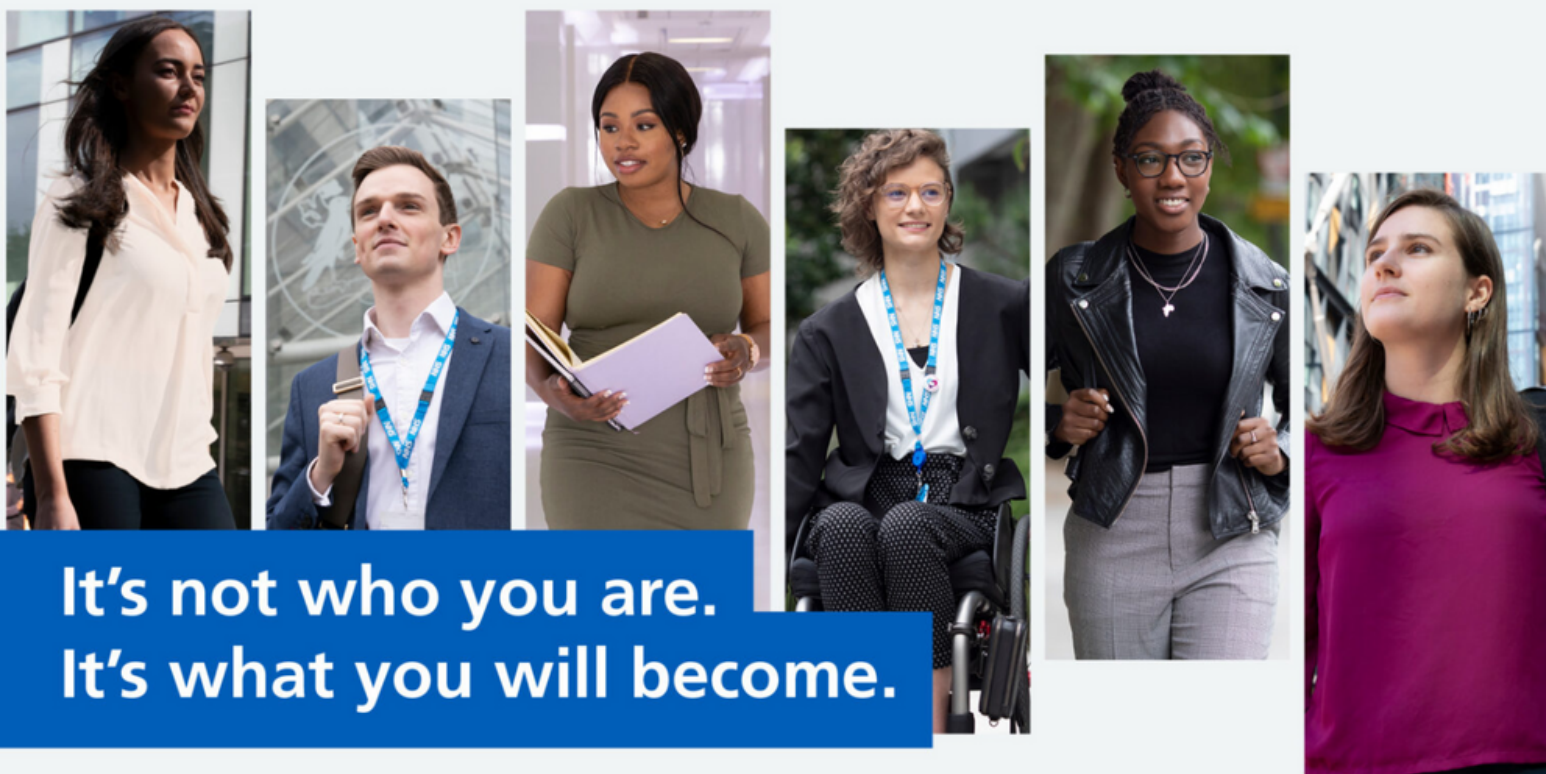


North West GMTS Trainee Stories



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Graduate Management Training Scheme

About the scheme

The NHS Graduate Management Training Scheme (GMTS) is a multi-award winning fast-track graduate scheme providing mentoring, support and high quality non-clinical training over around two years to those wanting to develop their career in the health service, with the opportunity to become successful leaders in the NHS; while helping to sustain the NHS talent pipeline.

If joining the GMTS in the North West, trainees will specialise in one of four areas:

- General Management
- Finance
- Human Resources
- Health Informatics



[Start your journey here](#)

Adam Beattie

Liverpool Heart and Chest Hospital



Adam Beattie began his GMTS experience with a whirlwind orientation at Liverpool Heart & Chest Hospital.

