



“I am currently working as a locum in Molecular Microbiology at Leeds General Infirmary, surrounded by some of the kindest people I have ever met. It has affirmed all of the reasons I wanted to return.”

Stacey King qualified as a **biomedical scientist** at Derby City Hospital in 2009, but when her temporary contract came to an end she decided to leave the profession and follow her interest in virology research.

“I was really interested in virology and the science behind diagnostic testing. I’ve spent the last 7 years in virology research and did a PhD at the Institute of Infection and Global Health at University of Liverpool.

However, once I’d completed my Phd lab work, I realised I wanted a more structured 9-5pm work day and I also really missed working with people in the NHS.

I searched online for return to practice (RtP) schemes for biomedical scientists and didn’t find anything, but then I came across the Health Education England RtP programme and contacted Paul Chapman.

I needed 60 days of updating skills and knowledge; my PhD counted as the formal updating knowledge section and for the informal element, I read up on diagnostic procedures. I then had to do a 20-day placement which I undertook at the Queen’s Medical Centre in Nottingham.

Although the placement was important, it wasn’t at a very high level, for example there was no reporting/validating/authorising of results, but when I started work as a locum biomedical scientist shortly after, I had some excellent on-the-job training and was so glad to be back; I hadn’t realised how much I had missed it.

Things have changed of course, the diagnostic environment is more automated now; you don’t really need a biomedical science qualification to run the machines, so there are more medical lab assistants on the scene, and the biomedical scientists are more specialised. But, I have been reminded how passionate and determined my colleagues are; most are overworked and underfunded but there is strength through adversity and it is very powerful when we all pull together to provide an excellent healthcare service.

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Returning to practice can look like an overwhelming task; I found the Health Care Professions Council guidance quite vague, preferring a more structured process with specific requirements and number of days to complete, so that gave me a bit of stress, but for some the flexibility may be an advantage.

However, I’d say stick with it, because it is so valuable and once you are back you will be so glad you completed it. I am much happier and content in my life now, and look forward to what the future brings”.

Are you
ready to
return?