



Sarah Higson

Patient Experience Lead, Ipswich Hospital

What is your role at work?

Patient Experience Lead, Ipswich Hospital – covers all forms of feedback to enable service improvement, including surveys/FFT; complaints/PALS/bereavement teams; involvement & engagement (patients and community); family carer lead; EDS and diversity champion; Schwartz Round facilitator as part of link with staff experience.

How did you get into this type of work?

My career has been split, starting out in the voluntary sector running charities focussing on drugs, sexual health, CYP, homelessness before coming into the NHS about 14 years ago when I decided I 'needed a change'...I ran a cancer information centre in west London, ironically taking it out of the NHS to set it up as a stand-alone charity to ensure its sustainability. I came to Ipswich 10 years ago in search of big skies and the sea! Starting in PALS/PPI at the trust, my role has grown to reflect the ever growing patient experience agenda.

Being 'person centred' has been the connecting driving force throughout my career with a strong belief in the power of people working together to make a difference.

What's your favourite part of the job?

The variety of things I am involved with – at times a bit like plate spinning, but mostly love the different aspects and challenges – love feeling that change can happen and we can all make a difference by working collaboratively and really listening to people – patients, carers and staff.

What's the most challenging part of your role?

At times patient experience/engagement can seem to be towards the bottom of the 'to do' list and when we are moving at speed to make changes it's frustrating how easy it seems to be to lose sight of involving patients/carers.

Tell us why you think patient experience matters

It's fundamental and is the thread running through everything – everything connects back to the experience of the service provided which is why elsewhere improving customer service/experience is the driving force for the bottom line.

What have you found valuable about the HOPE Network?

The opportunity to network, make connections, receive wisdom, hear from experts, share experiences.

What is your greatest achievement in your role?

I'm proud of the work I've led on to create partnerships – with our patient leaders (user groups/structure) and with our community (to provide carers' support).

If you could be anything else, what would it be?

A return to my circus/juggling self!