



# Louise McGahon

Chief Cardiac  
Physiologist

## What does your job entail?

I have specialised in Echocardiography within my Cardiac Physiologist role. Within this speciality, there are a number of procedures I perform or assist the Doctor with to assess how well the heart is functioning. The main procedure I perform is Transthoracic Echocardiography. This procedure uses ultrasound to assess how well the heart contracts and if the valves of the heart are working as they should to allow blood to flow to the body or the lungs. Other procedures I assist the Doctor with are contrast and bubbles studies as well as Trans-Oesophageal Echocardiography.

## How did you get into this line of work?

A family friend was a Cardiac Physiologist. She told me all about her job and to consider it when applying for the health service as she knew I wanted to work within the NHS. I looked up the course in the University of Ulster Allied Health Professionals section.

## Outline your career to date

Post qualification, I immediately started as a Band 5 in England in a tertiary centre. This cardiology unit had a large catchment area, so catered for various patient cohorts. This provided me with a great starting point to help me develop my professional skills within the Cardiac Department and in a Multi-Disciplinary Team in the Cardiac Catheter Laboratories where we provided emergency procedures to help patients during heart attacks. Within 12 months, I had gained a Band 6 training post to specialise in echocardiography and spent the next three years gaining my BSE accreditation so I could scan and report my studies unsupervised. Once gaining my qualification in BSE, I moved and began working in another tertiary centre in Dublin. This was the main heart and lung transplant centre in Dublin. By moving to this centre, I was again able to further develop my professional knowledge and skill set whilst working effectively within the department as a BSE-accredited Echo Sonographer. Three years after moving to Dublin, I was able to obtain a position in the SHSCT as a Chief Cardiac Physiologist specialised in Echocardiography.

## Tell us about your qualifications and training

I attended a four-year course at the University of Ulster: Clinical Physiology (Cardiology). I now believe this course has been reduced to three years and is now known as Healthcare Science. I then gained BSE accreditation enabling me to scan and report the echo studies I perform. To maintain my accreditation, I do various online courses and conferences to keep myself up to date with current practice.

## Whats the best advice you've ever recieved?

Go and train in England or abroad somewhere. This helped me gain so much more experience professionally and in life.

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

When you pick your course, see where else you can do that course. Keep your options open.