

CLAIRE LEATHER
HEAD OF FINANCE
WARRINGTON AND HALTON TEACHING HOSPITALS NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

CAREER PATH

Management Accounts – Divisional Accountant – Womens and Childrens - November 2007 – March 2012

I joined the Management Accounts team at Warrington and Halton Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust in November 2007 as a Band 8a Divisional Accountant. Within this role I was the main finance contact and lead for the Women's and Children's Health care group and some of the corporate areas of the Trust. This role included producing monthly management accounts, supporting year and final accounts, producing costings for service developments and providing advice and guidance to budget holders and senior managers to aid decision making and financial management. I also had responsibility for managing 2 members of staff including their training and development. This was my first senior finance role within the NHS, and I was supported in developing by internal shadowing, attending conferences and FSD courses.

Management Accounts – Divisional Accountant – Unscheduled Care – April 2012 – March 2018

Following maternity leave I returned to the Management Accounts team again as divisional accountant, but now supporting unscheduled care which included all emergency and non-elective care as well as the medical specialties. This opportunity to move to support a different care group gave me the opportunity to both broaden my experience and knowledge across other areas of the Trust and also to work with new people which supported my on-going learning and development at the Trust.

Management Accounts – Senior Business Accountant – Acute Care Services -April 2018 – September 2022

After a successful application and interview I was given the opportunity to move to into the Band 8b Senior Business Accountant role within the management accounts team covering Acute Care Services. This role gave me the opportunity to get more involved with more strategic work, supporting longer term change and sustainability within the care group. I had the opportunity to be the financial lead on service changes within the care group which increased my exposure to various clinical areas throughout the trust, increasing my knowledge and skills. It also meant establishing my team within financial management and helping to support and develop them as well as developing our financial reporting. This

increased my confidence in working with others and gave me the opportunity to be part of the success and progression of others which I found rewarding. Whilst in this role I decided to become part of the sponsorship programme and asked the Director of Finance at that time to be my sponsor. This gave me a greater exposure both within and outside of the Trust and the opportunity to work with my sponsor as a mentor to explore what I wanted to do next and how I could acquire the necessary skills and experience to get there.

Finance – Head of Finance GIRFT - October 2022 – May 2024

After gaining lots of experience across different roles I applied for an internal secondment opportunity for a Head of Finance role focusing on improvements and efficiencies. This was both because I was interested in working more in depth within improvement and having a positive impact on changes for our patients and as a result of having a better understanding of what direction I wanted to move in as a result of being part of the sponsorship programme. The role involved working with the national GIRFT (Getting It Right First Time) role with a focus on improvement to patient pathways and clinical services to ensure longer term sustainability as well as delivering efficiencies as part of our wider Trust CIP (Cost Improvement Plan) plans. This in itself was a great learning opportunity, and I had the chance to work more closely with clinicians and really get involved with improving things for our patients. It also exposed me to project management and increased internal and external reporting and the importance of governance.

Finance – Head of Finance -Improvement, Performance and Commercial Development - June 2024 – Present

Following some changes in the senior team I have had the opportunity to expand my role to also cover performance and commercial development since June 2024. Through my financial management background, I have had previous experience of commercial development, in particular supporting with financial aspects of revenue requests and business planning, but in my new role I will oversee the whole process and review, so lots of new skills to be developed! This links in well with the improvement work that I support, in that any service development, investment or strategic business plans we want to pursue should be aligned with our improvement priorities, so I am in an ideal position to ensure this is happening and to identify where any areas within these that could support efficiency and sustainability.

Performance is also linked to our Trusts improvement plans in terms of monitoring our progress and highlighting areas we need more support. It supports our quarterly QPS (Quality, People and Sustainability) reviews which pulls performance, business plans and improvement all together. This is a new area to me, and I am looking forward to understanding this more and expanding my knowledge, skills and learning in this area to better support the Trusts longer term sustainability and improvements.