

NHS FINANCE CAREER STORIES

SUCCESSFUL MOVES BETWEEN NHS SECTORS



CAREER STORY

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SENIOR COST ACCOUNTANT AT GREATER MANCHESTER MENTAL HEALTH
NHS FOUNDATION TRUST



NHS FINANCE ROLES

Having graduated university with a degree in Accounting and Finance, Paul hoped to get his first role on the career ladder in finance and the NHS was the last place he expected to end up. Every Friday morning Paul used to look through the finance opportunities in the North West jobs paper however *'having come straight from university all of my experience at this stage was in retail, I had worked in Sainsbury's, McDonalds and worked in bars which made getting a finance role a little challenging at first.'* Paul was given his first finance job by Salford Royal NHS FT as a management accounts clerk in women's and children's services. After 19 years working across different NHS organisations in Greater Manchester, Paul believes his NHS career is for life.

For Paul, Salford Royal NHS FT was a great organisation to start off his NHS career. He had an excellent line manager who encouraged him to join the student networks and attend the student conferences, and also encouraged him to focus on his studies. At the first student conference he attended Paul was advised to stay in his role for two years, then look to move on to gain experience in other areas. Following this advice, Paul moved on from Salford Royal after 18 months and moved into his first commissioner role at Salford PCT as a finance officer working on Practice Based Commissioning (PBC). After two years in this role, Paul moved back to a provider organisation; this time to the Christie NHS Foundation Trust as an assistant divisional finance manager. The Christie is a specialist provider which meant Paul had a new type of organisation and culture to learn about. Here Paul spent seven years working on various projects including network services, the School of Oncology involving education and training, research and development, and the Christie Charity.

Following seven years at the Christie, Paul moved back into the world of commissioning as a senior finance analyst at Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale CCG where he stayed for four years. Here he was leading on the acute side of things which involved contract monitoring and negotiations, and management accounts. As all his previous roles were in management accounts so Paul was keen to expand his knowledge and learn about contracting, *'at the CCG I led on the provider contracts, the main one being Pennine Acute which was around £290 million which was great experience for me.'*

When considering his next move Paul wanted to work in an area that he had not worked in before to increase his breadth of knowledge and decided to apply for a role at Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS FT in costing. *'I had done several month and year-ends by this point and wanted to challenge myself in something new.'* This is Paul's current role and looking back throughout his NHS career to date it is clear that he likes the challenge and variation of trying different roles in different NHS sectors.



CAREER STORY AT A GLANCE

YEAR	JOB TITLE	AREAS	ORGANISATION
Late 2004	Management Account Clerk	Women & Children's	Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust
Early 2006	Finance Officer	Practice Based Commissioning (PCB)	NHS Salford PCT
Early 2008	Assistant Divisional Finance Manager	Network Services	The Christie NHS Foundation Trust
		School of Oncology (E&T)	
		Research & Development	
		The Christie Charity	
Late 2015	Senior Finance Analyst	Acute & ISP	NHS Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale CCG
Late 2019	Senior Cost Accountant	Costing - NCC	Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust

FAVOURITE CAREER MOMENTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Paul has thoroughly enjoyed his 19 years working in a variety of NHS organisations. One of his notable career achievements to date was using his skills to create a new and more efficient process for staff lists at Salford Royal. What was once a very time-consuming activity Paul managed to automate and save himself and colleagues a lot of time which was then rolled-out as best practice in his department and taught to his peers. He also managed to do something similar when he moved to the Christie for the board report.

Paul really enjoyed his time at the Christie where he had the same team for seven years. This organisation gave him a wide range of experience across the board. For example, the charity gave him experience in financial accounts, the R&D gave him exposure to professors and fellows, the School of Oncology taught him about education and training, and the network services involved him in getting out onto the wards to shadow nurses and care workers. Also at the Christie, Paul had experience of being on the CIP (Cost Improvement Plan) group, looking for efficiencies and the possibility of outsourcing opportunities *'the exposure and breadth of work was fantastic at the Christie.'*



CHALLENGES OF MOVING AROUND DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE NHS

Paul hasn't just chosen his roles based on pay-grade, but also because they provided opportunities and new learnings within different sectors in the NHS, *'as I move up, the experience across the board can only help me'*.

