

# "On operations in Afghanistan, my clinical skills were invaluable."

Tracey has been a reservist for as long as she's worked in the NHS.

## Tracey Smith-Straney

**Clinical scientist and haematology laboratory manager, and Officer Commanding HQ and Support Squadron, 208 Field Hospital (V).**

### Employer or university

University Hospital Aintree



### How I became a reservist

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I first became interested in the military years ago. I was at a crossroads about what to do but I'd really liked my science subjects at school and got a job as a trainee biomedical scientist. At the same time, my best friend was doing her nursing and TA training - having fun, meeting new people, and keeping fit - and I thought it would be good for me too!

### What I do

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As part of the military, I've been on two operational tours of Afghanistan as the officer commanding for the pathology laboratory, and visited Canada, France, Germany, Gibraltar and Holland.

I've developed both my NHS and military roles because of the cross-over in each learning environment. On operations in Afghanistan, my clinical skills were invaluable, and my military management skills are really useful in my laboratory manager role at Aintree.

## **The best bits and challenges**

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I think the best thing about being a reservist is the chance to meet people from all aspects of the military, especially those directly involved in the Army Medical Service. Networking with and meeting people from outside the laboratory - my 'day job' - has helped me see things with a different perspective and understand the direct benefit to patients of my work. You can get very focused on your one small area of the NHS - the lab in my case - and therefore quite unaware of the impact of your service on patients. So being in the military network 'pool', I get to see patients and really understand the impact of my contribution.

The best thing about the NHS is the support and training I've received to extend my clinical practice to clinical scientist status, while at the same time receiving support for my military commitments. And I've been able to develop both my NHS and military roles because of the cross-over in each learning environment. On operations in Afghanistan, my clinical skills were invaluable, and my military management skills are really useful in my laboratory manager role at Aintree.