

Hannah, Return to Practice

I'm Hannah Amondson and I am a Return to Practice Paramedic at St Richards Road Surgery in Deal.

I began my career as a paramedic in the London Ambulance Service after completing a degree at the University of Hertfordshire in 2004; it was at the time the only degree programme for paramedics and a new concept. Due to my own health issues, I moved into telephone advice in 2006 and then I moved to the East of England Ambulance Service in 2008, working on a rapid response car. Unfortunately in 2015 I had to take retirement due to my health. I had tried to move into primary care a few times but the paramedic practitioner role was still in its early stages, mainly funded by the ambulance service and required you to be physically fit and do home visits which I couldn't do, using a wheelchair and struggling with chronic pain.



Once I had surrendered my registration I believed that I would never be able to work again due to being medically retired. However after a number of years, my condition began to stabilise and I started to consider doing some kind of training from home. I found the Health Education England website and an online course on the University of Coventry's AHP Return to Practice course, the course consisted of 2 modules and was based around the 4 pillars of Advanced Practice. I started the course in February 2023 and was assigned a paramedic mentor from the university who I would meet with online to read and discuss my essays.

I needed some patient contact hours to consolidate my learning, especially having not assessed or treated a patient face to face for over 15 years! I contacted the HEE/NHSE South East placement team for their support. It took lots of coordination to find a suitable placement environment. At the same time, I also started thinking about my passion for primary care and realised that I could join the sector. I contacted the Kent and Medway placement team to do my return to practice placement in primary care and they set about trying to find me a suitable placement. I started at St Richards Road Surgery in Deal and was given a placement supervisor who was an ACP from a paramedic background.

I started the placement by observing the teams in the practice to know who did what and who had specialist training in which areas. I would meet with them and discuss some of the cases that we had seen and write reflections. It was a learning curve because a lot of the conditions seen were not what I would have been treating in the past as a paramedic. My supervisor was able to set up a minor injuries and illness clinic for me to assess and treat some patients under supervision, this was a great experience as it allowed me to practice my assessment skills. I learnt a variety of skills during this time, including EMIS and referrals. Due to my experience in telephone and e-consultations, I found this aspect very useful and am currently looking to join the First Contact Practitioner course to work part-time in primary care and develop further. Primary care has given me the flexibility I need due to my disability, and opportunities to establish my role as a Return to Practice Paramedic.

When I first started this journey, I initially thought that no one would consider employing me due to my disability but people have been open-minded and grateful for the knowledge and experience that I can bring back into practice. Overall, it has taken less than 1 year for me to complete my Return to Practice journey part time, with the course costs being covered by HEE/NHSE.

I would encourage anyone who has previously been on the HCPC register and is considering returning to practice to look into it even if they can only offer a few hours a week; the NHS needs your support and colleagues will welcome you with open arms. I have really enjoyed the experience. It's given me a sense of purpose and achievement again.