

Mary Ross

Level 6 Public Health Practitioner (Integrated Degree)

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You can access the standard [here](#).

Public health practitioners (PHPs) work as part of a national workforce that strives to help people and communities to maximise their potential for a healthy, happy and productive life, to live healthier for longer. PHPs focus on health at a community or population level, assessing and managing risk of disease and ill-health, and the prevention of premature deaths. They monitor and promote health and wellbeing to ensure fairer health outcomes between different communities and groups (health inequalities). They put in place protection measures to protect the public from environmental hazards and risks. They evaluate sources of evidence, interpret it and design and plan health interventions.

Meet Mary Ross, a Level 6 Public Health Practitioner (integrated degree) apprentice working at Devon and Cornwall Police.

We spoke with Mary about her apprenticeship journey, keep reading to find out more.



1. What apprenticeship are you studying and what does the study involve?

I am currently studying a Level 6 Public Health Practitioner (Integrated Degree) apprenticeship.

2. Why did you want to do the apprenticeship?

I wanted to increase my knowledge around public health approaches to population harms, prevention and intervention and be able to apply it in policing serious and organised crime and harm. Public health theory and practice, the concept of social justice, has much to offer criminal justice. We sort of recognise socio economic determinants and inequalities, but a greater understanding will help us collaborate with partners and change the landscape for our communities and populations.

There is common ground and so much knowledge that police can access as well as the possibility of rich and productive relationships with public health colleagues and academics. Primary prevention is a challenge for policing as we move into the whole-systems space in policing drugs and violence. Building structures that can deliver to population and place will be enabled by an understanding of public health theory and practice and the Public Health Practitioner (integrated degree) from University of the West of England is really delivering for me. The evidenced-based approach and reflective practice is emphasised so in terms of serious CPD (Continuing Professional Development), the apprenticeship gives you the full toolkit – what to do and where to find it plus the knowledge, skills and behaviours that will be required.

My focus is on delivering a public health frame in my current role over the 3 years rather than getting registration but for those who want to move over to public health and move around the statutory system, the Public Health Practitioner (integrated degree) seems to be a real gateway.

On completion of the Level 6 Public Health Practitioner (integrated degree) apprenticeship, the apprentice can apply for professional registration with the UK Public Health Register (UKPHR), subject to UKPHR's application and verification requirements. This is a voluntary register.

3. What is your current role?

Specialist Problem Solver focused on public health approaches in policing serious and organised crime and harm.

4. How did you get into your current role?

I was in the police for 21 years. After retirement, in 2018, I applied for a job as a police staff, specialist problem solver with Devon and Cornwall Police. I was tasked to work on public health approaches in policing, using the 4P's of Prepare, Pursue, Prevent and Protect.

I came across the College of Policing work of Supt Justin Srivastava and Dr Helen Christmas, Public Health Consultant at Hull City Council "[Public Health Approaches in Policing: A Discussion Paper](#)." And also "[A whole-system multiagency approach to serious violence prevention: A resource for local system leaders in England](#)," authored by Rachel Bath, Consultant in Public Health. Reading their work helped develop a simple whole-system model of public health approaches in policing serious and organised crime in Devon and Cornwall called 5C4P (from the 5C's of the multiagency approach to serious violence integrated with the policing 4P's). So, the apprenticeship gives me the skills, behaviours and knowledge to consolidate and further develop the model.

5. What has been your proudest achievement on your apprenticeship to date?

Getting through my first set of assessments! Whilst Professor Mytton and her team at University of the West of England are great and every online session is a "school day" and you learn something new, having to translate that into an essays, reports and presentations is a discipline and a challenge. But so worthwhile.

6. What do you want to do once you complete your apprenticeship?

It's quite simple for me: there is so much useful evidence and theory around public health, the effects of inequality, socioeconomic determinants, shame, trauma, community approaches: I want to be able to identify the common ground and take what is applicable and use it as part of a whole-system approach to the problems that face policing – problems on the horizon and being vigilant for the weak signals that will escalate and become our future threats.

7. What would you say to someone considering an apprenticeship?

Do it! Be organised, consistent and be prepared for hard work: the apprenticeship will raise your thinking, your behaviours and practice and your ability to create solutions to another level.

Have you seen our
Apprenticeship Standards
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