

Joanna Royle – Case study

When I left my profession, Physiotherapy, in 2010 to focus on the needs of our growing family, I didn't expect to return. I had worked as a Physiotherapist in various settings in the Midlands after joining the register in 2004. When I left I was a band 6 on acute wards, doing respiratory physio, but also covering other specialties, including working in a Children's Hospice. However, my work became increasingly difficult to fit around the needs of my 4 children and my husband's work, so I felt that I had to leave.

We moved to the North East with my husband's job in 2015 and I became increasingly frustrated that I had skills, experience and 2 degrees that I had worked really hard to acquire, but couldn't use.

I had considered many other professions and job opportunities but none of them were quite right. So, just prior to the pandemic, I decided that I wanted to attempt to return to Physio. However, the pandemic and obvious need for more NHS staff gave me the push I needed to get on with it.

Once home-school was over (so I thought!) in September 2020, I finally began my Return to Practice (RTP) journey.

At first returning to practice seemed really daunting! I had to do 420 hours of supervised clinical work and/or study. I needed a supervised placement to regain my confidence and refresh my skills, but had very few contacts in the North East. I wondered if I would even find a job that fitted our busy lives at the end of it! However, I decided I had to "push the doors" and find out.

I got some great advice from Paul Chapman at the HCPC/HEE, as well as from other returnees once I had registered my intent to return (R2PAHP-HCS@hee.nhs.uk). I braced myself for the challenge, updated my CV and emailed Nic Emery, Professional Lead of Adult Physiotherapy at CDDFT, my local NHS trust, asking if they would consider supporting my return with a supervised clinical placement. After so many stories of returnees finding it almost impossible to get a placement, especially during a pandemic, I was absolutely delighted and amazed to hear back from Nic just 3 days later with a "yes"!!!

We then planned and prepared for my placement in Durham at UHND, feeling our way through a system we were all new to, but the Trust and Physio department could not have been more helpful or more accommodating and I started my clinical hours in December 2020. It was an absolute joy to return to Physio and work with the team at CDDFT, it really wasn't any harder than returning after a maternity leave! I was able to work voluntarily and supernumerary in a wide range of departments, refresh my skills and identify gaps. I studied alongside this, keeping a log of my hours and reflections on my learning. Lesley Charman, my named supervisor was incredibly supportive, encouraging and helpful throughout.

I started to build an idea of what I wanted as a job and had some really helpful conversations during my return. I took the opportunity to do some of my RTP hours in Bishop Auckland Hospital, on the Frailty and Rehab wards and I quickly realised that it suited my skills really well.

Joanna Royle – Case study

Just after I finished my RTP hours I was interviewed for a band 6 job at Bishop and was delighted to be successful, I started working for the trust in May 2021.

I am so incredibly grateful to everyone who helped me on my RTP journey, to all those in CDDFT and especially the Physio departments at Durham and Bishop for welcoming me, supporting me, for making my return so easy, enjoyable and for reminding me how much I love being a Physio! I had lots of support and advice from other returnees too, through the RTP network.

It doesn't have to be difficult to return, even after 10 years out! Thank you so much CDDFT!!