

Northumbria University

Return to Nursing, Midwifery and Specialist Community Public Health Nursing (SCPHN) practice.

Guide for potential applicants



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Return to Nursing, Midwifery and SCPHN Practice.

The Return to Practice (RtP) programme at Northumbria University is supported by Health Education England (a part of NHS England), to provide a route to return to practice for those individuals who's NMC pin has expired. Recognising the knowledge and experience such individuals will bring to the workforce. The programme accepts applications from the four fields of nursing (adult, child, mental health, learning disability), Midwifery and Specialist Community Public Health Nurses (SCPHN). The term *returnee* is used for individuals on RtP programmes to differentiate them from traditional full time undergraduate students.

Prior to undertaking an RtP programme, please check the [NMC readmission](#) requirements page to understand if applicants can return without the need to complete an RtP programme. Standard revalidation is three years.

Entry requirements

There are no restrictions on applications because of time away from Practice. Northumbria accept applications from those with a registration lapse of less than one year, to over twenty years. Applicants with a prolonged lapse, may be required to show evidence of voluntary/support work in health and social care. This is certainly applicable to Midwifery applicants.

The RtP programme is delivered at level six (degree) and includes a 2500-word written assignment. As a result, applicants must show evidence of successful study at level five (diploma) on application. Applications cannot be accepted without this evidence.

Previous applicants in this position have accessed many on-line/local college short courses to achieve level five study.

Case study scenario.

Beth left nursing 20 years ago. Beth trained at certificate level (level three) prior to nurse training offered at diploma level. Beth did not complete any training at diploma level in her career. Beth looked at short courses (20 credits or more) offered on-line and distance learning in health and social care. However, Beth chose to attend evening classes at a local college to complete a module in counselling. Beth applied for RtP, knowing that if accepted, a condition of her offer would be to provide evidence of successfully completing the module prior to commencing the RtP programme.

What Northumbria can offer applicants.

Northumbria University utilises the Practice Education Facilitators (PEF) within NHS organisations to secure a wide range of placements. Placements are agreed with applicants and PEF's and every effort is made to place returnees in a clinical area of their choosing. Some areas however, for example Intensive care and Accident and Emergency are not considered suitable for returnees.

Nursing- as a general overview, nurses returning to the four fields of Nursing are placed in one clinical area such as.

- Adult- acute services (respiratory, cardiology, orthopaedics, gynaecology, theatres etc.). Also, community nursing teams and a small number of care homes.
- Child- also placed in acute and community child health locations.
- Learning disability- also placed in acute and community locations.
- Mental health- also placed in acute and community locations. Certain specialist areas are also available.

Midwifery

Midwifery returnees must be placed in several services within one NHS provider. This is to comply with Midwifery standards. Returnees to Midwifery have placements in community midwifery, intrapartum care and hospital-based antenatal and postnatal care and neonates.

Specialist community public health nurses (SCPHN)

Returnees to SCPHN are placed in one team specific to their role.

General Practice Nurse (GPN) placement

Alongside traditional placements. Northumbria offers placements in primary care for those interested in a career in general practice. This placement is an option for any of the four nursing fields.

GPN placements are unlike traditional placements and are reserved for those that see this as a future career. GPN placements do not provide GPN training, Returnees in this area are restricted to the roles and responsibilities that govern student nurses. Any formal training would be given when a future substantive job is secured.

Why return to practice?

As a previous NMC registrant, returnees' have knowledge and skills essential to supporting the ongoing development and delivery of the NHS.

Returning to clinical practice can be daunting, even following a short break in registration. However, returnees' will find clinical teams eager to welcome a returnee to the team and support their development. Many returnees are surprised at the speed that confidence returns with the support of clinical colleagues.

How is the programme funded?

There are no costs to applicants if they live and intend to work in England throughout and following the programme. [NHS England — North East and Yorkshire](#) support the programme and pay university fees, placement fees and provide a returnee bursary. Current Bursary is £1000, £500 paid in the initial 4 weeks of the programme, the second £500 paid on course completion.

What is an education bursary?

A bursary is money that returnees can use to pay for books, travel to placements (fuel, public transport, car parking fees), purchase food/drink on campus.

Importantly, academic bursaries should not count towards your Personal Allowance or affect any other means-tested money you receive or intend to apply for, such as benefits. However, please check with any agency for reassurance regarding your personal circumstances.

How long does it take to complete the Return to Practice programme?

The RtP programme is delivered twice a year with intakes in March and September. Returnees can complete the programme in four to nine months. Each returnees' journey is unique and discussed on an individual basis at interview. The time a returnee will commit to the programme will depend on when their registration lapsed, the number of hours they can commit to a clinical placement each week, and personal and family commitments.

