

Introduction

I have worked in various NHS administrative roles for over two decades. Before I joined the Orthotics Department at the Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust, I always felt that administrative teams were not viewed as important, and their skills were not valued. I was never provided with an opportunity to showcase my skills and push myself.

My role as an orthotic clerk has changed my view completely. Since joining the orthotics team in April 2024, I have been encouraged to develop professionally. Our team has an ethos of education first! We are encouraged to attend courses and improve our skills and knowledge. We have 'training needs' as a rolling item on the agenda at our monthly meeting, and we are encouraged to seek and attend courses that will complement our skills. Our administrative staff are fully integrated into the team and offered opportunities to Chair team meetings, lead on service improvement projects, carry out service audits, and present at AHP career fairs with our clinical colleagues.

Our service is research-active, and everybody is included. Three of our administrative staff have been supported in submitting abstracts to professional conferences. Previously, I would never have imagined that I would be considered skilled enough to submit something to a professional conference or that professionals would want to include the administrative staff at the conferences.

I have learned that I have a lot to offer, and having been given the opportunity, I have exceeded all my expectations, and now I am keen to achieve more and advocate for other administrative staff who are often invisible and not encouraged to reach their potential. Clinical teams work better when the administrative staff are fully included and there is no divide.

Results

The ethos in our service of ensuring our administration staff feel valued, included, and seen has led to a team which works together to solve problems and overcome challenges. It has improved creativity with lots of discussions around service improvements and has led to several of our administration staff completing quality improvement projects, research projects, and audits.

It has created a culture of feeling safe to speak up and have our opinions heard and valued. This ensures that the service benefits from all the experience and skills the administration team have to offer. It also reduces divisions between the administration and clinical teams.

For me, it has enabled me to complete my NVQ in Business Administration, have two successful posters accepted at BAPO's conferences, complete audit projects, lead on service improvement projects, lead on delivering a webinar on reasonable adjustments and celebrating neurodiversity, and most importantly, feel a sense of pride in my work and my achievements.



Discussion/Conclusion

Working in the orthotics department has made me feel empowered, confident, and passionate, and I cannot wait to see what my future in orthotics has in store and the projects and research I will be involved with.

Administration teams within orthotic services have a significant amount of knowledge and collective experience. This should be utilised to create leadership within the service. Leadership and research should be for everybody, regardless of title.

I encourage managers and colleagues to look around their teams and consider who is not being included, who is not being encouraged to contribute. Provide them with an opportunity and they might just surprise you!

Orthotic administration staff may also be excellent candidates for orthotic apprentice courses with their experience and knowledge, a ready-made pipeline to help ease the workforce challenges facing the profession.

Acknowledgments

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