



NHS In the spotlight

The Energy Managers Association is pleased to announce that Charlie Cox, the Energy Manager at University Hospitals of North Midlands NHS Trust, has become the first EMA Recognised Energy Manager after demonstrating the knowledge and skills in energy management in accordance with the EMA Energy Management in Practice training programme and its core competencies. We have asked Charlie about his role at the Trust and energy management in general.

How did you become interested in energy management?

I have always had a fascination for how things work and a desire to make them work better. Energy management made up part of my previous role in the food industry, and I realised that I enjoyed that part of my job most because it allowed me to make systems and equipment work more efficiently. My parents were early adopters of renewables, with solar panels and a wind turbine powering the lights in the house 20 years ago, so I suppose it all just came together from there.

What does your role at UHNM entail?

Like most energy managers, my role is pretty wide ranging and varied. On the technical/engineering side, I am responsible for the energy centre at the Royal Stoke University Hospital, and I also spend time in plant rooms checking that the existing equipment is working efficiently, or identifying projects to save more energy or water. Other aspects include compliance with relevant legislation, writing business cases, staff engagement and reporting of consumption, cost and carbon.

What is the most exciting part of your job for the NHS?

Working as part of a dynamic sustainability team and finding new ways to make a real difference to our organisation is great fun. Like all NHS organisations, UHNM is under enormous financial pressure. I see my job as making sure that we reduce the amount of money that we spend on energy and water as much as possible, so that we can spend that money on patient care instead. The added bonus is that many of the energy saving initiatives also have a positive impact on patient experience, such as reduced noise or light when they are trying to sleep, so they are helping our patients to recover quicker.

What is the most frustrating part of your job?

Like any large organisation, UHNM has a lot of policies and procedures in place. These are vital to ensure that we deliver the service that our patients deserve, but they can make life difficult when you are trying to do something that hasn't been done before. Making fundamental changes to the way things are done can be incredibly challenging, but I suppose that just makes it even more rewarding when it happens.

Can you describe your typical day?

It's a cliché to say that there is no such thing as a typical day, but it's also true. A lot of my time is spent in the office or in meetings, but I can also find myself in a boilerhouse or plantroom. Like everyone these days, I get drawn into spending a lot of time responding to emails, but I try to dedicate as much time as possible

to things that are actually going to make a difference to cost and carbon emissions.

What drives you?

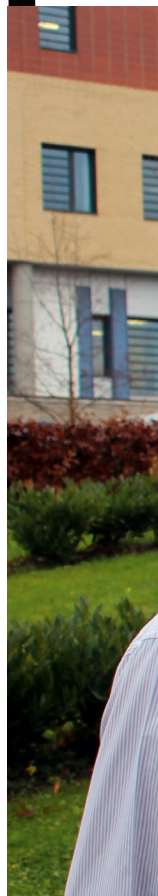
I believe that climate change, caused by human activity, is the biggest threat to life on earth. I also believe that the NHS is the greatest institution in the world, and that it achieves amazing things with diminishing resources and increasing demand. Knowing that I am reducing greenhouse gas emissions and saving money for the NHS is all the motivation I need.

What qualities should a good energy manager possess?

I think tenacity is probably the most important thing. In any organisation, making changes to reduce energy and water consumption is going to be seen as a "nice to have" side issue, or just an inconvenience. An energy manager needs to keep pushing and keep convincing people that energy savings will make a real difference to the organisation.

What is your greatest contribution to the energy management sector or your current role?

The project that I am most proud of working on is UHNM's community funded solar power project, Saving Lives With Solar. This scheme is highly innovative in bringing together a community energy company (Southern Staffordshire Community Energy), a fuel poverty charity (Beat The Cold) and our clinical consultants from within UHNM. This project brings a new source of investment



into low carbon technology in the NHS and demonstrates that energy and sustainability staff can make a real difference to the wellbeing of patients.

Which energy efficient innovation can revolutionise the global economy?

I don't think there will be a single magic bullet that will change the world on its own; I think that real change will only come from the cumulative effect of lots of small changes. We already have lots of incredible technology at our disposal, but the challenge is to find innovative ways to apply it and to fund it. Maybe long term, something like nuclear fusion will come along as a plentiful supply of cheap energy, but realistically we need to make the most of what we have now.

What advice would you give to someone looking to craft a generation strategy?

It is important to have a clear idea of what you are trying to achieve, before you jump into the detail of how you are going to achieve it. I see a lot of energy strategies that start with something like, "we are going to install a CHP plant". That's fine as an end result, but you need to take a step back and understand the bigger picture of how energy management needs to develop within the organisation in the long term.

What prompted you to undertake the Knowledge and Skills' Gap Analysis Interview with the EMA?

I have been looking for some form of accreditation in energy management for some time now. Colleagues in more established disciplines have the option of chartered status, but there didn't seem to be an appropriate equivalent for energy managers. My degree is in Manufacturing Engineering, so much of my energy management knowledge has been picked up from experience, as well as from magazines, exhibitions and the internet. This left a nagging

doubt in my mind, that there may be aspects of energy management that I know nothing about because I have just never come across them in my current role. The interview process was a great opportunity to review what I have picked up over the years, and it was reassuring to know that I have got all of the bases covered.

Do you think that the EMA Recognised Energy Management status will allow you to highlight your credentials as an energy manager?

It is nice to have the official endorsement of the EMA, and I am sure that it will increase my profile both inside and outside of UHNM. My natural position is to think that it shouldn't matter what qualifications or recognition someone has, as long as they do a good job. However, in reality it is essential for an energy manager to be seen as credible by a broad spectrum of colleagues, in order to garner support for the important work that they do.

