

Executive Search Case Study - Birmingham Women's Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

Helen Young was appointed Director of Nursing and Midwifery at Birmingham Women's Hospital in September 2012, for a job she previously might not have considered applying for. But the NHS Leadership Academy Executive Search Service, which was involved in recruiting for the role, was robust in its efforts to find the right candidate, said Helen.

"I had been doing interim work and was looking for a new role, but this was very much a midwifery focused job and although I have always had midwifery in my portfolio as a Director of Nursing, I am not a midwife, so I probably would not have looked at the job if I had not been approached," said Helen.

"The NHS Executive Search team explained the job in great detail and gave me the confidence to go forward with the application. I think they went to great lengths to find out about me and my skillset and to match the right person with the job, even though I did not seem an obvious fit at first. What was good was that they looked beneath the surface," said Helen.

Helen was taking part in leadership training at the Academy when she was asked if she might be interested in the post. After the initial contact she was supplied with a person specification and profile of the organisation, and had a phone conversation with the NHS search service to find out more about what sort of post she was looking for and what she could offer. Then she had a face-to-face meeting with the search team as part of an initial screening process.

"It was very robust and took a whole morning," said Helen. "After that there were meetings with the trust, meetings with stakeholders and formal interviews. Although it was a very thorough process I found the NHS Executive Search team to be very approachable and informative. If they felt they needed more from me they came back and asked me to expand on particular issues."

Helen was also impressed with their honesty.

"I think that makes the NHS team different from commercial search agencies," she said. "They were very honest and open about some of the challenges and changes that the Trust had gone through and they explained in detail what they were looking for and why. I found that very helpful."

Ros Keeton, CEO at the Trust, commissioned the NHS Executive Search Service to recruit not just for Helen's role but also for a Director of Finance. In both cases she was very pleased with the service.

"We have a good relationship with the Leadership Academy and were approached about piloting the search service," said Ros. "When we met with the team we were impressed. It was a really positive experience."

Ros also feels that the NHS Executive Search Service was much more robust than the service often provided by some commercial recruitment companies, and the process was also transparent and fair.

"I have been a CEO for ten years and a Director before that for ten years, so I have used quite a few firms. They often provide an adequate service but I think the NHS service was much more proactive. The team was very thorough and went to extensive lengths to investigate the market and to come up with a good long list. The whole approach was very

methodical and analytical. The analysis they did of each of the candidates and their skillsets was very detailed and professional.

“Their penetration of the market was also different. It helps that the NHS service is part of the NHS, in practical search terms as well as ethically and financially. In times of financial stringency it’s an attractive prospect to be able to reinvest recruitment funding back into the NHS, especially when what the team has developed stands up very credibly against private recruitment agencies.

“I have recommended the NHS Executive Search service to others and was pleased to do so,” said Ros. “We received a very good service.”