

Mary McLeish works on the surgical ward at Derby Teaching Hospital. Here she tells us about her nursing career and what it was like returning to practice.



"I started nursing in 1987 and enjoyed the patient care and the teamwork. I kept busy during my 12 years out of nursing, raising a family and becoming a school Governor and voluntary classroom assistant, but last year it felt like the right time to return to practice.

I searched the internet for information and saw Derby University had a return to practice (RtP) course. I was invited for an interview and asked to do a simple maths test. That same day, I was offered a place on the February 2016 course!

I began studying at Derby University and negotiated a 15-hour per week, 6-month work contract at Derby Teaching Hospital as a health care assistant with support and mentorship in my chosen clinical area, to achieve the course competencies.

My mentor and I identified areas of personal and professional development and my experience was personalised to meet them. I received a great deal of encouragement and support from the other members of staff, and was able to integrate the RtP programme into my shifts.

On completion of the RtP programme, I was interviewed, to become a permanent member of staff and I am now employed as a Registered Nurse at Derby Teaching Hospital.

The most challenging element of the RtP course for me was the academic part and the level of IT which is now used, but the University provided me with support and the course members developed a peer support group with regular get-togethers.

I was a little nervous when I first stepped back on the ward, but that very quickly evaporated and I feel I have brought my caring and empathetic manner back to nursing; I often have younger staff asking me for knowledge and advice!

I'd advise anyone thinking of returning to practice to don't be afraid to go for it! You will have valuable skills and knowledge that the health service is crying out for. You will need to be a little organised and pro-active in seeking out opportunities, but the rewards are worth it."

Mary returned to nursing. **You can too.**

Begin your return journey at: **comeback.hee.nhs.uk**