Education and Improvement Wales and typically comprises general practice (GP) placements that aims to expose trainees to primary care. The new non-GP LIFT in public health offers a broader and more varied exposure to preventative medicine which is often overlooked in the traditional undergraduate medical school curriculum. In the context of this paper, I pursued the public health LIFT to develop a broader understanding into addressing systemic issues to prevent end-stage disease complications with strategic solutions through an upstream approach.

This paper provides an overview of key reflections drawn from a range of public health experiences which addresses family health, environmental, and regulatory compliance issues during a public health LIFT as a junior doctor.

## Work in the Public Health LIFT

**Preconception Care Draft Strategy:** The North Wales Preconception Task and Finish group draft strategy provided valuable insights into the implementation of preconception care. As part of this process, I had the opportunity to contribute additional perspectives related to NHS national screening

programs, vaccination uptake (such as Human Papilloma Virus and Hepatitis B), and addressing anemia through nutritional supplementation. The Lancet series (2018) reflects this approach to preconception care, emphasizing how preconception health can impact future health and outlining steps to improve health before pregnancy as illustrated in Figure 1.1,2 Public health efforts can significantly improve maternal and child health outcomes by targeting women with the greatest preconception health needs, which helps address the principles of inverse care law as described by Hart in 1971.3 This experience has strengthened my understanding of the critical role draft strategies play in the policymaking process to strategically drive societal change.

## Consultation to decommissioning a nuclear power plant station:

Shadowing a consultation regarding the decommissioning of a nuclear power station both as the representatives from the health board, I recognized the complexities in the nuclear-related discourse. The consultation involved discussions among various stakeholders, including local residents and volunteers from healthcare and social work sectors, regarding the historical background of the site and the ongoing decommissioning process. While the discussions relatively addressed most of the concerns foreseen, I noticed one predominant challenge was the use of scientific jargon in presentations, which may have presented difficulties for laymen to fully engage with the information relayed. This consultation was a valuable learning experience as it highlights the importance of plain language in consultation presentations in enhancing public engagement throughout the decision-making process. It will be crucial to bridge the gap between accessibility, technical expertise and needs of the local community to ensure that final decisions are representative of the health-specific concerns of individuals directly affected by the changes in local environmental health policies.

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**About the Author:** Dr Poh is a medical graduate, and she completed the Public Health Longitudinal Integrated Foundation Training (LIFT) program as a foundation trainee at Ysbyty Gwynedd (Bangor Hospital) in NHS Wales, United Kingdom. She was the recipient of the NIHR Newcastle Biomedical Science Studentship Award to intercalate for a Master of Research (Cancer) in Newcastle University. She is currently a Research Fellow at Program in Global Surgery and Social Change (PGSSC) at Harvard Medical School.

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Student Editors: Rola Mohareb, Dzhaner  
Bashchobanov

Copyeditor: Adnan Mujanovic

Proofreader: Amy Phelan

Layout Editor: Daniela Collazos

Submission: Jun 6, 2024

Revisions: Jul 19, 2024

Responses: Jul 19, 2024

Acceptance: Nov 12, 2024

Publication: Nov 19, 2024

Process: Peer-reviewed

**Meeting on Cryptosporidium Outbreak:** The interdisciplinary meeting involved reporting the coordinated response to the Cryptosporidium outbreak linked to a local swimming pool. The discussions highlighted the importance of vigilant water filtration and pool treatment monitoring, as well as the necessity of interdisciplinary cooperation between environmental health, health protection, and other local health agencies. Reviewing outbreak control plans regularly demonstrated the importance of adhering to established communicable disease surveillance protocols to control an outbreak. This meeting helped me appreciate the multi-agency expertise in protecting communities against communicable disease outbreaks through a systematic and proactive response, underpinned by epidemiological principles such as the Bradford Hill criteria.<sup>4</sup>

**The new Wales-wide 20-mph speed limit law:** My first-hand witness of the implementation of Wales' 20mph speed limit law passed in July 2022 highlights the importance of synergy between researchers and policymakers. This pioneering legislation aims to make streets safer and inspire other nations. Research by public health practitioners and Edinburgh Napier University suggests it could reduce collisions by 40%, preventing 6-10 fatalities and 1,200-2,000 injuries annually. This collaboration between research findings and policy decisions has led to a significant change prioritizing community safety and wellbeing.

