

Karen Fletcher - my Career as a Disability Analyst

I commenced my career as in the field of Disability Assessment Medicine in November 2005, employed by Atos Healthcare. I was appointed as National Lead Nurse and my role sat within the Clinical Leadership Team as a strategic role to introduce skill mix to a previously medically led contract. My role was to recruit, train and pilot the use of nurses, initially, in undertaking functional assessment and giving advice to DWP Decision Makers to support their decision-making process. I worked with a project team to recruit the first 9 nurses and they started in January 2006 in Leeds, Newcastle and Glasgow. There were many process and legal changes required to enable to nurses to undertake assessments and provide written advice to the DWP, but this was a successful project and CHDA now employ approximately 900 nurses, Physiotherapists and Occupational therapists. I have now moved into Operational Management but have always maintained my skills and training as a Disability Analyst. I will advise on written information and medical evidence and conduct face to face functional assessments for Employment Support Allowance.

Sharon Brown - National Head of Quality CHDA

Registered Nurse of 21 years, working primarily in Critical Care and private sector until I joined Atos as one of the first Non-Dr Functional Assessors in 2006. I became Nurse Team Leader in 2007, during this time I spent some time delivering face to face training and have been trained to deliver all 'nurse appropriate' types of benefit work. In 2011 I was the Lead Nurse on the Northern Ireland WCA/ Non WCA contract supporting transition and was heavily influential in the direction of travel in terms of service and quality of service I remained there until I joined CHDA in 2015 as a member of the Clinical Standards Team.

Dr Angela Graham - Chief Medical Officer

After graduation in 1981 I completed GP training, sat and passed the MRCGP, and then worked as a partner in an urban general practice, at the same time I did 2 sessions per week in disability assessment. Combining full time general practice, at a time when we did all our own on call, with two young children was a challenge and I made the decision to step back for a while to manage my work life balance. I applied for and secured a role as a full-time disability analyst in Glasgow in 1992. I continued to do regular sessions in General Practice for a considerable number of years, thinking that I would return to GP in the future. However, after a few years, with experience behind me I was able to expand my role in disability analysis, first as an auditor and trainer, then as a clinical manager, supporting quality and clinical governance regionally and then nationally. In 2011 I had the opportunity to move for 3 years to Northern Ireland to support the start-up of disability analysis service there, returning to GB as clinical director in 2014. Over the years I have had opportunities to work on projects outside the day to day role, including with the FOM at the introduction of the Diploma in Disability Analysis Medicine, and working with numerous renowned medical specialists on DWP working groups set up to reform benefit testing

Stacey Murden

I started as a Disability Assessor in September 2014 following 2 years previously spent in Accident and Emergency as a trauma nurse since I first qualified. My role was to undertake home and clinic-based assessments to ensure a clear, accurate and robust assessment was undertaken regarding how the claimant's health conditions impacted on function. The role itself developed my history taking skills alongside providing me with a sound clinical understanding of a variety of health conditions, the treatment and medical management required for those conditions and how disability impacts on individual's abilities to undertake key everyday life activities. Although very challenging in the beginning, I enjoyed the role thoroughly. Following on for this I received a promotion and became a Clinical Coach within the same business and developed another new set of skills. I would support, mentor, coach and performance manage clinical performance of Disability Assessors. I undertook a course in coaching provided by the company and again, thoroughly enjoyed making a difference

and supporting those who were having challenges within the role I had previously undertaken.

This then led me to become a Regional Clinical Lead and I had overall responsibility for a region in terms of quality. I was also a 'subject matter expert' and continued to support those who required it, being involved in the creation of clinical content, training, learning and development from a clinical perspective and implementing this consistency amongst a disperse work force. I had line management responsibility within the role and learnt about HR processes, performance management and leadership skills which led to a further promotion as a Clinical Lead for a large audit function whereby I learnt to deal with complex managerial information and again, supported the 100 strong auditor work force and was continually developing and learning new skills.

My final promotion within the business was to a Clinical Governance Lead specialising in calibration and stakeholder engagement. The role gave me another set of skills and I was responsible for quality assuring over 200 Clinical Support staff on an 8 weekly basis and reporting back to the senior management and executive teams on performance, intervening and planning interventions when required and ensuring a sound end to end process. The other side of my role gave me significant exposure at high profile meetings, again with key stakeholders inside and outside of the business and I would present on the service we delivered from a clinical perspective and at times, answer challenging questions on the spot. Although initially very daunting, the latter has significantly improved my confidence both clinically and non-clinically and I have watched myself grow into a more confident individual, both in and outside of the workplace.

My experiences within 5 years of Disability Assessment and learning a unique but specialised set of skills has led me onto a new position outside of the company as Quality Matron for a large hospital in London. I will be incredibly sad to leave a fantastic team and role that I love but I am very grateful for my career in Disability Assessment and the company that have supported me to go onto a bigger role as without the skills I have developed and been supported to learn, doing so at this stage in my career wouldn't have been possible.'