

On the right path



Tell us a little about your current role

I'm a registered nurse working in the Clinical and Product Assurance Team for NHS Supply Chain. My role includes the clinical assurance of product frameworks for the NHS, ensuring that products are safe, fit for purpose and meet the end user's needs. As part of this, I've led and developed a risk-based process to embed human factors principles into product specifications to improve safety beyond regulation. This starts with engagement with the end users of the products to gain a thorough understanding of the products' requirements establish who uses them, where they are used, the goal and related tasks for which they are used for and the context they are used in.

Why did you decide to start the pathway?

My role had made me increasingly aware of the positive impact that human factors has in procurement and healthcare. I'd been to several study days and one-off workshops but had no formalised training. I saw the course as an ideal opportunity to underpin my understanding through accredited learning. I wanted to be able to increase my knowledge and confidence around human factors so I could formalise the processes that have already been developed in my team.

I liked the idea of distance learning with the flexibility of being able to

Colette Longstaffe shares her experience of being the first person to complete both levels of our healthcare learning pathway – helping health workers learn more about human factors

undertake modules when it suited me. It made it much easier to fit in with my job and was a really accessible way to get some credible training.

Was it what you were expecting?

It was more interactive and engaging than I expected it would be. The most enjoyable part was meeting other people – those who were taking the course and those who were delivering it. Despite us all being from various professions, with a diverse range of professional and academic qualifications and experience, it was really inspiring to see there was such a cohesive atmosphere within the sessions and a feeling we all had a lot we could learn and that the approach to a systems way of thinking was one we could all improve on.

Everyone was so enthusiastic and welcoming. There's something unique around striving to improve patient and user safety that can bring a real passion out in us all and crosses professional and organisational boundaries.

What did you find the most interesting?

For me, the most interesting part was piecing it all together. The nine modules making up the pathway are all interlinked and as I went through the pathway it became more apparent how they all worked with each other.

I'd thought the module on medical devices would be the most relevant to me, but all the other modules were just as useful. Seeing how everything was connected and the correlation between the elements was great.

How has it helped you in your role?

It's given me more confidence and credibility in my role when driving

change that aims to increase safety through our procurement processes. It helped me learn the theory behind areas such as task analysis, procedures and hierarchy of controls, and has given me the confidence that the approach we are taking is the right one. I feel like I've now got the theory to explain why we do certain things and why we make certain recommendations. I can show how what we're doing is backed up by a foundation of safety science.

How does it feel to be the first person to complete it?

It's a nice feeling and I appreciate the fact that I've been supported by my manager and organisation in terms of time and funding. When I first applied for it I didn't think I'd end up doing the modules so frequently but the flexibility and the support I got really helped. I did my first one in January and finished in July. They were quite spread out so I never felt I was taking on too much.

What advice would you give anyone else considering it?

I've already recommended it to one of my colleagues working in the NHS as a nurse practitioner! I would recommend anyone who has an interest in this area to start by undertaking the first two modules – you don't have to commit to all of them, you can give the first ones a go and see how you find it. I've loved doing it and would recommend it to anyone with an interest in human factors.

What are your plans for the future?

I hope to be able to undertake the two-year level three course and continue to work in partnership with the wider NHS to increase safety. ■