

David – returning physiotherapist



I was working as a Senior (Band 6) Orthopaedic Trauma physiotherapist, and I enjoyed my job. I had quite a lot of other interests and as a Christian, religious studies and theology were two of them. My boss at the time allowed me to go part-time so that I could study theology at university. After undertaking my undergrad BA in theology, there was a possible opportunity for me to undertake a PhD and I didn't feel I had the time to do this and work as a physio. I had to choose one or the other.

As it was, I choose the PhD. Once it was finished, I worked as a post-doctoral researcher in the field of contemporary religious studies. Over the next ten years, I always missed physiotherapy; working with people; the multidisciplinary team; a health care setting; and the job satisfaction. Then the research I was undertaking started to dry up and it became clear that I would either have to move to another part of the country or look for something outside of my research field. That was when I started to explore returning to practice as a physiotherapist.

When I thought about going back to work in the NHS, I felt quite daunting. It had been years since I had put on a physiotherapists uniform, and I wasn't sure I'd be up to the job. It was not an easy decision to make, as it would involve another change in career, six to eight months of re-skilling and the nagging uncertainty that I might not find my feet again.

However, Health Education England (HEE) and South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust supported me throughout my return to practice journey. The trust provided access to senior staff so I could discuss what would be involved.

Once I decided to go for it, a series of clinical placements were arranged, so I could update my skills. These placements were great. The staff I worked under were consistently friendly and professional. They provided the ideal environment through which I could learn and grow, gaining the competence and confidence I needed. There were bumps along the road as you would expect, but HEE, along with the trust's HR department, placement facilitators and physiotherapy team were quick to respond to any issues, often going the extra mile.

Thankfully it's all worked out really well. I've been able to re-register as a physiotherapist and recently had an interview for a Band 5 rotational job with the trust and I'm pleased to share that I was successful! So, I'm now looking forward to starting work in a few weeks' time.

If you are mulling over returning to practice, don't be afraid. Perhaps like me you might feel the need to start at an entry level again and build back up. However, I have known others who have walked back into senior roles. That's the beauty of the personalised approach used when returning to practice. For me, returning to practice was a big decision but I'm glad it's one I've taken and I'm very grateful to all those who helped me throughout this process.