

NHS FINANCE CAREER STORIES

SUCCESSFUL MOVES BETWEEN NHS SECTORS



CAREER STORY

JENNIFER KLOMECAH

FINANCE MANAGER AT WRIGHTINGTON, WIGAN AND LEIGH NHS FOUNDATION TRUST



CAREER STORY

Jennifer graduated from the Manchester Metropolitan University in 2009 with a degree in Accounting and Finance. This was a particularly difficult time for graduates to be finding jobs with the recession, so Jennifer initially tried to sign-on for benefits. However, when trying to do this Jennifer was offered a placement with the Housing Association, which turned into a permanent role, and they funded her ACCA accountancy qualification. Jennifer spent the next 4 years at the Housing Association where they gave her time to study and supported her through the qualification. Unfortunately, by the time she qualified there was no role to step up into there, so she decided to make a move into the private sector.

This by Jennifer's own admission was not the right step in her career *'it just wasn't the right organisation for me, I experienced discrimination and there were many cliques which made it a difficult working environment.'* Following 11 months in the private sector, Jennifer spoke to a recruitment agency about other opportunities and applied successfully for a fixed-term contract role in the NHS and never looked back.

This first NHS role was at Mersey Care NHS FT which is a mental health and community provider. Jennifer really enjoyed working at Mersey Care, *'it was a great place to work with fantastic staff, I felt like I was really supported to develop in the role.'* As this was Jennifer's first NHS role, the greatest challenges for her were learning the NHS language, abbreviations and acronyms but Mersey Care were so welcoming, and Jennifer found it a great place to start her NHS career. As this role was just a one-year contract whilst they were going through a restructure, Jennifer knew that she had to look for her next role and was supported by the organisation in applying for her next NHS job at Alder Hey Children's Hospital NHS FT.

Following 3.5 years at Alder Hey Children's Hospital NHS FT, Jennifer was looking for progression and decided to apply for a role at Bolton CCG. This was Jennifer's first time working for a commissioner which although very different was very interesting and gave Jennifer a chance to gain wider experience. *'Going from a provider to an organisation where the funding comes from and where the decisions are made gave me a better overview of how things work in the NHS.'* Living in Liverpool and driving to Bolton everyday wasn't easy but the sacrifice paid off as after a year Jennifer was promoted at the CCG. Following 2.5 years at the CCG Jennifer moved to her current role, Finance Manager in reporting and service development at Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS FT, her first time in an acute provider.

Moving back into a trust at a slightly more senior level, Jennifer reflects that there may be a few gaps in knowledge or experience around how things run operationally but believes this is something that can be learnt with a bit of time and support. *'I don't think it is a disadvantage in any way moving from a commissioner to a provider. Understanding the commissioner perspective as well helps you with your work in a trust.'*

Whilst Jennifer fell into a career in the NHS rather than choosing it from the outset, she now sees it as a career for the long-term. Hybrid working and working from home means that you can work anywhere, the NHS is everywhere and there are now less obstacles to move around to different NHS organisations. Jennifer believes that *'once you get to know the systems, terminology, the ways of working - it is easy to transfer.'*



CAREER STORY AT A GLANCE

DATES	JOB TITLE	ORGANISATION
Nov 2015 to Sept 2016	Management Accountant	Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust
Sept 2016 to Jan 2020	Assistant Divisional Accountant / Systems Accountant	Alder Hey Children’s Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
Jan 2020 to May 2022	Lead Management Accountant	NHS Bolton CCG
Jul 2022 to present	Finance Manager	Wrightington, Wigan And Leigh NHS Foundation Trust

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO SOMEONE STARTING IN A NEW ORGANISATION?

‘Follow through on the induction process’. For Jennifer having a great induction was instrumental for her in settling into the role and to ‘hit the ground running’. Jennifer was also assigned a ‘finance buddy’ to help her settle in and have someone to go to if she needed help or advice. As part of her induction Jennifer met with all of the different divisional teams, understanding their typical days and what they do and how that related to her role. ‘That was really helpful for me, especially working from home you don’t get to see or interact with a lot of people. My role is a little bit independent, reporting for the whole organisation, so I don’t sit with a divisional team, so it was essential for me to be able to put faces to names and understand who is doing what and who to ask.’

Having worked in mental health, specialist, commissioner and acute organisations in the NHS, Jennifer understands that people may worry about the knowledge gap when moving sectors. To overcome these worries Jennifer advises to ask questions and spend time doing some research into the organisation. Once you are in the organisation you have access to much more information than you had before. *‘You could go through some old financial reports, to get some knowledge and context behind the figures. Talk to people and attend some of the operational meetings to build up that knowledge.’*

Jennifer reflects that it might be a little overwhelming at first, but you pick up things and moving between NHS sectors really helps with your knowledge and should be seen as a positive. When starting her new role at WWL she spent a lot of time with operational managers and divisional accountants, to hear about business cases, service developments and other big issues that need to be mentioned in reports. *‘I work in a reporting role, and I can’t report on the figures if I don’t know the story behind them. Invest the time when you first start.’*



WHAT DO YOU ENJOY MOST ABOUT WORKING IN THE NHS?

Jennifer has worked in the NHS for 7 years in a variety of organisations and enjoys the flexibility to move around and build up experience.

In her current role she is leading on a project developing an app as a reporting tool for senior budget holders. So, the ability to work on innovative new projects and picking up new skills is a great benefit of working in an NHS finance department.

ANY OTHER ADVICE TO COLLEAGUES LOOKING TO MAKE A CAREER MOVE?

‘For me one of the things that I really value is having good relationships with my colleagues, my managers, they have supported me in my career development and career moves. Take the time to network and develop relationships with colleagues and speak to more senior colleagues and learn from them.’

Jennifer also advised to share your experiences so that others can learn. Jennifer has joined the One NHS Finance Sponsorship Programme and has built many professional relationships through the initiative and network. *‘Use the programmes and resources available to you like on the One NHS Finance website.’*



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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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