

STAFF STORIES

Chris Walker

Chris has worked within the NHS for almost 30 years and during that time has seen many changes. He tells us why he believes that every person who works within the NHS is contributing to patient care and why as a Dudley lad, he relished the chance to work at his local hospital.



When did you first start working in the NHS?

I started working as a trainee accountant in 1992 with the West Midlands Regional Health Authority based in Birmingham and back in those days we were all based in large corporate offices, not within the hospitals.

We were encouraged to do hands on work experience within the different hospitals in Birmingham, so we understood what the NHS was really there for and how we were contributing to patient care.

Can you talk me through your different roles during your time with the NHS and explain a little about each one?

I initially moved to the South Birmingham Health Authority and then in 1994 after we saw Trust's established I went to work for Southern Birmingham Community Health Trust as a financial accountant based at West Heath Hospital in Birmingham.

In 1996 I moved to South Birmingham Mental Health Trust at Monyhull Hospital and stayed there in it's different guises until 2009. Having started as a financial accountant I ended up as Deputy Director of Finance and qualified as an accountant during my time there. It was really rewarding, and I worked in almost every locality in Birmingham before in 2009 getting the opportunity to come and work in Dudley.

Russells Hall is my local hospital, it treats my family, my children were born here so it was a real honour to come and work at my local Trust. I found that because it was delivering the services to me and my family I had real connection to the job that you don't quite get when you are travelling outside of your own community.

I originally came to Dudley as the Deputy Director of Finance but that's expanded over the past 11 years to include managing the estates team and the PFI contract as well as being involved in numerous operational projects for the Trust.

Would you have a message to someone looking to work in the NHS?

A career in the NHS is really rewarding. They should take the opportunity to learn all the services and understand that every single person in the NHS contributes to providing excellent patient care.

Is there anything you have been particularly proud of during your time?

I am really proud of how the Trust manages the PFI contracts to ensure the Trust gets its services delivered in the most efficient way possible and to ensure we get the best value for money.

We have also delivered the accounts in a timely manner with a consistent clean bill of health and there aren't many finance teams around who could match our record. Within the system and by the regulators we are seen as being at the forefront of our profession.

I would also say I am proud of how my team have worked during COVID. We have been involved in procuring PPE, involved in the COVID taskforce and the pandemic certainly galvanised staff across the Trust and gave us a mutual appreciation for the work we all do.

How has the NHS changed since you first started?

Back when I started a lot of the hospital sites had a social side compared to now. Every hospital had their own sports areas, football pitches, swimming pools, squash courts. This has largely disappeared now as new hospitals have been built without these facilities. You often wouldn't go straight home after work, you would go out with work colleagues to play sport or socialise and this is something perhaps we miss now.

If you could sum up the NHS in one sentence what would it be?

It is a rewarding career that allows you to develop your own professional expertise but always on behalf of our patients.