



The University  
Of Sheffield.

School Of  
Health  
And  
Related  
Research.

# Public Health Research

## Introduction

The Section of Public Health is a dynamic multi-disciplinary teaching and research group which has expanded and developed over the past decade into a research-led group with wide-ranging interests within five major research areas: health inequalities, obesity, alcohol policy, geographical information sciences and public involvement in research.

The core interest of this group is in improving the health of the public at local, regional, national and international levels. The Section contains individuals with a range of public health skills, including clinical public health specialists, epidemiologists, psychologists, sociologists, information scientists and health services researchers.

There are three integrated areas to the work of the Section: research and knowledge transfer, teaching and professional development and support for staff working in the NHS. This includes public health training support and supervision, through both secondments available to all public health trainees and a programme of support for trainees taking Faculty of Public Health membership examinations. ScHARR has been designated a "National Treasure" by the Faculty of Public Health which enables public health trainees from other regions to take advantage of unique training opportunities. Several Section staff have honorary NHS contracts and provide support at Primary Care Trust and Strategic Health Authority levels.

We undertake a varied range of knowledge transfer projects, the majority for NHS organisations and involving evaluation of services to inform commissioning decisions.

Section of Public Health  
School of Health and Related Research (ScHARR)  
The University of Sheffield  
Regent Court, 30 Regent Street  
Sheffield, S1 4DA

For further information visit: [www.shef.ac.uk/scharr/sections/ph](http://www.shef.ac.uk/scharr/sections/ph)

## Health Inequalities & Obesity Research

Inequalities in health and in access to, and uptake of, health services are an ongoing problem and the gap between those with the best and worst health has increased rather than declined in the last 20 or so years.

Members of this research group have a depth of experience in primary research into inequalities in health in the community, in primary and secondary care and in occupational settings, as well as in use, need and access to health care services. The team has expertise in a number of disease areas, including obesity, diabetes, circulatory and respiratory diseases and renal disease. A range of methodologies are used by the team, including quantitative and qualitative research, action research, evaluation and systematic reviews of evidence.

The last few years have seen the successful completion and publication of a number of research projects contributing to the Leverhulme-funded "Changing Families, Changing Food Programme" which covered themes of inequalities, food choice and obesity. These major research themes have been brought together since 2008 as themes within the NIHR-funded South Yorkshire Collaboration for Applied Health Research and Care (SY CLAHRC).



This is a major £20 million, five-year partnership between key NHS stakeholders and the University of Sheffield as well as Sheffield Hallam University. The Section has played a leading role in the development of the SY CLAHRC, leading both the Obesity and Inequalities themes.

As a "research implementation" theme, the Inequalities theme work programme has employed three full-time facilitators to support the use of research evidence in the development and implementation of interventions aiming to reduce health inequalities across South Yorkshire. A number of action research projects are being undertaken to implement change across four PCTs and case studies are being used to explore impact on NHS research culture.

For further information contact Liddy Goyder: [e.goyder@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:e.goyder@sheffield.ac.uk)

The obesity theme activities include setting up a cohort to study the changing nature of weight and health; providing an evaluation service for the NHS in South Yorkshire with particular reference to health, weight and obesity and exploring aspects of childhood obesity. This will help answer important questions of relevance to the NHS in its attempts to deal with overweight and obesity in the South Yorkshire population. The cohort will enable tracking over time of the way in which Body Mass Index (BMI) shifts between normal weight and overweight / obesity, and will allow an assessment of NHS (and non NHS) service utilisation amongst overweight and obese patients. The cohort will also provide the basis for a clinical trials facility which will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of new treatments. This will make an important contribution to developing the evidence base in relation to NHS based treatment and for the prevention of obesity.