GMTS trainees complete a 20-day orientation plan before starting their first placement to provide a broad overview of the NHS and wider healthcare system through the lens of their host organisation.

Activities can include meeting senior leaders, working with carers and partner organisations, learning how services are delivered and organisations operate.

Adam said: "I really enjoyed having interactions with patients. For example, I spent time with rapid response nurses, they were really friendly and nice to get to know them at the end of my first week.

"The cardiac rehabilitation class was also really interesting. Once a patient has had surgery, the community team takes them on and gets their health level back on track. It was really good to see the whole spectrum and talk to patients about their experience."

In addition to meeting clinical and patient facing teams, Adam met with senior staff at Liverpool Heart & Chest Hospital Foundation Trust.

"I got to meet the chief executive who was brilliant, we chatted about all sorts of things, including personal management philosophy and thinking about what type of manager I want to be, but it was quite informal.

"I had meetings with other executives too and each had their own perspectives and personalities, it was nice to speak to different types of people and hear their insights."

Other activities included shadowing outpatients, patient flow, therapies services and learning about physiotherapy.

"I spent a full day with the physios, I didn't realise how much that encompassed. Before I thought the role of a physio was one thing, but actually was completely different than what I expected and so much more.

"I met various people, from those managing referrals and scheduling outpatients, to spending time with PA's and co-ordinators, through to following the patients, it was really interesting."

Starting the GMTS scheme can be daunting, but Adam gave advice to other trainees starting the scheme and orientation activities to help overcome any nerves.

"Before orientation, I had questions ready beforehand and tried to be as inquisitive as possible. The biggest challenge was having the confidence to meet so many people I've never met before and make the most out of each situation. It was intense, at the end of each day I was happy but ready to relax - I slept well each night!"

It may sound daunting, but Adam advises future graduates to enjoy all experiences, even during the application and recruitment process.

"My advice to applicants is to be yourself, enjoy it and do what you would naturally do. For example, in the assessment centre, we were asked to bring what you did during Covid to keep you busy.

I did a wine course, so I took a wine book to show how much I'd learned about wine! It got a laugh and helped me feel more comfortable during the assessment centre."

Being ready to learn, listen and make contacts was a big benefit of Adam's orientation.

"I met people during orientation that I am now working with in my placement, for example I met people in Radiology and Quality Improvement which helped understanding and allowed me to reach out for collaboration when I began my role.

"I'd also advise trainees to look at their competencies before orientation as it can help give ideas how to achieve them with the people you meet during orientation."

Following the orientation, Adam moved to his first full time placement working on new projects, appreciating the support of new colleagues and enjoying a positive working environment at Liverpool Heart and Chest Hospital.

Kofi Madden

Finance Trainee



Finance trainee Kofi Madden joined GMTS in 2019 and has gained some remarkable experiences while on placement.

Kofi's first placement at St Helens & Knowsley NHS Trust was severely disrupted due to Covid-19, but Kofi was quickly given responsibility at the start of the pandemic.

During the first wave, Kofi managed Whiston Hospital's PPE store, including rationing and distributing millions of items of PPE stock throughout the hospital, external sites and office locations.

This job moved very quickly, starting with no reporting to lots of reporting, managing over a million items of stock, a full warehouse stacked from floor to ceiling. At one time Kofi was working six or seven days a week, driving to the hospital with no-one on the roads, but the hospital was very busy tackling Covid.

Kofi said: "We were able to provide a delivery service not only to the wards but external sites and support services in offices. I made sure I met at least one person from every ward in the hospital and let them know about the service.

"I went from first six months of being a trainee, to the next six months taking responsibility of a job no-one has done before, working with the Head of Procurement and reporting to executives. I remember one time I got a phone call saying the British Army are downstairs, reporting into me to deliver PPE! We whittled it down from seven days a week to five days a week once the national situation had calmed down by managing the stock carefully.

"It was a massive change, but it was down to the Head of Procurement giving me the responsibility, they were a great support, showed me great leadership, he wouldn't delegate anything he wouldn't be willing to do himself."

In addition to the finance placement and Covid challenges, Kofi completed a two-month flexi placement with Mersey Care. During this two-month placement, Kofi developed capacity and demand management tools for the eating disorder, psychology and autism services.

Kofi utilised and modified tools originally introduced by an external developer and implemented these into services teams processes, whilst building relationships across different departments.

The data output found that some departments were relying on trainees and others were losing hours unaccounted for. This resulted in departments identifying practical changes via reporting from the tools.

