

JESSICA SCOTT, ASSISTANT BUSINESS ACCOUNTANT FOR UNPLANNED CARE, WARRINGTON AND HALTON HOSPITALS NHS FT

CAREER STORY

Leaving school, Jessica knew that she didn't want to go to university so decided to go to college and study graphic design. After six months Jess knew that this wasn't for her but was unsure about what she wanted to do career wise.

Having moved from the Lake District to Widnes, Cheshire Jess decided to apply for an apprenticeship at a private accountancy firm. Although she was not successful in getting the role it did help her to decide to do her AAT Access course. This is level 1 AAT, a qualification in accounting that teaches you the very basic knowledge of accountancy principles, whilst doing 200 hours of work experience. From there Jess heard about an apprenticeship with skills for health and her NHS career began.

Jess joined the finance cadets which happened to be the last cohort of this particular scheme, the apprenticeship was a year's placement at an NHS Trust whilst studying level 2 AAT. Jess started in procurement and then spent the rest of the year working in management accounts, costing, financial planning and financial services. The placement gave her the opportunity to understand the different areas of NHS finance and how they all link together. At the end of the year, Jess secured a job in management accounts and has stayed in management accounts ever since. Jess feels very fortunate to have come across the apprenticeship in the NHS *'I always thought a career in the NHS was just doctors and nurses, didn't realise finance was an option, you don't realise until you are in the NHS that is a lot more than just doctors and nurses'*.

Jess has enjoyed her experience so much that she has her sister coming to the hospital to do some work experience with the finance team this summer.

When asked about career highlights Jess has 3 things that really stand out for her, firstly securing a permanent role at Warrington and Halton Hospitals NHS FT following the apprenticeship. Secondly helping other members of the team progress in their careers; two assistants in the team gained promotion after 12 months of being in Jess' team. Thirdly, working on a bed reconfiguration project that was passed and signed off by the trust board. Jess gained a lot of knowledge from this particular project, and it was so rewarding to see that this business case that she had been a part of made a positive difference to the overall care of patients.

When talking to finance professionals in the NHS about their typical days, one common theme always appears, there is no typical day. Whilst Jess' job role is so varied and can change every day the types of things she would usually do involve: meeting and advising budget holders, training them if they are new, helping with business cases, service level agreements, reconfigurations of wards.

When asked about the benefits for working in an NHS finance department, Jess says it is all about helping people. *'When I first started I didn't make the link but now more and more I am seeing the roles we have in finance does help those patients on the wards. Helping those patients who could at the end of the day be your family, friends or even yourself'*. When asked about the biggest challenges, for Jess it is trying to help everyone, which can be

quite demanding. Working for the NHS in pandemic was also a challenge, things had to be turned around a lot quicker. However, they learnt so much about themselves and their teams and could really rely on each other, it brought the team even closer together.

There is a really supportive and encouraging culture at Jess' organisation, if you want to shadow a department or spend a day elsewhere to learn more, such development opportunities are encouraged. Jess has spent a day at Warrington CGG to try and understand a bit more about the commissioning side of NHS Finance.

So, what next for Jessica Scott? Whilst Jess is not sure what her next career move might be, what she is sure of is staying in the NHS. For those thinking of starting their career as an NHS finance apprentice like Jess did, Jess advises *'If you are still unsure about joining the NHS on an apprenticeship ask someone who has done one, we are all happy to have a chat. The months I have spent in different departments really have given me useful knowledge for my career today. I knew I didn't want to go to university, so an apprenticeship was the right thing for me. Learning whilst you are doing your studies sets you up well for a good career in NHS finance.'*

The final words of advice from Jess to those considering a NHS finance apprenticeship... *'Go for it!!!'*

Film – Action movies or Marvel

Book – Anything that adds to learning

TV show – something that has been recommended by Eileen in work. Or Gardener's World, Saturday kitchen

Food – anything cooked by grandma