

# CASE STUDY: PROMOTING NHS FINANCE CAREERS THROUGH UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS

GREATER MANCHESTER MENTAL HEALTH NHS FT



# INTRODUCTION

Promoting NHS finance careers is a key theme at Future-Focused Finance and an integral part of the new [NHS finance Promotion, Recruitment, and Retention Strategy](#). One of the actions to meet this objective involves establishing links with local colleges and universities to offer finance placements. This case study showcases Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust’s (GMMH) collaboration with the University of Salford to offer internships and sandwich placements to students.

Suzanne Robinson CFO for Greater Manchester Mental Health and Future-Focused Finance Chair is an alumnus of Salford University and credits the university for her academic qualifications that have shaped her career today. Following her time at Salford University Suzanne wasn’t sure what she wanted to do for a job but was advised by someone in the careers service to have a look at the NHS graduate scheme. Suzanne then went and spent some time in her local hospital in their finance department to see what working in the NHS was all about and for Suzanne that was it – the NHS was the place where she wanted to pursue her career. Now as a Chief Finance Officer, Suzanne has reconnected with Salford University to promote NHS finance careers to current students.

# BACKGROUND

Whilst GMMH has supported many students through internships if and when local students have contacted them about placements, there has never been a formal structured internship programme in place.

The finance department at GMMH is always looking for ways to link into local communities and offer opportunities so initiated discussions about creating structured placements and internships with Salford University. This new internship scheme aimed to build stronger links with the university and encourage students to consider careers in the NHS and join the NHS family.

The finance department already has three standing placements for sandwich placement students, where those studying take a year out in industry. This new internship scheme is a really good first step into introducing students to the NHS before hopefully applying for a longer or more permanent scheme or position.

# IMPLEMENTATION

The finance department at GMMH planned a structured internship program. Initially, they intended for students to apply and be interviewed by the department itself, but due to timing conflicts with exams, the university conducted an internal selection process. The students selected were all studying finance as part of their degree programmes and had completed their first year of university.

Ten students were chosen for two-week full-time placements in the summer holidays, rotating through different areas of finance such as management accounts, financial accounts, costing, innovation and strategy, and systems team. This approach gave students a comprehensive overview of the finance department’s operations and an insight into what real life finance in industry looks like.

The trust ran the placements over a five week period so the ten students were not all in at the same time.

The internships required students to be present in the office every day this was down to things such as IT equipment but also gave the students an opportunity to really experience an office environment. Timetables for students were coordinated to align with the department’s hybrid working schedule, below is an example of how they split out the two weeks:

		Area;	70 hours
11	am	Management Accounts	<b>Intro DoF</b>
	pm		<b>Shadowing DoF/IDoF/ADoF</b>
12	am	Management Accounts	<b>Financial Management</b>
	pm		Introduction to budget statements
13	am	Financial Services	Shadow Budget Clinics
	pm		Shadow SLT
14	am	Management Accounts	Costing an investment proposal
	pm		Shadow month end meeting
15	am	Management Accounts	Shadow Senior Managers meeting
	pm		Introduction to Clinical & Corporate teams
18	am	Strategy, Income, Systems, Costing	Introduction to month end processes
	pm		Overview of accruals/prepayments
19	am	Procurement	<b>Strategy, Innovation, Costing</b>
	pm		<b>Procurement</b>
#	am	Financial Services	<b>Financial Services (AP, AR, Technical)</b>
	pm		
21	am	Financial Services	
	pm		
#	am	AVP	
	pm		

## FEEDBACK

Feedback from students, university lecturers and staff was overwhelmingly positive. Students appreciated the practical experience and expressed interest in pursuing further opportunities in NHS finance, such as sandwich placements and the NHS Graduate Scheme. For staff it has been so rewarding to see students who previously had no idea that a career in NHS finance even existed to actively looking to pursue one in the future. It also offered resource to the team from bright young students keen to learn and get involved in tasks of the finance department.

## FUTURE PLANS

The department very much plans to run the Internship Scheme again but with current gaps in the team are taking some time to think about how they can launch it for this year. The trust is very central locality wise, with services covering Salford, Bolton, Trafford, Manchester and Wigan and they want to be fair with access for the whole area. If they continue to just work with one university, it could mean students that might be interested from other universities don't get the chance to apply. The department are looking at the logistics of expanding partnerships to other universities within their service area to ensure a fair and open process.

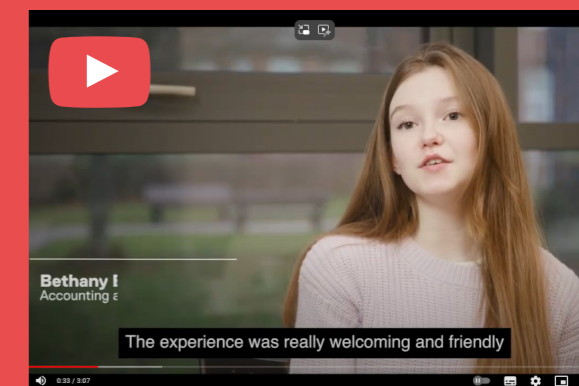
The aim of the department is to establish a continuous flow from internships to sandwich placements, eventually leading to permanent NHS roles. There are some challenges recruiting people, so this is a fantastic opportunity to grow their own from the local communities.

## ADVICE TO OTHERS CONSIDERING STARTING A SCHEME

- Plan Ahead: Identify projects that could benefit from student involvement.
- Commit Resources: Ensure staff availability to mentor students, it is very intensive so be aware of that before you start the programme.
- Simplify Rotations: Consider less frequent rotations to reduce induction time.
- Accommodate Hybrid Working: Align internships with in-office schedules or alternatively ask staff to come in more than they usually would just for the period of the placements.
- 'Just do it!'

GMMH's experience demonstrates the mutual benefits of university partnerships in promoting NHS finance careers, offering valuable insights for other organisations considering similar initiatives.

You can hear about the positive experiences of the scheme on the short video here:



## FURTHER RESOURCES



### NHS GRADUATE MANAGEMENT TRAINING SCHEME

[View here](#)



### NHS FINANCE ENTRY ROUTES

[View here](#)



### LATEST NHS FINANCE JOB VACANCIES

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



One NHS Finance brings together the Future-Focused Finance, National Finance Academy, and the Finance Innovation Forum programmes and networks to make sure that everyone working in NHS Finance has access to skills, knowledge, methods, and opportunities to influence and enhance patient services.

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](mailto:one.finance@nhs.net)

<https://financecareers.nhs.uk>

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