**My time at SPH**

I joined NHS Solutions for Public Health (SPH) for a 6 month placement in 2023 as part of the specialty registrar training programme in Public Health.

Having worked in commissioning prior to joining the Public Health training scheme, I was curious to understand the role of SPH and the services it provides (together with other parts of the Arden & GEM Commissioning Support Unit) in the context of the broader public health landscape.

It was a pleasure to receive such a warm welcome right from my first day on placement and the team continued to involve me in discussions on bidding decisions and be incredibly generous with providing advice and feedback on the projects I contributed to during the rest of my time there.

The team deliver on a wide range of projects across a spectrum of commissioners, including NHS England, ICBs, councils, charities and even Crown dependencies on occasion! During my time there, I worked on projects including a regional review of commissioning policies for Assisted Reproductive Technologies, an evidence review of different models of care for managing acute sickle cell crisis, as well as contributing to the preparation of several bids – a fairly unique opportunity within training programme placements as far as I am aware! (much of the work SPH deliver on is won through a competitive bidding process)

I certainly feel that I am coming away from the placement with a good understanding of what kinds of needs in the public health system that an organisation like SPH is well placed to meet. In addition, it was a great opportunity to see how an experienced team can deliver on complex projects at a fast pace through working in a highly collaborative way. It also highlighted the fact that expertise in technical public health skills is not sufficient to being able to deliver a high quality output by itself: ‘soft skills’ such as judgement and communication style have hugely important roles to play in shaping how outputs and recommendations from projects are presented and received.

Thank you to all those in the team who involved me in your projects, with a special thanks to my supervisor Veena de Souza for her attentive feedback and advice and to SPH Associate Director Claire Cheong-Leen for providing this placement as an opportunity for public health registrars.

Lynn Zheng