“It’s never been easier to return to the nursing profession”

Across the country a new campaign, Come Back, has been launched to support nurses in returning to practice. What makes this special is that it differs from previous campaigns on a number of levels.

Back in June, I wrote about a review of the return to practice (RTP) programmes available and the experiences that returning nurses have had previously. That review, and the stories returning nurses have told us, inspired us to bring together the nursing community to reinvigorate the programme.

We have undergone a period of research, developed processes, supported the programme with funding and worked with RTP leads, nurses and key partners to ensure we made the right decision every step of the way.

Nursing RTP programmes have now been refreshed and refocused, based on nurses’ feedback and their needs. We’ve addressed financial issues by confirming that course fees will now be paid. We’ve identified where support was lacking and developed a toolkit to ensure every organisation involved in the programme has guidance. We’ve developed the Come Back campaign to support those looking for a course. From a practical point of view, it has never been easier to return to nursing.

The Come Back campaign sees us connecting directly with the nursing community through the use of social media and the abundance of health professionals and key partners already having conversations about nursing online. Led by nurses, who have returned to practice and have great stories to tell, the campaign addresses the key reasons that prevent people from returning, particularly the emotional reasons.

We’ve been overwhelmed by the sheer volume of nurses who have been in touch about their RTP experiences. From Penny in Kettering, who returned after bringing up her eight children, to John in Manchester, who has returned to the ward 28 years after he stepped away, all received a really warm welcome back into nursing.

No matter how many years have passed since returning nurses last practised, the fundamentals haven’t changed. Compassion, understanding and commitment are still at the heart of care. We want to reassure those looking to return that there are fantastic opportunities available for them and that we will support them in their return. That’s what this campaign is all about.

Once nurses are on the refreshed RTP programmes, they can expect to have a supported, flexible and varied experience that eases them back into nursing life. This is a great start to what we hope will be a change in attitude towards RTP, where we see nurses returning and staying because we continue to look after them and continually ensure we have the right processes in place driven by their personal and professional needs.

I know I’m not alone in believing that no matter where you are or what role you are in, once you’re a nurse, you’re always a nurse. We’re really looking forward to welcoming nurses who decide to come back. NT

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Cancer survivors may find that coping with anxiety and fear of recurrence is a significant challenge. You could assume that having regular checks would allay and manage that anxiety but, as our article on page 20 reveals, attending a busy outpatient clinic and waiting with others who may experience recurrence did not provide any reassurance.

In response, an acute trust developed a supportive model of follow up. Women with breast cancer and a low-to-moderate risk of recurrence attend educational sessions with the option of a drop-in service.

A 12-month audit found the service, developed in partnership with Breast Cancer Care, reduced overall anxiety as well as the number of outpatient appointments. It also gave women the chance to meet others with breast cancer, which they found beneficial.