

Author: Geoff Lawrence**Date: 18th September 2023****Who am I?**

My name is Geoff Lawrence. I work for Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust as an Associate Director – Contracts and Due Diligence. I have been with the Trust since December 2019 working with both the Trust and the CCG(s)/ICB. I have a degree from Canterbury Christchurch University in Business and Administration in Health and Social Care

Career Path:

Nothing is definite in life and your career can never be predicted from your first day to your last. In September 1980 as a fresh faced 17 year old, I started work at Barclays in Northumberland Avenue just a stones throw from Trafalgar Square and Nelsons Column. For the next 20 years, I learnt my craft in International Banking especially in stocks and shares and international investment. I climbed the ladder through various international banks, Canadian, Japanese and American and in 2000 became a Vice President for Citi Private Bank working in London and Geneva.

In 2007, I was made redundant due to the impending global credit crisis and found myself at a career crossroads. Do I continue to work London or do I work closer to home. During the winter I applied for several positions and someone suggested I applied to the NHS. I applied for several Finance post yet found this a difficult nut to crack. No accountancy experience or qualifications did not help. I applied for a SLA Manager post at Medway NHS Foundation Trust. With contract management experience to support my application, I was successful at interview and joined in March 2008.

I stayed at Medway for 8 years leaving as a Contracts Manager before joining Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust for a year and then joined NHS England Specialised Commissioning until ill health and an organisational restructure meant that I once again I had to review my personal situation. I was fortunate that KMPT got in touch and offered me a secondment which became a substantial post 6 months later.

The only thing my professional career path I could attribute to planning was the decision in 1979 to apply for jobs in London. Everything after was down to circumstance. Many opportunities presented themselves whether financial or a change in direction. All of the banking posts that I accepted added to my experience, most good and one not so good, but I learnt an incredible amount.

The NHS gave me an opportunity, one that I believe I have embraced and one in which I made many, many friends, learned a lot from colleagues both clinical and non-clinical and given me a professional life that I could never have dreamt of.

From high tech, business intelligent, state of the art offices, accompanied by a near paperless environment and a legislative minefield, I joined an organisation, swamped by paper, out of date computers, 1970's telephones and a catastrophic network of individual computer systems. I was not expecting such a difference.

However, what I did find were people prepared to go the extra mile, every minute of every day. People who cared and people who prepared to do whatever it took to make sure that every single patient had the best of care.

The career low has to being made redundant. The highlights are many but you cannot beat the network I have in the NHS and that continues to grow. Being a Sponsor, a FACE and a value maker certainly helps.

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Current role

Most days, I chair and attend meetings revolved around out of area placements all with the ideal of improving patient care. In addition, I also monitor the MH financial exposure and am currently working on our autistic cohort who are currently placed out of area to ensure that the proper finance and contractual controls are in place.

I love the interaction and reflecting on how I have been able to influence people and teams to improve pathways and service for the good of our patients. I working hard in developing a senior manager style that is authoritative but without taking away that team approach that I love to instil.

Personal Development

I am an extrovert, who loves working with people but am always prepared to listen. Someone once said to me listen to all the advice you are being given but remember you do not have to take it. There have been many influences on my life both inside and out of the NHS. I have my ex manager at 3 of the banks but in the NHS, my current line manager and soon to be CEO of my Trust, has to be the greatest influence on my NHS career. She has shown faith in my ability, recognised my wealth of knowledge and supported me at my lowest. Without her, I would not be the professional that I am today.

I continue to learn and have no regrets over my chosen career path. I now share my wealth of knowledge with 2 sponsees and also continue to work with the National and Regional Finance Academy and the HFMA. I am keen to give back to those starting on their chosen career path by showing how it can be done. I have just joined the HFMA Coaching Scheme as I look towards trying to secure a Director post in the near future.

Work-Life Balance

Outside of work, I am married and enjoy travelling with my wife, who also works in the NHS and have 24 year-old twin daughters. I enjoy playing golf am Treasurer and Trustee of the Oliver Fisher Special Care Baby Trust I also deliver patient experience presentations for Kings College Hospital to doctors and nurses about my life dealing with blood cancer.

Reflection

My biggest work-related achievement was in recognition of my teams work for KMPT at the HSJ Patient Safety Awards in 2022.

If someone asked what I would do different, I would say join the NHS sooner. Banking gave me a superb life with all the trappings of earning a high salary and travelling Europe. The NHS gave me so much more and gave me my life.

Back in 2008, the person who was interviewing me for the job at Medway and he asked me why I wanted to join the NHS. It was a simple answer. I said "If I can improve patient care by 1% by doing my job to the best of my ability every day, then I have succeeded"