

Jo Dent

Head of Region, Healthcare Commission

Biography

1983

Speech and Language Therapist

Jo qualified from the Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London. She initially worked as a generalist therapist in Bexley, moving on to become a specialist therapist in both Sandwell - where she specialised in working with adults with neurological conditions - and Stafford - where the role was predominantly based around developing services for dysfluent adults and children. These posts taught Jo a lot about caseload management and prioritisation, professional boundaries - especially how and when to refer onwards, and multi-disciplinary working. In 1992, she completed an MSc at City University in Human Communication studies, enabling her to further her career.

1993

Head of Speech and Language Therapy

With a decade's experience, Jo took over the management of a failing service that had poor retention and long waiting lists. By focusing on clarity about what needed to be achieved, she was able to develop a patient-focused culture, ensuring that no patient waited longer than twelve, and then six weeks for an initial appointment. She also introduced notional caseloads and gave priority to the robust collection of meaningful data. The improved service gave staff training and development opportunities, making it a popular employer for therapists. Jo says her legacy left "a waiting list of candidates wanting to come and work for the service, a national profile and short waiting times."

1995

Head of Rehabilitation Services

Moving on to a combined acute and community hospital, Jo's next role gave her responsibility for the management of physiotherapy, occupational therapy, dietetics and chiropody. She rose to the challenge of creating a team of different professionals working to different agendas, gaining a deeper understanding of national policy and corporate strategy that enabled effective planning. In this post, Jo improved the profile of AHPs as a group within the organisation and established a multi-disciplinary rehabilitation service aligned with social services. However, she regrets not having "sufficient courage to drive through the change programme required to challenge old-fashioned structures and ways of working."

1996

Primary Care Development Manager

Taking what she had learnt from rehabilitation services, Jo moved on to a development role where she managed community nursing teams and was responsible for managing fund-holding GP accounts. As this role was not in her previous professional sphere, Jo had to develop credibility and the trust of the service, an awareness of a different way of doing things, and demonstrate that she was willing to learn. By drawing on previous experience and being flexible, Jo delivered important changes that nurses had wanted for a long time, as well as bringing in new roles and new ways of working. She also enhanced her leadership skills by learning how to manage confrontation and deal with competing priorities.

1998

General Manager Cheshire

Jo's next progression was to manage therapists, nursing teams, family planning services and domestic services. By working closely with the Strategic Health Authority, Jo was able to develop South Cheshire rehabilitation services and challenge existing practice, driving modernisation. Improving services meant that Jo established both an integrated rehabilitation team and a mobile

physiotherapy team. It was at this point in her career that Jo decided to gain more qualifications to enhance her skills. She completed an MBA at Wolverhampton University, obtaining funding through a competitive process. To develop further, she was also Management Services Councillor for the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists.

2000

Project Manager

Jo took the opportunity for this secondment to take Wednesbury and West Bromwich PCG to PCT status. To manage the programme of consultation with different stakeholder groups, she had to ensure that she was familiar with the relevant legislation, systems and processes. She worked closely with the Chief Officer and Chair of the PCG, GPs and the clinical governance project board to successfully achieve PCT status.

2001

Allied Health Professions Advisor Commission for Health Improvement

In a change to working patterns, this role saw Jo working remotely without a close team or anyone to manage. She learnt much about regulation and the role of the regulator, and national and corporate policy, culminating in the development of strategy for AHPs within the Commission that affected national policy. Jo represented the Commission often: in working with SSI to develop inspection for people with disabilities; in work with the Welsh Assembly, developing and delivering four pilot workstreams in Wales; and on the Nat PACT AHP significant issues group. She also participated in the national Audit Management Challenge and the HSJ management challenge.

Head of Region - Healthcare Commission

Jo took up her current post after two roles that gave her even more policy experience. From 2003 to 2005, Jo was Assistant Director for Reviews and Inspections at the Commission for Health Improvement, after which she became an area manager for the Healthcare Commission. Now, Jo is responsible for the effective delivery of the Healthcare Commission's operating plan, for the assessment and management of risk within the region, and for ensuring quality and performance standards are achieved.