Clinical placements allow returnees to demonstrate safe practice in the proficiencies stipulated by regulatory bodies and professional standards. To demonstrate this, returnees complete a Practice Assessment Document (PAD) containing the relevant standards. The PAD document used at Northumbria is approved by the NMC and used throughout NHS England.

Total number of hours- A full-time week is 37.4 hours.

Each week returnees must hold 7.5 hours for university taught sessions and self-directed study. Therefore, the maximum number of clinical hours returnees can work is 30 ($30+7.4=37.4$). However, returnees can choose to work a minimum of 15 clinical hours a week ($15+7.4=22.4$). Please see example scenarios below.

Nursing- The minimum number of hours is 150 with a maximum is 450. Those with a registration lapse of more than 10 years must complete the full 450 hours. For others, this is agreed at interview. Nursing standards are found in [Future nurse: Standards of proficiency for Registered nurses \(2019\)](#)

Midwives- Must complete the full 450 hours regardless of registration lapse. This is an NMC stipulation and not negotiable. [The standards of proficiencies for midwives \(2019\)](#)

SCPHN- Nurses can only reinstate a SCPHN registration alongside an original nursing registration. This requires two clinical placements, one to achieve the competencies set out in the Future nurse standards above. And a second to achieve those in the [Standards of proficiency for specialist community public health nurses](#). As a result, placement time is 450 hours in total. However, if an applicant has retained their nursing registration, only one placement in a SCPHN team is required. This will reduce the placement hours.

Please contact the programme led to discuss individual circumstances. However, the following scenarios may be useful to demonstrate how each applicant is individual. Please remember these scenarios do not account for annual leave or sickness, this time must be added.

- *Mary and Abdul both decide to return to nursing eight years after their NMC pins expired. They both need to complete 400 hours in clinical practice. Mary has no dependencies and can commit to the full 30 clinical hours a week.*

Abdul has family commitments and can only commit to the minimum of 15 hours a week. Mary's placement is 13.5 weeks, while Abduls is 26.5 weeks.

- *Samantha has decided to return to Midwifery. Samantha's NMC pin expired 8 months ago. Samantha will need to complete 450 hours. Samantha can commit to 22.4 hours a week. This requires a 20-week placement.*
- *Raja wishes to return to school nursing. Raja's nursing and SCPHN registration lapsed 6 years ago. Raja will work 450 hours and will be placed in a general community team for 300 hours to complete her nursing PAD, and then 150 hours in a school nursing team to complete the SCPHN standards. Raja can work 30 hours a week and total placement time is 15 weeks.*
- *Frank wishes to return to Health Visiting. Frank continues to work as a nurse and has an active nursing NMC registration. Frank will continue to work part time and agrees to 200 hours placed in a Health Visiting team. Frank can commit 15 hours a week, requiring 13.5 weeks.*

Emerging and developing routes.

Applicants from outside the North-East of England.

NHS England will fund places for applicants living in England but living outside the North-East region. Placements can be agreed close to applicant's home address, study days in Newcastle must be attended.

Please contact the programme leader if interested in this route.

Case study scenario.

- *Amanda's NMC pin expired 5 years ago. Amanda wishes to return to Learning Disability (LD) nursing, unfortunately, Amanda's local Higher Education Institutes RtP programme does not accept LD applicants. Amanda has approached an LD service close to home that agrees to offer a placement area. Amanda passes the placement details to the RtP Programme leader/placement facilitator at Northumbria to agree the placement. As Amanda resides in England, NHS England pay all fees and Amanda travels to Newcastle for the taught study days.*

Applicants from outside of England.

NHS England will not fund university/placement fee's or pay a bursary for applicants outside England. However, applicants may choose to self-fund or approach an employer to cover the programme fees.

In either case applicants should contact the programme leader.

Case study scenario.

Mohammed lives in Scotland, unfortunately Mohammed has not found a suitable programme to return to Children's nursing. Mohammed is aware Northumbria University can support his return. Mohammed has two options.

1. *Mohammed will self-fund the programme, agreeing to pay all tuition fees, placement fees and any expense travelling to Newcastle. Mohammed is*

aware he will not receive the £1000 bursary. Mohammed is also responsible for locating a placement area in child health willing to support him in Scotland.

- 2. Mohammed cannot afford the expense to self-fund the programme. Mohammed approaches a local employer advertising vacancies in child health. The employer agrees to pay all tuition fees, placement fees and may cover the expense of travelling to Newcastle if Mohammed commits to working for them when he regains his registration. Mohammed is aware he will not receive the £1000 bursary. Mohammed's future employer can offer a placement area in child health.*

The Return to Practice programme design

The programme is delivered through Northumbria University and all study days are held on [Coach lane campus](#) in Newcastle. There are ten study days in total, eight held face to face and two on-line. The programme is not delivered distance learning and all eight Newcastle study days must be attended. Although clinical practice areas can be negotiated outside the North-East.

