

Louise Smith

Diagnostic Radiographer

Qualified: 1990

Stopped working in a clinical role: 1995

Returned to practice: 2021

Current role: Bank Diagnostic Radiographer

AHP/HCPC Return to Practice

Where are they now?

Radiography was something I had always wanted to do. I trained at the Derby Royal Infirmary, and practiced until 1995 when I retired with a back injury.

“I wanted to return to radiography from the day I left, but the possibility always seemed remote. Then in 2021, my daughter hurt her ankle, and I wondered if it needed an x-ray. That evening I found myself idly searching for radiography jobs, and came across an advert for a Return to Practice (RtP) post. I took a huge and scary leap of faith and applied. My sister, who is an Occupational Therapist helped me to realise that my skills and experience, although rusty, were valuable.

I managed to complete much of my formal study before I started my placement, providing me with a decent up-to-date knowledge base.

One of my new colleagues remarked on my first day, that radiography was like riding a bike, just a different model of bike. This has turned out to be surprisingly accurate. I have been welcomed, made to feel at home, valued and looked after. If you've been thinking about returning to practice for some time, please look into it a little further; the NHS needs its qualified staff to return to practice, especially now.”

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“ Radiography, like other allied health professions, has retention and recruitment issues and returners have the potential of vast experience and knowledge, so we see RtP as a huge benefit to the Trust and the patients in our care.

Radiographers who have been out of practice for a number of years will always have their core skills embedded and they may have been working for themselves or other industries, so can bring the wealth of experience with them. A fresh pair of eyes is also very beneficial!

Trusts can support them with a robust induction plan, pre-placement visits and by having all their ID checks and other housekeeping completed in plenty of time. Then, ensure they are allocated with a mentor, involved in team meetings and are welcomed and encouraged to join the team.

It is also really important that Trusts actively promote RtP! There are more people out there than we think, many of whom are unaware of the RtP route back into the profession they worked hard for.”

Claire Duckett

Superintendent Radiographer - Education & Professional Development
University Hospitals of Derby and Burton NHS foundation trust

