

Career Story

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I've spent my career in NHS finance, progressing from junior roles to Deputy Director, which has given me a very practical view of what good finance looks like in reality. Coming through that route has definitely shaped how I see the job. For me, finance has always felt quite practical and close to the frontline—it's not just about reporting numbers, but about helping services keep going and improving where they can.

Early on, I was doing the basics—processing transactions, working on controls, and getting a feel for how things worked day to day. That grounding has stayed with me and still influences how I look at things now. Over time, my role shifted from producing information to actually using it to support decisions, and looking back, that felt like a real turning point. It became less about the numbers themselves and more about what you do with them.

A lot of the organisations I've worked in have been under real financial pressure and, if I'm honest, that's probably where I feel I've been most useful. In a number of roles, I've supported the delivery of recurring savings programmes—typically in the range of £10–£20m annually—working with operational colleagues to move plans from paper into something deliverable. I've always found something quite engaging about working with people to get through difficult situations and find a way forward, rather than just pointing out what's wrong. In several cases, that's meant helping organisations bring positions back under control and meet statutory financial duties where there had been a risk of deficit.

Becoming a Deputy Director in 2012 was another step up and broadened things quite a bit. I took responsibility for large parts of the financial planning and reporting cycle, including leading on the development of annual plans and in-year recovery actions. Getting involved in areas like contracting, procurement and audit helped me see how everything connects across an organisation, not just within finance. For example, I've led on contract negotiations with commissioners and key providers, helping to secure more realistic positions and manage financial risk in-year.

Since then, I've also taken on Director roles on an interim basis and spent time working at Executive level. In those roles, I've overseen budgets of several hundred million pounds and worked closely with Boards to navigate challenging financial positions. That included presenting recovery plans, supporting difficult decisions around service change, and ensuring organisations remained compliant with regulatory and statutory requirements.

Coming through from the ground up means I still pay attention to detail, but I also have a good sense of what's actually realistic and deliverable in practice—which isn't always the same as what looks right on paper.

As my role has developed, I've found I think less in terms of big, one-off achievements and more about what you consistently deliver over time. Much of my career has been in organisations facing financial challenges, where my role has often been about keeping things on track—delivering savings, maintaining control, and consistently achieving financial balance or near-balance positions in difficult circumstances. That consistency is probably what I'm most proud of. It doesn't always stand out, but it matters.

I've been involved in larger pieces of work as well—supporting business cases for capital schemes, contributing to service reconfiguration, and working on system planning across organisations. In practice, those have involved working through complexity, bringing different stakeholders together, and keeping momentum over long periods rather than anything particularly technical in isolation.

More recently, I've spent more time working at system level, which has been a different kind of challenge. For example, I've contributed to system financial plans and helped align organisational positions with wider ICS priorities, often where there hasn't been full control. It's less about direct authority and more about influence—balancing competing priorities and maintaining financial grip across multiple organisations.

The same probably applies to leadership. Over time, I've become more comfortable with an approach that's fairly straightforward and down to earth. I like to understand what's really going on and keep things as simple as possible. In one role, for example, we had a reporting pack that ran to over 25 pages but wasn't being used effectively outside finance. We reduced it significantly—focusing on key risks, trends and actions—which led to better engagement from clinical and operational leads and more focused decision-making.

Relationships matter a lot as well. When things get difficult—and they usually do at some point—trust makes a big difference, so I try to build that early rather than wait until it's needed. I'm also comfortable being honest when I need to be. There have been times where I've had to clearly set out that plans weren't affordable or delivery was off track, and work with colleagues to reset expectations and agree alternative approaches.

Alongside all of that, there's always been a strong sense of responsibility around public money. That's something that's stayed with me from the start and still shapes how I approach decisions.

Looking ahead, I'd like to keep building on my experience at system level. I'm particularly interested in how organisations can work more effectively together, because

a lot of the challenges we face don't sit neatly in one place—particularly around financial sustainability and service change.

At this stage in my career, I'm less focused on job titles and more on where I can genuinely add value—ideally in roles where there's some complexity and something that needs fixing or improving. I'd also like to support others coming through the profession. I've had some good opportunities along the way, and I try to create similar opportunities within my teams through development and support.

Looking back, my career has really been about steady progression and building experience over time rather than big standout moments. Working in challenging environments has shaped how I approach things—probably making me more pragmatic and focused on solutions. When things are difficult, I tend to step in rather than step back.

If there's one thing that sums up how I work, it's consistency. I keep going, work through issues, and try to move things forward. It's not always that visible day to day, but over time it adds up—and that's what really matters.