

Ruth Wheatley qualified in 1982 and enjoyed working in a busy London teaching hospital. Once her children came along she used her nursing skills in roles which were more flexible, working on a pharmacy counter and becoming a registered child minder. But, once her children had left home, Ruth started to consider returning to nursing.



“At the back of my mind I knew I was a nurse and wanted to see if it was possible to return given that I had been out of practice so long. I got a job as a healthcare assistant at Northampton General Hospital in 2010 and worked on lots of different wards; it gave me the opportunity to see how things had changed, gain up to date experience and find an area I enjoyed working in.

Colleagues who knew I had trained as a nurse kept saying, “when are you going to become a nurse again?” Then a practice nurse friend mentioned the return to nursing process and with support from my ward sister I looked into the return to practice course at The University of Northampton. With some help on how to apply I was able to do a good application and most importantly I had recent, relevant, experience to back up my application.

After a successful interview I started in September 2015 and met some lovely return to practice nurses; we were all a little apprehensive and excited, but I felt a bond between colleagues with shared ambitions to return to nursing.

We were shown our time table and given work placements and a mentor was arranged. We were also advised on how to study and find relevant information which was really useful for those of us who had not done a degree.

I found it difficult getting back into writing in an academic style, and taking on such a vast amount of information in such a short time did give us all brain-ache! However as well as knowledge and technical skills, I now bring valuable life experience to my work; I have empathy with patients and families and have insight into what struggles they may face, I have maturity and know what it is like to be a patient.

When I first stepped back onto the ward again, it just felt right. So many colleagues came up to congratulate me and I knew my family were proud of me. A lot has changed but luckily nurses are not required to starch their hats nowadays!

For me, it was really helpful to get hospital experience as a health care assistant first, it boosted my confidence and gave me a great insight into how things have changed. If you are considering returning to nursing, talk to someone who has gone through the process, and then do it!

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

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