



# A VIEW FROM CLINICAL NURSE ADVISORS

There is more pressure than ever for NHS trusts to generate savings. But to be successful, the procurement process must go beyond saving money and focus on clinical suitability, quality, and patient safety. It therefore requires real partnership between procurement teams and clinicians. Here, we look at that very developing partnership with NHS Supply Chain.

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money, fit for purpose, safe, and reflect professional, patient, and carer needs. A team of clinical nurse advisors supports the operational delivery of this at a local level within the customer engagement team.

Their clinical background, combined with their understanding of the procurement process, makes them ideally suited to bring procurement and clinical agendas together. The advisors understand the importance of value for money while ensuring product usability and clinical suitability. In this issue, we get some insight into the challenges and motivations from four of NHS Supply Chain's clinical nurse advisors: Emma Nuttall (EN), Alison White (AW), Katriona Graham (KG), and Michelle Knowles (MK).

## What are your main responsibilities?

**EN:** Working alongside trust staff, both within clinical teams and in trust procurement departments, I identify ways to facilitate savings and product standardisation whilst maintaining safety and quality for the patients and product users. We are integral to the customer engagement team by being a clinically credible voice and giving expert

advice through the sharing of knowledge and experience.

**AW:** I provide a clinical voice within trust procurement departments and the wider business, helping them to understand potential clinical barriers and reach a satisfactory conclusion for all.

## Why did you become a clinical nurse advisor?

**EN:** I developed an interest in product choice and purchasing whilst working within theatres. This started while I was a staff nurse and then a sister, but increased as a department manager with budget responsibility and savings targets to achieve. I wanted a role which allowed me to work across a more diverse procurement and NHS landscape whilst supporting staff to do a great job for their patients, but also to make sound product and purchasing choices.

**KG:** Having worked both in the NHS and the private sector, I felt this was an opportunity to use these experiences to work with trusts on the changing landscape within procurement, supporting impartiality on prod-

Established in April 2018, the Clinical and Product Assurance team within NHS Supply Chain (NHSSC) ensures that the all products procured by NHSSC are value for

The Clinical and Product Assurance (CaPA) function within NHS Supply Chain ensures that all products procured for the health and care system are value for money, fit for purpose, safe, and reflect professional, patient, and carer needs. The CaPA team consistently apply the recent assurance framework across the Category Tower Service Providers to ensure professionals, patients, and carers support the development of future specifications and associated evaluations to meet user needs as part of the procurement process.

CaPA also ensures that the procurement process is informed by the patient safety agenda in collaboration with partners such as NHS Improvement and NHS England. CaPA supports the adoption of new innovations into the NHS which provide improvements in patient outcomes, sustainability and/or unmet clinical need. This is informed by collaboration with wider national initiatives including the National Wound Care Strategy Programme, Excellence in Continence Care, Health Tech Connect, and NICE to ensure procurement supports the delivery of the NHS Long-Term Plan.



**Emma Nuttall | Clinical nurse advisor, north**

Emma has 20 years' nursing experience within the hospital acute sector. This included theatre nursing, but predominantly in anaesthetics and recovery for a wide variety of surgical specialities and procedures. She has also worked in accident and emergency and intensive care. She worked briefly outside the NHS undertaking target-led assessments prior to joining NHS Supply Chain in Sept 2016.



**Alison White | Clinical nurse advisor, south**

Alison has over 20 years' of clinical experience, starting in a busy stroke unit in East Sussex. Here, Alison became familiar with complex rehabilitation therapies. Alison then furthered her career by commencing a staff nurse post in the critical care unit at Eastbourne District General Hospital. Over the years she attained various qualifications and progressed from staff nurse to junior sister. Alison joined NHS Supply Chain in 2015.



**Katriona Graham | Clinical nurse advisor, central**

Katriona qualified in 1990 and has gained clinical and commercial experience, commencing in cardiology and cardiac surgery in Leicester. She progressed from staff nurse to practice development nurse, finally specialising in tissue viability, working with multidisciplinary teams and procurement. Katriona then moved into the skin and wound care commercial sector in 2006 where she held national responsibility for skin integrity. She joined NHS Supply Chain in 2016.



**Michelle Knowles | Clinical nurse advisor, north**

Michelle began her nursing career in acute surgical care before pursuing a career in medical products as a nurse advisor, working in a number of therapy areas. Michelle then moved into community nursing, where she worked as a specialist in bladder and bowel care. Following two years in Australia, where she continued to work within a urology specialism in an acute setting, Michelle returned to the UK and worked as a rehabilitation case manager before joining NHS Supply Chain in 2015.

ucts while facilitating clinician choice.

### **What do you love about your job?**

**EN:** Seeing hard work pay off. Being able to change a person's perception of procurement and NHSSC is hugely rewarding. Getting clinical staff to work with their procurement teams and become involved in the process of product choice to make savings for their trust.

**KG:** The opportunity to make a difference and help trusts achieve cost-effective, safe clinical choices – plus I'm constantly learning about new things every day! Working with a great team of nurses that I can turn to if I need help in understanding products or want to bounce ideas off.

**MK:** Developing good relationships in trusts where previously they have not worked collaboratively with NHSSC.

### **What is the most challenging aspect of your job?**

**EN:** There aren't enough hours in the day to do all the things I would like to do, as quickly

as I would like to do them. The everchanging procurement and product landscape throws up challenges and hurdles, but then again that makes the job interesting.

**KG:** Customer and colleagues' understanding of the clinical nurse advisor role can be varied, and managing expectations around projects adds to the challenge. We cover many trusts, so this in itself is also challenging, but rewarding.

**MK:** Managing expectations of what we are able to achieve within certain timeframes and the reality of dealing with complex projects and the time that it can take.

### **What career advice would you give to your younger self?**

**EN:** If you are going to think big, think bigger. Nothing is impossible.

**AW:** You get back what you put in and if you're going to do a job, do it well or not at all!

**KG:** Grasp every opportunity and learn from it. Not everything works out but experience is invaluable.

**MK:** Believe in yourself and your capabilities.

### **What has been your greatest achievement in your current role?**

**EN:** Being interviewed by NHE last year! Supporting one of my trusts to exceed their savings targets and for them also to win nationally recognised awards for projects I have supported them with.

**AW:** Being invited to join the south of England clinical procurement group, showing that my work is appreciated and valued.

**KG:** Using my previous work experiences and knowledge to develop relationships with clinicians to move forward on projects they feel they have control over, in terms of clinician choice and potential savings.

**MK:** Being seen as a valuable member of team NHS.

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