Job title: NHS Graduate Management Trainee (Informatics)

Current employer: NHS Mid & South Essex University Hospitals Group

Sector: Health and Healthcare

Tell us about your current role and organisation.

I recently started on the 2-year NHS Graduate Management Training Scheme, in the Informatics stream. This involves two main placements, which for me will both be within the Mid & South Essex University Hospitals Group (MSE). My current role as a Healthcare Analyst is interesting and quite varied.

What sort of person would this role suit? *(i.e. personal skills, qualities and values)*

This role would suit anyone with a passion for health, care and wellbeing as well as an avid interest in information, analytics and the systems and technologies which facilitate these. A self-driven/self-motivated person, with a willingness to learn, an ability to manage competing priorities and is able to inspire others. An individual who values inclusivity, equality and equity, and embraces diversity.

What does a normal working day look like for you?

No day is the same on this Grad Scheme! In my current placement, I run daily/weekly/monthly reports for submission to numerous stakeholders including NHS Digital, clinical commissioners and GPs. I'm involved in a number of projects, so spend time providing analytical support for these; I process and analyse the data then present and communicate the information in a clear, concise way to enable informed decisions to be made. One of these projects is within Integrated Care, identifying frequent hospital attenders in order to understand why they attend so frequently and how to better support these patients in the community, in the hope of preventing such regular illness. I am also assisting with the evaluation of a clinical pathway redesign to assess whether the expected outcomes of this service change are being realised. As a Grad trainee, I also spend a fair amount of time out of the office, attending study days at UCL or University of Manchester, or even in Leeds (at the NHS Leadership Academy).

How did you get to where you are now? *(i.e. what are the entry-level roles graduates would apply for to get where you are?)*

Last summer I graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Global Health, and I applied for a place on the GTMS during my final year. One of the great things about the scheme is that the minimum entry requirement is a 2:2, so the opportunity is open to a larger pool of people. Additionally, it's not mandatory to have a background in data science, only an interest in this and a desire to learn. This was great for me, because although I did Maths as an A-level and my degree had elements of statistics and epidemiology, I had limited knowledge in Informatics.

How would you go about getting experience (*placements, work experience, internship*) in the industry you work in?

Generally, I think any experience in healthcare would be useful. I worked in a nursing home part time throughout university and this experience really demonstrated the positive effects of quality care, but also highlighted how challenging work in healthcare can be; I use this as my motivation to constantly drive for improvement and innovation in healthcare. It's definitely a good idea to make use of the long summers during uni! I worked at my local Healthwatch for example, which was a good opportunity to understand the interactions of the NHS with external allied organisations. Although I think it's fair to say I've had a fair amount of experience in the health sector, my technical skills before the scheme were limited. I would recommend looking into internships and placements in analytics, even in companies that deal with big data, as this would all be knowledge beneficial to the NHS. This would further develop the workforce and help to inspire change by facilitating the decision-making processes.

Finally, I would recommend learning how to code! Even if you end up using a different coding language in your workplace it helps to understand the key principles. I participated in a 3-day coding crash course last year and even this helped me in my understanding of the theory behind coding. I am now on my journey to learning SQL.

What are the biggest challenges you face in your work?

One of the biggest challenges for me as an NHS Grad Trainee is definitely effective time management. Working full time, as well as studying part time towards a PGDip in Health Informatics and a PGCert in Healthcare Leadership is of course a fine balancing act.

Within my specific placement at the moment, the main challenge is around the fact that we are undergoing a period of transition as three individual trusts merge into one. These are exciting times and offer new opportunities to better patient experiences of health and care within the area, however with this comes a number of hurdles to overcome, especially in regards to analytics, since there are issues relating to interoperability and the standardisation of procedures to be considered.

What's the progression like/where do you see yourself going from here?

There are many opportunities for progression and development. The Grad Scheme is very much focused on achieving certain competencies relating to technical skills, but also works to develop me as a leader, so that when I graduate from the scheme I'm equipped to work in a position of leadership. I could go on to work for NHSx or NHS Digital for example or work my way up to Director of Information within an NHS Trust. Some NHS Grads have gone on to become CEOs within the NHS, so the options are limitless! I intend to stay within the NHS at the end of the two years but am keeping my options open at the moment. My second placement at MSE will be within the Strategy Unit and I am excited to explore the use of Informatics within this area.

What top tips would you pass on to students interested in this type of work? *(i.e. any particular skills, knowledge, experiences, volunteering, extracurricular activities)*

To work in the NHS, you should really know why you're doing it. The NHS is completely different to many of the famous tech companies and that's because it is not driven by profit. While innovation is of course important, patients and their health care and wellbeing are at the heart of the NHS and its purpose and this is what drives everyone who works within it. I would recommend taking on things which show how your personal values align with those of the NHS. This could be through voluntary or paid work which demonstrates your aspiration for excellent customer service, for example. Similarly look for opportunities to be a leader. The NHS Leadership Academy has a fab 9-dimensional model for healthcare leadership which is worth having a look at.

If you have any questions or would like to know anything else please do get in touch; I'm more than happy to help! ☺ My email address is kemi.biyi.19@ucl.ac.uk.