

*“ I got great support directly from the adviser at NES who was readily available and wanted to ensure that my application was successful... the process of organising funds also proved surprisingly straight forward ”*

I work full time as part of the team of five palliative medicine consultants in Lanarkshire. I am based in St Andrew's hospice in Airdrie which is a large unit with 30 beds. As well as my inpatient responsibilities, I offer sessional support to the acute and community teams.

I started in St Andrew's Hospice in 2004 as a Staff Grade Doctor, having previously qualified as a GP and taken a break to have my first of three sons. I intended to return to General practice, but that never quite happened! I loved my role as a staff grade at the hospice, but I knew that with time, I would want more. I was successful in my application to become an Associate Specialist in palliative medicine in 2010 and after years of threatening to do it, finally embarked on the CESR process with sincerity in 2015. My application to the Specialist Register was approved in 2017 and I was fortunate to be successful in my consultant application when a post became available through retirement in early 2018. Easy?!

The whole process required hard work and determination. Without the support and belief of my consultant colleagues, it would not have been possible.

The second factor that was vital, was the opportunity to be seconded from my post as Associate Specialist to undertake 'top up training'. I had to gain experience in areas of the palliative medicine curriculum that I did not encounter day to day. This included attachments in Chronic Pain, Oncology, and Paediatric palliative care. I also chose to spend some time in Acute Medical Receiving since it had been a while since I had last been in that kind of environment.

My secondment was supported by the SAS development fund. The financial support allowed a locum to be appointed to cover my post for four months. The logistics of organising the various attachments was complex, but knowing that I had the support of my colleagues and that I was not leaving them short-staffed was a great help.

I found the application to the SAS development fund probably the most straight forward part of the whole process. I got great support directly from the adviser at NES who was readily available and wanted to ensure that my application was successful. Once it had been approved, the process of organising funds between NES and HR at NHSL also proved surprisingly straight forward!

I would encourage others who feel they are essentially working at consultant level, or are capable of doing so, to consider a CESR application. It is not a decision to take lightly however and the effort involved should not be underestimated.

My three top tips for anyone considering a CESR applications would be:

- 1 Ensure you have buy-in from consultant colleagues. Let them know what you will bring to the service with further training and specialist registration.
- 2 Study the relevant specialty curriculum, and make an early application to the NES SAS development fund for support in top up training. Be specific about what you need to achieve and how you plan on achieving it.
- 3 If there is one, sit the Specialty Certificate Examination early on. There's no point jumping through all the CESR hoops without it.

Good luck!