**Challenges in this placement:**

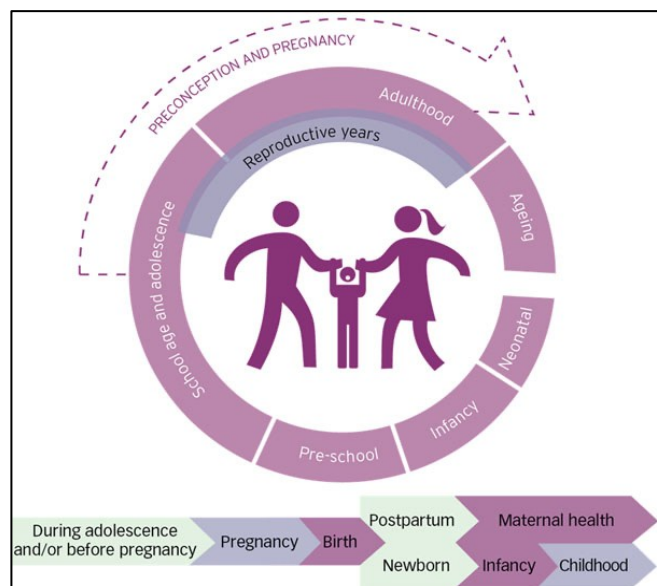
1. One of the key challenges in this placement is managing primary clinical responsibilities and core teaching requirements alongside the unique learning opportunities in LIFT. Proactive planning and coordination are essential to leverage the benefits of the program.
2. The scope of work in public health is also significantly different from routine clinical practice, requiring a period of transition to the complex network of health policies and political agendas involved. Hence, dedicating focused effort to expand knowledge in the field is essential.

**Conclusions**

An exposure to a diverse range of public health issues along with ongoing projects in the field—including family health, environmental concerns, and regulatory matters—, has deepened my appreciation for senior professionals. These dedicated individuals work tirelessly behind the scenes to drive changes that improve the health and welfare of the population. With rising chronic diseases, integrating knowledge in public health into medical training is crucial. I strongly encourage junior doctors to embrace public health training, as it offers new perspectives on complex health issues through identifying practical guidelines, conducting quality improvement projects, and potentially helps develop new skills through sharing learning experiences and teaching.

**Permissions and conflict of interest :** I worked as a foundation trainee in Ysbyty Gwynedd (Bangor Hospital) and declare no other competing interests. Permission for publication has also been obtained from Dr. Ushan Andrad, Foundation Program Director, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board NHS Wales.

**Figure 1.** Preconception Car.



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**Acknowledgments**

None.

**Conflict of Interest Statement & Funding**

There is no conflict of interest in writing this manuscript. Health Education and Improvement Wales in introducing and supporting the Public Health Longitudinal Integrated Foundation Training (LIFT) program at Ysbyty Gwynedd (Bangor Hospital) Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board.

**Author Contributions**

Conceptualization: DP. Data Curation: DP. Formal Analysis: DP. Investigation: DP. Methodology: DP. Project Administration: DP, SA. Resources: DP, SA. Software: DP. Supervision: SA, UA. Validation: DP, SA, UA. Visualization: DP. Writing - Original Draft: DP, SA. Writing - Review Editing: DP, SA, UA.

**Cite as**

Poh D, Andrews S, Andrady U. Public Health Longitudinal Integrated Foundation Training (LIFT) program: A Junior Doctor's Experience. Int J Med Stud. 2025 Jan-Mar;10(1):94-96.

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ISSN 2076-6327

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