

## Welcome to the Public Health Commissioning Network

This brief guide tells you how to get the most out of your membership of the Public Health Commissioning Network (PHCN). If you have any problems or questions about PHCN please drop me a line ([tomporter@nhs.net](mailto:tomporter@nhs.net)).

This document is divided into five short sections: (i) How PHCN works; (ii) Accessing and using the PHCN website; (iii) Getting help with commissioning problems; (iv) Sharing your work and experiences with others; (v) Further advice and feedback

### *(i) How PHCN works*

PHCN is a network for individuals involved in public health commissioning, including commissioning health and wellbeing services, as well as healthcare public health. Membership is free and open to anyone in the public, voluntary and not-for-profit sectors. There are currently over 550 members of PHCN.

Most members represent local or regional NHS or local authority organisations and are directly involved in commissioning; a smaller number of members represent 'partner' organisations which support commissioners, such as the Department of Health (DH) and the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE).

Most PHCN activity takes place over the web and by email. Members are encouraged to contact one another directly through the **Member Directory**, and all members will receive the **monthly newsletter** which includes a '**swapshop**' where people can seek advice from the community about commissioning problems they are currently facing. When members have been involved in an interesting or challenging piece of work we ask that they write this up very briefly for the **Casebook** - an informal monthly publication sent to members allowing people to share lessons they have learned from their work. The **Essential Resources** section of the website stores reference material useful for commissioners, and members can suggest items to be added there. Finally, you can do a search restricted to websites which are relevant to public health commissioning by using the **Targeted web search** tool.

Members will usually receive two monthly emails from PHCN, on the days the newsletter is released and Member Directory updated.

### *(ii) Accessing and using the PHCN website*

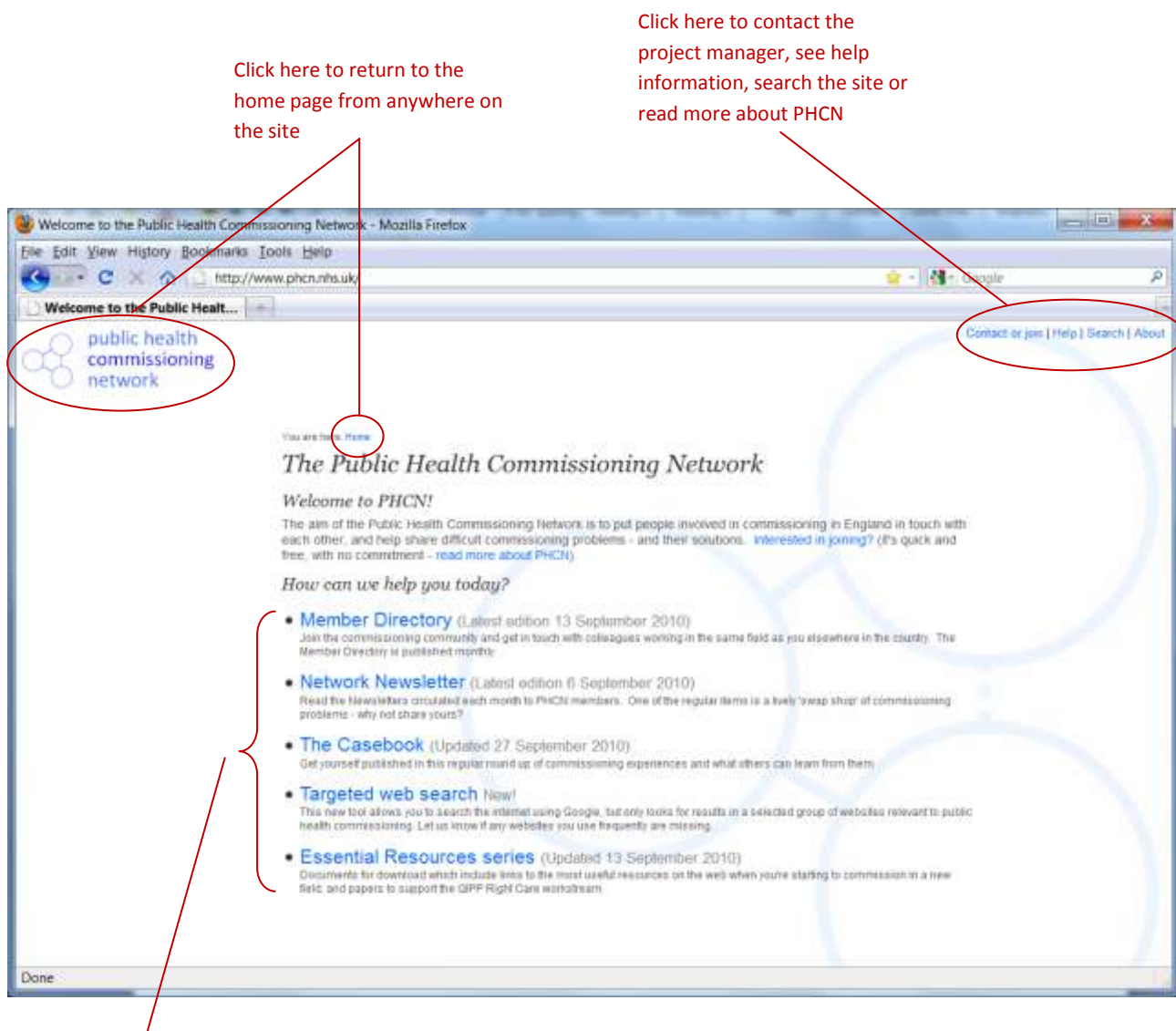
The PHCN website is available at [www.phcn.nhs.uk](http://www.phcn.nhs.uk)

