

NHS FINANCE CAREER STORIES



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CAREER PATH

Michael encourages all those considering a career in NHS finance to just go for it! There are a lot of varied roles in the NHS finance community. *‘The great thing about NHS finance is once you’re in, there are so many opportunities and development options open to you. You can explore new options as they arise, don’t be pigeonholed into one thing – you can move around and experience different areas of finance.’*

Michael did not follow a traditional path progressing through NHS finance roles. He has followed an interesting career path to eventually be in the position he is in as Deputy Director of Finance – Strategy, Estates and Capital at Dorset ICB. Michael has a degree in Environmental Science and was an ecologist, starting his career working at an aquatic ecology government organisation in Dorset – very different to NHS finance! As part of this role, Michael developed an interest in IT and then moved over to an IT company, where he worked for 4 years. Following this, he moved to work as a business analyst for Dorset Police. The opportunity to undertake a qualification arose when Michael’s boss encouraged him to continue to develop. In 2012, Michael became a CIPFA qualified accountant and continued his career within Dorset Police, by supporting and running the management accounts. In 2018, Michael joined the NHS. *‘There was no long-term plan or clear path, I just went for opportunities I was interested in at the time and followed my instincts.’*

When working in the police, Michael realised he wanted to work in the public sector. *‘I knew that I wanted to contribute towards delivering value for money for Dorset and support the local communities.’* The NHS is very different to other sectors, even to other public sectors; the regime is different and the expectations are different. The scale of the NHS overall and being comfortable working at this scale, is something that Michael has had to learn to do in the past few years.

A typical day for Michael includes lots of meetings with people from organisations within the region. Michael is the finance lead for the South Western ambulance contract. He must keep on top of a lot of requests and conflicting work pressures at once. Often these different workstreams need to be delivered at the same time, so there is a lot of prioritisation taking place within his day-to-day work.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

'Informally, the Finance Director at Dorset Police was a mentor to me.' His guidance set Michael on the finance path by encouraging him to gain his accountancy qualification. Michael's boss always believed in his ability to be successful in his career and recognise and work with his strengths. Recently, working within the ICS has improved Michael's communication skills greatly, as he is often speaking to a wide network and range of colleagues – across the local authorities and organisations in the region.

Michael's top tips on how to make staff development a priority:

- Don't see development opportunities as just undertaking a qualification or training.
- If there is something that interests you, engage with it and question how you can be involved.
- Look at personal development, can you attend meetings you wouldn't usually? Can you push yourself to contribute something?
- *'Where I have developed the most, is by pushing myself outside of my comfort zone.'*

HOW TO MAINTAIN WORK/LIFE BALANCE

Michael strives to maintain a distinct boundary between his professional and personal life. He firmly believes that it's essential to strike a balance and avoid overextending working hours, as it can create a misleading impression of what can realistically be accomplished in a day. He works to prioritise tasks and disconnect when the workday ends.

MICHAEL'S BIGGEST WORK-RELATED ACHIEVEMENT

During the early stages of his career in the police force, which coincided with austerity, Michael embarked on a significant project. He undertook a comprehensive review of how the public engaged with Dorset police, focusing on police stations scattered throughout the county. Leading this initiative, he instigated and directed the assessment, assessing public interactions at these stations and what times police stations were used the most. Upon completing the review, Michael proposed a novel model for the operating hours and locations of police stations. This approach aimed to better align the accessibility of police services with the public's needs. As a result of his efforts, the community saw improved access to police stations at times that suited their requirements.

FINANCE AND PATIENT CARE:

Part of Michael's role is to challenge operational and clinical business cases and other proposals to determine what value is for the system. Therefore, this ultimately impacts the quality and delivery of services across the region, resulting in improved patient care. *'You think the impact finance has is quite remote but ultimately we help to run the service and provide value and quality for patients and staff.'*

In his spare time, he coaches an under 10s football team, which is *'really enjoyable and rewarding'*.

Favourite Film/TV: Anything Star Wars!