



Case Study: Return to Practice (nursing)

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What was your initial experience of nursing?

I qualified as a registered nurse in adult nursing in 1997. My first role was on a medical ward and following this I moved to coronary care. Sadly, my nan died in coronary care but on a positive note it cemented that coronary care was the right place for me. Following some time abroad in Australia, where I worked in A&E, I moved back to the UK in 2000. I picked up working in coronary care. I was instrumental in setting up a thrombolysis service and found myself being the nurse who went to patients when they needed clot busting intervention. Unfortunately, a back injury made me re-think my career after Occupational Health advised me to move away from clinical work. At a time when there was a lot of change in the NHS, I secured a role as Service Improvement Manager for coronary heart disease, working in a major hospital. Drawing on my thrombolysis experience, I was asked to carry a bleep so I could attend A&E to see all patients following MI who were admitted to hospital. After 2 years, due to funding pressures, the role ended, so I looked at other areas of nursing. As a student nurse, I'd loved my health visitor placement which had given me insight into child protection issues and deprivation. I decided to re-train as a health visitor and enjoyed this role for around 10 years where I added a qualification in safeguarding to my experience. In 2016 I went to Saudi with husband and then on to Belgium during which time my registration lapsed. I was out of nursing for 7 years.

So, what prompted you to return to nursing?

We returned to the UK in July 2022. I'd never planned to leave nursing but being overseas made working impossible with 2 small children and my husband frequently away from home. When we returned home, the obvious thing to do was a Return to Practice (RtP) course. I toyed with idea of doing something other than nursing but realised that since a little girl, nursing had been my dream. I couldn't contemplate doing anything else despite recognising I probably had many transferable skills. So, I applied for a place on the RtP course at University of Lincoln and asked for a placement in general practice. I was accepted and prepared to start the course in September 2022.

Have you enjoyed your overall experience of your RtP module with placement in general practice?

There have been some challenges, but overall, I've thoroughly enjoyed the course and placement. My placement was even better than I'd imagined. They were very flexible and accommodating. I had a great experience. My mentor was superb - in fact I nominated her for an award at the Lincolnshire General Practice Nursing Team and Healthcare Assistant Conference 2023. She was incredibly knowledgeable and I learned so much. But perhaps even better was when she didn't know an answer to a question, we looked it up, discussed and learned together.

So, what's next?

I've secured a permanent role - not directly in general practice but as a Specialist Neighbourhood Nurse so I'll be seeing patients in their own homes. The purpose of the role is to prevent inappropriate hospital admissions and ensure people have frailty assessments and the right packages of care to prevent falls and subsequent admission to hospital. I know I'll be busy! My previous experience meant that I met all the requirements of the job description so I applied and was successful! I would definitely recommend the RtP course with placement in general practice to other people. My experience of the LTH has been nothing but positive. Thank you to everyone involved. It's a massive comfort to know you're there as a point of contact and I'm now looking forward to starting my new job and continuing to benefit from Career Start.

