

## Jeni – returning occupational therapist



Jeni is based in Hartlepool and completed her BSc in Occupational Therapy in 2011. Since qualifying she has had varied roles. After not registering with the HCPC initially, Jeni became a teaching assistant then a student teacher. In 2014, she opened a Board Game Café in her hometown with the focus of working with families, children, and young people with Autism, and those with mental health problems.

In 2017 she took up a role as a Telecare and Assistive Technology Assessor. This work in Adult Social Care reminded Jeni of her passion and she now shares her return to practice journey with us.

### Why undertake the Leadership Programme

“I was looking for some direction to focus my return to practice journey and I saw the opportunity to participate in the Leadership Programme and decided to go for it as it sounded interesting. Whilst working in Adult Social Care, I knew the world of the NHS had changed and I wanted to get my head around it as well as explore roles that weren’t necessarily traditional “OT” roles.

“I found it rather daunting setting out, without a set path ahead (other than returning to the register) and it took me a little time to get my head around the fact that I’m qualified, I just need to update!”

### Jeni’s leadership objectives

“I wanted to gain a better understanding of what leadership is and I wanted to develop strategies to increase my confidence and resilience. I also wanted to understand how I could be a leader in my role and future roles.”

### Projects Jeni has been involved in

“I’ve be working alongside other programme participants on projects including a webinar for returners to answer their questions and share returner experiences.

“I have also been taking the lead on developing a SharePoint for returners and stakeholders which will provide a wealth of the information for those returning to practice, and those looking to support returners.

“This has been really interesting to work on and whilst there have been some challenges – for example learning to use new software, but I have enjoyed the autonomy I have been afforded and the opportunity to develop new skills.”

### Jeni’s advice and experience

“I would absolutely encourage others to take up the Leadership Programme. I have found the confidence and trust placed in us by the return to practice team has greatly increased my confidence in my abilities.

“The coaching has also been an excellent way for me develop my knowledge and explore new ways of collaborative working.

“I have enjoyed the coaching sessions, the time to be present and focus on different themes including the ever-changing landscape of the NHS has been very valuable to me and following this up with reflective conversations with my fellow returners has also been welcome.

“I started the placement feeling quite out of my depth and thinking that I didn’t have the qualifications to be a leader, however during the programme I had a light-bulb moment – Anyone can be a leader! It’s not about being the boss, or the person with the highest qualifications, it’s about your state of mind – the way we act in our role, how we do our job and work with others around us.

“I have particularly enjoyed the opportunity to be working alongside some amazing people - from my fellow returners, to Natalie, Natasha and Paul, to the wider HEE team who have all embraced us and made us feel valued and welcome!”