



## Marianne Betts, Executive Director of BFS Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of Barnsley Hospital NHS Foundation Trust is put under the microscope

### **Tell us about yourself and how did you choose a career in public finance?**

Foremost I am a mum to a perceptive and caring 6 year old daughter, who knows her own mind... although that combination of traits can give some parenting headaches right now ☺, I want to help create a future landscape in which she can thrive as herself and one where she is recognised for everything she can contribute – it's one of the reasons why the opportunity to support Public Finance by Women was attractive to me.

I've been fortunate to work with some amazing teams and bosses throughout my career, that created an environment in which I was valued and could take non-traditional career paths. I've operated at Director level since I was 28 years old and now sit on the Board as an Executive Director for BFS Ltd; a wholly owned subsidiary of Barnsley Hospital, that provides estates, facilities, procurement and outpatient pharmacy services. My responsibilities for BFS include finance, commercials, governance, performance and business development.

My career was forged through procurement and commercials – the financial aspects came as part of the overall requirements for the roles and the step into a role as a Financial Director for Sheffield City Council came as we sought to bring finance and procurement teams together. My education is grounded in law and languages and I completed my Exec MBA with Cranfield University in 2018.

### **How are you coping during the pandemic? How has your life during this period?**

I think the pace of things materially changed - workwise, everything ramped up and the nature of working as part of the NHS means 24/7 demands became more evident in my typical office hours. The whole team, including myself, had to adapt to revised business needs and do so quickly.

From a finance perspective, revised budget processes, enhanced governance and financial reporting requirements were anticipated, but I didn't expect to be driving a transit van to collect essential items for the hospital from a warehouse – but everybody has mucked in as required.

**What are the best sides of your current job?**

I love what BFS stands for – it has a public sector ethos and places the team at its heart, but with the agility and commercial acumen of private sector practice. Every penny we make goes back into the NHS and public services – and on a personal level, knowing that financial keystone was in place was a motivator for me to join the company.

Aside from that, it is the BFS team. I'm privileged to work with a talented set of individuals who are team players. Their technical competence is second to none. I've been blown away by the breadth of knowledge held across BFS and the passion individuals bring to their jobs – it's inspiring to work alongside people who care about making a difference, no matter the role.

**Who are the challenges you face in your job?**

I'm struggling to answer this – I honestly don't tend to see things as challenges or obstacles, that's not to say there are no hurdles to jump over, but I would rather acknowledge the issues and then discuss those with the affected stakeholders to seek solutions. Can you tell I tend to be determined and I'm an optimist? ☺

**Who or what inspires you at your role?**

In my current role at BFS – my boss, Lorraine Christopher – she's a force of nature and cares about driving real results in the right way. We make a balanced executive team focused on operational pragmatism and strategic vision, grounded in a commercial reality.

I generally spark off people who are passionate about what they do and have the integrity to do the right things, not just anything. Outside of work – it sounds clichéd but my parents for their love, support and work ethic, plus my daughter – she keeps me firmly grounded!

**What books do you like to read and why?**

Above all, the news and professional journals. My whole career has been geared around public sector and to be effective I have found you need to be politically astute and have an ear to the public voice (majority and minority voices). To me, finance is the oil (or grit as needed) in the political and operational machinery of an organisation; I can't create an effective financial strategy without understanding the broader landscape as well as the internal dynamics to an organisation. And then, I would like somewhere to escape to and stop the brain whirring – so any book that can carry me away to another place, world or universe is just the ticket!



**How would you describe an ideal leader?**

Someone who is constantly listening and learning, who can use this insight to shape a clear vision and can convey this to the team in a manner that makes it meaningful to the individual's day-to-day operations. Leads by example, is resilient, adaptable and able to bring the team with them on a journey that the team recognises as their own success.

I'm passionate about making changes at a grass roots level and that means early insights and education. Career advice has come a long way since my school days, but I would love to see more focus on the breadth of roles and opportunities that centre around maths and finance, particularly the impact you as an individual can have on a day-to-day basis in those roles. For me, back office or corporate services are key drivers to effective change and directly impact the quality of services offered. They are not purely behind the scenes service providers managing processes.

I was also fortunate to be 'talent spotted' by bosses throughout my career, and then given the platform to thrive. I believe in 'paying that forward' and love working with my teams to see them grow and take ownership of plans, ultimately progressing on whatever path they feel rewarded by – that means basics like work life balance, benefits and work outputs tailored to enable women to have maximum impact and feel valued in the world of public finance. I've been fortunate to see individuals take on finance roles they were previously intimidated by, through to seeing individuals get motivated by a something outside of finance and bringing that passion back into their role.

Accountancy is an amazing profession but it's not the only route into finance based roles – I'm a case in point - so in the work place I would also like to see genuine values based recruitment with appropriate financial training available, so we can create a more adaptable finance workforce that brings in a breadth of experience and views. We need to create teams that has a better chance of strategically influencing and enabling front line services to deliver outstanding results.

Ultimately a series of individually led and system wide changes to break down the real or perceived barriers for women (or men) to enter a field that can be so rewarding for any person. It won't happen overnight, and needs sustained incremental changes – I don't know about you, but I'm in it for the long haul!  
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Interviewer: Aliya Boranbayeva, International Advisory Group Member