

## Real-life story - Sarah Roberts

Sarah was previously a registered nurse. She enrolled in the Return to Practice programme after hearing about it from an ex-colleague.?



Sarah Roberts Return to practice deputy senior sister

**Employer or university** Queen's Hospital, University Hospitals of Derby and Burton

**Salary range** Unknown

### What attracted you to nursing when you first trained?

My grandmother was a nurse so she was a massive influence. One of my earliest memories is of her fetching me from school on her way home from work, always on her 'sit up and beg' bike and wearing her cap and apron.

After my A-levels I started a weekend job at a private nursing home and was hooked from then onwards. I started my Registered General Nurse training (back then you didn't need a nursing degree) at Coventry School of Nursing in June 1984, a week after sitting my last A-level paper.

### Why did you leave?

By 2006 I was nursing at the same time as working on a joint business with my (now ex) husband and we had young children.

The business was very successful and it became difficult to commit to my nursing job as much as I needed and wanted to. I found myself becoming inflexible as a team member and felt conflicted. I was also finding it increasingly difficult to fulfil my Post-registration education and practice (Prep) requirements. So I decided to leave my nursing job and my Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC [1]) registration lapsed in 2008.

Getting back to nursing is the thing that I am most proud of. I did it for me and it's reminded me that this is the best job in the world!

## **Why did you decide to return?**

After my divorce in 2012, I left the business and worked in office admin jobs. At that time, I wasn't aware that there was a nursing Return To Practice (RTP) course so I assumed my nursing days were well and truly over. But my biggest regret was letting my NMC registration lapse.

In 2014, I bumped into an ex-colleague and she told me that she was a mentor for RTP students at the local hospital. I googled RTP to find participating universities and applied the next day. I was interviewed that summer and started the course at University of Wolverhampton in October of the same year. I passed and was able to re-join the NMC register in April 2015.

## **What were your biggest concerns? What support did you receive?**

My previous nursing career had been varied and I'd worked in different areas: neonatal, practice, child health and school. But I had literally forgotten how to do the many clinical skills I had gathered over the years. I was reminded at my RTP interview that you're never an 'ex' nurse, you're just not on the active part of the NMC register. The prospect of doing drug calculations particularly terrified the life out of me. As well as that, having being trained the 'old-fashioned' school of nursing way, university enrolment was a little daunting, as was the prospect of academia.

I received a massive amount of support from the minute I went to the interview. I was reminded of my status as a nurse and encouraged to return to a placement that felt familiar and comfortable. And former colleagues were my cheerleaders, facilitating meetings and sessions with frontline staff and placement opportunities for me.

My course mentor turned out to be someone I'd worked with years ago and the staff on the unit where I did my placement gave me a massive amount of support and encouragement too. It all helped facilitated the return of a lot of knowledge that had been hidden deep in the recesses of my mind!

University work was supported by the RTP course tutors and E-Learning was brilliant. We were given access to a couple of apps that we could use to practice.

My course fees were paid and I had a bursary of ?500 towards travel and books etc. My family helped me financially so I could give up my office job and concentrate on submitting my coursework and applying to re-register as quickly as possible.

## What advice would you give someone thinking of returning?

Prepare yourself for the onslaught of some hefty academic work, mainly via self-guided study! Reacquaint yourself with former colleagues and friends who are nurses, pick their brains and get back into thinking like a nurse before you start the course.

I'd recommend reading any articles by organisations like the King's Fund, NHS Improvement, Public Health England and NHS Employers, and look at your local NHS trust's website too. And if you can, make contact with someone who has walked your path before ? an ex-RTP student like me.

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### Interested in returning to nursing?

We'll send you free, expert advice on restarting your nursing career.

Let's go [2]

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#### Links

[1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#NMC>

[2] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/nursing-registration>