For further information contact Paul Bissell: [p.bissell@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:p.bissell@sheffield.ac.uk)

## Alcohol Policy Research

The Section takes a lead in ScHARR's developing research programme on alcohol, funded through the Medical Research Council (MRC), the Department of Health Policy Research Programme, the Scottish Government, the Home Office, the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE), the Nuffield Foundation, the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) South Yorkshire CLAHRC and the Canadian Institute for Health Research (CIHR). ScHARR recently carried out a series of systematic reviews and policy appraisals on the effectiveness of alcohol policies, including alcohol pricing interventions, advertising restrictions, restrictions on places and times of alcohol sales, and the effectiveness of screening and brief interventions in primary care settings, as well as investigating the role of alcohol in adolescent mental health. This research has been influential in informing current policy debate about alcohol policy, especially with regard to minimum unit pricing.



The current focus is on investigating the role of alcohol in creating and maintaining health inequalities, exploring the determinants of problematic alcohol use, and further developing our programme of alcohol policy appraisal and evaluation in the UK and internationally. The Section hosts the multi-institutional MRC Alcohol Policy Research Cluster.

For further information contact Petra Meier: [p.meier@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:p.meier@sheffield.ac.uk)

## The Public Health GIS Unit



The Public Health GIS Unit was established in 1999 with funding from the Public Health Development Fund. The Unit's primary research interests lie in environmental epidemiology, spatial analysis and geographical variations in health and healthcare. There are active research links with the Department of Geography at Cambridge and the Department of Epidemiology and Public Health at Imperial College. The Unit has been engaged in academic research, consultancy work projects and maintaining links with the NHS public health GIS community through its Public Health GIS Network meetings.

The Unit's academic research focused on epidemiological studies designed to investigate the effects of outdoor air pollutants on stroke incidence and survival. A comprehensive stroke case dataset from the South London Stroke Register was used in conjunction with modelled and monitored air pollution data for the Greater London area.

In recent years the Unit has developed its capacity for consultancy work. This aspect of the Unit's work programme has resulted in links with a number of public sector organisations and joint working with the Tribal consultancy group. Projects have included examining public access to green space in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, health equity work for Ashton, Leigh and Wigan PCT and an evaluation of a Met Office health forecast alert service for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease in the Bradford area.

For further information contact Ravi Maheswaran: [r.maheswaran@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:r.maheswaran@sheffield.ac.uk)

## Public Involvement in Research Theme

Public involvement in health, social care and public health research is firmly established in health policies nationally and internationally. The public involvement in research theme addresses a number of key questions: what are the best ways of involving the public in research? What is the impact of public involvement on research, and on key stakeholders? What are the attitudes of researchers to public involvement? We undertake collaborative research with members of the public to address these questions.

For further information contact Jonathan Boote: [j.boote@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:j.boote@sheffield.ac.uk)

Research projects include a study to improve the quality and effectiveness of service therapies and self-management of long-term depression (IQuESTS), part of a mental health theme led by Professor Glenys Parry, within the South Yorkshire Collaboration for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care (SY CLAHRC). Service user researchers are members of the research team, and have jointly developed the bid and the research protocol. Integrating different perspectives has been found to enrich the research and generate new knowledge, whilst making the research more relevant to the end users of the research.

## Public Health Collaborating Centre (PHCC)

The Centre for Public Health Excellence (CPHE) at NICE issues guidance to public health professionals and practitioners and others with a direct or indirect role in public health within the NHS, local authorities and the wider public, voluntary, community and private sectors.

ScHARR is home to one of the two Public Health Collaborating Centres (PHCC) in England that support the CPHE in the development of national guidance. The Public Health Collaborating Centres work closely with public health colleagues in NICE to produce evidence reviews, economic appraisals and other evidence based products to support the development of guidance by the public health advisory committees of NICE.

The ScHARR-PHCC is a multidisciplinary collaboration within ScHARR involving more than 20 researchers including mathematical modellers, health economists, quantitative and qualitative systematic reviewers, information specialists and public health specialists from the Health Economics and Decision Science and Public Health Sections.

Topics covered to date include:

- Prevention and early identification of alcohol use disorders
- Physical and emotional health and wellbeing of looked after children
- Contraceptive services for socially disadvantaged young people
- Emotional and social wellbeing of young people in secondary education
- Promoting well-being at work
- Weight management in pregnancy
- Quitting smoking in pregnancy
- Weight management after childbirth

For further information contact Viv Walker: [v.walker@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:v.walker@sheffield.ac.uk)