

A DAY IN THE LIFE: JACKIE SWANNICK



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Abstract:
In this article, Abbott's National Nurse Manager Jackie Swannick shares insights into her role, drawing on her experience with the Abbott Nurse Advisor service since its beginnings in 2000.

Can you tell us a little about your role as National Nurse Manager at Abbott?

It's difficult to put it simply, as my role is so multifaceted, but that's one of the things I enjoy most about it. The main aspect is in the leadership and management of the whole Abbott Nurse Advisor team across the UK, making sure we continue to deliver a high-quality service for both patients and healthcare professionals.

That involves a wide spectrum of responsibilities, including the governance that underpins the service, maintaining policy, procedure and regulatory standards, and oversight of recruitment and training to support the ongoing development of the team.

You work closely with the contracts team and play a key role in the implementation process. What does that involve?

I'm directly involved with key healthcare professionals and stakeholders during both the contracting and implementation stages. It's important to me that our customers understand from the start exactly how our service operates in practice, and that they recognise not only what we deliver, but what it feels like to work with our team.

During implementation, I oversee the process from the community nursing perspective. While our focus is on ensuring all patients are transferred smoothly onto the new feeding system, we also maintain a nursing service for those patients during the transition, so their care is uninterrupted.

What does a typical day look like for you, if there is such a thing as a typical day?

I wouldn't say I really ever have a typical day. Much of my day-to-day work is done remotely via Teams, which has been a big change since the pre-pandemic days, but I also do a great deal of travelling around the country. I go wherever I'm needed, whether it's attending meetings at our offices in Maidenhead or Sittingbourne, or visiting a customer face-to-face. I could be in Hull one day and Swansea the next. I really enjoy it when I'm able to go out on the road with members of the team and do in-person community visits with their patients.

You've been part of the Abbott Nurse Advisor service since its beginnings in 2000. How has the service developed over that time?

I was one of seven nurses at the start, and we made the first steps to help shape the service into what it is today. At the time, we were focused exclusively on pump training, but over time, the service began to evolve, the clinical aspects of our roles expanded, and it became increasingly apparent just how much of an impact our expertise and support could have for patients. The service has grown and developed so much that it's almost unrecognisable from where it started 26 years ago.

Abbott Nurse Advisors are now seen as clinical experts in enteral feeding. They facilitate safe discharge from hospital, ensuring patients return home feeling confident that they or their carer can operate and manage their equipment and feeding tubes safely and independently.

Of course, we continue to deliver personalised support, with phone calls, home visits and routine check-ins to make sure everything is going well. Most patients have a direct line to their Abbott Nurse Advisor, so if they have any problems with their feeding tube, a colleague can respond quickly and visit to provide practical support or even change the tube in situ, if necessary. All of which helps to avoid unnecessary readmission to hospital.

What's the biggest challenge you've encountered in your role?

Over the years, and often on a daily basis, I've had to be quite agile to ensure the service can quickly adapt to change. One of the biggest challenges was, of course, the pandemic in 2020. I had to effectively rethink everything about the way we worked to ensure patients continued to receive the support and care they needed, while also keeping our nurses safe.

What is the most fulfilling aspect of your role at Abbott?

It's the feedback we receive. Even just a comment from a patient about how much a visit or phone call from an Abbott Nurse Advisor has meant to them, or a thank you for the support they've had and what a difference it's made.

We're not expecting to be thanked, but the fact that a patient or their family members would take the time to reach out to us, when they may even be going through one of the most difficult times in their lives, says a lot about the impact of the work that we do. It can be quite emotional.

Can you tell us a little about your team?

I don't think enough can be said about the level of pride and care that our Nurse Advisors have in the service they provide for patients. Everything is about the patients; they're at the heart of everything we do, and our team will always go above and beyond to support them.

They work so closely and collaboratively with their local dietitians and nurses that they are often viewed as an extension of their own teams. I'm incredibly proud of the trust and confidence that our NHS colleagues place in us.

Tell us a little about yourself, what do you like to do outside of work?

I have two grown-up children, who I'm very proud of, and anyone who knows me knows that I'm obsessed with my two dogs. I love walking them, especially along the beach in Norfolk. I'm also an avid theatre-goer and try to get out to see shows in London as often as I can. You can't beat the experience of a live performance!