The programme begins with four weeks of face-to-face days, currently held on a Tuesday. All returnees, regardless of prior registration are taught as one cohort. From week four, returnees will commence clinical placements, while continuing to attend taught days on a weekly basis.

Routes for returning to practice.

Two routes exist to undertake the programme.

Independent application

Applicants can apply to the programme as an individual with the support of NHS England explained above. This route is unpaid but does allow individuals to determine the length of their programme, and commitment considering family/social needs or part time employment. On completion, this allows individuals the flexibility to pursue any role or career option or take time out to consider their future options.

Employer led.

Returnees can be sponsored by an employer; this has two main differences. Firstly, as individuals in this route may be paid as an employee on the programme, they may not receive the £1000 bursary. Employers have the option of retaining this money and not passing it to the individual. However, salary paid would normally exceed the bursary. Secondly, the employer may dictate the clinical placement and number of hours. There would also be an agreement that the individual will work for them after the programme, and they would not be free to look for alternative employment.

For either routes, applications are submitted through [Northumbria University Return to Practice website](#)

The application process begins early to allow time for the RtP team to negotiate clinical placements prior to interview, and to allow ample time for Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS criminal record check) and Occupational Health screening prior to commencement. For this reason, applications will close 3-4 months before the programme start date.

The application processes- Independent application

1. Applicants complete the on-line application on [Northumbria's website](#) and provide all the necessary supplementary documents requested by the admissions department. It is important to know the RtP team will not be sent applications until all requests for original awards and qualifications have been resolved.
2. In the application, applicants are asked for a preferred health care provider and speciality for their clinical placement.
3. The RtP team contact the preferred clinical area identified on applications to request a placement on your behalf.
4. Applicants are interviewed by both a member of the RtP team and a representative from the clinical area. To be offered a conditional place on the programme, applicants must be accepted by both the university and the clinical area.
5. Following interview, successful applicants are given a conditional offer. The conditions related to offers are a) Enhanced DBS clearance, Occupational Health clearance, agreed clinical placement area.
6. The RtP team will liaise with returnee during this time to update returnee on a regular basis.

The application processes- Employer led.

1. Employers advertise sponsored RtP routes for specified roles on NHS jobs. Allowing individuals, an opportunity to return to nursing, midwifery, SCPHN with the guarantee of a job on completion. If applicants do apply through this route, please also contact a member of the RtP team so they can liaise with any prospective employer.
2. It is not uncommon for previous registrants to secure a support/HCA post within an organisation to continue in a caring role. These individuals can approach the organisation and ask to be supported to regain their registration, with the commitment of returning as a qualified member of staff. Again, applicants are encouraged to contact a member of the RtP team to make them aware of this process. Returnees on this employer led approach cannot be placed as a returnee in the clinical area they work as a support/HCA. The organisation will secure another area.

Applications for either route are through the applications link on the web page.

Standards for student supervision and assessment

In 2018 (updated 2023) the NMC published new standards for student support, replacing the previous "Mentor" approach. [NMC standards for education and training \(2023\)](#)

Students are now supported in practice by, Practice Assessors (PA) and Practice supervisors (PS). The changes allow any health care professional belonging to a professional body (medical, physiotherapy, occupational health, associate nurse, operating department practitioner etc.) to support nursing students and agree their competence in elements of the PAD document.

Alternative supervision standards apply for midwives [Standards for pre-registration midwifery \(2023\)](#)

An NMC document also summarises the implication for RtP of the new standards for nurses and midwives [Standards for Return to Practice programmes](#).

What can I do to prepare for the interview.

As previously stated, returnees are interviewed by a member of the university's RtP team and a representative from their chosen clinical area. The interview is to understand their motivation to return to the NHS and clinical practice. It is also an opportunity to demonstrate an awareness of current health and well-being guidance.

At interview, all applicants are asked the same questions regardless of professional background and experience. However, in interviewees answers, they can demonstrate knowledge of developments and government/professional guidance relevant to their previous experience and future career plans. The NHS currently adopts a values-based approach to recruitment to ensure students and employees share the values and behaviours that align with the values of the NHS Constitution. [NHS England Values Based Recruitment \(VBR\)](#)

The interview also provides an opportunity for interviewers to satisfy themselves applicants are aware of the numerous commitments (university study, placement shifts alongside family/social responsibilities), and strategies are in place to manage attendance.

A list of recommended resources and websites are.

[Royal College of Nursing](#)

[Royal college of Midwives](#)

[The Nursing and Midwifery Council](#)

[NMC- SCPHN](#)

[Health Education England- Return to Practice homepage](#)

What happens when I am accepted onto the programme?

Applicants will not be informed on the day of the interview by the panel; however, they will receive a reply from the university's admissions team within 2-3 weeks. If applicants are not accepted, an explanation will be given with specific feedback to support a future application.

