

Michael Hau

About Me:

I am currently Head of Finance at Coventry and Warwickshire ICB where I manage a small team with the responsibility of overall financial management, advice, and support on all aspects of financial planning, monitoring, and reporting in relation to all primary care budgets across the ICB. I completed a degree in Business and Finance prior to achieving the milestone of becoming a fellow of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA); a journey that I look back on with immense pride but also astonishment with how I managed to fit in study whilst working full time.

Career Journey:


I like to think of my career as a journey rather than a path. A path makes out it was planned and without setbacks. My journey to date has certainly been fulfilling and one but one that I would not have realised without a bit of grafting, personal drive and luck thrown in.

After a few years working in a small accountancy practice, my first real exposure to the NHS came when I switched jobs to work for consultancy firm UHY Hacker Young. As a firm with specialising in NHS consultancy and the commercial sector I was fortunate to work on some high-profile assignments across both the NHS and the public sector in what was arguably a turning point in my career.

After 3 long hard years of balancing 12 hour work days with study I had finally qualified as an accountant and it was at this point that I seriously considered a finance career in the NHS. As one of the largest employers across Europe I felt the NHS had much to offer in terms of career progression and work life balance and wanted to work for the NHS rather than with the NHS as a client. After having worked in the commercial sector for several years I felt there was a lot I could potentially offer in terms of commercial skills and knowledge acquired from different industries that could be applied to NHS organisations.

NHS Finance:

If you speak to finance staff who have worked in the NHS long enough not many would argue that NHS Finance and the role of accountants in general has evolved over the last 10-15 years. When I first started out at a Primary Care Trust it was very much about the core functions such as financial management and control which is admittedly is still the bedrock of what NHS Finance about but increasingly accountants are now diversifying and finding their professional training combined with a deep knowledge of core NHS functions are very much in demand. The need for leadership, inspiring others, solving complex problems, and balancing highly sensitive and often complex issues are in demand and are examples of where NHS Finance can add value. Wherever we look



there are now many examples of organisations with leaders who have financial backgrounds in positions that affect patient's lives and ultimately their health outcomes.

The changing needs of the role of finance is certainly something that recognised by organisations and pioneered by the likes of HFMA, NHS Employers, Kings Fund and other training bodies. There is now so much in the way of support both in house and externally with greater emphasis on mentoring, coaching, owning and driving personal development but also on the skills development with no shortage of willing providers. There has never been a more challenging yet better time to work in the NHS with the level of support and development on offer.

Personal Development:

The greatest thing about a career in NHS finance is that given the right attitude and approach to work you can now access a wide range of networks and resources to support and guide you to achieving you career aspirations whatever that may be. Whilst I've never engaged a mentor through my development, I wish I had and done it sooner because I think I would have benefitted from learning from those who have achieved their ambitions and the steps and pitfalls they took and avoided.

Despite this I have worked with some talented individuals, many of whom went on to become Finance Directors and Chief Finance officers. The one thing they all had was the ability to structure and articulate ideas; to see all sides of the argument, to engage key stakeholders at all levels and the ability to take a balanced view based on all information available. This is an area where I would personally want to develop and through working with One NHS Finance and the developing talent programme. Through a structured development plan and regular 1:1s I feel adequately supported to be able to achieve my goals. Naturally, there is a commitment on both sides.

Work-Life Balance:

This is an area that is often overlooked and but is increasingly of importance especially post pandemic. Naturally most people only see the physical aspects of a good work life balance to such as agile working and flexible hours, but it is the silent symptoms of isolation, stress and depression that can impact people's mental health and their effectiveness at the workplace. As a health and wellbeing warrior for the finance team I work in collaboration with the HR team to ensure that staff are balanced and happy which should lead to a healthier workforce who are more productive and likely to stay in their jobs.

As someone who avidly enjoys running and cycling, I most associate good work life balance with a healthy and active lifestyle. I find this provides me with energy and drive to maintain a high level of focus throughout the day. However, for many it is much more than this and is something that I aspire to help my team and others to develop through my role as a manager, a health and wellbeing warrior and as an individual role model for others within the NHS network and wider community.

