

Laurence Patrick

About Me:

I'm Laurence Patrick and I've been working as a Finance Business Partner at NHS Greater Manchester (GM) for the past 12 months. I joined the NHS in 2017 via a local placement scheme and never left. I graduated from Manchester Metropolitan University in Accounting & Finance in 2019.

My Role:

As a Finance Business Partner one of my main responsibilities is that I work closely with contracting and commissioners (service leads) managing contracts with NHS and Independent Sector providers on behalf of NHS GM. This responsibility can vary from ensuring the accurate financial reporting of activity, processing invoices, analysing activity for future investment or service redesigns and enacting the latest national guidance.

The other main element of my role is helping commissioners manage the Mental Health Service Development Funding for NHS GM. A national allocation given to every integrated care board across the country to be spent on nationally set priorities and strategies. This involves working on contracts, reviewing costings to ensure value for money and the accurate reporting of the fund internally and nationally.

Career Path/Career Journey:

My first role in the NHS started after a gruelling search for placements during my second year at university to help booster my employability with potential graduate employers. I luckily secured a role as a youthful student placement for 12 months at Salford Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) with my time split 50/50 between contracting and management accounts. This allowed me to gain first hand experience of NHS financial processes and was a great introduction to the NHS.

During my time I was able to meet a range of qualified accountants from all the different bodies showing me the differences between the professional qualifications like CIMA, ACCA, CIPFA and ICAEW which then meant I could make an informed decision on my final year modules to gain as many exemptions as possible. This meant less exams further down the line!

This role was then extended to part time working one day a week through my final year of studies. I was grateful for this opportunity as it meant I could continue building on previous experience and wouldn't need to find a part time job to support me through my final year of study. They showed great flexibility with my working days, allowing me to concentrate on my exams when required!

After graduating since I was able to keep up with the network I'd built, I secured a development role as a contracting and finance assistant at Salford CCG which allowed me to start studying and progressing towards my professional qualification with ACCA whilst gaining more

experience managing in contracts and reporting on secondary care (hospital) activity.

It took roughly two years to complete my studies with ACCA and become a qualified accountant. At which time I had secured a senior management accountant role at Salford CCG (again) working in primary care (general practice) services. This was a great opportunity as I had only ever worked around secondary care so was able to widen my knowledge about a different but very important sector of healthcare. This role involved liaising and advising general practices in Salford around their contractual finances, managing and reporting on nationally funded schemes like the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme (ARRs) and collaborating with commissioners to develop fully costed locally commissioned schemes. It then allowed me to start developing my managerial experience by managing the current placement students using my own experience to help them develop and succeed.

During this time the NHS was going through nationally mandated change. Clinical Commissioning Groups were disbanded and merged into Integrated Care Boards (ICBs). This was an unsettling time but thanks to this experience I have learnt that change also brings about opportunity! After 2 years I was able to secure a finance manager role at NHS GM based in a locality finance team. This role was an expansion of my previous role still working in primary care but gaining new experience around adult social care and collaborating closely with our local authority colleagues by managing and reporting on joint budgets. This was a step up giving me insight to how finance functions collaborate at a higher level for planning and strategy across multiple organisations and healthcare sectors.

After 16 months I secured my new role as a finance business partner within the central contract and finance team.

Work-Life Balance:

In my spare time I find hiking and badminton really help me switch off from work. I try to do both once a week with friends and family. Having plans with friends during annual leave means I can fully relax and normally come back recharged and raring to go.