

NATHAN CHRISTOPHER

FINANCIAL PLANNING

WARRINGTON AND HALTON TEACHING HOSPITALS NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

CAREER JOURNEY

Financial Services (April 2009 – June 2012)

I started working as a Financial Accounts Assistant in April 2009, and my main responsibilities were monthly balance sheet reconciliations, quarterly Agreement of Balances exercises, amending and uploading Payroll and Pharmacy files into the ledger and raising debtor invoices when necessary. It was during this role that I started my CIMA studies (Autumn 09) having previously completed AAT at night school before I joined the NHS. I left this role by moving to Management Accounts in order to gain further NHS finance experience, and to give me practical experience with other aspects of my CIMA studies.

Management Accounts (June 2012 – July 2014)

During this time I worked as a Management Accounts Assistant for the Scheduled Care division of the Trust, within a sub team of 3 including myself. I was responsible for month end tasks including posting accruals, prepayments, deferred income etc. to the ledger in order to report an accurate financial position. I met with budget holders on a month basis to discuss their financial position, and helped them where applicable in a bid to reduce spend, for example by calculating various skill mixes the budget holders could use to stay in line with their budget but that would enable them to offer quality patient care. I was part of the annual budget setting process during my entire time within Management Accounts (both in this role and the next to be mentioned), which was crucial in order to set realistic and achievable budgets for each of the departments within our domain. I left this role for a promotion within the same department.

Management Accounts (July 2014 – Mar 2017)

After successfully applying for an internal role, I became Assistant Divisional Accountant for the Unscheduled Care Division in July 2014, again working in a sub team of 3 including myself. Within this role I was responsible for one member of staff (who did a similar role to my previous one) and took on more responsibility with regards to being out and about within the division, meeting with more senior clinically based staff in order to report their budgets, and to work with them in order for them to be able to reduce spend where possible. I deputised for the Divisional Accountant as and when required. It was during this position that I completed my CIMA studies, having passed my final exam in December 2014 and completing my log book in December 2016.

Financial Planning (Apr 2017 – present)

I joined the Financial Planning team as Costing Accountant in April 2017. At this time the Trust had signed up to the national Costing Transformation Programme led by NHS England in a project to help standardise costing across NHS bodies by moving away from the traditional Reference Costs submission to the National Cost Collection. This project was phased over 5 years initially (although COVID delayed progress) with each year implementing new costing standards and datasets/national mapping to increase the quality of the data outputs.

My first task in this role was to help build the new system to set it up for both internal Service Line Reporting and external Reference Costs/National Cost Collection submissions.

I was responsible for leading on the SLR process from start to finish to generate outputs to show where the Trust was profitable. I worked closely with the DataWarehouse team to ensure the data used in the system was accurate and fit for purpose. I managed the Assistant Costing Accountant and helped structure their workload to ensure that SLR and the NCC were completed to a high standard. In May 2020 I was appointed Senior Costing Accountant for an initial 6 month period which was then made permanent. Since then, I have led the team to improve on current SLR/NCC processes to provide a more accurate output, which is important given the financial pressure on the organisation. I now manage the Costing Accountant role and ensure the team are capable of carrying out their tasks to a high level by promoting any training that would be beneficial. Soon after moving into this role I had to recruit into the 2 other roles and build a new team, which are now well established and well versed in their roles.

The WHH Costing Team were shortlisted for the HFMA National Costing award in 2022 and attended an event in London to represent the Trust. Although the Team were not successful, to have been shortlisted and recognised was a massive achievement for us and I am exceptionally proud of us all. I was also shortlisted for an award at the HFMA Northwest event in 2024.

The Team have presented at the annual national HFMA Costing event and regionally at NHS England events about their costing journey and problems we have overcome. We also presented to the Northern Ireland Department of Health who are undertaking a similar CTP process.

I work closely with the Trust Get it Right First Time (GIRFT) lead to help identify opportunities where the Trust can improve productivity and efficiency. A large monetary value has been allocated to this improvement working out of the total Trust CIP allocation. External benchmarking is used to monitor how the Trust compares to the national average and highlights reasons why the Trust is running at a deficit. This data can be used to improve pathways and streamline processes to enable better patient flow, and can also be used to highlight external factors with the ICB for them to consider.