

Esther Steel

Trust Secretary, Royal Bolton Hospital

Biography

1984

Student nurse North Manchester General Hospital

Due to experiences in her life, Esther was keen to work with amputees, maybe counselling, but none of the careers advisors she saw had any advice about how to get into this. She opted to train as a nurse, hoping this would be a way into a career working with amputees.

1988

Trainee orthotist Paddington

Esther qualified as a nurse in 1987, but to her disappointment discovered that at the time Artificial Limb and Appliance Centres (ALACs) - now known as Mobility Centres - employed social workers rather than nurses as counsellors for amputees. Luckily, she spotted an advert in the Nursing Times for orthotics and prosthetics training at Paddington. She applied, was successful, achieved financial support from Remploy, and discovered that she loved it! Why? Esther says it was that "no two patients were the same, you had to think on your feet and problem solve, there was a mix of patient care and engineering, and improvising solutions to really make a difference."

1992

Qualified as an orthotist

As an orthotist, Esther used her skills, knowledge and experience to assess her patients, who were of various ages with a range of conditions, then prescribed or design the most appropriate orthosis to meet the treatment objective. This would depend on the patient, but it included stabilising or protecting a particular area. After gaining much clinical experience, Esther decided to progress her career and move on to a more senior post.

1998

Senior Orthotist

It was a natural progression for Esther to move into a senior role, and this one was mainly in paediatrics, an area that interested her. At this time, she also started a part-time degree in Health and Business. Her main motivation was that all new orthotists and prosthetists were now degree-trained, and she didn't want her own qualification (an HND) to be a disadvantage. Esther found her degree through Liverpool Hope University, who offered an outreach programme enabling people to study part-time, completing one evening a week in a local 6th form college and also studying at home. She found the degree course hugely beneficial, particularly non-clinical skills like report writing.

2000

Principal Orthotist

Looking for more responsibility and new challenges, Esther moved on to work as a principal orthotist for RSL Steeper. In this role, she had sole responsibility for the orthotic service at a large district general hospital, and managed one other member of staff.

2001

Clinical Services Manager

Esther gained a promotion to a senior management role, largely due to the report-writing skills she'd developed in her degree. She found the transition a satisfying challenge: "The biggest change was in managing more people - I had a regional team of orthotists reporting to me and was responsible for planning cover for their annual leave and sickness."

2004

General Manager

Achieving another promotion, this time to general manager, Esther took on even more responsibility, which included involvement in tendering for new contracts and managing a larger team. This added further to Esther's broad range of experience, and was another step on the path to the post she currently holds.

2008

Trust Secretary

In her current role, Esther works closely with a wide range of stakeholders, from external organisations to Trust management, to ensure the effective governance of the Trust. She makes sure the organisation runs smoothly so everyone can do their job. Esther's 20 years in orthotics have given her lots of transferable skills - orthotic clinics were always busy, so time-management and good organisation were essential. "Although the two roles of orthotic general manager and Trust Secretary seem miles apart, there are lots of similarities, including hard work, people management and the selling of services." Esther still does some clinical work, lending her skills as an orthotist to voluntary projects abroad when she has the time.