To enable the greatest levels of sharing, and avoid everyone having to remember (yet another!) password, the website is entirely open, can be accessed from any computer connected to the internet, and does not require an NHS/N3 connection.

The website has been designed to be uncluttered and easy to use. The opening page provides obvious links to the main bits of PHCN - the Member Directory, monthly newsletters, Casebook, Targeted web search and Essential Resources (see Figure overleaf).

From any page on the site you can also contact the Project Manager, search the site, get help, and view information about the Network, by clicking on the links in the top right. You can also return to the home page at any stage by either clicking on the PHCN logo on the top left, or where it says 'You are here: Home ...'

**Figure.** The PHCN website



Select these options to go to the relevant bit of the PHCN website

### *(iii) Getting help with commissioning problems*

There are three main ways you can seek help from colleagues in the Network on a problem you are facing:

1. Browse or search the PHCN website to see if anything has been written about your problem before. To search, click the link on the top right of any page and enter your query. It's possible your problem has appeared in a previous newsletter 'Swapshop' or Casebook entry

2. Ask a question in the monthly 'Swapshop' - this appears in the newsletter each month, which all members receive. To ask a question please email [tomporter@nhs.net](mailto:tomporter@nhs.net) and it will go in the subsequent newsletter. This usually comes out on the first or second Monday of the month
3. Look in the latest Member Directory ([www.phcn.nhs.uk/members](http://www.phcn.nhs.uk/members)) for people who are working in similar fields to you, then send an email to those people with a request for help, saying you found their name through PHCN

Remember too to read through the monthly newsletter when you receive it, which contains useful help and advice from other commissioners and supporting organisations. You may also want to try the Targeted web search to see if other trusted websites contain any relevant information.

#### *(iv) Sharing your work and experiences with others*

There are four principal ways you can share your work with others through the Network. If you're not sure which is the best method, feel free to email [tomporter@nhs.net](mailto:tomporter@nhs.net) for advice

1. Complete a Casebook entry ([www.phcn.nhs.uk/casebook](http://www.phcn.nhs.uk/casebook)) - this only takes a few minutes and means it will be available in an easy-to-read format on the PHCN website for others to use, and contact you if they want to find out more information
2. Write an article about your work or experience for the monthly newsletter ([www.phcn.nhs.uk/newsletters](http://www.phcn.nhs.uk/newsletters)) - email [tomporter@nhs.net](mailto:tomporter@nhs.net) if you would like to do this
3. Email colleagues working in your field with your work - look in the latest Member Directory ([www.phcn.nhs.uk/members](http://www.phcn.nhs.uk/members)) to find people working on similar topics to you
4. Request a link be added to the Essential Resources section of the website ([www.phcn.nhs.uk/essentials](http://www.phcn.nhs.uk/essentials)) so people can easily find your work

#### *(v) Further advice and feedback*

If you have any questions at all about PHCN please email the Project Manager, Dr Tom Porter, at [tomporter@nhs.net](mailto:tomporter@nhs.net). Please note I usually work one day a week for PHCN (Mondays) and will pick up queries when I am next able.

We are always looking for ways to improve PHCN to make it most valuable for our members - please email the same address if you have any suggestions or comments on the Network - thank you.