"I learned how intricate the model could get with the service, you could get down to the level of detail of how much time people spent for example writing letters or travelling, or how many clinics people could do in a week - a lot more detailed than I first realised.

"I really enjoyed learning the new skill, and my manager held my hand at the start, by the second meeting let me take the lead, and by the third round of meetings he let me loose, I ran with it and took responsibility."

Kofi has learned a lot from placements and education elements of GMTS. Finance trainees complete a CIPFA qualification but also modules from the Elizabeth Garret Anderson (EGA) programme.

"I now know the importance of leadership styles and how teams can be effective from the EGA - I didn't realise it at the time, but now I do. Sometimes it can be difficult to make that connection especially in the finance specialism. It was also difficult because I was returning to education after full-time work but got there in the end."

GMTS has a strong reputation throughout the NHS and Kofi was given an important piece of advice early on in his first placement.

"One CEO said to me 'the scheme can give you the keys to the NHS and it's up to you to use them'. This gives you the realisation that once you speak with the right people, they will let you see as much as possible.

"It's not until you get into the organisations that you get to realise you do actually get the chance to have the keys, have a look at everything that's going on and get such a well-rounded view of the NHS."

Having the 'keys to the NHS' doesn't cover absolutely everything - one evening Kofi got his car locked in the hospital car park at the end of the first week, the car was stuck for the whole weekend - keys to the car park may have been more useful on that day!

"At least I was able to get to know security staff at the hospital! And getting to know people in the hospital and departments really helps, for example the housekeepers in the wards became friends as they got to know me while distributing PPE."

And a final piece of advice Kofi would give to new graduates joining the scheme: "It's hard to prepare someone for what the scheme is, treat as a good experience, get involved, grasp opportunities and enjoy yourself!"

Lucy Matthews

Finance Trainee



Finance trainee Lucy Matthews graduated from GMTS in 2021 and found the experience extremely rewarding.

At the start of the scheme Lucy was excited, although a little nervous. Lucy completed a physics degree before starting the scheme, so many of the finance elements were brand new.

One of Lucy's highlights looking back at GMTS is how she has grown as a person, developing leadership skills and learning how finance departments play a vital role in patient outcomes.

Lucy said: "I think the breadth of experience that we get on the scheme is amazing, different experiential learning opportunities, action learning sets, and getting the opportunity to work with many different leaders and inspirational people."

GMTS trainees complete an orientation period before starting their first placement which often includes exposure to senior meetings, shadowing staff in different departments and meeting teams across the host organisation.

"The orientation gave me a really good grounding and almost a new-found appreciation for the NHS. I've always felt that the NHS is an amazing organisation, that's why I wanted to work for it, however the orientation gave me an even greater appreciation for all that goes on behind the scenes.

"My first placement was with in an acute trust in financial services, this gave me a really good grounding into NHS finance, I was able to gain an understanding how hospitals work. I was given a clinical buddy, she would take me on walk rounds every few months, so I could see different areas of the hospital and explain things to me.

"I completed my two-month flexi-placement at a large consulting organisation in Healthcare Consulting which allowed me to develop skills different to what I had done in my first placement, such as programme management and business case writing. It allowed me to view the NHS from a different perspective and felt it was a unique experience, one I really valued.

"My second placement was at a community and mental health trust in management accounts, so a completely different type of placement, but I really found my feet in this placement."

The scheme can be very demanding, especially in the finance specialism and this provided Lucy with lots of challenges.

"I think studying to become a chartered accountant, completing competencies, working full-time - juggling all that is hard work, but it does pay off in the end.

"The support is great - programme and placement managers and the trainee support manager Kelly helped me throughout. I could talk through things, they were really good at giving advice and helped me find my own answers, so I became more independent. The support you get on the scheme is brilliant."

Lucy also recommended support communities across the NHS, including [Future-Focused Finance](#), a national programme to support staff and engage everyone in improving NHS finance. The programme facilitates networking, sharing ideas and learning, bringing finance and clinical or other non-finance colleagues together.

Katie Jones

General Management Trainee



Katie was part of the GMTS 2018 intake, specialising in General Management and completed her first placement at Macclesfield District General Hospital.

Hi I'm Katie and I started the General Management scheme in September 2018. I completed my first placement at Macclesfield District General Hospital which is run by East Cheshire NHS Trust.

I am the service manager for paediatrics which so far has been immensely interesting and a massive learning curve.

I found out about the scheme in about November 2017 and knew straight away I wanted to apply. Following some post-university travels I was working for a company that was commissioned by the NHS and really enjoyed speaking to patients and being a part of their care journey and experience.

