



UK Health
Security
Agency



Champs
Public Health
Collaborative



UNIVERSITY OF
LIVERPOOL

CONTACT TRACING AND INTRODUCTION TO HEALTH PROTECTION COURSE 2024

Key Highlights and Evaluation Report



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1. Overview

In late 2020, amidst high rates of coronavirus and a national lockdown, the need for skilled contact tracers accelerated the development of unique and innovative training programme in Cheshire and Merseyside (C&M). A partnership between the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA previously Public Health England (PHE)), the University of Liverpool (UoL) and Champs Public Health Collaborative led to the creation of the Contact Tracing course in January 2021.

Initially focusing on COVID-19, the course provided theoretical and practical skills for contact tracers. After the initial success, the programme was expanded and with the evolution of the pandemic situation, the Introduction to Health Protection Course replaced the original Contact Tracing Course. The new course expanded its focus beyond COVID-19 to a wider range of diseases and health protection principles.

The refreshed course was delivered to its first cohort in March 2022. During the period of delivery from 2022 to 2024, the course content was further modified as needed to include other high consequence infectious diseases such as Mpox and other emerging health protection areas.

2. Stakeholders and Partners

The nine Directors of Public Health (DsPH) across C&M provided the overall leadership for this programme of work with the Director of Public Health for Health Protection being the senior responsible officer.

The three organisations involved in the development and maintenance of the course were:

- Champs Public Health Collaborative (PHC): Lead for the programme, provided management, teaching and administrative support to the course.
- UKHSA: Majority of the teaching was carried out by UKHSA staff and this arrangement was underpinned by a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) formalising payment to UKHSA from Champs PHC. The staff also provided support in the evaluation, modification, and assessments of the course.
- University of Liverpool: Were commissioned to provide the pedagogical input and online platform through which the course was delivered.

3. Funding

Funding to support the development and delivery of the Contact Tracing Course was provided by the nine C&M DsPH.

4. Course Content

The content for the original contact tracing course was primarily aimed at those working in the contact tracing workforce across C&M. The content was designed to engage the workforce on all health protection aspects of COVID-19. As contact tracing ceased, the course was re-designed and named *Introduction to Health Protection*. The redesigned course continued to have the underpinnings of health protection but considered within a wider context, rather than COVID-19 only. The context was also applied to setting and demographic groups, with learning outcomes focused on:

- Understanding how infections spread from a single case to clusters, outbreaks, epidemics and pandemics.
- Understanding and applying general infection protection principles to COVID-19 and other infections spread.
- Understanding and applying general health protection principles to COVID-19 and other infections spread through the respiratory tract.
- Recognising the importance of sound professional practice underpinned with reflection and supervision.

Each course ran for four weeks and required all attendees to commit to three days per week, totalling 33 taught hours and an additional advised 33 hours of self-study. As part of the redesign the pass/fail element of the course was removed and instead, participants received a certificate of professional development on completion.

5. Cohorts overview (2021 to 2024)

A total of 153 candidates completed the course over the 3-year period. The candidates worked across the North West for various organisations, with 66% from the C&M region. For further information on cohorts, please see appendix 1.

6. Course Evaluation and Feedback

Feedback and evaluation were conducted in multiple ways:

- Course participants were given the opportunity to feedback during the live teaching sessions and during the final assessment.
- An online questionnaire was also provided for participants to also give feedback. The answers from these various methods formed the basis of internal assessment of the course.

Overall, feedback from the group discussions and online questionnaire were generally positive:

- Candidates found the content of the course useful to their current work setting and prospects.
- Candidates reported that overall, their knowledge on health protection had increased, with some even exploring doing a further degree because of the course.
- Reflecting on feedback, certain aspects were changed during the course such as delivering all teaching sessions live rather than using pre-recorded videos and bringing in diseases such as Mpox and Scabies, which were not in the original format of the course.
- The course had a notable impact on enhancing participants' understanding of infectious diseases and an overview of outbreak management.
- The course influenced participants professional behaviour positively and increased their sense of value and development investment from their employers.

7. Conclusions and Next Steps

Based on feedback, any future iterations of the course should consider:

- Developing a progressive training programme to allow for ongoing knowledge and development related to participant experience.
- Exploring broader topics such as climate change and environmental health. A training needs assessment that was conducted in 2023 also revealed a keen interest in learning more about New and Emerging Diseases, Emergency Preparedness, Resilience and Response, Environmental Public Health and Communication in Health Protection. Specific diseases highlighted in the training needs assessment included Hepatitis C, Avian Flu, *Clostridioides difficile*, and *E. coli* O157).
- Alternative formats of delivery such as full training days, opportunities to attend face to face sessions and utilising pre-recorded videos (recognising this would impact flexibility of delivery).
- Ensure that any future course is designed to provide the system with the best value for money.

Finally, it is worth noting that a unique selling point for this course was the removal of barriers such as first degree to enrol onto the course. This will need to be taken into consideration for any future iterations of the course.

Acknowledgements

- The Cheshire and Merseyside Directors of Public Health
- Lead CM DsPH for Contact Tracing
- Champs Support Team
- UKHSA
- University of Liverpool Team
- Cheshire and Merseyside Contact Tracing
- Local Authority Public Health Teams
- All the learning participants of both courses

Appendix 1: Cohort Overview

Organisation	Cohort Number									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	8	9	10	
Allerdale Council						1				
Blackburn Council						2				
Bolton Council						1	1	2	1	
Bolton FT NHS						1				
Bury Council						1			1	
C&M CT Hub	2	4	3	3						
Champs Support Team				1						
Cheshire & Wirral NHS Partnership							1		1	
Cheshire East Council		1			2	1			1	
Cheshire West & Chester	1				2	3	1			
Cumbria Council/Westmorland & Furness						1		1		
Cumbria Hub			4							
GM ICT Hub		1		3						
Halton Council	1		2	1						
Knowsley Council	1							1	1	
Lancashire Hub			5	3						
Lancashire County Council										3
Liverpool City Council	1	1			1		1	1		
Liverpool Port Auth					1	1				
Manchester City Council						2				
Salford Council						3	1		1	
Sefton Council		2	2					1	2	
St Helens Council	1	2	2	1		1				
Stockport										1
Tameside & Glossop NHS Trust										1
Warrington Council	1	1	5		1					2
Wirral Council	2	2				7	3	2	2	
Other/Unknown	4	1					1			
PHE/UKHSA	2	1								
Public Health Agency (Northern Ireland)										4