If accepted, any offer will be conditional. The admissions and RtP teams will liaise with successful applicants throughout this process.

There can be many individual conditions, however, the three fundamental conditions are:

1. Enhanced DBS clearance (criminal record and cautions)

2. Occupational health assessment
3. Agreed clinical placement.

It is essential applicants complete/return all requests. Successful applicants will only be invited to enrol on the programme when all conditions are met.

When a clinical placement is agreed, returnees are provided with a contact name and number/e-mail prior to/at the beginning of the programme. It is the returnee's responsibility to make contact, introduce themselves and agree shifts in advance. Some clinical areas may also ask returnees to complete mandatory training prior to commencing clinical shifts.

How am I assessed?

To successfully complete the programme and regain an NMC pin returnees must complete two assessments:

Part 1: You will be assessed by an individual essay of 2,500 words. This is discussed in depth from week 1 of the programme.

Part 2: Returnees must successfully demonstrate they have met relevant NMC professional standards and attendance requirements by completing:

- Nurses- a Practice Assessment Document (PAD)
- Midwives- the Midwifery Ongoing Record of Achievement (MORA)
- Specialist Community Public Health Nurses- SCPHN Standards of Proficiency

Integral to these documents are professional values.

[The NMC Code](#) presents the professional standards that nurses and midwives must uphold to be registered to practise in the UK. Professional standards apply to any returnee intending to re-join the register. Any concerns that a returnee cannot display these values may result in failure to complete the programme.

The Return to Practice team

- Programme lead- Mike Stephenson
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Test of competence

Northumbria University in collaboration with the NMC provide an alternative route to regain a lapsed registration- The Test of Competence (ToC).

This route is separate to the RtP programme.

Further information and contact details on this approach can be found at

[NMC Competence Test Centre at Northumbria University](#)
[NMC Test of Competence](#)

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Frequently asked questions (FAQ's)

Applications

- **I retired 6 years ago and left nursing 15 years ago, is too late to return?** - No. There are no restrictions.
- **I moved house and cannot find my original NMC certificate or training records, can I apply?** - Yes, but you will need to contact the NMC and ask for evidence of your previous registration. To demonstrate evidence of diploma study you will need to contact the training provider and ask for a proof of study (qualification, length of course and credits awarded)
- **I have missed the application deadline and the link is no longer available on the website, can I apply?** - No, applications close to allow time to arrange DBS and OH clearance.

Placements

- **I am interested in the GPN option, do I need prior experience?** - No, but you must have a desire to work in a General Practice in the future.
- **Can I have more than one placement area?** - No. Health Education England pay for one clinical placement. You can however negotiate to visit support services or specialist teams within this area.
- **I agreed to work 15 hours a week but can now work 22.5, can I increase my placement hours?** – Placement areas have a maximum number of students allowed at any one time. Placement hours are agreed at interview to allow placement areas to remain within these limits. However, in discussion with the placements manager and PEF some flexibility may be allowed. However, this is not guaranteed, and you may be asked to commit to the original hours.
- **Do I wear a student uniform as a Returnee?** -Yes, Returnees' wear the same uniform as traditional students. The uniform policy is strict, and returnees must always comply. If you do not comply, you will be asked to leave the clinical area. Returnees are provided with trousers and tunics by the University. Only plain not branded shoes (no plain black trainers) must be purchased.
- **What does “supernumerary” mean?** - As a returnee, you are *present in excess of the normal or requisite number of rostered staff*. While this allows returnees flexibility, you are welcomed as a member of the clinical team and must negotiate any time away from the clinical area. This may be refused if staff consider remaining in the clinical area is to your advantage.
- **I have childcare/part time job commitments and cannot work weekends, is this, OK?** - Flexibility in placement hours is discussed at interview and may be a barrier to an offer being made. Or an alternative area may be suggested

for you. You are accepted as a member of the clinical team on placement and should be as flexible and accommodating as possible.

Academic studies

- **I have not studied for many years and have concerns I will pass. Will I be supported?** – Yes, it is common for returnees to have a prolonged break from studies. You are supported by a named member of the academic team and can access all study and learning support offered to any university student.
- **If I fail the assignment, do I get another chance?** - Yes, returnees have two opportunities to pass the assessment tasks.

General questions

- **When can I apply for a job?** - Returnees can apply for substantive jobs at any time in the programme. However, on completing the programme it can take the NMC between 4 and 12 weeks to reinstate a registration.
- **I do not want to work when I finish, how long will my registration be valid?** - The date the NMC reinstate a registration is the yearly date used to collect annual fees, and with any NMC registration will be the revalidation date every three years. Failure to achieve the necessary [revalidation evidence](#) within three years will result in removal from the register.