

Department of Health

Nic Greenfield FCMA, Deputy Director of Workforce (Education, Regulation & Pay)

Nic was sponsored at university by the Royal Air Force to study Economics. He completed sixteen years in the RAF and retired in 1991. During his RAF career, he qualified as a Chartered Company Secretary and as a Chartered Management Accountant. He spent a short time as a senior lecturer at university and joined the National Health Service in September 1993. Nic has held a variety of senior appointments in the NHS as an accountant and as a CEO. He joined the Department of Health in August 2004 and is now responsible for national policy on professional regulation, education and development, NHS pay and pensions, including responsibility for the allocation of the NHS's £5 billion budget on workforce development. Nic is an ex-President of the West Midlands Branch of CIMA and is committed to the value of CIMA in supporting the development of public services. The Department of Health is a CIMA Training Partner.

What gives you the most satisfaction about working in the Department of Health?

Some accountants are driven by the opportunity to generate profit, but those of us who work in the public sector are generally driven by the opportunity to make a real difference to the services we provide for the general public. It can be highly rewarding. I also enjoy working within organisations with a clear sense of purpose, strong shared values and a commitment to continuous improvement. My current job is particularly fascinating as it includes regular work with Ministers and the opportunity to influence health and social care at a national level, though at times it can be like appearing in an episode of 'Yes Minister'.

What's the difference between a good finance director and a good chief executive?

The difference between a good FD and a good CEO is often very small, but the difference between an accountant and a good CEO can be significant. Sadly some accountants have a reputation for focussing on costs and controls. They may be sound technically but they inhibit rather than enable their organisations. They lack strategic vision, awareness of the wider context and struggle to build effective relationships, particularly with key staff from other professions. Those who aspire to CEO posts therefore need to seek opportunities to work outside their normal professional boundaries and networks. This can be unnerving initially, but those who persevere will soon realise that their CIMA qualification provides a range of skills that are highly valued by other professionals.

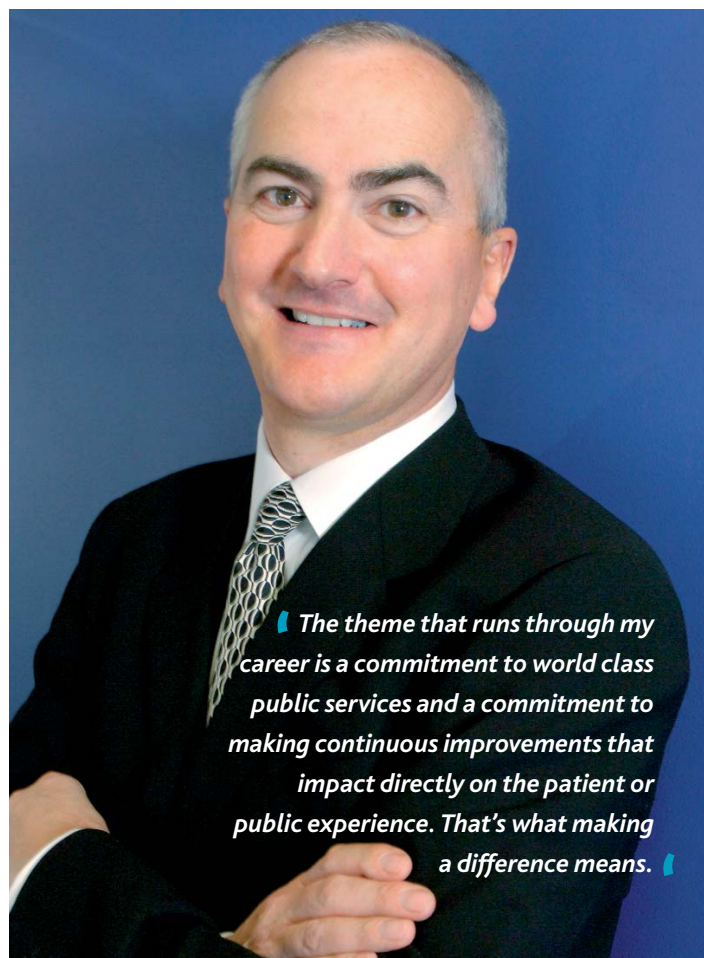
Why CIMA?

I would say there are two reasons why CIMA is particularly attractive. The first is that the curriculum delivers the skills and knowledge that have been proven in business and are increasingly required in the public sector. In short, there is widespread recognition throughout the public sector that CIMA is fit for purpose. The second is that CIMA is an international qualification recognised, respected and valued around the world. People like the idea that their skills are transferable and that this will improve their career options.

What advice would you give to an ambitious CIMA student as to whether the NHS is a good choice of career?

I would say the NHS is an excellent choice of career for a CIMA student! We have well-structured financial management training schemes and we are looking increasingly to link those schemes more closely with the training of other professionals such as junior doctors, general managers and HR specialists. This will improve organisational performance by

building early mutual respect and understanding. If you look in the financial pages, the jobs are varied. Some are in the financial discipline but there are many others that use CIMA skills such as performance management, business planning and project management – you therefore don't have to stay within your professional discipline. You can do as I have done and undertake a mix of specialist and general management jobs. One thing is sure though, if you do a good job you can progress, earn a six figure salary and, most importantly, make a difference that you can be really proud of.



Latest figures show that CIMA has more members in the public sector than any other UK based body*

*Key Facts and Trends in the Accountancy Profession' report published by the Professional Oversight Board for Accountancy (POBA) in February 2005.

For further information about finance careers in the NHS, please visit www.futureleaders.nhs.uk/financial.htm