

## **Return to Nursing Practice**

### **My personal story by Sue Kennish**

I started my career at Noble's Hospital, as a cadet nurse and left a year after qualifying, to study Midwifery. Over a period of 18 years, I was employed in a variety of roles, including primary, secondary and tertiary care. When I was a Practice Nurse, I specialised in asthma care; became an asthma trainer and subsequently gained a teaching qualification in Further and Higher Education.

To suit family commitments, I began teaching Health and Social Care at the Isle of Man College of Further and Higher Education. I was initially employed for 6 weeks to cover sickness, but stayed for 14 years!

My decision to return to nursing was not taken lightly. I would be taking a significant reduction in salary and losing half my holidays; but the yearning to resume nursing eventually surpassed the value I still placed on my teaching career. Friends and colleagues thought I was either brave or totally mad! I knew though, that if I didn't do it, I may regret it.

The application for the return to practice programme was quite straightforward. It cost £600 (it is now a free course) and would take up to a year to complete. I decided to commit to the course full-time, and as I would no longer be earning a salary, 'fast-tracked' and completed it in 5 months. Prior to starting, I had to pay for a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check, complete a few mandatory training courses, attend an appointment with Occupational Health, and be fitted for uniforms (identical to those worn by student nurses).

I thoroughly enjoyed the programme, even though it was hard work! Having to write reflective, referenced assignments was not daunting to me, given my background in education. However, this could be off-putting to some, who like me, qualified in an era that focused on practical skills rather than academia, and also, may not have studied for many years. Today's nursing requires evidence-based practice, so it is necessary to be able to research, understand, and implement theory in to practice. Also, revalidation has superseded PREP, so all nurses need to prove they are keeping up-to-date with professional practice. The lecturers at Keyll Darree are really supportive and teach study skills to help with this, so don't let it deter you!

I hoped to practice as an adult community nurse, so sought advice about the most appropriate ward in which to undertake my clinical placement. As such, I worked full shifts on the Private Patient's Unit, to gain experience in medical and surgical nursing. I have to admit that at first it was a baptism of fire; the ward was scarily busy and I felt like the proverbial 'rabbit in headlights'! Although the intention is to be supernumerary to enable learning, I embraced the challenge, remained proactive and as such, was quickly included as part of the team. My mentor was one of the ward sisters who was lovely as well as encouraging. I had to complete a record, demonstrating competent practice, which was signed off by my mentor. I ensured I observed unfamiliar practices and requested supervision when undertaking new procedures. I chose to work beyond the required hours of clinical practice, to consolidate my learning and further increase my confidence.

I have now worked in adult community nursing for 2 years and it is an absolute joy and privilege. My passion for nursing has been truly rekindled. I am in the process of submitting my level 5 APEL portfolio in preparation for further study, will be commencing the Multi-professional Support of Learning and Assessment in Practice (Mentorship) course in April, and hope to apply for the specialist practitioner qualification in community nursing in September.

Returning to nursing is genuinely one of the best decisions I have ever made and wish I had done it years ago.