Despite believing that a broad depth of experience is really helpful in his current role and will serve him well in any future roles, there has been some challenges moving from one sector to another. When looking into moving to a commissioner following his time at the Christie, Paul did receive some feedback that he had spent too long in a specialist trust, and they were looking for someone with more commissioner experience. Despite having worked at a PCT they wanted CCG experience, however these push backs only motivated Paul to persevere and secure his next role in a CCG.

Paul has been able to use his commissioning experience when working in provider organisations, and vice-versa, which has helped bring different perspectives to his roles and helped him to succeed in them. When moving into mental health costing roles, Paul believes his experience across other sectors has helped him in gaining a role at Greater Manchester Mental Health.

EXPERIENCES OF RECRUITING

Candidates from outside the NHS often find it frustrating when they are turned away from roles due to lack of NHS experience and wonder how they can get NHS experience if they are never given an opportunity in. Those moving between NHS sectors also sometimes experience frustration when lack of experience in a certain sectors is the reason for not successfully obtaining a role. Diversity and breadth of experience and skills shouldn't be overlooked when looking for new staff.

At Greater Manchester Mental Health, Paul and his team have been recruiting for a costing role by using an alternative process to try and capture a wider breadth of applications. Within the advertisement they have removed costing and NHS experience from the job description / person specification and have decided to focus more on skillset, *'if they have the right skills, we can teach them mental health and we can teach them costing.'* They ended up giving the role to someone who was a recent university graduate with a master's degree in international business management. This candidate had Power BI and SQL knowledge and skills which they have been able to share with other members of the team. They now have a new employee and really pleased to be working in the NHS, and plan to continue and grow their career there.

'We need to remember that although staff who have the experience might be able to hit the ground running, bringing people in with the skill sets also is a good approach.'

ADVICE FOR THOSE LOOKING TO MOVE FROM ONE NHS SECTOR TO ANOTHER

It can be quite challenging moving from one to the other however Paul has shown throughout his career that it is entirely possible to do so. Paul advises *'if you are at a commissioning organisation, aim to get experience within the payment side of things, there is very little in the way of pay, budgets at commissioners unless you do the corporate areas. Whereas at an Acute trust it is all about your staff lists your whole times, skill mix changes, get someone to talk you through these.'* Paul advises to speak to people and do your research on the areas that you might not know so much about.

'Look at job descriptions and person specs, look at the key points and do your research, for example I looked at the costing systems suppliers here before applying for this role in costing.'

The NHS has so much publicly available information which should be helpful to anyone researching a new role. Paul also advises using your networks and speaking to colleagues who may have previously worked in the organisation or who currently works there and find out what the organisation is like. *'As I see it, moving around the NHS is a learning opportunity and it is good to know that the team you are going into is going to be supportive of your development.'*

The Finance Skills Development Network in the North West has played a massive role in Paul's career development and networks *'Salford Royal were brilliant as a first NHS organisation to work for as they got me involved in FSD from the get-go. I went on their student conference in my first year and then joined the organising committee before getting involved in the student forum.'* Paul advises to take advantage of the development opportunities and networks that are available to you from the Skills Development Network, HFMA and One NHS Finance.

WHAT IS NEXT?

Paul's immediate priority is to finish his last exam and become CIMA qualified, then look to move to Band 8 roles.

'Now I have worked across multiple sectors I do not feel limited in where I could go. The moving around different NHS sectors for me has been very deliberate. Don't move for the sake of moving, think about your next role, switch between commissioner and provider and get that breadth of experience.'

FINAL WORDS

'Understand the challenges, read the news articles, don't be afraid to move around yes, it is different but it is a learning experience.'

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If you have any questions on any of the above or would like any further information, then please get in touch with the team at one.finance@nhs.net

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