Meet the woman going to help create Zambia’s NHS

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Getting out of one's comfort zone is often chosen as a New Year resolution. And if you are looking to do so in 2019, Marion Lynch's leap into the unknown can certainly inspire you!

In February this year, Marion, who is deputy medical director in the South East, will head to the African continent and spend six months working with the Ministry of Health in Zambia. Her role is voluntary and the Minister and her team are looking forward to having Marion's support to introduce a health system that includes quality improvement, performance management and that supports nursing across the

country.

The work is part of the Improving Global Health (IGH) Programme run by the Thames Valley and Wessex Leadership Academy, funded by Health Education England. To complete it, Marion is taking unpaid leave from NHSE, but will receive a monthly stipend to cover essential living expenses in-country during the placement that will see her leaving her family behind. The IGH Programme has been running for the past 10 years and each year approximately 25 individuals complete a fellowship which includes a 6-months overseas placement (with one or two other IGH fellows) working with a partner in a resource-poor setting. The programme works on the principle of mutual benefit – The IGH Fellows (NHS staff) share their skills and experiences; and at the same time learn about other health systems, system strengthening and development work as well as having the opportunity to work in partnership with a diverse range of people.

Their learning is supported by an experienced UK-based mentor who helps them recognise and evidence their own personal learning, with a particular focus on leadership behaviours, using the NHS Healthcare Leadership Model (2013). On their return, the NHS alumni of the scheme are able to use their new and enhanced skills to benefit their work in the NHS.

In Zambia, Marion has her new home sorted - a tiny cottage of her own in Lusaka. However, she will have daily contact with two other fellows who will be working with the medical staff in Zambian hospitals. Once there, Marion will also work with the Tropical Health Education Trust (THET) a specialist global health organisation, to ensure that the work with the Zambian government is sustainable and may be shared with others working on similar issues in other settings. Marion's challenge will be huge, working in a country with major health and system challenges. The UK Department for International Development (DiFD) has recently pulled out its financial support due to alleged corruption and colleagues in the country are preparing for a potential Ebola outbreak. This country of 17 million people often suffers from medicine shortages and will greatly benefit from the

fellow's contribution.

For those of you who will want to know more about her work and/or follow her adventures, she will be keeping in touch and writing two regular blogs. She will be writing a monthly blog for the Royal College of Nursing' journal as a well as a blog and podcast for HEE's Global Engagement Directorate. On her return she will also be writing a full report detailing her learnings and experiences.

Marion's attachment to the African continent is not new. She founded and funds her very own charity, Fiona Foundation for Kids set up in memory of her younger sister who died in 2016. Fiona was a foster mum and special needs teacher in the UK and died before she could live her dream and take her expert skills across the world. The charity continues her great work and currently focuses on the slums of Kenya, helping to make sure that mothers and children can stay together even through the toughest of times. It funds child safety and development education for staff and mums, plus daily food and day care for 30 children aged 0-3 years. This means that their mums can go to work and earn enough to keep their home and child by working in manual labour jobs for £1.20 per day. Before this help was available the kids were often left

alone all day because £1.20 does not go far. On her way to Zambia Marion will drop into Kenya and see the kids for a couple of days and will be running brainstorming sessions with the charity team to help them solve some of the quality of care issues. Marion will not be able to fund her charity for the next six months and would therefore greatly appreciate any donations that could be made towards it. You can find out more about the Fiona Foundation for Kids on its website or Facebook page and donate to the charity following this

link: https://mydonate.bt.com/charities/fionafoundationforkids

We wish the best of luck to Marion on her adventure!