I was in awe of those already working in the NHS, and knowing I wanted to do something where I felt like I could make a difference, I became extremely motivated to join in any way I could. I hadn't taken too much interest into Graduate schemes prior to leaving university unlike many of my peers as I knew I didn't want to join a corporate company and work hard in order to line someone else's pocket.

Finding the NHS Graduate scheme gave me that incredible opportunity to join such a pivotal organisation where I could work with a different motive centred on helping people and delivering the best patient care.

The scheme begins with a four week orientation process which is a bit like a whistle-stop tour of everything healthcare; from primary care to tertiary centres, social care, local council, ambulance services and beyond.

In one week I found myself in the passenger seat of an ambulance driving to an emergency, dressed up in scrubs observing general surgery, on the neonatal ward watching over a 4 hour old premature baby in an incubator, visiting patients in their homes with a district nurse and helping porters transport patients, notes and much more around the Trust.

These opportunities gave me great insight into how all of these services interlink and interact with one another to ensure that the patient receives an excellent standard of care.

Every single person that I met along the way - despite being from all different teams and services, from finance managers to ward nurses to the housekeepers- is motivated towards achieving that common goal. Each person has different priorities, different goals and targets, different backgrounds and different perspectives in what is most important to them.

Each person has to balance patient care, targets, safety, quality, performance and financial obligations, but when it comes down to it, all of those staff members are there because of the patient and are motivated to positively contribute their care.

It was such a unique experience to have an 'access all areas' pass to the hospital and beyond for those four weeks. And actually I have come to see the whole scheme as just that; the learning and shadowing and observing hasn't stopped just because my official orientation period has ended.

I can honestly say, without sounding too cliché, that I am learning something new every day. Whether that is about the service or the Trust, about processes and systems, or about myself, my leadership qualities and abilities.

I have abundant chances to grow and I have a number of things lined up over the coming months to gain experience where I want to gain it.

That is one of the major plus sides to the scheme: that it is about you. And you can shape the experience you have. You can shape what you learn and how you learn it, how you grow and what type of leader you become. The scheme is certainly a fast track scheme and having responsibilities in such early stages of my career is awesome albeit daunting; but I am a strong believer that it is when you are outside of your comfort zone that you learn the most.

It is a privilege to be on the NHS Graduate Management Training Scheme and I feel incredibly lucky to have the next two years to develop as a leader with great support around me and endless opportunities for learning.

Freya Macfarlane

Human Resources Trainee



Freya was part of the GMTS 2017 intake, specialising in Human Resources and completed her second placement at the [Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership](#).

On being asked to reflect on my first 12 months of the scheme I was initially faced with trying to streamline the rich experiences I have had into the set word count.

Yet as I consider what my ‘remembering’ self thinks or feels about my past ‘experiencing’ self, I am struck by the level of calm I have within the core of my being.

I attribute this fully to the graduate scheme, which has provided the platform and framework for me to actualise what I always wanted from life – to be valued, challenged, and ultimately contribute to something bigger than myself.

All of which I can honestly say I have achieved. Referring to my very first blog for the scheme I advised potential applicants that they have to really want to be here, in the NHS, as this conviction will see you through untold challenges and unexpected highs.

For me, it has also facilitated a certainty of purpose that I previously lacked, and has guided me for the past 12 months and will do for the next few decades.

Of course, this isn’t enough, you have to actually enjoy your day job to have the motivation to engage with the work authentically. I specifically chose the HR specialism as I felt that this was where my skills and aptitudes would best align, I suspect if I had chosen Finance another story would have told.

For me, this choice has proven something of a vocation, and has provided me with an opportunity to explore an incredibly diverse profession, and engaging with some wonderful people and schools of thought.

Last year I was a Business Support Partner in an Acute Trust, supporting frontline staff in the face of severe pressures, and enabling a just culture so that humanity was applied to policy for the best outcome.

Now, I am currently situated at the Greater Manchester Health & Social Care Partnership working to improve the health, wealth and wellbeing of residents who live here.

This is a lot more strategic, but very exciting and means I am working across three different, but equally valid, projects.

This leads me on to my two Top Tips to thrive whilst on placement. Firstly, use the buddy network and your cohort's contacts. Through this I managed to organise my second placement at the Partnership.

Secondly, use your novice hat to request access to anything and everything. Not everything will be pertinent, although the few times that it does will bear real fruit. For example, I volunteered to be judge for the HSJ awards, which came at a particularly stressful time for deadlines, however at the awards ceremony I met someone who worked at NHS Improvement and subsequently shadowed him, in London, for a week in January.

You will find that the more exposure you have, the easier it is to make connections between people, organisations, strategy and vision, politics and the wider social context.

