



CONNECT HEALTH Bee-inspired

Caitlin Ferguson, HR Advisor talks about her career to date at Connect and how she eventually came to realise that HR was the career for her.



“Connect has given me the fantastic opportunity to try out different roles, until I figured out what I wanted to do.”

Connect gave me the chance to try different things. Life is not set out for you and you can change your direction at any time.

I joined Connect in May 2014. Prior to that I worked as a recruitment consultant at Manpower, after deciding that my business management degree at Sunderland University wasn't for me after six months - it didn't feel right as I really didn't know what I wanted to do.

My friends recommended Connect and I applied for a Patient Care Advisor role

I joined the RMC (referral management centre) which involved a lot of buddying up at first. I started on the PhysioLine team, booking people in for appointments and after a few months I was moved to the Clinical Assessment and Treatment Services (CATS) team which is more complex, dealing with clinical letters and results.

Connect had just won a new contract and the workload was quite high, so I was asked to move over to help out for 4 weeks.

I automatically identified areas for improvement and was asked to step up to Team Leader

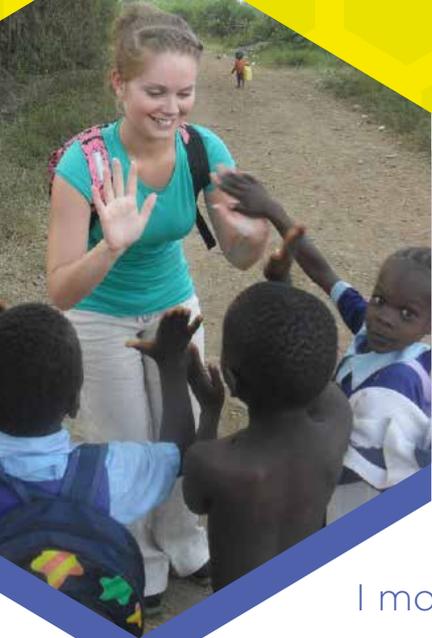
At the time, I was one of eight to be chosen to go on a Team Leader development programme.

I had already started to pick out things we could do better with the new contract and we'd seen an improvement as a result but there was a little frustration that as an advisor, I wasn't in a position to make things better.

One example is when I noticed that the relationship between the NHS and Connect team could benefit from some improvement. So I initiated a meeting and by explaining how their actions were making the team feel, we discovered they were really nice people and understanding of our concerns. Neither team had a face to the name so by getting round the table, we realised that we were all trying to do a good job and if we got together we'd make it better. As a result I pulled together an improvement plan.

I was in this role for about a year and then was successful in my application for senior team leader

This was for the whole of the RMC, working between all the team leaders (six at the time) and the RMC manager. **I like to improve things and I liked working with the other team leaders to listen and help them overcome their issues.**



I knew I had to follow the company procedures and policies and **I think people need to know they can put their trust in you.**

Having really enjoyed the people side, I moved into HR

After about a year, I felt that the role itself had come to a natural end and I moved over to HR as Recruitment Advisor. My role was to process the applications and vacancies, posting the adverts, liaising with the manager to come up with job descriptions, salary conversations, arranging interviews and running assessment centres.

We then appointed an additional recruitment advisor, so my role was broadened to HR Administrator for the team. There are 2 of us. Jack does the learning side of things. I do general HR, advice for managers on policies and procedures, manage absence for the whole company, I take the data from the system, liaise with payroll and support the managers in managing absences. I'm also responsible for DBS (disclosure and barring services) system and I also distribute uniforms to new starters. This is quite a big job when there are 450 staff.

I love the fact that every day is different

No one query I get is the same and I like being the go-to person to help and support managers and staff.



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When I worked in the RMC, I became a bit of an agony aunt but now have a remit to help and make people feel better. It's really interesting as employment laws change all the time, **so there is always something new to learn.**

Connect is now supporting my CIPD college course

In September 2017, I started my CIPD course (Chartered Institute of Personnel Development). I'm currently doing level 3 and go to college on a Friday morning. I'm finding the course really interesting - there are only 8 of us on the course and they all work in HR from really different companies, so I'm learning so much and hope to move onto level 5.

If I hadn't have joined Connect I wouldn't have figured out that I wanted to work in HR

I suppose I've always been keen to help others. I've got two younger brothers and grew up with 6 working dogs. Now I've got my own dog and am training him from a puppy. Whilst in sixth form, I had the opportunity to fundraise (climbing mountains etc) and travel with a charity to rural Kenya and teach English in schools and run empowering workshops with girls and women, asking them about their ambitions. It was fantastic to see the difference we made.

The HR team are great - always driving change and pushing things forward. They are all so positive and they've helped me **go from where I was, to where I wanted to be.** Whilst compiling this people story, I've now been promoted to HR Advisor from January 2018.

If you'd like to find out more about working at Connect, contact hr@connecthealth.co.uk



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