



Avril Watson

Audiology Manager

Can you give us a brief outline of your work history?

I started training in Craigavon and the Royal Victoria Hospital (RVH) in 1982 when hearing aids were mostly body-worn and analogue. I was employed as the manager of Armagh and Dungannon from 1990 and when the three legacy trusts combined, I became the manager of the SHSCT in 2010.

What made you decide this career path?

I went to school with someone whose sister was training to be an Audiologist, and it sounded really interesting. Working with children and making a real difference to people's lives appealed to me.

How did you train for this role/educational route?

In 1982, the training was very different, and it was more of an apprenticeship approach. We trained in RVH where the School of Audiology was based and attended day release to Belfast School of Engineering and Technology. There was also input from UCC at Jordanstown for lectures and acoustic modules. My practical experience was gained at Craigavon Area Hospital.

What qualities are required for your job – personal and professional?

Good communication and interpersonal skills, along with empathy and patience, are required. A science and IT background is needed for this job.

What does a typical day involve?

No two days are ever the same in my job. Even though I have the management responsibility for the Audiology Service, I still try to see as many patients as possible to keep my skills up to date. I feel this ensures that the Service is always patient-focused.

What do you like best about your job?

I like a challenge, and I get many of them as a manager. I set out over 40 years ago to help people, and I am still learning better ways to do that as technology improves.

What advice would you give anyone thinking of doing your job?

If you are a caring person, enjoy problem-solving, and have good IT skills, this may well be the career for you. It is one of the few specialties that work with all ages, from infants to older people. There are various teams within Audiology, such as Newborn Hearing Screening, Paediatrics, Tinnitus Management, ENT Support, Cochlear Implant and Hearing Aid provision and therefore plenty opportunities for professional development.