You may never get a full grasp of it, but it strengthens your fundamental knowledge and awareness beyond the NHS, which is paramount for any future system thinker.

Five things I wish I had known before applying:

1. This would be the best decision I will ever make.

2. That even as a nervous grad trainee I could actually do the role, and do it well.

3. That I will make some lifelong friends.

4. That the balancing act of two university qualifications and a full time job still allows for a work life balance.

5. Not to worry about the unknown (as much as possible). The scheme can appear overwhelming but there is a lot of genuine support from formal and informal sources who want you to be the best you can be.

Why should organisations in the North West get involved?

There are organisations that bid every year for a trainee, and frequently get them, from which I infer that they see a return on investment in committing to the scheme.

I would like to see more organisations engaged with GMTS in regions that to widen access for potential trainees in more remote places in the North-West.

I am a firm believer that people who work where they live are more committed and passionate, and by establishing a route in for driven and capable individuals, it is possible for organisations to align its needs with a sustainable workforce. This can only have positive outcomes for service delivery and patient outcomes.

Further to this, in attracting graduate trainees the organisations are accessing minds that are being shaped by system level leadership principles and patient-first focus, and so can act as a conduit in facilitating change in a wider context than before.

Lastly, organisations will be offering a chance for an individual to gain the security to develop into an instrument for good.

Paul Fleming

Human Resources Trainee



Hello my name is Paul Fleming. Looking back on my time in the NHS Graduate Management Training Scheme I have been able to reflect on my leadership journey over the last few years.

I am hoping to share with you the key take homes I have learnt throughout my exposure to leadership. All views are my own and thank you for taking the time to read this.

1. Leadership is not measured in time served. Leadership in many forms.

When I first began my leadership journey it was evident to me that many only see leaders as those with the most experience within an organisation. This is fundamentally flawed as leadership comes in many forms. Although there is obvious benefit being both a leader and an expert this is not always possible. When you are beginning your journey it is possible to demonstrate leadership through your actions and behaviours.

Start by leading with your behaviours, by embodying the behaviours you wish to see in others. Once you have gained more experience lead with your actions and make decisions, being cognisant to bring all those within the team with you through change.

2. Universal leadership qualities.

A mentor once told me that “If my team is not delivering look at me first”. This highlights to me the real importance of a leader and the weight leadership carries. It also leads me to question how I ensure throughout my leadership journey that I demonstrate positive leadership practises.

Within my journey I have picked up the following key indicators of good leadership; Tools, Training, Time, Support, Feedback, Clarity and Direction.

In demonstrating these qualities myself and witnessing these in others I have been able to make change and influence others without formal line management responsibilities, to serve transformation within the NHS. I believe that using these with all those around you and assessing yourself based on these will undoubtedly lead to improvements within your leadership practices.

3. Give yourself time before you start to lead – there is benefit to See, Do, Teach.

In observing leaders I have noted that those who succeed are those who don't make decisions without first analysing the culture and practices of an organisation. I was once told to "Survive then Thrive" and I stand by this.

Focus your time initially on understanding those around you, the power dynamics of an organisation and the current practices they undertake. Once you have a sound understanding of these and you are proficient and respected within your role suggest improvements and make changes.

This reminds me of the phrase "rock the boat but stay in it" as change best occurs when you have the support of those already within the system.

4. Document your learning and "nuggets of good practice".

I have always been keen on keeping a reflective log of my experiences, learning and exposure to best practice. This helps me to not only emulate the actions of other leaders but also provides me a comprehensive list of opportunities that I can draw knowledge from when starting in a new position. A good few examples of these are NHS Right Care for commissioners and Model Hospital for providers.

5. Leadership growth - being a mentor and a mentee.

A key theme throughout my leadership journey has been mentorship. I have been blessed by those around me offering mentorship and I have passed this forward by beginning mentorship myself.

I recommend finding mentors to anyone I talk about leadership with. Find someone that inspires you and spend time with them. This is not always easy as everyone is extremely busy in the health and care sector but the returns are worth your investment in time.

Counteract those in your life that act as "Drains" (people that drain your energy) with those who are your "Radiators" (those that provide you energy and encouragement). This has helped me many times retain my passion for healthcare when you have instances of self doubt or disenfranchisement.

6. Your leadership journey doesn't and shouldn't end.

I believe it is everyone's obligation to keep reviewing their leadership practices and how you impact on those around you. Being a leader in healthcare is difficult at times but it is worth it.

The work I do makes real impact on patient's experiences of services and facilitates the amazing work of colleagues around me. I make a note to review how I am leading change on a monthly basis and provide myself some time to reflect on my experiences and my continued motivation.