

Real-life story - Ken Whyte

Ken enjoyed the 14 years he spent working in catering but decided it was time for a change. Read on to find out how he made a switch from catering to being a training administrator within his trust.



Ken Whyte Training Administrator

Employer or university Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

Salary range Unknown

How I got into role

I started working in catering for Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust as soon as I turned 16. I enjoyed my time in catering but by the age of 30, I thought I needed a career change before I felt it was too late. I spoke to the HR learning and development manager from the trust who went through some details with me on possibly taking a secondment in the learning and development department.

I was successful in getting the one-year secondment that allowed me to transfer from the catering team to the learning and development team. At the same time, I completed a level 2 NVQ in business administration apprenticeship. I knew that passing it would give me a good chance of getting a full-time job in the team when a job became available and it did! I was successful in getting in and have never looked back!

What I do

Electronic Staff Record (ESR) is a system which provides an integrated HR and payroll system for NHS organisations. All staff in the trust use ESR to complete online training and check monthly payslips. I use ESR in my day-to-day tasks.

It can get very busy in the office on a typical day. We get quite a few phone calls during the day which can

range from issues with training reports to ESR queries and course registers not being updated on the system.

When a member of staff completes online training, their profiles are supposed to be updated automatically on ESR to show that the staff member is compliant in whichever training module they have completed. However, there are times where it doesn't update for reasons out of our control which leads to phone queries about it. When this happens, we look into it and manually update it at our end to show the staff member is compliant.

Having a good knowledge of using computers and being familiar with the windows programmes helped me settle in a lot better than I thought.

The best bits and challenges

I'm very proud of completing the level 2 NVQ in business administration. I thought going straight into an admin role would be a difficult transformation as I had been working in catering for 14 years. However, I picked up most things quite quickly. Having a good knowledge of using computers and being familiar with the windows programmes helped me settle in a lot better than I thought.

Some of the calls regarding the ESR system can be challenging, especially if a member of staff isn't happy. An example could be if training hasn't been recorded as completed on the system and their manager has asked them why they haven't completed it. We always aim to get a completed face-to-face class register uploaded on to ESR within a week of it being completed. Sometimes we don't receive the registers on time so if this happens, we get in touch with the team and they usually send the register to us by the end of that day.

Other queries we get are about training reports. We generate them once a month so if a member of staff completes their training after the monthly deadline, their reports show uncompleted until the next month. They're often unhappy when they get in touch with us, but understand the system once we explain it to them.

Life outside work

I have many hobbies and interests that I like to do in my spare time – everything from cooking to playing football and video games. I have recently gone back to the gym and am doing hot pod yoga once a week

I like to keep my work separate from my personal life and believe in a healthy work-life balance.

Career plans and top tips for others

I am currently undertaking my level 3 NVQ in business administration. I can see myself progressing in my current role and working towards more qualifications so I can achieve bigger and better things!

The three qualities/attributes you need in this role are: patience, communication and compassion.

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