

"The best part of returning to practice was being able to work with and support women and their families at this moment in their lives."

Michaela took a career break from midwifery but was still passionate about women's health and kept her knowledge up to date. Whilst studying for an MSc in Maternal and Child Healthcare Practice, Michaela decided to return to what she loved.

Michaela Mercuri

Bank staff midwife

Employer or university

St George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
Bank staff midwife

What attracted you to midwifery when you first trained?

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I grew up in Peru where my father was working at the time. Whilst living there, my family and I spent a lot of my early teenage years volunteering in a children's refuge where we helped to care for extremely vulnerable children. This is where my interest in a nursing career began.

After qualifying as a nurse, I worked on a gynaecology and breast oncology ^[1] ward at St Bartholomew's Hospital for approximately three years before moving into General Practice. Whilst working as a practice nurse I became particularly interested in family planning and women's health, and therefore decided to apply to do midwifery training to

expand my knowledge in this field. I worked as a midwife on the maternity unit at St George's Hospital, London.

Why did you leave?

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After my third child was born, I felt that I had spread myself very thin, and the increasing costs of childcare that we incurred with me working had become no longer financially viable. My husband and I therefore decided that it would be beneficial for me to take a career break to focus on raising our children.

Why did you decide to return?

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Letting my registration lapse was a very difficult decision for me. I have always been passionate about women's health so during my career break, I kept my knowledge up to date in this field, completing a MSc in Maternal and Child Healthcare Practice.

Whilst studying, I decided to return to practice and therefore completed a Return to Practice (RTP) module with a clinical placement at St George's hospital. Once I'd completed the course, I was offered a Bank staff midwife position and am currently awaiting a start date.

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

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RTP felt like getting back on a bike after a long time! Regaining confidence was a big thing. I found one of the challenges was that often mentors and other members of staff were unsure of my role and what I was capable of. This ambiguity led to some feelings of frustration at times.

But I had some very supportive mentors who really helped me regain my confidence, and were fabulous role models too. The best part of returning to practice was being able to work with and support women and their families at this moment in their lives.

Typically, the role is rotational, so I worked alongside a midwife mentor, and followed her shifts as much as possible. If I were to request a change in the role, I would suggest combining the preceptorship skills with the RTP training, as I would have found it very helpful to be able to regain confidence in these skills again.

Returning to practice after so many years has not been without its obstacles. The use of technology has advanced, and the needs of the service users have also changed. However, continuous learning and skill development is the nature of the job, which is one of the aspects I enjoy and look forward to further developing with time.

I feel proud that I have got to where I am now.

What advice would you give someone thinking of returning?

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Midwifery is a career that is incredibly rewarding and a total privilege. However, it is also highly demanding. The role is evolving, moving towards more continuity of care, which can present certain challenges with work-life balance.

So, if you're considering a RTP course, be aware of this and make sure you are ready and able to accommodate it. If you are, you won't regret the challenge!

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Links

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