



Declan McClements

Head of
Orthoptic Services

What does your job entail?

In my current role, I operationally manage the Orthoptic Services at SHSCT. This includes core Orthoptic services and specialist services of stroke and SEN. I am currently developing Neuro-Orthoptics and also responsible for joint refraction waiting lists with Optometry MDT colleagues.

How did you get into this line of work?

I graduated in 2013 with a BSc Degree in Orthoptics from the University of Liverpool and have been a registered Orthoptist with the British and Irish Orthoptic Society and the HCPC since then. I was always interested in science and had a particular passion for caring for others, hoping to one day work in a medical specialty.

Outline your career to date

In my opening role as an Orthoptist, I spent a number of years consolidating and expanding on the core Orthoptic skills I had learned at university. Following this, I became a Specialist Orthoptist, with extended roles in Glaucoma and Medical Retina, working closely with Ophthalmology medical colleagues on delivering treatments for these diseases. My passion for service improvement projects led me to a secondment in the Transformation team, using my skills and experiences to date in a new environment in Women's & Children's services. Whilst on secondment, I gained crucial experience in operational management and then became Ophthalmology Assistant Service Manager, managing key regional services such as the Macular Service, Glaucoma service, Eye Casualty Department, and the Ophthalmology in-patient ward. An opportunity arose during the COVID-19 pandemic to pursue a secondment as the Ophthalmology Service Manager, managing a large-scale workforce within the wider Ophthalmology team, and a large-scale budget. I then became the Head of Orthoptic Services, returning to my degree specialty as the professional head of service.

Tell us about your qualifications and training

I have been lucky to avail myself of many training opportunities in my career, some within work, and some taken independently in my own time at various opportunities. I have completed the following qualifications to supplement my learning: a Masters module in Glaucoma at the University of Manchester, a Masters module in Orthoptic clinical tutoring at the University of Liverpool, level 3 and level 5 CMI awards in First Line Management and Growing as a Manager, Project Management and Planning at the University of Darwin Virginia, a Post-Grad Certificate in Workforce Planning at the University of West London, ASPIRE Leadership programme by Health & Social Care Trusts and Leadership Academy, BDA Future Leaders course via the Institute of Leadership & Management, and I am currently undertaking a Post-Grad Certificate in Collective Leadership for AHPs. For me, it is important to continue your learning throughout your career so that you can face new challenges with up-to-date information and methods to overcome.

Whats the best advice you've ever recieved?

I have received a lot of great advice from important people in my career to date, but one of my all-time favourites has come from a close colleague, who quoted Albert Einstein: "In the midst of every crisis lies great opportunity."

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I am an avid gym-goer, love lifting weights and using the rowing machine. I coach the Belfast Redbacks Australian Football League (AFL) club team (who are current AFL Ireland and AFL Europe club champions) and have recently been appointed the Ulster Wolfhounds AFL Northern Ireland (National) team coach. I really enjoy trips to the north coast with my wife and our dog. This involves long walks on the beaches and relaxing, spending some quality time 'chilling out.'

What advice would you give your 16-year-old self?

Enjoy every moment, mistakes don't mean the end of the world although it may seem it at the time and trust your gut!