



Sue Heatherington BA, MSc, FRSA

Thinking partner for innovators and changemakers

Sue is an experienced organisational strategist working with leaders and senior teams to make sense of where they are and navigate their way forward in a complex, interconnected and rapidly changing world. Her breadth of professional experience is unusual and enables her to see across boundaries and perceive the bigger picture in designing and supporting transformational change.

Her reputation as a pioneering NHS Chief Executive in England and in Wales was linked to the system wide innovations that she championed and the way in which she brought together clinicians, managers and people using services to redesign and deliver care fit for the 21st century.

Notable areas of innovation include:

- Breakthrough information technology in primary and community care, in hospitals and in mental health services.
- Establishing a region wide, real-time emergency capacity management system incorporating eight acute hospitals, three ambulance services and twenty-five healthcare organisations across a population of three million people.
- A global pioneer in population based digital diabetic retinopathy screening, covering one million population
- Integrated multi-disciplinary teams providing ground-breaking care for people with chronic conditions who were at risk of frequent hospital admissions. This included developing new roles and training, as well as the underpinning systems.
- Redesigning mental health services at town, city and regional levels.

During her decade as an NHS chief executive (1999-2009), Sue also co-founded cross-organisational partnership boards, including health, local authority and university partners, and led on the organisational development agenda. Whilst in Wales she chaired the Critical Care Board for Mid and West Wales and was vice chair of the Cancer Network for the same region. She was also a key player in the all Wales Specialist Commissioning Board where major strategic and commissioning decisions were made concerning tertiary services, such as specialist cancer provision.

Since leaving the NHS Sue has worked with universities, health and life science organisations, and a wide variety of leaders across multiple sectors (see CV below for details). She is also a writer, professional coach and has first-hand experience of the health and social care system as a long-term carer and erstwhile cancer patient.

Sue Heatherington CV

Experience

The Waterside (Swansea) Ltd – Director – 2009 to present

The Waterside combines a unique venue with consulting and coaching services (www.thewaterside.co.uk)

Major clients include:

- The Foresight Partnership/GE Healthcare - board and senior leadership development in the NHS (Senior Associate 2010-15)
- Royal College of Physicians/Swansea University – designing and facilitating innovative cross boundary events on HCI in medical devices.
- Swansea University - coaching and master classes for SMEs on LEAD Wales / ION Leadership programmes; teaching on the Graduate Entry Medicine programme;
- CHI+MED – thinking partner and leadership team coach for this £5m multi-university EPSRC research programme
- IBI (UK) - leadership and team development for part of the global architecture group
- Welsh Government - facilitating the Life Sciences Hub and MC for BioWales
- Cardiff University/Welsh Deanery – teaching Higher Specialist Trainees
- NASA UK – a UK: Chinese healthcare and life science partnership

Other clients include: Wales Millennium Centre; Coastal Housing Group; Congregational Federation; Sancta Maria Hospital; the CLA; Telos Partners; Karl Storz Ltd; NHS Wales; Youth Arts Network Cymru; Wales & West Utilities; Sarum College; UCL, Queen Mary's and King's College University of London; St Joseph's Hospital; Cambrian Ventures Ltd; the Red Café Programme.

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Swansea Local Health Board – Chief Executive – 2005-2009

At the time this was a large commissioning health board with a diverse population of 232k and annual budget of £300m. It was a complex board with challenging partnership arrangements across the city, in a system that was broken. Some direct service provision, contracting and quality assuring all primary, secondary and community health services for the population, whilst also promoting public health and wellbeing. Sue had a reputation for whole system working and clinical and patient engagement in pioneering service transformation, but also for quietly challenging conventional wisdom.

Regional and national leads for specialist healthcare commissioning, public health and secure mental health services.

Swansea Local Health Board merged with neighbouring health boards and the local NHS trusts in 2009 and is now Swansea Bay University Health Board.

Wokingham Primary Care Trust – Chief Executive – 2001-2005

Founding CEO for early wave PCT, with 140k population and £170m annual budget. Direct provision of community care, out-of-hours services for the whole of West Berkshire and local hospital services. Commissioning of all primary and secondary care. Reputation for pioneering new forms of service provision, high quality service delivery, clinical collaboration and being a good place to work.

Sue co-founded the West Berkshire Partnership Board: an early exemplar of cross-public service joint working.

Regional leadership roles in use of ICT in healthcare, emergency capacity management, academic collaboration and mental health

Wokingham Primary Care Group – Chief Officer – 1999-2001

Established as transition stage between GP fundholding and primary care trusts, ready to take on full commissioning responsibility and direct provision of community care.

Brookside Group Practice – Strategy Development – 1992-99

Headhunted to work with the medical partners in the second largest GP practice in the UK at the time (20 GPs, 26k patients on three sites in greater Reading) to develop their services and capabilities to deliver first class care for their patients. Reputation as a leading-edge practice, developing innovative solutions in partnership with others, which informed national strategy and policy

Creative Management Services & Voluntary work – Owner – 1986-92

Working part-time with a range of private sector clients including long-term business management for a conservation and countryside company, market research for the construction industry, and strategy development for a small IT provider; plus project management support for an overseas development organisation and partnered in marketing consultancy for the Health Education Authority.

Voluntary work included work with the homeless and marginalised in Reading, and church leadership at both local and town level.

University of London and nurse education – senior admin roles – 1984-6

Deputy undergraduate admissions officer and deputy examinations officer for Royal Holloway College and then senior administrator for the West Berkshire School of Nursing bringing in new hospital-based examinations and Project 2000 student entry.

University of Reading – Postgraduate research – 1981-84

Cross-disciplinary research on the impact of farm diversification on the sustainability of the rural economy and farm household (NB an extension of my MSc research and a little ahead of its time...)

Education and professional development

- BA in Development Studies (first class), University of East Anglia, 1980
- MSc in Agricultural Economics, University of Reading, 1981
- Postgraduate diploma in advanced executive coaching – European/Zurich programme with the AoEC/Middlesex University, 2010
- Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, 2014 to present
- Myers Briggs Type Indicator practitioner, 2013
- Former Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine

Personal

Land management – with her husband, Sue owns and manages a 40-acre valley in the hills north of Swansea, south-west Wales, including a herd of alpacas.

Carer – for several decades, including currently for her physically disabled Downs brother. She also underwent surgery for breast cancer in 2018.

Board appointments – currently Deputy Chair and Chair of the People and Remuneration Committee for a national charity with a Royal Charter (British and Foreign Bible Society, founded in 1804)

Creative – Sue is a writer and photographer, including daily Quiet Disruptor posts (www.quietdisruptor.com)

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