

## Stepping Outside of My Comfort Zone



### **Barnsley and Rotherham Hospitals Lead Healthcare Scientist and Environmental Controls Lead Zoë Clarke describes her experience of her Clinical Fellowship.**

I have worked in Barnsley for fifteen years within the Assistive Technology Team. Starting from a team of five people we have grown to a team of thirty providing Electronic Assistive Technology to Yorkshire and the Humber. The equipment we assess for enables people with disabilities to control things in their environment such as their television when they are unable to use a standard remote control. We also assess people for specialised communication aids. For the last three years I have also been Lead Healthcare Scientist for Barnsley Hospital representing the different Healthcare Science Teams (ranging from Audiology to Pathology), within the hospital.

In September 2021 I started a secondment as one of three Clinical Fellows with the Office of the Chief Scientific Officer (CSO), Professor Dame Sue Hill, at NHS England. In the last couple of years in my Lead Healthcare Science role I have gained experience in system transformation with South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw Integrated Care System (ICS), and I was attracted to the Clinical Fellowship as an opportunity to expand this learning and gain more national experience.

I was definitely nervous and had a large dose of Imposter Syndrome on my first day with the CSO's team.

Six months later and I have learned a lot! It has been exciting to transfer my skills from my Assistive Technology role to the Fellowship and also share my clinical experience with policy makers and system leaders. It is easy to underestimate the knowledge we gain from working with patients. As well as that I have learned new skills and gained new knowledge in corporate and administrative functions. There is always a lot of language that is specific to any large organisation, and getting to grips with that and how to approach presentations and papers has been really interesting.

So far I have organised a whole-day Workshop on the future of healthcare technology and the role of the engineering workforce. This event has led to a findings report published in the SCOPE journal for the Institute of Physics and Engineering in Medicine (IPEM). COVID has highlighted how essential Clinical Engineers are and this event was an opportunity to celebrate and also think about what is needed in the future.

I have also worked on Workforce Identity, thinking about how we bring over fifty specialties together as part of the Healthcare Science family. Identifying common ground and how having One Clear Voice while maintaining our individuality can have great benefits.

For my main CSO project I am definitely outside of my comfort zone! Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) is a major priority for the NHS, ensuring that we make best use of antibiotics and we minimise the risk of increased resistance by avoidable prescription.

In my work for our Trust in Assistive Technology and Environmental Controls, I am far from a lab-based scientist. However, I have been leading on a project to review improvements in the diagnostic pathway for Urinary Tract Infections (UTI). It has been exciting and a little scary to rapidly gain knowledge in a new area whilst being reassuring that my previous experience is valid. This project has involved building networks, developing proposals, and most importantly, considering the best area to focus for better patient outcomes.

There have been some challenges in the CSO's Fellowship. When our Assistive Technology Team moved to remote working during the pandemic, I already knew people face-to-face. Although it was different I was able to translate those relationships online. When starting a new job virtually there are no existing relationships and these have to be built online.

Things which you do face-to-face when starting a new job like shadowing people in meetings is more difficult, you are an unknown face that pops up on a screen, and it has to be much more planned to have the pre-brief or de-brief which you would usually have on the walk to the meeting room or over a cup of tea! It has been fabulous that there are two other clinical fellows and their peer support has been really important.

I am looking forward to progressing the work I have started over the next six months and bringing my learning to Barnsley Hospital.

If you would like to find out more about Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) there is an online lecture on Tuesday 15 March, from Professor Philip Howard, Regional Antimicrobial Stewardship Lead, as part of Healthcare Science Week, 'AMR – a threat to modern medicine?'. (<https://bookwhen.com/sybics-hwbevents/e/ev-sxd4-20220315100000>)

If you would like to find out more about Assistive Technology visit <https://www.barnsleyhospital.nhs.uk/assistive-technology/>

If you would like to find out more about Healthcare Science Week (14 – 20 March) visit <https://www.ahcs.ac.uk/about/healthcare-science-week/2022-2/>